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**AGING BEAUTY: THE ADAPTIVE RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE AGING PROCESS IN WOMEN**

by

Sheila Marie Bluhm

**A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology**

**Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 2000**

AGING BEAUTY: THE ADAPTIVE RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE AGING PROCESS IN WOMEN

Sheila Marie Bluhm, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2000

The youth-based, patriarchal culture in which we live bestows valuable status, power and prestige upon young, beautiful women. Within the standards of this society, the natural aging process progressively deteriorates a woman's beauty, and, therefore, her social worth. A vast network of media and societal messages prompt middle-aged women to react to this devaluation. Several pathways or behavioral alternatives are available as reactions, adaptive reconstructions, and/or the medicalization of the aging process in women. The goal of this sociological/gerontological exploratory research is to identify, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options available to midlife women.

The primary method used for this study is a literary analysis of available material pertinent to the topic of female aging beauty. An extensive review of the literature resulted in the extraction of twelve fundamental integrated findings.

The secondary method consisted of in-depth interviews with a small group of Caucasian, midlife women, ages 45 to 55. The perception of the loss of beauty with age was categorized into four main divisions in concert with the literature review. These four divisions, which were formatted into a preliminary organizational

chart, are: (1) redefinition, or the alteration of beauty definitions; (2) resignation, or accepting the consequences of the beauty myth; (3) rebellion, or the abandonment of the beauty myth; (4) reconstruction, or fighting age.

The conclusion determined that, in accordance with the theoretical basis of Cooley's Looking Glass Self, the issue of Mirror ownership (source of reflection, being self-owned, other-owned, or societally-owned) and its perceived accuracy is essential to pathway selection. This prompted the revision of the organizational chart into a flow chart which more succinctly presents the choices available to women at midlife. It initially appears as if women in this study who claim ownership of more than half of their Mirror are happier with their aging process and more able to fight off negative societal messages and ageist perceptions. Future research is strongly urged in this area.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Any personal acknowledgments allowed me must, because of who I am and whose I am, begin with thankfulness to my God who sustains my life, and brings me to this, the Promised Land.

There are not enough words to express gratitude to my Committee Chair, Dr. Ellen Page-Robin. Years ago she envisioned this accomplishment, and planted the seeds of a dream. She watered, pruned, fed, trimmed, and nurtured the dream into full bloom. How does a rose thank a Master Gardener?

To my other Committee members, I express a deep thankfulness for all their time and intensive work. Dr. Lewis Walker, Dr. Thomas Van Valey, and Dr. Gwen Raaberg have gone beyond all expectations to make this research possible.

My daughter, Amanda Nell Schlimm, has helped me in every possible way, bringing support, food, encouragement, comfort, laughter, piano concerts, and hugs. My son and daughter-in-law, Matthew and Melanie Schlimm, encouraged me page by page. To my mother, Lois M. Bluhm, my aunt, Doris Sieplinga, my sister, Salli R. Bluhm, and my brother, C. James Bluhm: thank you for being there for me through it all. To Steven J. Morley goes a special thanks. From driving me to campus the first day, to being outside the oral defense door on the last...and the thousand days in between, thank you, Pa.

I also acknowledge all my female ancestors who are/were brilliant enough to also obtain doctoral degrees. Unfortunately for

Acknowledgments--Continued

the world, they were born at the wrong time and place. This work was done in their name and in their stead.

Finally, this dissertation, as well as my educational achievements, are dedicated to my father, the late Charles E. Bluhm. I will never forget his phone calls asking me what page I was on now, reminding me of its priority in my life, and always, always urging me onward. With great pride, he unconditionally believed in me. If there were four words which could somehow cross from this world to his, I would say, "I did it, Dad!" Perhaps he already knows.

Sheila Marie Bluhm

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

"For an old woman, ageism is a killer because her sense of worth has been inexorably eroded by a lifelong pursuit of youth/beauty" (Copper, 1988, p. 73).

In order to understand more fully the midlife transitional period of women's age trajectories, this sociological/gerontological exploratory study will identify and analyze the behavioral alternatives open to women as the power, status, and prestige of youthful beauty diminishes with age. The main research goal is to explore, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options or pathways which midlife women may (or may not) choose to replace the advantages of youthful beauty.

Organization of the Chapters

Chapter I introduces the research goals, as well as the parameters of the field of research. It also provides a detailed statement of the problem.

Chapter II discusses the appropriate theoretical applications for this research, employing one primary and two secondary theories.

Chapter III presents the methodological format engaged in this research, including both an overview of the extensive review of the

literature, and specifications on the in-depth interviews which occurred with a small target population of middle-aged women.

Chapter IV begins the literature review for this research with an examination of the elusive definitions of beauty and physical attractiveness. This analysis of female beauty constitutes the first of five divisions which provide grounding for the structural formation of this research.

Chapter V continues the literature review with the remaining four divisions: (1) female aging, (2) socio-historical considerations, (3) feminist examinations, (4) female midlife body and health issues. It is hoped that the integration and consolidation of these individual topics proffers a major contribution of this research, which will be applicable for future studies.

Chapter VI offers the presentation of research questions employed for the in-depth interviews, as well as the responses of the participants.

Chapter VII provides the analysis of the cumulative findings, and the revision of the initial organization chart into a more fluid flow chart.

Chapter VIII consists of the conclusions of this study, including a recapitulation of the findings, and suggestions for future research. This chapter also includes an action component, which is consistent with feminist research methods.

Statement of the Problem

The youth-based, patriarchal culture in which we live bestows valuable status, power and prestige upon young, beautiful women. Within the standards of this society (and its vast network of media messaging), the natural aging process progressively deteriorates a woman's beauty and, therefore, her social worth.

Societal messages prompt middle-aged women to react to this devaluation. Several pathways or behavioral alternatives are available as socially acceptable reactions, adaptive reconstructions, and/or the medicalization of the aging process in women. Prior known research has not identified, nor analyzed these alternative pathways available to women in their transitional middle-aged years. The goal of this research is to explore, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options available to midlife women.

There is a paucity of sociological and gerontological research on female beauty. Beauty throughout women's life course trajectories has received even less serious research consideration. This is not surprising, given the difficulty of defining both beauty and physical attractiveness. How does research quantify an aesthetic concept as beauty? Has female beauty and physical attractiveness received less than serious sociological and gerontological consideration, due to its nearly exclusive, current location within the feminine domain? How will research on such an elusive, immensurable concept be received for serious academic consideration?

As evasive as this topic is, it is clear that its presence is

irrefutable on the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of sociological examination. On a micro-sociological level, perceptions of beauty and physical attractiveness strike at the very core of women's self-esteem and self-concept. Beauty rituals are deeply imbedded in the daily routines of most women, often consuming vast amounts of time, money, and effort.

On a meso-sociological level, beauty and physical attractiveness are transitory concepts which may change greatly throughout one's individual life course. Collectively, concepts of youthful beauty may be compared and contrasted to midlife and late life perceptions, with significant disparity.

On a macro-sociological level, the cosmetic industry in the United States, alone, is a multi-billion dollar annual enterprise. This is in no small way attributable to the sale of anti-aging products and treatments for women of age. Age-related radical procedures, such as cosmetic surgeries, contribute to a booming medical specialty. Governmental regulations on anti-aging beauty products and treatments have been compromised. Strong societal messages demand that women remain youthful-looking, regardless of their realistic, chronological age. Concrete rewards are bestowed upon the young and beautiful. Michel de Montaigne (cited in Etcoff, 1999) states:

I cannot say often enough how much I value beauty as a quality that gives power and advantage.... It takes first place in human relations; appears in the foreground, seduces and prepossesses our judgments, exercises great authority, and is marvelously impressive. (p. 30)

Grounding issues of beauty and physical attractiveness in the realm of topics worthy of serious sociological study has been a challenge for supportive social scientists for decades. Etcoff (1999) states that

the social sciences have been strangely absent from the rich intellectual debate about the nature of human beauty.... Gardner Lindzey's 1954 Handbook of Social Psychology, a lengthy tome devoted to the study of social interaction, lists only one entry for physical factors. Any reading of psychology and anthropology texts written before the late 1960s would suggest that physical appearance had absolutely no bearing on human attitudes or affections, and no role in human mental life. Why have the social sciences had so little interest in the human body? (p. 20)

According to Etcoff (1999), social scientists have shunned beauty as "trivial, undemocratic, and all in all not a proper subject for science" (p. 22). Etcoff also reports that by the late 1960s Lindzey was chiding his fellow colleagues for their neglect of morphology (outward appearance). He suggested that, "perhaps now is the time to restore beauty and other morphological variables to the study of social phenomena" (p. 22). Decades later, it is clear that social scientists have, for the most part, let his suggestion fall on deaf ears.

This sociological/gerontological exploratory study intends to heed that suggestion and research issues and alternatives available throughout the life course, specifically as it relates to beauty issues of midlife women. An entire chapter is dedicated to the definition and comprehension of the beauty issue within an aging female population, from a socio-historical, sociological, and gerontological perspective. A comprehensive review of the literature is

quintessential to the research outcomes, as well as the amalgamation of this knowledge. A small number of midlife women also participated in in-depth interviews in order to confirm existing findings, make additions or deletions the presence of other options within their lives.

It is hoped that the exploration, examination, labeling, and categorization of this research provides a more detailed profile of the options available to women in midlife. It is also hoped that some indications will surface, as to the healthiest, most power-inducing pathways for women's developmental trajectory as it concerns issues of beauty and physical attractiveness.

Summary

This initial chapter establishes the field of research for this dissertation by outlining the chapters in which this study will be accomplished. The validation of this topic for serious sociological and gerontological research was initially established. The goal of this research has been stated as the exploration, examination, labeling, and categorization of the multiple options available to midlife women as they age. Two basic research methods will be employed to accomplish this goal: review of the literature and in-depth interviews with a small target population of midlife women. This chapter has established the construction of the parameters of this exploratory research.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS

Introduction

Because sociological and gerontological examination of the body image of aging women, self-perceptions of diminished beauty, and concomitantly attached societal values have been deficient in the literature, there is no set precedence for an established theoretical framework which is inherently felicitous for this research. In an effort to ground this study most accurately in applicable precepts and to tease out appropriate applications of existent theories, one primary and two secondary theories have been chosen. This section will present those theoretical perspectives for analysis within this specific research.

Primary Theoretical Perspective

The Looking-Glass Self

Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) devised a theory at the turn of the last century which may be surprisingly fitting for research in the new millennium. His first book, published in 1902, is entitled Human Nature and the Social Order. In it Cooley offers his classic theoretical contribution in the form of the reflected or Looking-Glass Self. Cooley (1902) states:

Each to each a looking-glass reflects the other that doth pass. As we see our face, figure, and dress in the glass, and are interested in them because they are ours, and pleased or otherwise with them according as they do or do not answer to what we should like them to be; so in imagination we perceive in another's mind some thought of our appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on, and are variously affected by it. A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: (1) the imagination of our appearance to the other person; (2) the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and (3) some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. (p. 152)

This theory appears apropos first, because it was specifically meant to address the way in which an individual views his/her face, figure, and dress. Additionally, it accounts for self-definition via the judgment of the other.

Cooley (1902) continues:

The comparison with a looking-glass hardly suggests the second element, the imagined judgment, which is quite essential. The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind. This is evident from the fact that the character and weight of that other, in whose mind we see ourselves, makes all the difference with our feelings. We are ashamed to seem evasive in the presence of a straightforward man, cowardly in the presence of a brave one, gross in the eyes of a refined one, and so on. We always imagine, and in imagining share, the judgments of the other mind. (pp. 152-153)

Although Cooley refers to the other person in the singular, there is no reason to believe that this judgmental force could not be extended to society at large. In fact, George Ritzer (1992) grounds this particular theory within the parameters of Cooley's understanding of the effect of society on the individual and continuing social interaction. According to Ritzer (1992),

Cooley had an interest in consciousness, but he refused (as did Mead) to separate consciousness from the social context.

This is best exemplified by a concept of his that survives to this day—the looking-glass self. By this concept, Cooley understood that people possess consciousness and that it is shaped in continuing social interaction. (p. 48)

Applying, then, Cooley's three principal elements to this study, the following apperceptions may be inferred:

1. Aging women imagine or perceive their appearance to others in society.

2. They have an imagination (or may even have arrant proof) of society's judgment of their appearance via media messages and popular texts.

3. This process creates some sort of feeling. Within the parameters of this study, this feeling includes high motivation to select certain paths of action during this transitional rite of passage from youth to middle age.

Edward C. Jandy (1969), in his book entitled Charles Horton Cooley: His Life and His Social Theory, notes that Cooley, himself, was well aware of gender differences in the application of this theoretical method of self-definition. Jandy (1969) states:

Even as regards the two sexes, Cooley thought there was some difference in the development of the self. So far as he observed, girls early appear to be more impressible; they are much more concerned about how they reflect in the judgment of other people. Women have, it seems, a greater need to find a stable, compelling image of themselves. If such an image is found, either in a visible or an ideal person, the power of devotion to it becomes a source of strength.

Denied the fulfillment of this need, they tend to become derelict in conduct or drifting in character. Men appear to be able to stand alone more since they seem to be built for aggression more than are women. Whatever the differences, Cooley believed that directly or indirectly the imagination of how we appear to others is a controlling force in all normal minds.

(p. 116)

The quintessential premise of the theory for this study on aging beauty lies not only in the fact that we are socialized to be defined by the reflection of ourselves in others, but that we adopt their perceived judgment as our own. This study maintains that once this perceived loss of beauty and its consequential devaluation is incorporated into our very perception of self, we are highly motivated to act.

Charles Horton Cooley: Influences and Oppositions

In 1864 Charles Horton Cooley was born in a spacious house on State Street in Ann Arbor, Michigan, on the edge of the University of Michigan campus. Generations of students have unknowingly visited his birth home, as it later came to be occupied by the Michigan Union. Thomas McIntyre Cooley (father of Charles Horton) was a professor in the newly established Law School at the University of Michigan. The year that Charles Horton was born, Thomas McIntyre Cooley was elected to the Supreme Court of Michigan.

Charles Horton Cooley's life from birth through his college years is marked by serious illness. Cooley's nephew, Robert Cooley Angell writes of his uncle's health (in Reiss, 1968), stating that:

for fifteen years he suffered from an elusive stomach disorder and in high school he contracted malaria. A semi-invalid, he had few playmates, participated little in boyish sports, and early acquired the habit of omnivorous reading. His illness also gave him the opportunity for much day-dreaming and not a little serious thinking.... Cooley was unusually thoughtful, quiet, well-read, idealistic, and desirous of self-expression, but he had no clear occupational goal.... He did not start

his real career until he was twenty-eight. (pp. 2-3)

Cooley's illness-induced isolation developed his perspicacious nature and gave him a tremendous ability to view the inner self.

Edward C. Jandy (1969) states that

Cooley's gift was introspection. He was no scholar compiling footnotes and references and he was not a philosopher in the formal sense. He was a seer. He was a man who used his own mind as a broad highway into the mind of the human race, and a man who loved to express his thoughts well. He became a sociologist because the developing science of sociology gave him free scope for the kind of thing he wanted to do. He was once an economist. He might well have become a philosopher or a psychologist. In another society, he might have preferred to make his contribution as an essayist. (pp. 1-2)

Perhaps it should be expected, therefore, that Cooley was accused of sociological solipsism, or the belief that no one exists but him/herself. George Herbert Mead, a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, criticized Cooley's first book, Human Nature and the Social Order (1902) for its "extreme mentalistic stance and the exaggeration of the mental as the essence of society" (Mead, 1930, pp. 699-706).

Angell (1968) addresses the issue as follows:

Although Mead was undoubtedly justified in criticizing him for overstating the case, I think that Cooley was mainly trying to emphasize what is now called the phenomenological position: that it is not what people are but what we think they are that determines our reaction to them. In large part interactions take place according to the interpretations that the parties have of each other, and these interpretations are mental facts. One of his favorite statements was that sociologists have to imagine imaginations. By this he meant that they were not qualified to study the social world unless they could project themselves into people's minds and interpret the world as those people did.

It is easy to understand how Cooley came to take so extreme a position. Ever since he was a child, he had been thinking

about people, thinking how they looked to him, and how he looked to them. No doubt he had wondered how Thoreau looked to his neighbors and how Lincoln looked to the slaves. The world that he knew was a world of interpretation.... (pp. 4-5)

Many of Cooley's perspectives have been abandoned over the past century, due to perspectives of Mead. Mead is thought to have surpassed Cooley's original premises by further developing the definition of self to include the I and the Me. According to Randall Collins (1994),

Cooley spoke of the looking-glass self, as a kind of self-image derived from outside. Mead pointed out that this is only part of the structure. There is an I, a spontaneous action part of oneself that responds to the social situation and makes gestures to others. The self is not completely determined from outside, but it has an element of freedom and initiative. There is also the Me, the self comprised by the attitudes taken by other people towards one. This is the self-image, the self as proud or humble, good or bad, ugly or beautiful. The Me is a derived self, which emerges only reflectively after one has made active gestures toward other people. Cooley's looking-glass self is reduced to a lesser position, and, thus, the entire system is made more dynamic. In all of this the Generalized Other plays a pivotal role. The looking-glass is not merely outside, as Cooley had it; rather, it has to become a permanent fixture inside one's mind if one is to be able to glance one's thoughts of it and thus give them the general significance that makes them communicable. (pp. 259-260)

Mead made famous the term Generalized Other, denoting society at large as a direct influence on the individual. Collins (1994) states that "this is not merely the taking of the stance of some particular other person upon oneself, but a permanent faculty of the mind that takes the attitude of the whole community" (p. 259).

As previously noted, however, Cooley's view of the other as a judgmental force can easily be extended to society at large.

Sumner, Ward, Giddings, and Small are considered by Parsons

(in Reiss, 1968) to be the founding fathers of symbolic interaction. While the social psychological movement was established at the University of Chicago, Charles Horton Cooley, (who spent his entire academic life at the University of Michigan), George Herbert Mead, and W.I. Thomas are considered major contributors.

Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949) was a pioneer psychiatrist in the treatment of schizophrenia in the 1920s. He presented an interpersonal theory which linked child development to feedback from a specific Other being, namely that of mother for infancy, or as regarded by Mead, the Generalized Other.

Sullivan (1953) stated:

Now here I have set up three aspects of interpersonal cooperation which are necessary for the infant's survival, and which dictate learning. That is, these aspects of interpersonal cooperation require acculturation or socialization of the infant.... Now, at this time, the beginning personifications of me are good-me, bad-me, and not-me.

...Good-me is the beginning personification which organizes experience in which satisfactions have been enhanced by rewarding increments of tenderness, which come to the infant because the mothering one is pleased with the way things are going.

...Bad-me, on the other hand, is the beginning personification which organizes experience in which increasing degrees of anxiety are associated with behavior involving the mothering one in its more-or-less clearly prehended interpersonal setting. That is to say, bad-me is based on this increasing gradient of anxiety and that, in turn, is dependent, at this stage of life, on the observation, if misinterpretation, of the infant's behavior by someone who can induce anxiety. (pp. 161-162)

A.H. Chapman (1976) refers to Sullivan's first aspect as the Emotionally Comfortable Me, the second aspect as the Anxiety-Ridden Me, and the third (not-me) as the Panic-Ridden Me. Chapman states

of the latter:

An infant who is treated with extreme anxiety, hostility, and rejection feels that he is markedly repulsive, worthless, and inadequate. Out of such feelings evolves the concept of the panic-ridden me (not-me).... The panic-ridden me is perceived and observed only in states of disorganized panic, nightmares, eerie dreams, schizophrenic phenomena, and other kinds of psychiatric distresses later in life. (p. 159)

These basic concepts, as well as Sullivan's concepts of self-dynamism and self-system, are woven into his interpersonal theory which, according to Gerard Chrzanowski (1977), "postulates that each individual has a variety of personal responses to others that are directly related to his developmental encounters with significant people" (p. 16).

The role of Other impacts development, as well as the very core of any individual, according to Sullivan (1953), who states that

self-dynamism, self-system, and self are employed to express the same meaning. So the self is not a fixed entity, but a configuration of interpersonal processes. It seems well to emphasize that the self is always related to interpersonal relations. (p. 257)

Patrick Mullahy (1952) denotes the importance of Sullivan's work, when he states that

Sullivan's theory of the parataxic integration of interpersonal situations has been noted by Beaglehole as opening up an extremely valuable attack on the problems of communication, the function of language, speech and gesture in communicating ideas, emotions, moods, from one person to another, and speculates that further study of these integrations can provide the basis for a new and more powerful study of group life than social scientists now command. Our speech and gestures are likely to be directed towards the other person as defined by integrated tendencies of which we are not aware. The role of the psychiatrist is to discover this other person. The role of the sociologist is to study the number and varieties of

parataxic integrations in order to understand the dynamic character of group life itself. (p. 212)

Despite all this early interest in interpersonal feedback and role of the Other throughout interdisciplinary fields, Collins (1994) still praises Cooley's Human Nature and the Social Order as "the first significant statement of American micro-sociology," which also gives birth to a sort of phenomenological empiricism (p. 254). Collins is, however, quick to criticize Cooley's emphasis on the quintessential importance of the Other in defining self, as well as Cooley's belief that all others are imaginary until the individual develops an idea of the other person, meshed with what exists a priori in that person's mind. Collins (1994) concludes:

Nevertheless one cannot write off Cooley as a mere dreamer. His theory is next to worthless as a model of the larger structures of society. But it did open the way to a theory of microsociology as a process of mental interpretation. (p. 255)

Election of Cooley as Primary Theory

Notwithstanding the historical devaluation of Cooley's innovative theoretical concepts, the focus of this study is best represented in his three basic principles of the Looking-Glass Self. The scope of this research is encompassed in the imagination of one's appearance to the other (Cooley) or Generalized Other (Mead), the imagination of judgment of that appearance, and the creation of self-feelings.

Although Mead, Thomas, de Beauvoir and others expand the concept of the Other to a much greater extent, much of their develop-

ment moved beyond the scope of the theoretical context of this research. Cooley's foundational theory of the Looking-Glass Self embodies the constitutive theoretical needs herein required.

Anecdotal Evidence of Theoretical Applicability:

In her book Minding the Body (1994), editor Patricia Foster presents a revealing, first-person account of facial cancer, disfigurement, and reconstructive surgery. Written by Lucy Grealy, and simply entitled "Mirrors," the essay is an exemplar of the appropriateness of the application of Cooley's reflectivity theory to issues of feminine beauty and self-concept. Grealy (1994) states:

Our whole lives are dominated, though it is not always so clearly translatable, with the question How do I look? Take all the many nouns in our lives: car; house; job; family; love; friends; and substitute the personal pronoun it is not that we are so self-obsessed, it is that all things eventually relate back to ourselves, and it is our own sense of how we appear to the world by which we chart our lives, how we navigate our personalities that would otherwise be adrift in the ocean of other peoples' obsessions.

One particular afternoon I remember very lucidly, an afternoon, toward the end of my yearlong separation from the mirror. I was talking to someone, an attractive man as it happened, and we were having a wonderful, engaging conversation. For some reason it flickered across my mind to wonder what I looked like to him. What was he seeing when he saw me? So many times I've asked this of myself, and always the answer was a bad one, an ugly one. A warm, smart woman, yes, but still, an unattractive one. I sat there in the café and asked myself this old question and, startling, for the first time in my life I had no answer readily prepared. (p. 72)

Grealy (1994) then relates the exact progression of Cooley's theory in first imagining her appearance to the man sitting across from her, imagining his judgment of that appearance, and realizing

the "self-feeling" which it creates within herself. She continues:

I looked at the man as he spoke; my entire life I had been giving my negative image to people, handing it to them and watching the negative way it was reflected back to me. But now, because I had no idea what I was giving him, the only thing I had to judge by was what he was giving me, which, as reluctant as I was to admit, was positive.

...I once thought the truth was an eternal, that once you understood something it was with you forever. I know now that this isn't so, that most truths are inherently unretainable, that we have to work hard all our lives to remember the most basic things. Society is no help; the images it gives us again and again want us only to believe that we can most be ourselves by looking like someone else, leaving our own faces behind to turn into ghosts that will inevitably resent us and haunt us. It is no mistake that in movies and literature the dead sometimes know they are dead only after they can no longer see themselves in the mirror. As I sat there feeling the warmth of the cup against my palm this small observation seemed like a great revelation to me, and I wanted to tell the man I was with about it, but he was involved in his own topic and I did not want to interrupt him, so instead I looked with curiosity over to the window behind him, its night-darkened glass reflecting the whole café, to see if I could recognize myself. (p. 73)

Cooley's theory of the Looking-Glass Self provides relevant application in the analysis of the juncture of aging beauty and societal influence.

Secondary Theoretical Perspectives

The Presentation of Self

Erving Goffman's (1922-1982) dramaturgical theory is a valuable secondary theory for this study. Goffman maintains that the presentation of self in social interactions or impression management is similar to theatrical performances (Goffman, 1959, 1967).

Ritzer (1996) explains:

Goffman saw much in common between theatrical performances and the kinds of acts we all put on in our day-to-day actions and interactions.... In all social interaction there is a front region which is the parallel of the stage in a theatrical performance. Actors both on the stage and in social life are seen as being interested in appearances, wearing costumes, and using props. Furthermore, in both there is a back region a place to which the actors can retire to prepare themselves for their performance. (p. 74)

In The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), Goffman finds the appropriateness of examining cosmetics and make-up with this theory as he, himself, quotes Simone de Beauvoir (1953):

Even if each woman dresses in conformity with her status, a game is still being played: artifice, like art, belongs to the realm of the imaginary. It is not only that girdle, brassiere, hair-dye, make-up disguise body and face; but that the least sophisticated of women, once she is dressed, does not present herself to observation, she is, like the picture or the statue, or the actor on the stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there-that is, the character she represents, but is not. (pp. 57-58)

Goffman's front region or on-stage analogy involves three traditional parts: setting, appearance, and manner. It is the appearance and, so-called stage make-up which is most pertinent to the considerations of this study.

In response to the high valuation placed on youthfulness, women dealing with age-related changes may engage in behavior which makes them appear less aged, preparing in the back region or back-stage for on-stage appearances of youthfulness.

Again Goffman (1959) quotes de Beauvoir (1953) in the presentation of this theory:

With other women, a woman is behind the scenes; she is polishing her equipment, but not in battle; she is getting her costume together, preparing her make-up, laying out her tactics; she is lingering in dressing-gown and slippers in the wings

before making her entrance on the stage.... (p. 113)

Goffman's theory provides valuable insights and an interesting framework in which to examine both the backstage antics of anti-aging procedures and the on-stage presentations of a younger-than-valid self.

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Another secondary theory incorporates both a theoretical and, in some sense, a methodological framework for this study. What is more, it offers a philosophical grounding in which to validate the study of aging beauty in women. This theory is feminist standpoint theory, developed by Nancy C.M. Hartsock (1987).

Germane to this study is the precept that women's developmental and social strategies of coping with the aging process, in concert with beauty devaluation, have not been identified, labeled, mapped, or examined. In fact, these strategies of coping have been excluded from traditional research as topics which are not consequential enough to merit serious examination. It appears that these strategies are highly salient to the daily female life. Few, if any, topics infiltrate the daily female life more directly or purposefully than the aging process. This study intends to validate the importance of both the topic of examination and the everyday experiences of women from their own standpoint.

Canadian sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (1992) states that

inquiry starts with the knower who is actually located; she is active; she is at work; she is connected with particular other

people in various ways; she thinks, laughs, desires, sorrows, sings, curses, loves just here; she reads here; she watches television. Activities, feelings, experiences, hook her into extended social relations linking her activities to those of other people and in ways beyond her knowing.... The standpoint of women never leaves the actual. The knowing subject is always located in a particular spatial and temporal site, a particular configuration of the everyday/evernight world. Inquiry is directed towards exploring and explicating what she does not know-the social relations and organization pervading her world but invisible in it. (p. 91)

According to Judith Lorber (1998), feminist standpoint theory is based on the following sources of gender inequality: "The neglect of women's perspective and experiences in the production of knowledge; Women's exclusion from the sciences; and Invisibility of women's perspective in the social sciences" (p. 115).

"Simply put," says Lorber (1998), "standpoint feminism says that women's 'voices' are different from men's, and they must be heard in the production of knowledge" (p. 116). For this reason, this study will interview women, seeking experiential insight, inherent wisdom, and intimate views of women from the location of their own lives.

According to Ritzer (1996),

standpointism argues that a social observer can arrive at a truth about a situation by weaving together the situated accounts of the variously located actors, including the account of the social observer herself, in the situation. A feminist social observer begins by trying to see the world from the standpoint of women.... (p. 338)

Smith (1990) understands the importance of capturing women's experiences in sociological research. She validates their own "everyday/evernight realities" in the construction of knowledge. Smith (1990) states that

to begin from the standpoint of women is to insist on the validity of an inquiry that is interested and that begins from a particular site in the world. It is to be committed to an inquiry that violates the conditions of sociological objectivity and yet insists that there is something to be discovered, to be known, a product of inquiry that can be relied on. (p. 33)

Steven Seidman (1994) concurs by stating that

feminist sociology would take women as they find themselves in their particular local settings, social relations, and daily activities as the starting point for social knowledge. If sociology cannot produce a comprehensive, totalizing theory, it can at least yield reliable knowledge of how things work which may prove useful for women in understanding the social conditions that shape and constrain their lives. (pp. 307-308)

It is from this premise that women will be sought within the context of their own worlds and asked to share their personal experiences on aging beauty. Their testimonies, their truths will be valued and respected--not within the realms of scientific objectivity, but with the innate premise that knowledge can only be constructed by asking, listening, and in listening, hearing another's truth.

According to Dorothy E. Smith (1990),

if we begin from the world as we actually experience it, it is at least possible to see that we are indeed located and that what we know of the other is conditional upon that location. There are and must be different experiences of the world and different bases of experience. We must not do away with them by taking advantage of our privileged speaking to construct a sociological version that we then impose upon them as their reality.

We may not rewrite the other's world or impose upon it a conceptual framework that extracts from it what fits with ours. (p. 25)

It is, most certainly, the place from which this research intends to begin. It should also be noted that Shulamit Reinharz (in

Pearsall, 1997) offers great insights into the amalgamation of gerontological and feminist theory. She indicates that many women have made important contributions to the interdisciplinary field of gerontology (C. Estes, J. Jackson, E. Kahana, M.F. Lowenthal, B. Neugarten, M.W. Riley, E. Shanas, L. Troll, et al.) Reinharz also demonstrates that a limited number of gerontologists have consistently integrated feminist- and age-consciousness in their work, e.g., S. Curtin, Z. Blau, and A. Hochschild.

Conceptual linkages between feminist and gerontological theory may be categorized into five divisions, according to Reinharz (1997):

(1) the struggle over the extent to which their group is defined by biology or social conditions; (2) the strategic use of statistics to demonstrate the existence of inequality and to press for policy changes; (3) the struggle over whether to consider the group as a whole, or to be concerned primarily with those subgroups which suffer the greatest inequities; (4) the struggle over the choice of a strategy which demonstrates the group's strengths or unfair treatment; and (5) the struggle to prevent or challenge a backlash which would arise among powerful groups or other relatively powerless groups. (p. 74)

Reinharz (1997) states:

What feminism and gerontology have in common is an attempt to create social consciousness, social theory and social policy which will improve the life chances of a specific group.... Feminism seeks to understand why-what are the crucial variables that determine the status of women?.... Gerontologists are concerned with relations, i.e., interdependence, hostility, love and affection, between old and young, in a way analogous with feminist concern with the relations between men and women. There are many other parallels....

It is my contention that just as the women's movement inherited the experiences of the civil rights movement (Evans, 1979), the fledgling anti-ageism movement is now inheriting the experiences and success of the women's movement. Gerontology is the theory that furnishes the ideology of the anti-ageism movement. A full-fledged social movement to combat ageism has not yet arisen, but in its nascent form it is heav-

ily influenced by feminist models for social change and well populated by feminist activists. (pp. 74-75)

The importance of a feminist/gerontological theory for the analysis of women within the aging process cannot be overstated. The availability of one such theory is currently non-existent, but the juxtaposition of these two theoretical infrastructures lends concrete stability to the framework of such research as this, by merging gender and age into a master category of analysis.

Summary

One primary and two secondary theoretical perspectives will be used in the specific examination of this exploratory study. The primary theory is Charles Horton Cooley's reflected or Looking-Glass Self theory. The three principal elements of this theory were defined as: (1) the imagination of our appearance to the other person, (2) the imagination of the other person's judgment of that appearance, and (3) some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification. This theory was then applied to the issues of this study, resulting in the following inferences: (a) Aging women imagine or perceive their appearance to others in society; (b) They have an imagination of society's judgment of their appearance via media messages and popular texts; (c) This process creates some sort of feeling, including high motivation to select certain paths of action.

Influences on the life of Charles Horton Cooley were examined, as well as oppositions to this theoretical perspective, the most notable being George Herbert Mead. Justification for the election

of Cooley as primary theorist for this study was presented. The proffering of this perspective is concluded by anecdotal evidence of theoretical applicability.

Two secondary theoretical perspectives are then presented, including the presentation of self (developed by Erving Goffman and heavily influenced by Simone de Beauvoir) and feminist standpoint theory (developed by Nancy C.M. Hartsock, and widely used by Dorothy E. Smith).

The importance of coalescing the bifurcation of feminist theory and social-gerontological sensitivity for a study such as this was also noted.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Introduction

This is an exploratory study. The primary method employed appears in the form of literary analyses of literature pertinent to the topic of aging beauty. The scarcity of research on female beauty in any discipline is exacerbated with the introduction of the variable of age.

A secondary method was employed, consisting of in-depth interviews with a small number of women. These interviews were used in order to acquire additional information and vantage points from personal experiences. To a certain extent, feminist standpoint methods were integrated into the interview process.

Research Goals

In an effort to more fully understand midlife options for women, this study examines the behavioral alternatives open to women as the power, status, and prestige of youthful beauty diminishes with age. The main research goal is to explore and identify the pathways women of age may (or may not) choose to replace the societal advantages of youthful beauty. (See Chapter IV, Defining Beauty.) The purpose of this study is to explore, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options available to women in midlife.

Literary Review and Analyses

The literature review chapter more fully discloses methods and literary techniques of research used within this study. Suffice it to note herein, a broad review of the literature is extremely important for this study. New studies (both popular and academic) on the effects of aging for the Baby Boomer populations of some 79 million middle-aged people appear with great frequency. Amid a torrent of articles on diseases of aging and anti-aging procedures, very little research has been presented on the transforming body image and ramifications of devalued beauty of middle-aged women. Few academic studies consider the metamorphosing effect of beauty on women throughout the life course from a sociological or social-gerontological perspective. As a method of exploration, this research examines varying components of the subject matter, in order to elicit basic tenets on which this and future studies may be grounded.

According to Chrisler & Ghiz (1993),

psychological researchers have all but ignored body image issues of mid-life and older women. The medical researchers who have investigated the topic have been primarily concerned with the impact of surgery or chronic disease on body image. So many older women suffer from chronic illnesses that this is certainly an important topic, yet it is only part of a larger problem.

Because of society's creation of a beauty culture and insistence that women pursue an illusive beauty idea, and because of the tendency to see youth and beauty as synonymous and to define woman as body, one can expect to find many mid-life and older women experiencing body image disturbance as they encounter the effects of aging. (p. 68)

Although the paucity of psychological research is noted here-

in, the lack of sociological/social-gerontological research may be as great, if not greater. It became necessary, therefore, to divide the literature review into five basic divisions on which pertinent data are available. They are: (1) female beauty, (2) female aging, (3) socio-historical considerations, (4) feminist examinations, (5) female midlife body and health issues.

Other socio-historic background information was used on varying specific aspects of this study. For example, when researching current anti-aging beauty products, it is essential that the American beauty culture and a historical perspective of cosmetological trends be presented in order to provide contextual bearing and location (found in Division 3: Socio-historical considerations).

Feminist examinations of the aging process in women are also presented in the literature review, although they also reveal a lack of attention to issues of aging, and specifically, aging beauty. Changes to the female body in midlife and health issues of middle-aged women are also pertinent to this study.

Because only limited research has been conducted and reported in this specific area of this study, fragmented literature from a wide catchment had to be consolidated to ground this research. Herein lies one of the more important challenges of this study.

In-depth Interviews

In order to more fully capture the perspectives of women of age, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted with a small

group of midlife women. The target population consists of Caucasian Baby Boomer women (ages 45 to 55). Gender, age, and race were considered in the request for participants, but no criteria were used and no effort extended to control for issues of education or class status. The interviews were semi-structured or open-ended interviews, tinged with the imprint of feminist stand-point methods.

Study Participants

Subject Selection

The participants for this study consist of twelve Caucasian women, aged 45 to 55, who reside in and around Kalamazoo, Michigan. They constitute a non-representative, convenience sample. Participants were obtained from a variety of settings, primarily via word-of-mouth, using a detailed recruiting script (see Appendix B).

The interviewing of this target population was in no way meant to be representative of the population of women in the age group being studied. The findings of this research are not based on quantitative or majority responses. Instead, the interviews provided a deep richness which enhances and anecdotally exemplifies the literature review and analyses.

Populations Not Employed

The very important and complex issues of beauty for women of color and/or recently immigrated women are not a part of this study on aging beauty only because it is beyond the scope of this prelim-

inary, exploratory research. Future research on aging beauty is strongly urged, however, for women of color, women from a variety of socio-economic conditions, and for men.

Women older than the Baby Boomer cohort have also not been selected as part of this study. This is not because their experiences, life-histories, and viewpoints are seen as insignificant, nor because their issues of beauty are herein dismissed as unimportant due to their age. It is merely due to the fact that the focus of this study is on the transitional period of life when a woman reaches middle age and may experience a socially-constructed loss of beauty. Future research on beauty issues of older women is also strongly encouraged.

Research Site

The research population and site are women who currently reside and/or work in and around Kalamazoo, Michigan. Interviews took place at the location of the participants' choosing, including the student investigator's home, participants' homes, study rooms at Waldo Library, Western Michigan University campus, and University offices.

Nature of the Interviews

Protocol clearance for this research was sought and received from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board of Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan (see Appendix A).

Again, the in-depth interviews were semi-structured (open-ended questions) and face-to-face. With the written consent of each participant, the interviews were audio-taped for accuracy. The participants were asked to sign an informed consent document which included information about the study without deception (see Appendix C). The potential participants were verbally asked by the student investigator if they had a desire to participate. No financial remuneration was given to participants, although they were assured that their time, effort, and voices are highly valued and appreciated.

Broad, open-ended questions were asked and additional questions formulated to address each woman's unique experience. Specific attention is given to the fact that women's voices are not be constrained to fit some preconceived mold of the researcher. Women were asked and allowed to speak freely, adding information and life experiences at their own discretion which was not specifically requested by the interview questions. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, this information is valued and included in the research findings.

The interviews were lengthy, with an estimated average duration of one to one-and-a-half hours in length, but never exceeding two hours.

Information obtained from participants will be kept confidential, following federal and university protocol. In order to assure compliance, the names of women have been changed in written

material.

Research Questions

Because of the highly exploratory nature of this study, the use of open-ended questions was prevalent and the researcher followed the participants' answers with follow-up exploratory questions based on previous respondents answers. At no time, however, were questions extended beyond the scope of this study.

The basic research questions for which answers were sought included:

1. Has the participant felt a devaluation of social worth as she ages, specifically due to the loss of beauty with age?
2. What (if anything) has she done (actively or passively) in response to such social devaluation?
3. Exploratory questions were then asked (specific to answers given) in an attempt to label, categorize, and analyze the appropriate responses. The researcher needed to explore in detail the answers given in order to develop categories and a more comprehensive understanding of this transitional period in women's lives. (The basic interview script used to answer these research questions may be found in Appendix D.)

Benefits to Participants

In the Informed Consent documentation, direct benefits for the participants were acknowledged to be limited. The opportunity to

talk about the transitional period of midlife and the significance the study places on a heretofore isolated event in a woman's life may have provided a positive experience for the participants. Also, the fact that they are contributing to the greater understanding of women's lives and their rites of passage may be perceived as beneficial to the participant.

The over-arching benefit of this research is that this study provides an innovational contribution to the sociological, social-gerontological, and feminist research on the aging process in women.

Risks to Participants

At the creation of this research, it was conceived possible that some participants may experience discomfort in talking about their own individual experiences of aging, as it is often perceived as a negative life event (especially for women who are stereotypically reluctant to give even their chronological age). It was also noted that discomfort could be felt upon being asked about the effects of aging on appearance and body image. To address these potential risks, participants knew the nature of the research and the scope of information sought without deception before agreeing to the interview.

All participants were given informational resource material on Woman Care, Inc., a local private counseling establishment especially designed for women and their loved ones. The staff of Woman Care, Inc. (by previous arrangement with the researcher) agreed to provide

assistance to the participants if they wished to talk about these experiences with a professional. Each woman who agreed to participate in the study was given a brochure from Woman Care which lists the organization's specialty areas and gave the names, educational degrees, and specialties of each professional on their staff.

The women who participated were informed at the beginning of the interview that if they do not wish to answer any questions, discuss one question extensively, or be asked for further information on any given topic, the interview would leave the sensitive subject and go on to something else. Participants were also informed at the beginning of the actual interview that they were free to terminate the entire interview at any time they desired.

Confidentiality of Data

All information collected from the participants is kept confidential, following university and governmental protocols. Names of women were changed to assure compliance. Their real names do not appear on any audio-tapes or papers on which the information is recorded. The audio-tapes and forms were coded (see Appendix E), and a separate master list with the names of the participants and their corresponding code numbers was kept until the data were collected and analyzed. At that point, the master list was destroyed. Tapes, transcriptions, and other forms will be retained for at least three years in a locked file in the office of the Chair of the Sociology Department at Western Michigan University.

Feminist Standpoint Methods

Feminist standpoint methods were used to the extent that women's experiences were sought from their own vantage points. This was done in the same vein as research conducted by Dorothy E. Smith (1987):

The standpoint of women therefore as I am deploying it here cannot be equated with perspective or worldview. It does not universalize a particular experience. It is rather a method that, at the outset of inquiry, creates the space for an absent subject, and an absent experience that is to be filled with the presence and spoken experience of actual women speaking of and in the actualities of their everyday worlds. (p. 107)

Feminist standpoint methods were used in this research to the extent that they allowed sensitivity to and respect of the participants as women who have uniquely valuable insights when gender is used as a master category of analyses, and that they valued and attempted to capture the everyday/everynight realities of the participants. According to Zalk & Gordon-Kelter (1992),

women's everyday lives, especially as constituted in the past, have been experienced differently from men's and therefore may produce different knowledge and social understandings. Whether one uses quantitative or qualitative methods, women's lives become the focal point. (p. 59)

Feminist standpoint methods were used in this research to the extent that they value the emotional involvement of the researcher in her work, as well as values her standpoint as a Baby Boomer woman with strong empathy and understanding of the women she interviews. According to Maynard & Purvis (1994),

...what distinguishes feminist research from other forms of research is the questions we have asked, the way we locate

ourselves within our questions, and the purpose of our workthe researcher is also a subject in her research and her personal history is part of the process through which understanding and conclusions are reached. (pp. 15-16)

Jaggar and Bordo (1992) concur, stating:

Fusing the insights of both the sociology of knowledge and phenomenology, Smith argues for the importance of recognizing that both the observer and the observed have specific social biographies, that each are concrete persons occupying a moment in time: each is embodied; each has values. (p. 213)

Feminist standpoint methods were used in this research to the extent that they reject the traditional hierarchy between researcher and subject during the interview process in that subjects were fully informed of the nature of the interviews and encouraged to freely participate in their own words. According to Carter and Spitzack (1989):

Feminist research reveals that the researcher and the researched cannot be separated; they are both enmeshed in the sociocultural world. Rather than deceiving the subjects in research, which assumes that the researcher knows what is best for those who are studied, feminists argue that subjects can speak for themselves and can lend insight to scholarly endeavors. (p. 35)

In like manner, van Zoonen (1994) states:

To the extent that part of the ideology of feminism is to transform the competitive and exploitative relations among women into bonds of solidarity and mutuality, we expect assistance and reciprocated understanding to be part of the research/subject relation. (p. 129)

Feminist standpoint methods were used in this research to the extent that they insist upon the inclusiveness of female pronouns, symbols, vernacular, concepts, and expressions, so that the entire tone of the research captures the reflection of women's experiences; that they are socially relevant to women; and, that they contain an

action component.

According to van Zoonen (1994),

Dervin (1987) claims that the political value of feminist scholarship lies in its desire to give women a voice in a world that defines them as voiceless: It is transformative in that it is concerned with helping the silent speak and is involved in consciousness raising. (p. 128)

As Stanley (1990) states, "the point is to change the world, not only to study it" (p. 5). Maynard and Purvis (1994) state that

a final way in which feminist research practice might be said to be distinctive has been in its insistence on its political nature and potential to bring about change in women's lives. At one time this was summed up in the slogan that feminist research was on, by, and for women and that it should be designed with the aim of producing knowledge which would transform patriarchy. (pp. 16-17)

All of the above given tenets are incorporated into this study. In-depth interviews consisted of semi-structured or open-ended interviews in which an instrument outlining basic areas of inquiry and specific questions within each field was employed (see Appendix D).

Women were allowed to speak freely, adding information and life experiences at their own discretion which was not specifically requested by the interview questions. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, this information is valued and included in the research findings.

Summary

This chapter presented the methods employed for this research on aging beauty. One method of the sociological/social-gerontolog-

ical exploratory study involves an extensive review of the literature. For purposes of organization and analyses, five foundational divisions were created which encompass available literature on issues of (1) female beauty, (2) female aging, (3) socio-historical analyses, (4) feminist examinations, and (5) female midlife body and related health issues.

Another method (in-depth interviews) was used within a non-representative, convenience sample of twelve Caucasian women, ages 45 to 55, who reside and/or work in the Kalamazoo, Michigan area. Information was given concerning the method of data collection, selection and recruitment of study participants, reasoning for populations not employed, the research site, the nature of the interviews, the research questions, benefits and risks to participants, and method of maintaining confidentiality of the data.

Finally, discussion followed on the extent to which feminist standpoint methods were employed within the context of this study. Specifically, feminist standpoint methods are used to the extent that they:

1. Allow sensitivity to and respect of the participants as women who have uniquely valuable insights when gender is used as a master category of analyses.
2. Value and attempt to capture the everyday/everynight realities of the participants.
3. Value the emotional involvement of the researcher in her work, as well as values her standpoint as a Baby Boomer woman with

strong empathy and understanding of the women she interviews.

4. Reject the traditional hierarchy between researcher and subject during the interview process,

5. Insist upon the inclusiveness of female pronouns, symbols, vernacular, concepts, and expressions, so that the entire tone of the research captures the reflection of women's experiences.

6. Are socially relevant to women,

7. Contain an action component.

The merger of these methods are incorporated into this exploratory investigation in order to explore, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options available to women of age during the period of midlife transition.

CHAPTER IV

LITERATURE REVIEW: INTRODUCTION AND DIVISION ONE

Introduction

As previously noted, this review of the literature and amalgamation of its components is the predominant method of this exploratory research. After studying the spectrum of pertinent available literature, five fundamental divisions emerged as viable classifications which may be employed for purposes of organization. These five divisions are:

1. Definitions and Issues of Female Beauty.
2. Female Aging (including social gerontological aspects of aging).
3. Socio-Historical Considerations of Beauty.
4. Feminist Examinations (First and Second Wave).
5. Female Midlife Body and Health Issues (including general female health, the climacteric, and the medicalization of anti-aging beauty products and procedures).

Because Division One is very quintessential to this research, this chapter will fully encompass a review of the extensive literature which is relevant to the definitions and the issues of female beauty. Chapter V, which is considerable in length, is a continuation of the literature review, and contains the examination of the remaining four divisions.

One of the goals of this research is to juxtapose these particular divisions into a literary data base that is specifically pertinent to research on beauty issues for women of age. Fragmented literature from a wide spectrum of existing data is garnered in order to solidify and ground this research. Herein lies one of the more important challenges of this study. A formidable list of literature could be cited under each division. However, for the purpose of this literature review, the majority of the literature is found in the bibliography of this study. The literature which is cited within this and the following chapter is representative of the main issues within each division.

Division One: Definitions and Issues of Female Beauty

The elusive and ephemeral question of What is beauty? may be rivaled only by the eternal query, What is life? Myriad responses are culture- and time-bound, reflecting a macro-sociological perspective. Yet every individual claims the right to define beauty from his/her own perspective. This right to the micro-sociological perspective is claimed in the aphorism, Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Even with this broadest of ranges, defining beauty would represent a simpler task if its variables were confined to the physical. Unfortunately for this (and all other) research on beauty, the defining variables often include not only the physical, but the aesthetic, the philosophical (truth is beauty), the emotional, char-

acter traits, values that are prevalent in a society, actions and behaviors, as well as personal tastes and preferences. And this list is not exhaustive. In short, there is no single sociological or other definition of beauty accepted as having specifically defined variables which may be operationalized for quantitative study.

It is at this sort of juncture that social scientists often abandon topics that do not lend themselves to traditional modes of research. This is evident in the paucity of research which exists on the subject of human beauty today.

However, one may not logically conclude that when the subject matter cannot be succinctly defined via sociological variables, it is trivial, or unworthy of examination. Therefore, the subject of beauty cannot be ignored, for it invades the broadest ranges of the sociological imagination - and touches the deepest depths of personal self-esteem and self-definition.

Nancy Etcoff (1999) of the Harvard Medical School recently struggled with the definition of beauty as she began her work on the science of beauty. Early in her book Survival of the Prettiest she states:

But what is beauty? As you will see, no definition can capture it entirely. I started by mining what those who peddle beauty as business had to say, thinking they might have concrete details about their criteria rather than airy abstractions to float. Aaron Spelling, creator of 'Baywatch' and 'Melrose Place,' said, 'I can't define it, but I know it when it walks into the room.' I talked with a modeling agency that books top male models, and they were more descriptive: 'It's when someone walks in the door and you almost can't breathe. It doesn't happen often. You can feel it rather than see it. I mean someone you literally can't walk past in the street.' It is noteworthy that the experts describe the experience of

seeing beauty, and not what beauty looks like. On that end, all I got was that they should be young and tall and have good skin. But it was a start.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the word 'beautiful' as 'Excelling grace of form, charm of coloring, and other qualities, which delight the eye and call forth admiration: a. Of the human face and figure: b. of other objects.' As a secondary definition it states, 'In modern colloquial use the word is often applied to anything that a person likes very much.' The dictionary that my computer network provides says that beauty 'gives pleasure to the senses or pleasurably exalts the mind or spirit.'

The dictionaries define beauty as something intrinsic to the object (its color, form, and other qualities) or simply as the pleasure an object evokes in the beholder (The philosopher Santayana called beauty 'pleasure objectified'.) (p. 8)

Rather than searching for a solitary and universal definition of beauty, this chapter will examine the topic from varying points of view. An extended review of the literature indicates that the following four subdivisions will provide the most relevancy for Division One of the literature review:

1. The perceived triviality of the topic of beauty.
2. The social advantages and power of beauty.
3. Definitions of beauty from various perspectives, including: (a) attempted quantifications of beauty, (b) the male perspective and, (c) the female perspective and issues of female beauty.
4. Concepts of aged beauty.

The Triviality of Beauty

"The idea that beauty is unimportant is the real beauty myth" (Etcoff, cited in Schefer, 1997, p. 19).

When this researcher discussed her dissertation topic of Aging

Beauty with a senior faculty member in a different department of her university, the response was significant. After a burst of laughter the faculty member exclaimed, "Well, have fun quantifying that!"

That comment is representative of many attitudes surrounding research on the topic of beauty and aging beauty. Unless a topic can be succinctly defined and its variables operationalized into quantitative data, many empirical social scientists dismiss it as trivial, unimportant, non-impacting on the lives of target populations. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Micro-sociological Perspective

On a micro-sociological level, it would be difficult to discern a topic which cuts deeper into the very self-perception of women when they look into a mirror. Foster (1994) states:

As Lucy Grealy movingly reflects about the prospect of reconstructive facial surgery after childhood cancer: 'I didn't feel I could pass up yet another chance to 'fix' my face, which I confusedly thought concurrent with 'fixing' myself, my soul, my life.' Reading this, I can only say 'me too, me too.' Growing up I thought that enhancing and improving the body was synonymous with elevating the self. (p. 11)

Few other acts are repeated as faithfully and consistently as the beauty rituals which women of all strata perform on a daily basis. Women of all ages, races, socio-economic levels, and societal statuses do not leave their homes in the morning without first implementing the acts of beauty which they deem appropriate for their presentation of self to the world.

Etcoff (1999) states that

philosophers ponder it and pornographers proffer it. Asked why people desire physical beauty, Aristotle said, 'No one that is not blind could ask that question.' Beauty ensnares hearts, captures minds, and stirs up emotional wildfires. From Plato to pinups, images of human beauty have catered to a limitless desire to see and imagine an ideal human form. (p. 3)

Efforts to enhance beauty may be elaborately involved, time-consuming, uncomfortable and/or painful, detrimental, and expensive. Yet it may take a magnified mirror and the closest of examinations to discern any favorable outcomes from such involved beauty-enhancing efforts. The vast extent of societal beauty messages often leads women to a near-microscopic inspection of self. For example, some women employ magnified mirrors in an attempt to discern if their facial pores are too large when a pore-reducing product is advertised. Women rarely question the ratio of cost versus questionable benefit analysis. Such logic has neither impacted, nor slowed beauty-behaviors among women.

Macro-sociological Perspective

On a macro-sociological level, the exorbitant financial profits of the beauty industry substantiate the wide-spread societal use of cosmetic products. The monetary investments women make as consumers of beauty products also cannot be trivialized nor dismissed as unimportant factors.

Etcoff (1999) states that

many intellectuals would have us believe that beauty is inconsequential. Since it explains nothing, solves nothing, and teaches us nothing, it should not have a place in intellectual discourse. And we are supposed to breathe a collective sigh

of relief. After all, the concept of beauty has become an embarrassment.

But there is something wrong with this picture. Outside the realm of ideas, beauty rules. Nobody has stopped looking at it, and no one has stopped enjoying the sight. Turning a cold eye to beauty is as easy as quelling the physical desire or responding with indifference to a baby's cry. We can say that beauty is dead, but all that does is widen the chasm between the real world and our understanding of it. (p. 4)

Dorothy Schefer (1997) believes that the importance of beauty is not diminishing in the current technological Information Age. Rather, its societal role is becoming increasingly important. She states:

To ask what is beauty today is to come face to face with the changing definition of beauty. Perhaps more than any other time in history, we are preoccupied with, even confused by beauty: its power, its pleasures, its style, and its substance. Beauty may not be the most important of our values, but it affects us all; today more than ever, because we live in a Media Age where our visual landscape changes in seconds, and our first reaction to people is sometimes our last. Given this reality, the so-called 'triviality' of beauty suddenly seems not so trivial after all.

The beauty we see today is different, more complex. It's elusive, evolutionary, even controversial. No longer is beauty limited to a pretty face or a pretty picture: beauty has come to personify and reflect the social and cultural issues of our day. (p. 9)

An online examination of the World Wide Web on January 31, 2000 found that the search engine InfoSeek (Go.com) offers 1,499,270 sites on the topic of beauty, while the search engine Alta Vista offers 1,963,160 such sites. Seemingly endless Internet topics range from cosmetic dentistry to minimizing pores, from personal interactive beauty evaluations to selecting the most desirable marabou mule.

One such site is Beautyjungle.com, an online e-business which exemplifies the rapid commercial growth of beauty products and subjects on the Internet. Author Stefanie Olsen, (<http://news.cnet.com/category/0-1007-200-1531853.html>) staff writer for CNET News states:

Beautyjungle.com will announce plans this week to expand into the rapidly growing business-to-business e-commerce market, buoyed by a new \$20 million investment....The expansion comes as the online beauty industry begins to consolidate, only months after a period of precipitous growth. Beautyjungle.com, Beauty.com, Sephora.com and Gloss.com launched within weeks of each other last fall. Now some have been snatched up by larger e-tailers planning to expand their businesses.... Beautyjungle.com plans to launch its electronic marketplace in the second quarter of this year.

Modern technology and the information age have not reduced the importance of beauty in our culture. In fact, that very technology is being harnessed as tools of the beauty industry to promote ever-increasing methods by which to attempt to achieve and retain beauty. Amy Astley (quoted in Schefer, 1997) exclaims:

We've certainly got technology on our side-laser tooth whitening; non-fading hair dye; alpha hydroxy acids; lipstick that lasts all day! And enthusiastic beauty experts in spades-the waxers, the pluckers, the facialists, the cutters and colorists, the trainers, the manicurists and toenail trimmers, the makeup artists, the perfumers-all conspiring to render woman-kind more ravishing than a lifetime of good deeds ever could.

Products, treatments, miracle-workers: This is the stuff of beauty. And beauty is the stuff of life. (p. 57)

The macro-sociological perspective embraces the global ramifications of beauty, as well. Etcoff (1999) is not only aware of the far-reaching effects of beauty's importance in technology, she also provides a global perspective, stating that

people do extreme things in the name of beauty. They invest so much of their resources in beauty and risk so much for it, one would think that lives depended on it. In Brazil there are more Avon ladies than members of the army. In the United States more money is spent on beauty than on education or social services. Tons of makeup-1,484 tubes of lipstick and 2,055 jars of skin care products-are sold every minute. (p. 6)

Is beauty a trivial issue? It certainly is not in the world of technology, the global marketplace, nor in the rapidly advancing Internet world of e-commerce.

The Double Jeopardy of Beauty Research

As previously discussed, research on beauty is often trivialized or regarded as unworthy of serious sociological examination, despite its heavy impact on society on both micro- and macro- sociological levels.

A second, though somewhat more quiescent jeopardy arises in the field of beauty research, when the attractiveness or unattractiveness of the researcher is called into question. Although a study of serial killers would not call into question the killing instincts of the researcher, the physical beauty of the beauty researcher is often suspect. This pattern was established during the First Wave of the feminist movement, and reappeared during the Second Wave of the 1960s--1970s Women's Liberation Movement. Feminists were examined and their motives were questioned, based on their personal attractiveness or lack thereof. Much of the literature could be considered polemic, but First and Second Wave feminists set the stage for subsequent beauty researchers. Naomi Wolf (1991) states

that

...the 1848 Seneca Falls convention for a female Bill of Rights provoked editorials about 'unsexed women,' writes Gay, which insinuated that they had become activists because 'they were too repulsive to find a husband.... These women are entirely devoid of personal attractions.'

...As soon as women of the 1960s spoke up, the media took on the dreamwork demanded by the vital lie of the time, and trained the beauty myth against the women's appearance. The reaction to the 1969 protest against the Miss America pageant set the stage. Coverage focused on signs reading, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING WRONG WITH MISS AMERICA - SHE'S BEAUTIFUL AND JEALOUSY WILL GET YOU NOWHERE...Commentary dismissed feminism as 'a bunch...of ugly women screaming at each other on television...' (p. 68)

Viewing the physical attractiveness of the feminist as a determining factor in her seriousness, dedication, and ultimate motivation for activism both undermined the political effectiveness of her cause and placed her in the no-win situation of being either too pretty or too ugly to be heard and taken seriously. Wolf (1991) continues:

Though many women realized that their attention was being focused this way, fewer fully understood how thoroughly politically such focusing works: In drawing attention to the physical characteristics of women leaders, they can be dismissed as either too pretty or too ugly. The net effect is to prevent women's identification with the issues. If the public woman is stigmatized as too 'pretty,' she's a threat, a rival-or simply not serious; if derided as too 'ugly,' one risks tarring oneself with the same brush by identifying oneself with her agenda. The political implications of the fact that no woman or group of women, whether housewives, prostitutes, astronauts, politicians or feminists can survive unscathed the no-win scrutiny of the beauty myth are not yet reorganized in their full dimensions so the divide-and-conquer dreamwork was effective. Since 'beauty' follows fashion, and the myth determines that when something female matures it is unfashionable, the maturing of feminism was crudely but effectively distorted in the lens of the myth. (p. 69)

It would be naive to believe that a woman can research the

subject of beauty without the reappearance of this pattern. Again, the net effect is the trivialization of the subject matter and depreciation of the valid researcher on the most personal of levels. Wolf (1991), herself, addresses the issue by making the following comments on her own beauty research:

The trouble with any debate about the beauty myth is the sophisticated reflex it uses: It punishes virtually any woman who tries to raise these issues by scrutinizing her appearance. It is striking to notice how thoroughly we comprehend this implied punishment. We know well how it works in a typical beauty myth double bind: No matter what a woman's appearance may be, it will be used to undermine what she is saying and taken to individualize-as her personal problem-observations she makes about aspects of the beauty myth in society. (p. 268)

Only by identifying and refuting these pitfalls of beauty research can serious sociological examination of aging beauty begin.

In summary, the importance of the topic of beauty has been reviewed from both micro-sociological and macro-sociological perspectives. Beauty is important in the everyday world of women's grooming routines, personal expenditures, and even self-perceptions, as presented in future chapters. Beauty also has a significant social impact on the world of technology, economics, the global market place, even the Internet world of e-commerce. The double jeopardy of beauty research was also discussed, using a socio-historical examination of the First and Second Wave Feminist Movements, as well as indications of its presence among current beauty researchers.

The Social Advantages and Power of Female Beauty

"The beautiful woman enjoys a measure of respect and attention

not generally bestowed on women in a misogynist culture. The beauty industry trades on this reality and the fantasy of escape....Oh, we want to believe" (Chapkis, 1986, p. 95).

"Oscar Wilde believed the beautiful person has absolute rights to commit any act. Beauty replaces morality as the divine order. As Cocteau said, following Wilde, 'The privileges of beauty are enormous'" (Miller, 1997, p. 41).

The second subdivision under Division One examines the fact that sheer physical beauty brings social advantages and power. One need only look at today's Super Models and their multimillion dollar careers to confirm this fact. Their wealth, status, social advantage, and power are based solely on their physical appearance. Who has heard the sound of Kate Moss' voice? Or the expressed intelligence of Naomi Campbell? It is even suggested that Vanna White's continued popularity is based in the fact that she does not speak, thus allowing male fantasy to transform her into any woman they desire.

Nancy Friday wrote a book which appeared in hard-binding as The Power of Beauty (1996a), and in paper as Our Looks, Our Lives (1996b). This softening of the title may have sold more books, but either edition directly addresses the unmistakable power and social advantages which come from beauty. In her text (1996a) she states:

But your life has been as fashioned by mirrors as mine; none of us escapes the influence that our looks have had on our lives.... The universal power of looks is free-floating, an electrical charge between hungry eyes and the objects of their desire: 'Let me feast my eyes on you. Let me take you in.' It is an open market, traded on more exhibitionistically today

than at any time in my life. Near-naked bodies demand our attention on streets, undressed fashions fill the restaurants, the television screens in our living rooms: 'Look at me!' (p. 2)

One of the most powerful social advantages is that beauty is innately linked to goodness. Etcoff (1999) examines the power of this linkage in detail. She states:

We face a world where lookism is one of the most pervasive but denied of prejudices. People like to believe that looks don't matter. But every marketing executive knows that packaging and image are as important as the product, if not more so. We treat appearance not just as a source of pleasure or shame but as a source of information. (p. 39)

She continues by presenting a socio-historical link between beauty and goodness: Plato ("mortal beauty was a reflection of ideal beauty"), Sappho ("what is beautiful is good"), Renaissance humanist Marsilio Ficino ("beauty is the blossom so to speak of goodness"), Baldassare Castiglione ("beauty is a sacred thing... only rarely does an evil soul dwell in a beautiful body, and so outward beauty is a true sign of inner goodness" and "For the most part the ugly are also evil"), Francis Bacon ("Deformed persons are... void of natural affection"), and 18th-century philosopher Hegel ("Far from being an outer and accidental form is the incarnation of the very idea of beauty itself") (pp. 40-42).

Etcoff (1999) concludes that

if Mother Teresas always looked like Miss Universe, the world would be just and appearance would be an easy read....We say now that physical beauty is but 'skin deep' and that 'pretty is as pretty does.' But we don't always act that way. What pretty does is often seen in a forgiving light. We are quick to leap to judgments of the unbeautiful, imagining for instance that fat people are lazy or greedy. We know that the link between beauty and goodness is spurious, but our actions

are not always guided by conscious reason. (pp. 43-44)

Time and time again social research reveals the power and social advantages bestowed upon those who are perceived as beautiful. Etcoff (1999) cites studies and staged experiments in which people are more likely to help attractive people even if they don't like them (Sigall & Aronson, 1969); people are less likely to ask good-looking people for help; good-looking people are more likely to win arguments and persuade others of their opinions; people divulge secrets to them and disclose personal information (Nadler, Shapira, & Ben-Itzhak, 1982); and "Very attractive people of any size are given big personal territories; they carry their privileges around their persons" (Hartnett, Bailey, & Harley, 1974) (pp. 46-47).

Etcoff (1999) also states that "status is a prized commodity that we confer on the beautiful" (p. 48). She continues:

We expect attractive people to be better at everything from piloting a plane to being good in bed. We guess that their marriages are happier, their jobs are better, and that they are mentally healthy and stable. For practically any positive quality you can think of, people will assume that good-looking people have more of it, do it better, and enjoy it more. (p. 48)

And the power of beauty is not confined to the micro-sociological level. It invades all levels of society. Sidney Katz authored a chapter entitled "The Importance of Being Beautiful," included in Henslin's 1995 edition of Down to Earth Sociology, but not in subsequent editions. Katz (1995) states:

In a nutshell, you can't overestimate the importance of being beautiful. If you're beautiful, without effort you attract hordes of friends and lovers. You are given higher school grades than your smarter-but less appealing-classmates. You

compete successfully for jobs against men or women who are better qualified but less alluring. Promotions and pay raises come your way more easily. You are able to go into a bank or store and cash a cheque with far less hassle than a plain Jane or John. And these are only a few of the many advantages enjoyed by those with a ravishing face and body. (p. 301)

Karen Dion, of the University of Toronto, was one of the first social psychologists to perform research on the power and social advantages of beauty and attractiveness. She states, "We were surprised to find that beauty had such powerful effects. Our findings go against the cultural grain. People like to think that success depends on talent, intelligence, and hard work" (Katz, 1995, p. 302).

Dion has coined two terms to describe the relationship of beauty to social advantage. For the beautiful, the phenomenon is known as the halo effect. For the unattractive, the term used is the horns effect. According to Katz (1995),

In large part, the beautiful person can attribute his or her idyllic life to a puzzling phenomenon that social scientists have dubbed the 'halo effect.' It defies human reason, but if you resemble Jane Fonda or Paul Newman it's assumed that you're more generous, trustworthy, sociable, modest, sensitive, interesting, and sexually responsive than the rest of us. Conversely, if you're somewhat physically unattractive, because of the 'horns effect' you're stigmatized as being mean, sneaky, dishonest, antisocial, and a poor sport to boot. (p. 302)

Katz (1995) cites a study by Joan Finegan which found that

pleasant and neat-looking defendants were fined an average of \$6.31 less than those who were 'messy,' and in a British series of simulated court cases, "physically appealing defendants were given prison terms almost three years less than those meted out to unattractive ones for precisely the same offence. (p. 303)

Other benefits and social advantages of beauty throughout the

life course are cited by Katz (1995):

Attractive babies are touched, fondled and shown more affection (Munro, p. 303); Teachers assumed attractive children had higher IQs and were more likely to go to college (Walster & Clifford, p. 304); Physically attractive students were unanimously thought to have better marriages, be better husbands and wives, and lead more fulfilling social and career lives (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, p. 305); Good-looking women fall in love more and have more sexual experiences (Berscheid, p. 305); The status of a homely man increases greatly if he marries a very attractive woman (Sigall & Landy, p. 306); Beautiful men and women are hired over less attractive candidates, even when their credentials and expertise lag (Burke, p. 306); Attractive women are more persuasive than unattractive women (Ennis, p. 306).

Katz (1995) confirms the power of beauty by quoting Eleanor Fulcher, operator of a modeling and charm school in Toronto, who states, "A woman can make things happen by improving her appearance. I've seen it hundreds of times" (p. 307).

However, the sad fact is that it is not just a woman or any woman who can tap into the power of beauty. In fact, few women can. Halprin (1995) states, "This is the problem posed for women by the concept of beauty, that it empowers few, and disempowers most" (p. 74).

Of greatest interest for this research is the fact that Katz (1995) continues the study of the power and social advantages of beauty throughout the life course, into middle and late life. He states that

an elderly person's attractiveness influences the way in which he or she is treated in nursing homes and hospitals. Doctors and nurses give better care to the beautiful ones.... The good-lookers were judged to be more cooperative, better motivated, and more likely to improve than their less attractive counterparts.... Because the doctor feels that beautiful patients are more likely to respond to his treatment, he'll give

them more time and attention. (p. 307)

There is no doubt that physical beauty is very powerful. It endows its possessor with a wide and varied range of social advantages. The halo effect of beauty has been present throughout history, and shows no signs of abating either in present or future social contexts. Katz (1995) concludes that

in the myths that shape modern civilization, beauty is equated with success. It has been that way since time began. In most of literature, the heroines are beautiful. Leo Tolstoy wrote, 'It is amazing how complete is the delusion that beauty is goodness.'

We like to think we have moved beyond the era when the most desirable woman was the beauty queen, but we haven't. Every day we make assumptions about the personality of the bank teller, the delivery man, or the waitress by their looks. The way in which we attribute good and bad characteristics still has very little to do with fact. People seldom look beyond a pleasing facade, a superficial attractiveness. (p. 307)

In summary, the social advantages and power of beauty have been studied from infancy to old age. The findings of such research have immense ramifications for women of age. As the societal definition of youthful beauty fades from them day by day, the power, social advantages, and assumptions of goodness (halo effect) evaporate, and connotations of badness (horns effect), insignificance, and even invisibility are realized. Although most members of society pride themselves on judging people on a criteria deeper and more significant than physical appearance, studies show that the advantages and power of beauty have not waned.

Perspectives of Beauty

This section presents the third subdivision of Division One from three basic perspectives: the attempted quantifications of beauty from an empirical and mathematical standpoint, the male perspective as it pertains to female beauty, and the female perspective of beauty, which includes definitions from the women interviewed for this research, as well as issues of female beauty.

Attempted Quantifications of Beauty

"I'm happy people find me attractive, but really it's a matter of mathematics the number of millimeters between the eyes and chin" (Paulina Porizkova, supermodel featured on the cover of Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue three times during the 1980s, quoted in Etcoff, 1999, p. 132).

"Beauty is a conspicuous element in the abstract completeness aimed at in the higher mathematics...." (John Oman, cited in Huntley, 1970, p. xiii)

Attempts at defining beauty are pervasive throughout history. They reach beyond the aesthetic and the philosophical. They extend past the emotional and fashion fads of the day. In fact, an entire facet of beauty definition is found within the world of mathematics. The ancients were well aware of this, and today a re-emergence of the attempt to quantify beauty is surfacing.

According to Etcoff (1999), "Petrus Camper, an 18th-century Dutch artist and anatomist, invented a device to measure facial

angles from profiles, in an attempt to quantify beauty" (pp. 42-43).

H.E. Huntley (1970) has written a book on the subject, entitled The Divine Proportion: A Study in Mathematical Beauty. The concept appears under a variety of terms: The Golden Mean, The Golden Ratio, The Golden Section, The Golden Rectangle, The Golden Proportion, God's Ratio, and the Divine Proportion, to list a few. It involves Phi, the Fibonacci series, and Pascal's Triangle.

The Greek philosopher Pythagoras (569-500 B.C.) is credited with being one of the first to "observe certain patterns and number relationships occurring in Nature.... The explanation of the order and harmony of Nature was, for Pythagoras, to be found in the science of numbers" (Huntley, 1970, p. 23).

And one number, one proportion, appears time and time again throughout nature, often in objects which are considered to be beautiful to humans. A World Wide Web article entitled "The Biological Connection and the Divine Proportion" states, "...the appreciation of beauty by the human mind leads to an attraction to proportions in harmony with the Golden Section, that is 1.618 and its reciprocal 0.618" (<http://jwilson.coe.uga.edu/emt669/student.folders/banker.teresa/golden/goldbiol.html>). The Golden Ratio has been approximated to 0.6180339887499. Wayne Spencer (1998, <http://www.eaze.net/~wspencer/GODRATIO.htm>) explains:

Over and over in nature, in both the living and the nonliving realms, a particular number comes up again and again. Why? This number, known as the 'Golden Ratio' is related to a mathematical series and a certain spiral shape that is found in nature in surprising ways.... The famous astronomer, Johannes Kepler, who said that scientists were 'thinking God's

thoughts after him' called this special number the Divine Proportion.

The Gold ratio is the number $(1+\sqrt{5})/2$. ' $\sqrt{5}$ ' means the square root of 5. As decimal, it is 1.61803...to five places. Try punching this out on a calculator, and then punch out the inverse, $2/(1+\sqrt{5})$ and you will get the same decimal, but without the '1,' 0.61803. This is true to any number of decimal places! This is the only number with this property. It is sometimes written with the Greek letter phi. Another way to write it is the following: $\phi - 1 = 1/\phi$.

Huntley (1970) cites numerous examples of the presence of the Golden Mean. Within Western culture it is found in music which we consider harmonic. ("Perhaps many people enjoy music because they intuitively perceive its mathematical basis," p. 78) In nature it is present in the spirals of the successive chambered nautilus shell (*Nautilus pompilius*). It can be found in the breeding habits of rabbits, the design of the honeycombed bee hive, the arrangement of leaves on the stem of a plant (helix design in Phyllotaxis), the double spiral pattern of the seeds in a sunflower plant, the shape of the nautiloid mollusks, and the curve of the fern.

In ancient architecture, both the Greeks and Egyptians used the Gold Mean when designing and building their temples and monuments. The Parthenon at Athens, built in the fifth century B.C., would almost exactly fit the dimensions of the Golden Rectangle if restored to its original structure. In geometry, the five Platonic solids (tetrahedron, hexahedron, octahedron, icosahedron, and dodecahedron) incorporate the Golden Mean. Significant work on the Golden Mean was accomplished by Adolf Zeising (1884) in this work, Der goldene Schnitt. It inspired German psychologist Gustav Fechner

to research the aesthetic value of the Golden Rectangle. Fechner literally found thousands of examples of this Phi-based Rectangle in playing cards, windows, writing paper, book covers. His experiments were repeated by Witmar (1894), Lalo (1908), and Thorndike (1917), with similar results in each case (Huntley, 1970).

Most importantly for this study, artists throughout history have used the Golden Mean in facial portraits to create figures of beauty. Leonardo da Vinci is known for his implementation of the Golden Ratio (<http://galaxy.cau.edu/tsmith/KW/golden.html>).

The builders of Paestum used the Golden Mean in their temples. Artists as diverse as Leonardo da Vinci and George Seurat used the ratio when constructing their paintings. These artists and architects discovered that by utilizing the ratio 1:1.618..., they could create a feeling of order in their works.

Today plastic surgeons, orthodontists, dentists, and makeup artists are using the Golden Mean or the Divine Proportion to create beauty in the human face. The detailed extent to which it can supposedly be used to make someone beautiful is amazingly outlined in the following (<http://galaxy.cau.edu/tsmith/KW/golden.html>):

The normal human face is possibly the most beautiful perfect structure in all of the animal kingdom. The subject of structure, harmony, balance, and proportion from mathematical and geometric aspects are associated with the biology of growth and form. To ascertain these aspects in the human face, particular measurements are taken.

For the frontal transverse analysis, the following lengths are compared: the lateral rim of the ala of the nose (the widest part) to the chilion, a point at the angle of the mouth (where the mouth angles up or down); a point at the lateral canthus (the outermost corner) of the eyes; a point at the base of the nasal bridge (lies right between the eyes); and a point at the border of the temple at the level of the eyebrows.

A progressive phi relationship exists, with the golden proportion having the four parts in series. Taking the width of the nose as 1.0, the width of the mouth is 1.618 or phi. The next progressive phi is the lateral width of the eyes at the lateral canthus as phi squared; phi cubed is the width of the head at the temporal soft tissue (on each side of the forehead). The reciprocal of phi is the interdycron width (innermost corners) between the two eyes. Starting with the nose, the mouth is golden and, then the eyes are golden to the mouth, making the eyes phi squared to the nose; the head width at the temple is golden to the width of the eyes, making the head phi cubed to the nose.

As mind-boggling as this mathematic description of facial beauty may be, the discovery of the Golden Ratio does not stop there. It is also found in the relationship of the forehead to eye, eye to chin, ala (bottom) of nose to forehead, and tip of nose to the base of the tragus (opening) of the ear (which leads to cheek prominence). Teeth also exemplify the Golden Ratio, as "there is harmony in the dentation patterns which emulates the same golden series seen in the frontal face transverse patterns" (<http://jwilson.coe.uga.edu/emt669/student.folders/banker.teresa/golden/gold-biol.html>).

The Golden Mean has also not escaped popular press attention. In the June 3, 1996 issue of Newsweek, whose cover story is entitled "The Biology of Beauty: What Science Has Discovered About Sex Appeal," a geometric grid is superimposed over the face of Denzel Washington. The caption reads "Golden Mean: By drawing lines between paired features and marking the midpoints, researchers get an index of asymmetry. In Denzel Washington's case, the midpoints line up almost perfectly" (p. 62).

A different mathematical formula, created by Devendra Singh, a

University of Texas psychologist, offers a waist-hip ratio (WHR) of beauty for overall body dimensions in the same Newsweek article.

Healthy, fertile women typically have waist-hip ratios of .6 to .8, meaning their waists are 60 to 80 percent the size of their hips, whatever their actual weight. To take one familiar example, a 36-25-36 figure would have a WHR of .7....

Defining a universal standard of body beauty once seemed a fool's dream; common sense said that if spindly Twiggy and Rubens's girthy Three Graces could all excite admiration, then nearly anyone could. But if our ideals of size change from one time and place to the next, our taste in shapes is amazingly stable. A low waist-hip ratio is one of the few features that a long, lean Barbie doll shares with a plump, primitive fertility icon.

And Singh's findings suggest the fashion won't change any time soon. In one study, he compiled the measurements of Playboy centerfolds and Miss America winners from 1923 to 1990. Their bodies got measurably leaner over the decades, yet their waist-hip ratios stayed within the narrow range of .68 to .72. (Even Twiggy was no tube; at the peak of her fame in the 1960s, the British model had a WHR of .73.)

...He (Singh) has surveyed men of various backgrounds, nationalities and ages. And whether the judges are 8-years-old or 85-years-old, their runaway favorite is a figure of average weight with a .7 WHR. Small wonder that when women were liberated from corsets and bustles, they took up girdles, wide belts and other waist-reducing contraptions. Last year alone, American women's outlays for shape-enhancing garments topped a half-billion dollars. (pp. 65-66)

The waist-to-hip ratio has also been examined in studies which find that health risks are reduced if one has a pear-shaped body, rather than an apple-shaped figure. According to Iowa's News and Information Network, found online March 28, 2000, (<http://fyiowa.webpoint.com/health/waisthip.htm>)

Research shows that people with 'apple-shaped' bodies (with more weight around the waist) face more health risks than those with 'pear-shaped' bodies that carry more weight around the hips. This leads some health specialists to...choose the waist-to-hip ratio as a tool for determining health.

...Women should have a waist-to-hip ratio of 0.8 or less. Men should have a ratio of 0.95 or less. If you're above these levels, you may wish to talk to a doctor about losing weight. Or you can get started on your own by eating right and getting regular exercise.

Although the above-given research would suggest that the world of mathematics has a corner on the scientific market concerning the quantification of beauty, scientists, physiologists, biologists, psychiatrists, and evolutionary psychologists also have their say. Etcoff (1999) presents many theories which link beauty to a Darwinian struggle for survival of the fittest and explains why humans are most attracted to those perceived to be most beautiful, and, therefore, assumed to be most fertile. This, of course, has far-reaching ramifications for perceptions of beauty in women of age who are beyond their reproductive years. Etcoff (1999) states:

Evolutionary psychologists suggest that men are automatically excited by signs of a woman who is fertile, healthy, and has been pregnant before....

Female animals stay fertile until they die, but human females do not, and signs of age are therefore important cues to reproductive capacity. A woman's peak fertility is between the ages of twenty and twenty-four and remains near peak throughout her twenties. By the end of her thirties a woman's fertility has declined by 31 percent, and after that fertility declines much more steeply. Usually in her early fifties a woman has reached menopause. Things are very different for males, who can still father a baby naturally at age ninety-four. There is no visible sign of a good sperm carrier, or at least no one has found one. Unlike women, fertility is not written on the male body. This difference is the sole basis for the erotic visual preference for women in their teens and twenties. (p. 72)

How heavily is beauty and physical attractiveness based in reproductive function? In an age where birth control is readily available, and multiple children no longer needed for agricultural

survival, is fertility still the major determinant of beauty?

Micaela di Leonardo, Northwestern University anthropologist, says No, in the June 3, 1996 issue of Newsweek:

Attraction is a complicated social phenomenon, not just a hard-wired response. If attraction were governed by the dictates of baby-making, the men of ancient Greece wouldn't have found young boys so alluring, and gay couples wouldn't crowd modern sidewalks. People make decisions about sexual and marital partners inside complex networks of friends and relatives. Human beings cannot be reduced to DNA packets. (p. 66)

Etcoff (1999) disagrees:

Menopause is a cruel biological limitation for a woman who wants to conceive her first child at forty rather than sixteen. It is more than a minor annoyance to the woman who does not want to conceive but who wants to appeal to men as much as she did in her twenties and early thirties....

The medical science of fertility and reproduction now makes it possible for women to have babies into their sixties. When they are out of eggs, they can be implanted with someone else's; when their hormonal status is not conducive to child-bearing it can be artificially altered....

Have all these changes altered our tastes in beauty and made age and fertility cues in women obsolete? In a world guided solely by thought, not instinct, the answer would be yes. But we are products of evolution and cannot change instincts as quickly as we can change our tastes or update our information.

The frenzy over beauty and the enormous business in mimicking youth show that we are still turned on by the usual suspects. It may be difficult to change human nature, and easier to start by fooling her. With the rise of the physical fitness cult, plastic surgery, and advances in beauty technology, the appearance of a woman in her thirties, forties, and even fifties can mimic that of an ancestral woman in her late teens and twenties. One could say that this mimicry is the goal of the billion-dollar beauty industry. And it has been very successful. (pp. 72-74)

Etcoff (1999) concludes her argument with the ironic behavior patterns of males and females, as they relate to fertility and per-

ceived physical attractiveness:

A man may have no interest in getting a woman pregnant, he may take elaborate precautions not to, but his mate detectors are still firing, and he is still inexplicably turned on by the woman who flashes abundant evidence of her fertility. And women are still imitating the appearance of this visually preferred age group, even if they never want to be pregnant at all. (p. 74)

As interesting as mathematical, biological, evolutionary theories on beauty may be, it is obvious that no discipline has agreed internally, nor developed an external, universal quantification for the study of beauty. Perhaps it is not so outlandish, therefore, that Keats in his "Ode to a Grecian Urn" slams the door on the never-ending search for definitions of beauty by stating that "beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all. Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

In summary, attempts have been made to measure and quantify beauty dimensions throughout history. The Golden Mean (known by several names) has prevailed throughout time as a ratio found in nature, which is indicative of beautiful creatures and creations. Today attempts to quantify beauty continue in such mathematical proportions as the waist-to-hip ratio (WHR). Many evolutionary psychologists (such as Etcoff, 1999, and Zebrowitz, 1997) believe that perceptions of beauty are directly related to perceptions of fertility and reproductive capabilities, although this view is criticized (Wolf, 1991) as too narrow an explanation for the complex social phenomenon of physical beauty and attractiveness.

The Male Perspective

How men view female attractiveness is no small issue in the attempt to present various perspectives of beauty. Many evolutionists believe that men are attracted to feminine beauty which displays youthfulness, an abundance of female hormones, and good genes for reproduction. "These traits may be detected in large eyes, small nose, delicate jaw, full lips, small chin, firm, symmetrical breasts, smooth, unblemished skin, and a waist-hip ratio of .7" (Newsweek, June 3, 1996, p. 3).

Naomi Wolf (1991) thinks otherwise:

The beauty myth tells a story: The quality called 'beauty' objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it. This embodiment is an imperative for women and not for men, which situation is necessary and natural because it is biological, sexual, and evolutionary: Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. Women's beauty must correlate to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless.

None of this is true. 'Beauty' is a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics, and in the modern age in the West it is the last, best belief system that keeps male dominance intact. In assigning value to women in a vertical hierarchy according to a culturally imposed physical standard, it is an expression of power relations in which women must unnaturally compete for resources that men have appropriated for themselves.

...Nor is 'beauty' a function of evolution: Its ideals change at a pace far more rapid than that of the evolution of species, and Charles Darwin was himself unconvinced by his own explanation that 'beauty' resulted from a 'sexual selection' that deviated from the rule of natural selection; for women to compete with women through 'beauty' is a reversal of the way in which natural selection affects all other mammals.

...The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about

men's institutions and institutional power. (pp. 12-13)

A long history of the male gaze on female beauty fills the literature with remarkable detail. Our forefathers seemed to have little trouble providing itemized definitions of female beauty. British statesman Edmund Burke was certain he had defined the qualities of female beauty in his writing of 1776 (cited in Miller, 1997) which states that

on the whole, the qualities of beauty, as they are merely sensible qualities, are the following: First, to be comparatively small. Second, to be smooth. Third, to have a variety in the direction of the parts; but, fourthly, to have those parts not angular, but melted as it were into each other. Fifthly, to be of a delicate frame, without any remarkable appearance of strength. Sixthly, to have its colors clear and bright, but not very strong and glaring. Seventhly, or if it should have any glaring color, to have it diversified with others. These are, I believe, the properties on which beauty depends; properties that operate by nature, and are less liable to be altered by caprice, or confounded by a diversity of tastes, than any other. (p. 1)

In similar manner and with competitive detail, Madame Lola Montez (1858), author of The Arts of Beauty: or Secrets of a Ladies' Toilet, used the definition of female beauty articulated by the French poet Felibien (cited in Miller, 1997):

The head should be well rounded and look rather inclining to small than large.

The forehead white, smooth, and open (not with the hair growing down too deep upon it), neither flat nor prominent, but, like the head, well rounded, and rather small in proportion than large.

The hair either black, bright brown, or auburn, not thin, but full and waving, and if it falls in moderate curls, the better-the black is particularly useful in setting off the whiteness of the neck and skin.

The eyes black, chestnut, or blue; clear, bright, and lively,

and rather large in proportion than small.

The eyebrows well divided, full, semicircular, and broader in the middle than at the ends, of a neat turn, but not formal.

The cheeks should not be wide, should have a degree of plumpness, with red and white finely blended together, and should look firm and soft.

The ear should be rather small, well folded, and have an agreeable tinge of red.

The nose should be placed so as to divide the face into equal parts; should be of a moderate size, straight, and well squared, though sometimes a little rising in the middle, which is just perceivable, may give a very graceful look to it....
(p. 68)

Unfortunately, Felibien's detailed list does not end here. He continues by describing (in like detail) the perfect female mouth, teeth, chin, neck, skin, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, bosom, hips, knees, legs, and ankles.

What are the outcomes of a male-derived history of detailed female perfectionism, passed down throughout the generations? Patricia Foster (1994) states that

women have been taught to worry about physical perfection and to consider such concerns a necessary stimulus to improvement. 'Letting yourself go' for a woman is tantamount to betrayal of a legacy of femininity concerned primarily with pleasing the male gaze. (p. 9)

Wolf (1991) states, "As long as the definition of beauty comes from outside women, we will continue to be manipulated by it" (p. 277).

The detailed history of male-based definitions of female beauty may be surpassed only by the historically-detailed male disdain of old women and their association to beauty. A popular romance

novel of the 16th century (Minois, 1987) entitled The Rogue or the Life of Guzman of Alfarach gives the account of a returning hero seeing his mother after years of absence:

I found her toothless, thin and wrinkled, quite different from her former self. I saw in her how time undermines and devours all things. I bent my gaze on my wife and said to myself: In a few days the same will happen to her. And even if a woman escapes the ugliness caused by old age, she will inevitably have to succumb to the ugliness of death. (p. 252)

Throughout the centuries, women of age have experienced both the male edict to remain youthful, and the resulting male ridicule for attempting to do so. Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote in Praise of Folly (Minois, 1987):

Yes it's even more fun to see the old women who can scarcely carry their weight of years and look like corpses that seem to have risen from the dead. They still go around saying 'life is good', still on heat, 'longing for a mate,' as the Greeks say, and seducing some young Phaon they've hired for large sums of money. They're forever smearing their faces with makeup and taking tweezers to their public hairs, exposing their sagging, withered breasts and trying to rouse failing desire with their quavery whining voices, while they drink, dance among the girls and scribble their little love-letters. All this raises a general laugh for what it is - absolute foolishness. (pp. 255-256)

Centuries later, Montez (1858) urges women of all ages to remain beautiful, but at the same time, vehemently scolds old women who use rouge. She writes, "But in no case, can even rouge be used by ladies who have passed the age of life when roses are natural to the cheek. A rouged old woman is a horrible sight-a distortion of nature's harmony!" (Miller, 1997, p. 85).

Social psychologists realize that the male perspective is extremely comparative. Kendrick and Gutterres (1979) tested the

Contrast Effects by providing college men an extreme standard of comparison for thinking about other stimuli. The researchers entered the male dorm with pictures of young women who were rated moderately attractive by the male students. Kendrick and Gutterres (1979) then asked the subjects to watch an episode of the television series "Charlie's Angel" which starred three extremely attractive women. After viewing the television show, the male students once again viewed the same pictures of the moderately attractive women. When asked to once again rate the attractiveness of the photographed women, the male students found them much less attractive than originally stated (Ford, 1997).

The male perspective is influenced by the Contrast Effect. This comparative process takes place between movie and television stars and women of everyday life. Etcoff (1999) states, "Psychologists call this a 'contrast effect,' and men seem more susceptible to it than women are" (p. 50). As will be revealed in the socio-historical examination of beauty, the disdain for women of age from the male perspective of beauty is traceable throughout decades, even centuries. It remains prevalent in modern society.

Helen Gurley Brown (1993), in her book entitled The Late Show: A Semiwild but Practical Survival Plan for Women over 50, reiterates the male attraction to youthful beauty in women. She states:

Are we older females utter nitwits to care so much (still) about beauty? Certainly we are, but the world rewards beauty so lavishly it's hard not to take it seriously even at this late date. Men-if you want to use them as a yardstick-still value beauty in a woman-and we are talking here about the outside stuff in Diane Sawyer, Kim Basinger and Cindy Crawford,

not inner as in Mother Teresa-more than any other asset, no matter what they say, and they say a lot of silly stuff like what they care about most is intelligence, pleasing personality and 'she should be fun to be with.'.... What they mean is that after the requisite beautiful is taken care of ...they can then start to appreciate other things.

...I never knew a beautiful woman who couldn't find a man if she wanted one until she got to be about sixty; after that the going gets tougher. (pp. 95-96)

Where does the enlightened male, steeped in the 1960s-1970s consciousness-raising of the Women's Liberation, appear on issues of female beauty, and most specifically on issues of aging beauty? The Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue and Playboy's centerfolds are not on the threatened list as unprofitable endeavors. It is an eerie silence that makes one wonder if the male perspective has ever changed throughout the centuries, or if refuge is now simply being taken in the biological and evolutionary rationalizations which permeate society.

Germaine Greer (1999) responds succinctly when she states:

The feminist is the person who is entirely unsurprised by both the fact that virtually all cosmetic operations are performed on women and the fact that virtually all the people carving women into acceptable shapes are men.... Before women can feel that their looks are uniquely their looks and better (realer, more authentic, more interesting) than anything they could buy in their place, they will have to feel at least as confident as men. Men will have to give up their right to judge, to give points out of ten, to reward the extravagantly lovely and humiliate the usual, and begin listening to women rather than watching them when they speak.

Women will have to stop caring whether men find them attractive because, even if they decide to tart themselves up, they cannot win. The violinist who diets, bleaches and teases her hair, has collagen injected into her lips and her boobs pumped up, and plays her concerts in a bikini, certainly gets attention but no one takes her musicianship seriously. If the woman-made woman is never good enough, the man-made woman is

no better than a toy, built to be played with, knocked about and ultimately thrown away. (pp. 37-38)

In summary, this section examines claims that males find those females attractive who are most likely to display indicators of healthy genetic reproductive ability. The opposing view points find male definitions of beauty to be expressions of institutional power, control, and manipulation. Examples were given of historical male definitions of female beauty. The comparative male gaze was examined in a discussion of the Contrast Effect. Finally, the disdain for women of age from the male perspective of beauty was discussed.

Female Perspectives of Beauty

Men and women are socialized to hold discrepant views of their bodies. Their perspectives on beauty cannot, therefore, be any but divergent. Wendy Chapkis (1986) states:

While men are busy conquering and controlling nature and woman, women are obsessed with controlling their own bodies. Man believes he survives through his enduring achievements. Woman is her mortal body.

...Concern over control of the flesh (dieting, sexual self-control, disciplining the body against the signs of age) is a particularly feminine obsession. Though woman is identified with body she never can be confidently convinced she is mistress over it. Graying, wrinkling, gaining weight, all represent reminders that the one area of female identity and authority is only marginally governable.

...The woman who is awarded the title of Beauty momentarily escapes into the eternal ideal. Yet she knows, as each woman must, that she has been or will be seen as ugly in her lifetime. To be beautiful is to exist in a moment framed by expectation and fear. (pp. 15-16)

Germaine Greer (1999) opens her latest book, The Whole Woman,

with a description of Body Dysmorphic Disorder or BDD, "the abnormal preoccupation with a perceived defect in one's appearance" (p. 23).

She maintains that BDD has become a global pandemic, stating that

even if she (every woman) is as freakishly beautiful as the supermodels whose images she sees replicated all around her until they are more familiar than the features of her own mother, she cannot be beautiful enough. There must be bits of her that will not do, her knees, her feet, her buttocks, her breasts. Even if all these are fine and flawless, she knows that within she has guts full of decomposing food; she has a vagina that smells and bleeds. She is human, not a goddess or angel. However much body hair she has, it is too much. However little and sweetly she sweats, it is too much. Left to her own devices she is sure to smell bad. If her body is thin enough, her breasts are sad. If her breasts are full, her arse is surely too big. (p. 23)

Greer also quotes David Veale, of the Royal Free Hospital, speaking of BDD at the annual meeting of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. He said, "These [BDD] individuals are very socially handicapped. There is a high rate of depression and 25 percent have attempted suicide" (p. 23).

Although medically a diagnosis of illness, the vast majority of women relate to the above-described "symptoms" of BDD as a normal part of their thought process regarding their bodies. Greer acknowledges this as she writes:

As a way of inducing them to buy products of no use or value, women have been deliberately infected with BDD. Conditions that practically all women 'suffer from' are spoken of as unsightly and abnormal, to make women feel that parts of their bodies, perhaps their whole bodies, are defective and should be worked on, even surgically altered.... Preoccupation about her appearance goes some way towards ruining some part of every woman's day. Multi-million-dollar industries exploit both her need for reassurance and her need to do something about the way she looks.

...Whatever a woman does, she must not look her age. (pp. 25-

26)

What is beauty from a female perspective? Not only does it defy definition, it is certainly something which is unattainable. If it is somehow bestowed, the endowing powers (media, husbands, friends, lovers, etc.) are scrutinized for the authority to do so, and proof demanded. It is transient and ephemeral with each passing day. Logically this would thwart the efforts of any reasonable person to invest money, time, and effort in obtaining it. This is simply not true for women. Social factors greater than logic are at work: social advantage and power, mate-finding and mate-keeping, self-esteem and personal worth, acceptance and alleviation of loneliness, to name a few.

Traditional male definitions of beauty, when adopted and accepted as the standard by women, create a sense of ugliness in every female, especially in women of age. But in concert with the Labeling Theory, those hit hardest by the label of unattractiveness or ugliness are least likely to be able to throw off the derogatory and painful labels.

Halprin (1995) states it well when she writes:

...I think of all the attractive young women I know and have known. Not one has fully applauded herself. I believe that not one has fully believed herself to be beautiful. We aspire to a role that we never claim as our own. Because we seldom identify with our beauty in our youthful freshness, because, in fact, we often consider ourselves to be ugly, and because, above all, we fear aging, many of us continue throughout our lives to strive for a beauty we have never known. (p. 39)

So do we abandon the desire for physical beauty and attractiveness? Unthinkable! Barbara Sher (1998) states that

beauty is a control issue. With it we imagine we have the power to get all the love we need. Without it we're convinced we're helpless. We forget that we're quite tolerant of ordinary looks in everyone else.... But when it comes to yourself, your demands for perfect beauty sail off the charts. You become hopelessly unforgiving of your imperfections as a fourteen-year-old. And equally as narcissistic. You never think twice about other people's need to get love. It's your need to be desirable that's got you in its grip. (p. 102)

Yet no woman even shakes her head in disbelief when Sophia Loren states, "the pursuit of beauty is one of the greatest joys of being a woman" (quoted in Miller, 1997, p. 10). For centuries, women have endured the societal expectations of the Beauty Imperative (belief that if beauty-enhancing technologies and/or products are available, there is a duty or obligation to use them). In 1858 Montez said, "Every woman owes it not only to herself, but to society, to be as beautiful and charming as she possibly can" (quoted in Miller, 1997, p. 71), and "Overlooking entirely the matter of vanity, it is a woman's duty to use all the means in her power to beautify and preserve her complexion" (quoted in Miller, 1997, pp. 77-78). Over a century later, Estee Lauder launched a successful advertising campaign with the quote, "There are no homely women, only careless women" (Lauder, 1985, p. 213). The Beauty Imperative is not easy to dismiss or reject.

Despite the long history of social advantages and great demands of the Beauty Imperative to maintain physical youthful beauty, women will often go to extreme lengths to avoid the label of vanity. To be vain is to be evil, self-centered, somehow empty. The multi-billion-dollar beauty industry stands as proof that women of all

ages, races, and socio-economic classes spend great amounts of money on the retention of physical beauty. But the threat of the vanity label requires closed bathroom doors and silence, even among women, about their personal beauty rituals.

Participants in the in-depth interviews of this research were asked the stark question, "What is beauty?" Most respondents hesitated as they formulated their answers. Obviously few had pre-defined answers. Not one participant was willing to define beauty only in terms of physical appearance. In fact, some women denied any connection between beauty and the external body. (Note: Names have been changed for confidentiality.)

Ricki replied:

What is beauty? I think it's what makes you feel good about yourself...partly.... It's one aspect of how you feel about yourself. It's going to be different things to different people. For me, beauty is.... when I see someone who is very enthusiastic and passionate about a subject or an interest. They have a beauty that radiates with them. So I don't associate beauty with physical appearance.

June's response was:

What is beauty? Oh, man, that is a really tough one. I think when I look at a person my standard of beauty is different from I would regard as the 'popular' (whatever that is) standard...because when I look at a person I guess the beauty that I'm seeing is the shine in their eye, the quality of their smile, their openness, warmth.... And I think a person can be, you know, what may be regarded as pretty plain-looking by some people's standards, but I just think they look beautiful! But beauty, I think, at least my concept of it...somehow or another I've gotten this idea in my head that you have to look a certain way, you have to fit a certain...whatever that is... if it's Caucasian standards, their particular bone structure or your lips have to be a certain millimeter or your nose can't be too long or short or pug, or whatever. But I don't look at people that way...men or women...you know?

Sometimes I'll say to people that I know, "Isn't she just beautiful?" and they'll look at me and say, "Well, I don't know if I'd use the word 'beautiful'." But I see it differently.

Jennifer replied,

well, I'm not a real big person on physical beauty. That's not the way I value people. I value people much more on their ethics, their values, and the way they interact and treat other people. To me, that's highly attractive.

Others offered societal meanings of beauty when pressed for a solely physical definition, but were quick to discount these attributes as accurate definitions.

The dialogue between Sarah and this researcher was as follows:

Researcher: "I would first like to start by asking you a question: What is beauty?" Sarah responded, "I guess being comfortable with yourself...and liking who you are and where you're at." The researcher said, "Okay, what about physically?" Sarah responded that she didn't know. "Tall? I don't know. Tall? I don't know. It's a natural kind of look. It's difficult to put words to put words to that. You know it when you see it."

The researcher asked, "is there anything else you would like to say about that?" And Sarah's response was that she didn't think so.

The dialogue between Janice and this researcher also dealt with societal definitions of beauty, as follows:

Janice asked, "You're asking me What is beauty?" The researcher said, "Yes, what is beauty?" Janice replied, "What does it mean to me, or what does it mean in this world?" The researcher said, "Well, give me both." Janice responded,

I think you're accurate when you read that, that beauty is youth. Beauty is a toned body. Beauty is external in this society that we live in. I bought some of that. Those ideas. And struggle with the fact that I'm getting older and getting fatter all the time. But since about my 30s I have really done a lot of inner work to develop that inner beauty...that sense of beauty being a good person, someone who has a sense of connection to other things, other people, and just goodness, I guess. Who I am, rather than what I look like.

The researcher said, "Okay. That makes a lot of sense." Janice said, "Well, that's kind of how I see it and I'm not there yet. You know, I still struggle with the societal images of beauty."

The majority of women participants acknowledged physical beauty, but felt it was only a portion of the true definition. Not one woman detailed physical appearances. Not one woman cited shiny hair, smooth skin, age, race, proportionate face or body, a particular color of hair or eyes, nose shape, healthy appearance, strength, size or firmness of breasts, size or shape of buttock, or height.

On the other hand, the non-physical aspects of beauty given by participants were extensive, spanning a broad range of personal attributes. They included: enthusiasm, a shine in their eye, quality of their smile, openness and warmth, something radiating outward, sweetness, fun to be around, laughter, radiating a positive energy field, an inner being, the paradigm they operate from, their outlook on life, power from a sense of peace, being comfortable with yourself, liking who you are and where you're at, a combination of what makes up a person, creativity, humor, internal beauty, belief system, trueness to relationships, self-satisfaction, pride, being a good person, having a connection to other things and people, just

goodness, ethics, values, interactions and treatment of others, not arrogant or unkind.

Two out of the twelve participants (Barbara and Jill) were adamant that beauty consists of self-appreciation and personal ownership of the mirror that reflects their self-image. Barbara said,

I think beauty is what you think about yourself. I think--I really do--that a lot of people think what other people think before they make an opinion of themselves. So they are relying on their attitude toward your own beauty.

The researcher said, "Yes. And do you think that's accurate or do you think it should come from..." Barbara's response was,

I think people are happier when they feel good about themselves because of what they liked when they picked it out to wear it...or because it's comfortable...or because of what is them, rather than what that man over there wants me to do.

The researcher said, "So, it's not the reflection that's important... It's what's coming..." And Barbara replied, "...from your own heart. And then that beauty just emanates, just grows, I think."

Jill also claimed the right to her own definition of beauty. When the researcher asked her what beauty was, her response was,

Well, that's a definition that's changed over time for me. The first word that comes to mind for me in terms of where I'm at in my life right now would be something associated with power, but it comes from a sense of peace.

The researcher asked her to say more about that, and she said,

I guess I sort of would question your premise there that beautiful young women are in a position to be given power by society. I think that's a very... It's a superficial gift of power, if it exists at all. My recollection, personally, from having been that age, and, again from being around young, beautiful women now, is that it truly is a time when you are powerless. You are running as fast as you can in this little

hamster cage to catch up to somebody else's definition. I recall being in my 20s and being almost constantly unsure, even though everything around me said that I was beautiful, and sexy, and hot, and all those kinds of things. I questioned it all the time.

I guess there's probably some irony in that I don't-at this point, at the age of 50-have sources around me all the time telling me I'm beautiful, but I know I am. That sense of peace that comes from not questioning it, not feeling like it's something I'm waiting to be given by someone, and knowing without a doubt that it's mine to give, is a whole new sense of power that I don't question at all. I know I'm beautiful. Absolutely know it. There isn't a doubt in my mind.

The researcher said, "And that is powerful." And Jill's response was, "Absolutely. Absolutely."

As blatant as societal messages are concerning beauty and the beauty imperative requiring women to stay youthful-looking, no woman in this study echoed those messages. Could this be a concerted effort to not appear vain and superficial? Or are extenuating and internal factors really so essentially a part of the beauty definition that no woman was able to discard them?

Rita Freedman (1986) suggests that the female perspective of beauty is a multi-faceted concept, complete with innate contradictions which defy definition. She states that

beauty is many things-an external radiance, an inner tranquility, a sexual allure, a fact of social exchange. Contradictory definitions of the nature of beauty abound, indicating widespread ambivalence about its meaning.

On the one hand, beauty is dismissed as mere facade, a superficial trait of little consequence. On the other, it is infused with supernatural power: a spellbinding, dazzling, irresistible princess can capture hearts and control kingdoms. Beauty is sometimes equated with the fresh innocence of a country maiden, but other times it is fraught with the dangers of a femme fatale. It is noble but suspect, pure but corrupting. The stereotypic gorgeous blonde is dumb, yet sexy; pas-

sive, yet exciting. At one moment her beauty is coveted as an asset; the next moment it may be shunned as a liability.

First beauty is worshiped as an innate quality that cannot be artificially contrived; next it is packaged and peddled as an illusion that anyone can cultivate.... Precise definitions of beauty dissolve in such contradictions. (pp. 4-5)

Naomi Wolf (1991) advocates for a pro-woman definition of beauty, believing that "as long as the definition of 'beauty' comes from outside women, we will continue to be manipulated by it" (p. 277). She writes:

Can there be a pro-woman definition of beauty? Absolutely.... A pro-woman redefinition of beauty reflects our redefinitions of what power is. Who says we need a hierarchy? Where I see beauty may not be where you do. Some people look more desirable to me than they do to you. So what? My perception has no authority over yours. Why should beauty be exclusive? Admiration can include so much.

...Maybe the less pain women inflict on our bodies, the more beautiful our bodies will look to us. Perhaps we will forget to elicit admiration from strangers, and find we don't miss it; perhaps we will await our older faces with anticipation, and be unable to see our bodies as a mass of imperfections, since there is nothing on us that is not precious.

...A woman-loving definition of beauty supplants desperation with play, narcissism with self-love, dismemberment with wholeness, absence with presence, stillness with animation. It admits radiance: light coming out of the face and body, rather than a spotlight on the body, diminishing the self. It is sexual, various, and surprising. We will be able to see it in others and not be frightened, and able at last to see it in ourselves. (pp. 290-291)

The female perspective on beauty may, in fact, require the metamorphosis afforded by the woman-loving definition of beauty. Is it a possible reality? Or a lofty dream, a feminist fantasy? Freedom from patriarchal beauty benefits, male approval, and the power physical beauty evokes within society may be applauded, but could it

eradicate and replace the beauty myth which is so ingrained in our social consciousness on all levels of sociological examination?

Data from the literature which specifically addresses female beauty encompasses a diversity of perspectives. The vast majority of previous studies on female beauty either concentrate on youthful beauty or are non-age, non-cohort specific. Even in non-age specific literature, however, the underlying assumption remains that a youthful appearance equates to beauty.

Some pieces of literature attempt to merely define beauty (Hogarth, 1997; Schefer, 1997; Miller, 1997), while others seek some means by which to quantify its existence (Huntley, 1970; Etcoff, 1999). A variety of texts encourage women to retain the appearance of youthful beauty at all costs and by all available means (McCarthy, 1994; Begoun, 1999; King, 1948; Kenton, 1983; Montez, 1978; Gross, Stone, & Newman, 1994).

Others debunk the beauty myth and urge women of age to abandon societal messages of youthful beauty (Freedman, 1986; Wolf, 1991). A number of resources offer age-defying makeup tips and promise "You don't have to go gray (even gracefully)" (Haddon, 1998, p. 82). Conversely, others take a feminist view of youthful beauty within the context of a patriarchal society (Hansen, Reed, & Waters, 1986; Lehrman, 1997; Chapkis, 1986).

Particular authors focus on issues of beauty within the context of the feminine ideal or femininity (Thesander, 1997; Brown-miller, 1984; Tseelon, 1995; Farganis, 1996). Others specifically

link beauty to power (Friday, 1996b; Halprin, 1995).

In summary, this section examined the female perspective on beauty, including Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD), the female adoption of male definitions of beauty, and the Beauty Imperative. The section also includes many excerpts from the in-depth interviews conducted for this study, specifically the participants' responses to the question, What is beauty? This subdivision includes the queries into a pro-woman, or woman-loving, definition of beauty. Finally, it is noted that the vast majority of literature reviewed for this division, either explicitly stated or implicitly stated, assumed that female beauty was very highly associated with youthfulness.

Concepts of Aged Beauty

"I don't know how many more times I can beat this face into submission" (Cher, November 1987, quoted in Greer, 1999, p. 27).

"As a white candle In a holy place, So is the beauty of an aged face" (Joseph Campbell, in Irishry, "Old Woman," 1913).

The fourth and final subdivision of Division One examines concepts of aged beauty. As previously noted, research studies and literature on the subject of aging beauty are relatively rare. This section presents examples of literature which does exist on definitions of beauty as they relate to women of age.

The loss of female beauty with age is a common expectation within our society. It is rarely even questioned. As a woman ages, her focus is expected to turn away from the external locus of youth-

ful physical beauty with which she can no longer compete, and focus instead on the internal locus-to become a sage of wisdom with a sweet-grandmotherly disposition, obsessed with photographs of grandchildren, peer-appropriate female friends, doctor visits, and volunteer work. This aberration of the Disengagement Theory (expecting the old to withdraw from society), long ago abandoned by gerontologists for its dated perspective, is alive and well for aged women.

The male life course trajectory of societal worth is based on career advancements and financial success. A man spends decades on an upward rise from his first day of work at approximately age 18 until a plateau is reached at about age 55. This plateau may last a decade, until retirement is reached and the trajectory falls.

The female life course trajectory of societal worth is much different than that of the male. Based on beauty, and therefore youthfulness, the upward rise begins at birth with cuteness, continues upward through teen-age development, and peaks-not in mid- or later-life-but in the mid-20s. The resulting degenerative downward plunge may last for the next 70 years of a woman's life. Germaine Greer (1999) states, "Every woman knows that, regardless of all her other achievements, she is a failure if she is not beautiful. She also knows that whatever beauty she has is leaving her, stealthily, day by day" (p. 23).

Look Me in the Eye by Barbara Macdonald and Cynthia Rich (1991) is one of the first books to lash out against the stereotype of the physically-ugly old woman and radically challenge the assumed

juxtaposition of youth with beauty.

Macdonald, in Macdonald and Rich (1991), describes her own aging experience in light of physical changes:

My hands are large and the backs of my hands begin to show the brown spots of aging. Sometimes lately, holding my arms up reading in bed or lying with my arms clasped around my lover's neck, I see my arm with the skin hanging loosely from my forearm and cannot believe that it is really my own. It seems disconnected from me; it is someone else's, it is the arm of an old woman. It is the arm of such old women as I myself have seen, sitting on benches in the sun with their hands folded in their laps; old women I have turned away from. I wonder now, how and when these arms I see came to be my own-arms I cannot turn away from. (p. 14)

In the same book, Rich (1991) writes a chapter entitled, "Ageism and the Politics of Beauty." In it she describes picking up a book "rich and nourishing, published by a feminist press" (p. 140). She continues:

It is when you come to a section about aging that abruptly the connection-with you-is broken. You find the poet writing with dread and loathing at the thought that one day she must live inside the body of a woman who looks like you.

Stop! I don't want my scalp shining through a few thin hairs. Don't want my neck skin to hang-neglected cobweb-in the corner of my chin. Stop!

It shouldn't take this guided tour for any of us to recognize that an old woman must find it insulting, painful, personally humiliating, to be told in print that other women in her community find her body disgusting.

What you-the old woman-find especially painful is that the feminist newspaper where this excerpt was first printed, the feminist publisher, the poet herself, would surely protest if Jewish features, Black features, or the features of any other marginalized group were described-whether in the form of the outsider's contempt or the insider's self-hatred-with the kind of revulsion.... They would know that such attitudes do deep damage to a work artistically, as well as humanly and politically.

Yet clearly there are not the same standards about speaking with disgust about the bodies of old women. So the message has a double sting. The 'ugliness' of your physical being is not a cruel opinion but an accepted fact; you have not even the right to be insulted. How is it that you, the old woman, find yourself in this place? (pp. 140-141)

Rich (1991) doesn't stop with the feminist press, but goes on to find the identical pattern in mainstream media. She states that

this slice of mainstream media is jammed with political messages. Old women are ugly. Their view of things can be dismissed as just a way of venting their envy of young women. The old men, who have status and power, and therefore are the judges who matter, prize the young women's beauty and judge old women's bodies to be contemptible. The old woman has no defense since she, too, knows old women are ugly. And: the young woman's body in fact gains in value when set beside that of an old woman. (pp. 142-143)

The results of this society-wide devaluation and revulsion of the old woman's body, according to Rich, is summed in her quote, "Physical revulsion is an ideal tool for maintaining oppressive systems..." (p. 143) She continues:

To treat old women's minds as inconsequential or unstable is in one sense more serious, more dangerous, than disgust for their bodies. But most women find that the more our bodies are perceived as old, the more our minds are dismissed as irrelevant. (p. 143)

Naomi Wolf (1991) also perceives the beauty myth and issues of aging beauty as a dividing force between cohorts of women. She states that

competition between women has been made part of the (beauty) myth so that women will be divided from one another. Youth and (until recently) virginity have been 'beautiful' in women since they stand for experiential and sexual ignorance. Aging in women is 'unbeautiful' since women grow more powerful with time, and since the links between generations of women must always be newly broken: Old women fear young ones, young women fear old, and the beauty myth truncates for all the female life span. (p. 14)

A few years ago this researcher presented a paper at a medical conference to an audience predominately consisting of physicians. During the process of introducing myself, I listed my credentials and areas of expertise, concluding with the statement that I specialize in the study of old women. I was stunned when the audience of physicians burst out in loud peals of laughter. It appeared that old women were considered a trivial target population, and the very thought of studying old women was responded to with laughter. How does social change take place, when those in the most powerful and respected professions in our society debunk and publically ridicule this entire social class of age/gender?

Sara Halprin (1995) in her book entitled Look at My Ugly Face directly addresses the issue of power as it pertains to the perceived ugliness of the old woman. She states that

the association of ugliness with old age is so prevalent that it is unconscious, except, of course, for the old, who are keenly aware of how their wrinkles, thinning hair, and otherwise aging bodies are regarded by the youth-obsessed culture around them. For centuries, fairy tales and folktales have depicted old women as easy targets for ridicule, based on their ugliness, which was simply taken for granted.

...Old women are seen as ugly and often called ugly to their faces-by strangers and children on the street, by implication in the ageist remarks made constantly in the mass media, for example, in the many commercials that treat aging as a hazard to be avoided. (pp. 202-203)

Halprin (1995) then quotes both Tish Sommers (founder of the Older Women's League) and Baba Copper to present a challenge to concepts of youthful beauty, and the resulting issue of power, respectively:

I look forward to the time when we can merchandise a cosmetic line to make youth seem older-a special crow's foot pencil, the silver bleaches, the stick to make those delicious brown spots on the hands, eyeliner under the eye for that sexy mature look. Let the young ones eat their hearts out! (p. 203)

Baba Copper (cited in Halprin, 1995) states that

the problem for old women is a problem of power. First power over the circumstances and directions of our own lives and identity. Second, power as an influence upon the world we live in-the world we have served, in which we have such a large, unrecognized, vest interest. (p. 203)

Halprin (1995) uses these two quotes to connect issues of aged beauty with the issue of power in one of the most revealing statements on aging beauty and social advantage. She states that "so long as women are defined by appearance rather than by action, old women will be powerless in a world that sees them as ugly. This is a loss to the world as well as to the old women" (p. 203).

So what can be done to change this societal travesty, this narrow definition of female beauty, and all the societal benefits afforded its possessor? In concert with the action component of feminist methods, Rich (1991) asks, "How can we begin to change?" (p. 145). Her answer speaks to the general audience of readers, but also directly speaks to the sociologist and gerontologist examining the issue of aging beauty. She states:

We can recognize that ideas of beauty are socialized into us and that yes, Virginia, we can begin to move in the direction of re-socializing ourselves. We can work, for ourselves and for any revolution we might imagine, to develop a deeper and more resonant-dare I say more mature-concept of beauty....

Our task is to learn: not to look insultingly beyond these features to souls we can celebrate, but instead to take in these bodies as part of these souls-exciting, individual, beautiful. (p. 146)

Who says wrinkles are ugly and must be eliminated at great cost and, perhaps, the pain of medical procedures? Who says that gray hair has no place among the female beauty categories of blonde, brunette, or redhead? Who says that aging breasts and pear-shaped bodies are sexually unattractive? Are not these a normal part of the aging process for women?

We are socialized so completely that even the most learned in society often fail to recognize the powerful socialization process of youthful beauty. This is a cataclysmic reality. There is little doubt that female, age-inclusive definitions of beauty are needed for research, as well as for the greater society.

In summary, this section addresses the expectation of internalization of beauty during the female aging process, from physical, external attractiveness to attributes of inner qualities, i.e., wisdom, sweetness, and servitude. The male and female life trajectories of societal worth were discussed, as well as the devaluation of aged women based on perceived ugliness resulting from age. Finally, questions were raised concerning the inclusion of age-related physical changes in popular beauty definitions.

Grand Summary

This chapter begins the literature review by examining the first of five fundamental divisions, with the remaining divisions appearing in Chapter V. Division One encompasses the presentation of varying definitions of beauty, as well as discussing issues of

female beauty from various perspectives. The lack of consensus across time and cultures, within and across disciplines, and the futile search for a universal definition of beauty was discussed. Instead of attempting to accomplish a grand definition of beauty, this chapter examined issues of beauty from differing points of view and their relevancy for this study.

First, the importance of the topic of beauty was discussed from both micro-sociological and macro-sociological perspectives. This included both the very personal beauty routines of individual women, and the much larger impact of the beauty industry on global economics and the Internet world of e-commerce. Issues of perceived triviality of the topic were discussed. The double jeopardy of the beauty researcher was also examined, using a socio-historical discussion of the First and Second Wave Feminist Movements.

Second, the social advantages and the power of beauty throughout the life course were examined, in conjunction with the ramifications for women of age. The halo/horns effect was discussed, and studies presented to validate the continued use of physical beauty and attractiveness to award societal perks and real advantages.

Third, definitions of beauty were examined from various perspectives. These included:

1. The attempted quantification of beauty (from the ancient use of the Golden Mean to current use of the hip-to-waist ratio).
2. The male perspective (including evolutionary concepts, issues of power and control, the comparative male view, and disdain

for women of age from the male perspective of beauty).

3. The female perspective (Body Dysmorphic Disorder, female adoption of male definitions of beauty, the Beauty Imperative, interview participants' concepts of beauty, a pro-woman or woman-loving definition of beauty, and the diversity found in female beauty literature).

4. Concepts of aging beauty were discussed.

The societal expectations of the older woman to look inward for beauty, rather than question the narrow restraints of youthful beauty were challenged. The male and female life trajectories of societal worth were discussed, as well as the devaluation of aged women based on perceived ugliness resulting from age. A female, age-inclusive definition of beauty was also advocated. The following chapter continues the review of the literature, by examining the remaining four fundamental divisions.

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CHAPTER V

LITERATURE REVIEW: DIVISIONS TWO THROUGH FIVE

Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the literature review, proffering an examination of research currently available on the remaining four aspects of the topic of aging beauty. The insufficiency of significant psychological, sociological, and gerontological research on aging beauty was established in the methods chapter. While serious attention on life-prolonging techniques and diseases of aging dominate geriatric and gerontological research fields, the transforming body image of aging women and ramifications of devalued beauty of middle-aged women within the context of our society have been grossly neglected.

In order to ameliorate this void, this continuation of the literature review examines the remaining four fundamental divisions, as follows: (1) Division Two: Female Aging, (2) Division Three: Socio-Historical Considerations of Beauty, (3) Division Four: Feminist Examinations, and (4) Division Five: Female Midlife Body and Health Issues. This chapter concludes with twelve fundamental integrated research findings from the literature review. The merging of this literature attempts to create a morphogenetic catalyst for this and future research.

Division Two: Female Aging

Myriad books on the female aging process have flooded the market in the last two decades. It is obvious that marketers are responding to the multitudes of female Baby Boomers who are turning 50 and are concerned about their own aging process. Unfortunately, this literature is all too often devoid of the inclusion of female beauty and its ramifications for power, status, and prestige in modern society. The bent of this literature often addresses the transitional period of midlife, and it is not unusual for it to be gender-specific, aimed directly toward the aging female population. If the literature addresses the beauty issue at all, it frequently appears in the form of self-help advice for the retention of youthful beauty.

This tremendous amount of data can be sub-categorized into literature which generally addresses the human aging process (Cozic, 1996; Spence, 1995; Medina, 1996; O'Reilly, 1997; Hayflick, 1996; MacLay, 1990; Ricklefs & Finch, 1995; Rosow, 1974; Rowe & Kahn, 1998).

Other sources specifically examine the female aging process (Astley, 1994; Banner, 1992; Paoletti, 1998; Davis, 1960; Porcino, 1983; Coyle, 1997; Martz, 1987, 1992, 1994; Witkin, 1995; Sher, 1998; Harris, 1995; Heilbrun, 1988, 1997; Scott-Maxwell, 1968; Taylor, 1992; Rountree, 1993; Kaigler-Walker, 1997; Levinson, 1996; Fisher, 1983; Mandell, 1998; Turner & Troll, 1994; Thomas, 1997; and Grambs, 1989).

Literature which addresses issues of ageism can also be found throughout the data examined for this study (The Hen Co-op, 1994, 1996; Davis, Cole & Rothblum, 1993; Rosenthal, 1990; Secunda, 1984; Alexander, Berrow, Deomitrovich, Donnelly, & McLean, 1986).

Other sources concentrate on the middle-age transitional period (Maugans, 1994; Stasi & Rogers, 1998; Gullette, 1997; Pogrebin, 1996; Stern, 1995; Eliason, 1994; Hunter & Sundel, 1989; Van Hoose, 1985; Kaye, 1995; Sheehy, 1995; Lenz, 1993; Apter, 1995; Datan & Lohmann, 1980; Shweder, 1998; Giele, 1982; Schachter-Shalomi & Miller, 1995; Viorst, 1986; and French, 1977).

Literature promoting youthful beauty also offers extensive advice for women on how to retain youthfulness or youthful appearances (Fisher, 1994; Haddon, 1998; Henig, 1985; Brown, 1993; Hauser, 1951).

Data sources on these multiple aspects of the female aging process must be organized into a comprehensible format, which is no simple feat. Gerontology, the study of aging people, is an interdisciplinary field which has implemented its basic organization structure into three categories: the biological, the psychological, and the social gerontological. For purposes of organization of the literature, this section on female aging will use this gerontological organizational prototype as they apply specifically to the issue at hand.

Senescence and Psychological Aspects

Within the literature, senescence, or biological aging, is examined for humans, in general, and women in specificity. The content of this literature ranges from the mortal cell theory (Hayflick, 1996) to the appearance of gray hair (Gerike, in Rosenthal, 1990); from the pain of arthritis (Gullette, 1997) to the appearance of wrinkles (Medina, 1996; Ricklefs & Finch, 1995) and the dilation of blood vessels during a hot flash (Stoppard, 1994).

Whether the topic is osteoporosis or climacteric vaginal changes, all aspects of the biological and physiological female aging processes are present in the literature. It is clear that although there are universal aspects of human aging, many aspects are gender-exclusive (climacteric, prostate) or gender-prevalent (incontinence, osteoporosis).

At times the diagnosis and treatment of midlife maladies are concise. Other times, researchers are left pondering why there is no universal biological theory of aging...or why the presence of senile plaques and neurofibrillary tangles do not always present in the form of dementia of the Alzheimer's type...or why some hair turns gray, at varying rates, and others do not.

Women are currently being included in aging studies from which they had historically been excluded, with strong encouragement from federal funding agencies. Emphasis in the medical and geriatric fields is being placed on women's health issues. Although the biological aspects of aging are not the focus of this research, this

review of the literature examines the senescence which directly affects women's appearances and the medicalization of the aging process in women.

Psychological aspects of the female aging process are also not the focus of this research, however certain aspects have been specifically examined on issues of self-worth and self-esteem during the female transitional period of midlife. Review of this literature investigates the incorporation of society's perception of one's self into the very core of self-definition. This psychological perspective is inherent to the theoretical framework of this study.

In concert with Cooley's (1902) Theory of the Looking-Glass Self, Marilyn French (1977) writes supportive anecdotal evidence from the lives of women. She states that

women don't get even the respect of fear. What's fear, after all, in a silly woman always running for her mirror to see who she is? Mira lived by her mirror as much as the Queen in Snow White. A lot of us did: we absorbed and believed things people said about us. (p. 8)

Perhaps French sums up the psychological aspects of female aging, particularly as they pertain to issues of beauty, when she states, "One needs some reflection from the outside to get an image of oneself" (p. 147).

Other relevant issues of female psychological aging include fear of aging, fear of death, loss and its subsequent grief, issues of gender identity, cognitive developmental patterns, transitional role definitions, coping with societal depreciation, conflict in relationships, memory and recall, adult learning, and various other

topics of psychological importance.

It is not the goal of this research to present the biological, physiological, psychological or social psychological issues of the transitional, midlife woman. Instead, literature on these aspects serves as foundational data for the examination and analysis of female aging beauty.

Social Gerontological Aging

Women are considered a special population in social gerontological research. Old women form the fastest-growing segment of our population. They represent 56% of the young-old (those 65 to 74), and 72% of the oldest old (those 85 years of age and older). Old women constitute 75% of the 3.4 million elderly persons who were below the poverty level in 1997. Women live, on average, six to seven years longer than men in the United States, but have higher rates of illness, physician visits, and prescriptions, due to more acute illnesses and non-fatal chronic conditions (Hooyman & Kiyak, 1999; AARP, 1998). As previously discussed, there are also special medical, biological, and physiological concerns which are gender-specific and gender-exclusive.

The social gerontological study of the aging process is examined from a gender-specific perspective in such university courses, such as Women and Aging, Middle Aged and Aging Women, and Feminist Gerontology. Several anthologies and collections of data are being published on the topic of women and aging (Coyle, 1997; Alexander

et al., 1986; Davis, Cole, & Rothblum, 1993; Rosenthal, 1990).

Courses and literature on female aging consider such social gerontological topics as ageism; stereotypes; demography; sociological and gerontological theory; social support; caregiving; physical and biological aging; psychological aging; sexuality in late life; housing; transportation; elder domestic abuse; socio-economic status; retirement; religiosity; friendships; menopause; rural health; hysterectomies; lesbianism; late-life divorce; death, dying, and widowhood; aged ethnic minorities; as well as future issues and desired reforms.

Ageism

Ageism is frequently the subject of female aging literature (The Hen Co-op, 1994, 1996; Davis, Cole & Rothblum, 1993; Secunda, 1984; Alexander et al., 1986). According to Copper (Alexander et al., 1986),

ageism is the negative social response to different stages in the process of aging and it is a political issues. The ageism that old women experience is firmly embedded in sexism extension of the male power to define, control values, erase, disempower, and divide. Woman-to-woman ageism is an aspect of the horizontal conflict that usurps the energies of the colonized-part of the female competition for the crumbs of social power. (p. 47)

Examinations of the aging female stereotypes and resulting ageism, based on sexist notions of physical attractiveness and beauty, are still rare. Healey (Alexander et al., 1986), states:

Think of all the adjectives that are most disrespectful in our society. They are all part of the ageist stereotyping of old women: pathetic, powerless, querulous, complaining, sick,

weak, conservative, rigid, helpless, unproductive, wrinkled, asexual, ugly, unattractive, and on, ad nauseam. There is, by the way, an exception to this, and that is the stereotype of the wise old woman. She, of course, never complains, is never sick, and although no one really would want to be with her, occasionally it might be fine to sit at her feet!

How did this happen, this totally denigrating picture of old women? To understand this phenomenon we must look at sexism, for ageism is inextricably tied to sexism and is the logical extension of its insistence that women are only valuable when they are attractive and useful to men. (p. 59)

Jean Swallow (Alexander et al., 1986) notes that capitalistic interests and profits also feed stereotypes and affect women's perceptions of themselves as they age. She writes that

old women are not the ones defining aging, old women are not listened to about aging and ageism. Right now, aging is being defined by all sorts of people who make a living from inventing goods and services for old women. So we get stereotypes that serve the purpose of profit-making, and we're left with no real insight into either the process of aging or what old women have to confront in the world every day of their lives. (p. 199)

As more social scientists begin to appreciate the link between ageism and sexism, more insight into the female aging process will be realized.

Invisibility

Many midlife and old women speak of their own invisibility as a major social problem throughout this literature. MacDonald (Alexander et al., 1986) states, "You do not see us in our present lives, you do not identify with our issues, you exploit us, you patronize us, you stereotype us. Mainly you ignore us" (p. 20).

French (1977) fluently expresses the problem which occurred

when her main character, a midlife woman, attempts to return to school.

The blank eyes, the empty faces, the young bodies that ten minutes earlier had paced its (hallway) length, were gone. It was these that, passing her without seeing her, seeing her without looking at her, had driven her into hiding. For they had made her feel invisible. And when all you have is visible surface, invisibility is death. Some deaths take forever... (pp. 3-4)

According to Margarita Donnelly (Alexander et al., 1986),

invisibility...yes, it's already been happening to me but I didn't identify its source...being mistaken for the grandmother of a younger friend's baby...feeling a little strange when younger people find out my age and I hear, 'You don't look that old!...'remembering the job I wanted and didn't get that went to a less experienced 'younger' woman...

I began to read again in the same way I read when I first became a feminist. I looked for images of older women, began to analyze the literature I have read (and published) and the pattern was very clear. Older women, aging women, women who are past a certain age (which seems to be about 55) are not reflected in our society or are depicted in negative stereotypes. They are also absent from the feminist media and literature, and I have been a part of that erasure.

'Ageism' is insidious and real and functions in different ways toward women and men, working to keep women more powerless and invisible. (p. 7)

Although the problem is articulated throughout the literature, little in-depth research has been conducted on the subject of increased societal invisibility of aging women, other than quantitative measures of the presence of old women on television and in films.

In summary, despite a vast amount of literature currently available on female aging, the focus of this study in the context of social gerontological research, lies in the impact of beauty on fe-

male aging during the transitional period of middle life. Key mid-life studies (Maugans, 1994; Gullette, 1997; Pogrebin, 1996; Sheehy, 1995) and personal accounts (Taylor, 1992; Kaye, 1995) give an awareness to the uniquely female experience of this rite of passage. Within the parameters of this segment of the female life course, issues of beauty and personal attractiveness are examined in that literature.

Division Three: Socio-historical Considerations of Beauty

Socio-historical research is essential for a variety of specific aspects of this study. For example, when examining current anti-aging beauty products, it is essential that the American beauty culture and a historical perspective of cosmetological trends be presented in order to provide contextual bearing and location (Perutz, 1970; Mulvey & Richards, 1998; Peiss, 1998). From the examination of aging beauty in ancient goddess cults (Walker, 1985; Gadon, 1989; Muten, 1994; Wilshire, 1994) to the chronicle of beauty queens (Savage, 1998), from the history of cosmetic surgery to the current trends of cosmetic laser surgery and other medical age-fighting procedures (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Haiken, 1997), a socio-historical perspective grounds this research in its imperative social context.

The subject of beauty has endured evolutionary cycles of social relevance throughout a vast diverseness of cultural and historical epochs. This section of the literature review is not intended

to compress myriad literary and cultural perceptions of beauty into a historical outline. Rather, this segment will highlight major historical stereotypes, beliefs, and attitudes on the subjects of beauty, cosmetic usage, and radical procedures, insofar as they are relevant to this research.

Ancient Regards

Barbara G. Walker (1985) reports on ancient goddess religions in prepatrarchal societies in which the Holy Trinity was comprised of the Virgin (represented by the sacred color white), Mother (represented by the sacred color red), and Crone (represented by the sacred color black). According to Walker, "the same trinitarian pattern can be traced in all the Goddess figures of India, Arabia, Egypt, the Middle East, Aegean and Mediterranean cultures, and among Celtic and Teutonic peoples of northern Europe" (p. 21). Because this female trinity was thought to be cyclically active-always in movement-the godhead representing midlife and aged women, named the Crone, was believed to possessed the powers of both destruction (death) and creation (new life).

"The Crone was the most powerful of the Goddess's three personae. Seen in myth after myth as an old woman, she was yet stronger than any God," reports Walker (1985, p. 29). Her powers were considered so great that her aged physical appearance was envied, not despised, feared, or ignored. According to Walker (1985),

instead of aging normally through their full life cycle, women (today) are constrained to create an illusion that their

growth process stops in the first decade or two of adulthood.

There is an enormous gulf between a society like this and earlier prepatriarchal societies where elder women were fonts of wisdom, law, healing skills, and moral leadership. Their wrinkles would have been badges of honor, not of shame....

Prepatriarchal China, for instance, believed that all inventions in the fields of medicine, alchemy, nutrition, and food preparation were made by ancient mothers inspired by their Hearth Goddess, described as 'a beautiful old woman in red garments.' (pp. 31-32)

Wolf (1991) also notes perception of the beautiful old woman in matriarchal societies when she writes:

Though the pairing of the older rich men with young, 'beautiful' women is taken to be somehow inevitable, in the matriarchal Goddess religions that dominated the Mediterranean from about 25,000 B.C.E. to about 700 B.C.E., the situation was reversed: 'In every culture, the Goddess has many lovers.... The clear pattern is of an older woman with a beautiful but expendable youth-Ishtar and Tammuz, Venus and Adonis, Cybele and Attis, Isis and Osiris...their only function the service of the divine 'womb.' (p. 13)

Only two parts of the Goddess trinity exist in today's culture, according to Halprin (1995), who states:

Western Judeo-Christian culture, which commonly honors maiden and mother, ambivalent though their positions may be, fears and shuns the Crone, who signifies the death-bringing aspect of nature, as essential as birth and growth. This awesome power, so repudiated in our culture, is caricatured in images of grotesque witches, cackling and riding their broomsticks through the air, but it was once respected, even worshiped, as it still is in some African cultures as Oya, a powerful Yoruba Goddess. (p. 81)

Egyptian Beauty

Ancient Egyptian history spans some 5,600 years, ending with the defeat of the beautiful Cleopatra in 31 B.C. According to Donnan (1972),

Cleopatra, back in 50 B.C., prepared herself for a typical day of political intrigue by painting a generous amount of black kohl above her eyes, stroking green kohl below them, thickening her dark lashes and brows with more of the black substance made from antimony, and by being rubbed with fragrant, soothing oils...she was at least one of the most glamorous women of any era. (p. 1)

Donnan (1972) continues to state that during Cleopatra's time Egyptian women used crude paints for the eyes, often for medicinal purposes, since eye disease was a problem for that civilization. She states,

but they also painted lips, cheeks, usually with red ocher. A red pigment from henna was applied to hair and nails. The fashionable ladies of Mesopotamia also used red ocher, asafetida, and henna, but the Sumerian women preferred yellow for their cheeks. (p. 6)

The use of ancient cosmetics is made evident through archeological finds of toilet articles, dating as far back as 3500 B.C. When the tomb of Tutankhamen was opened, Howard Carter and other eyewitnesses saw and smelled aromatics existing from the time of his rule in 1350 B.C. (Donnan, 1972).

"Although the possibility that cosmetic art began in China is a very real one, solid evidence of its beginning is found in Egypt," states Donnan (1972, p. 4). References to female Egyptian beauty are numerous and detailed. According to Bax's research (1946, cited in Miller, 1997),

the ideal Egyptian woman possessed long, lustrous and often dark-blue eyes. Women painted their lids with kohl, a black substance, partly as a precaution against the glare of the African sun. They frequently also drew dark formal lines from the outside corner of the eye almost to the ear: and at an early period some women (of the Old Kingdom) used green paint on the underlid.... Her fingers also are long, and the upper class carefully painted their nails. (pp. 243-244)

Nefertiti, whose name means "the Beautiful One has Come," is another prototype of ancient Egyptian beauty. Her painted limestone head was located in the Berlin Museum at the time of Bax's research. He states (cited in Miller, 1997) that

Nefertiti had long, languorous eyes, a delicate nose, a fastidious mouth, an out-thrust, pointed chin and a lovely jaw-line which any woman might envy. One authority goes so far as to say that her portraits, 'when young, prove her to have been one of the most beautiful women of any period of the world's history,' a verdict with which few persons will quarrel. (p. 245)

According to Donnan (1972), the average Egyptian man during the reign of King Rameses III demanded cosmetics. She states that

it was not unheard of for the Egyptian man on the street to insist upon a fair ration of cosmetics. During the reign of King Ramese III, workers in the Theban necropolis went out on strike because, they said, they lacked sufficient ointment. No one, it seemed, should have to work under such awful conditions. There was no doubt that the ancient Egyptians accepted as fact the necessity of using ointments and aromatic oils for all classes of people. (p. 4)

Beauty in Greek Culture

Ancient Greek culture based its ideals of beauty on the Canon of Polyclitus, according to Vlahogiannis (Montserrat, 1998), who states that

these (beauty) ideals were codified in the so-called 'Canon of Polyclitus,' which served as the theoretical and sculptural model for the idealisation of body during the classical period. Written in the second half of the fifth century BCE, the Canon represented the body as a measure of beauty and perfection that was available to all, not only kings and heroes. The perfect body was the result of balance (symmetria) and harmony (harmonia), perfect proportions being a gift of nature, while ugliness was a lack of this balance. (p. 21)

Vlahogiannis also cites third-century BCE Stoic philosopher

Chrysippus and the Hippocratic corpus as equating illness and bodily deformity or lack of strength with hateful ugliness. This emphasis on symmetry, harmony, and balance survives to this day, as seen in recent scientific attempts to define and quantify human beauty. The previous chapter on the definition of beauty links these ancient concepts to modern conceptualizations.

Archaic and classical Greeks perceived beauty as "a gift of the gods and was often prized accordingly in religious ritual," according to Vlahogiannis (Montserrat, 1998, p. 37), who references the phenomenon of Greek male and female beauty competitions (*kallisteion*) which were used to select excellence, and contrast physical perfection to physical deviance and disability.

During the fifth century, emphasis on beauty shifted for men, from physical attributes to bodily strength. For women, however, the beauty remained exclusively external, and was manipulated to perform a definite social function to differentiate men from women, men from boys, reputable from disreputable women. Vlahogiannis also states (Montserrat, 1998), that

this shift to the focus on superficial beauty of women is further refined during the fifth century as social conventions developed to distinguish 'respectable' women from their 'disreputable' sisters by means of appearance. Contrived beauty, such as elaborate coiffures or the use of cosmetics, becomes a hallmark of the prostitute. This is a far cry from the elaborate toilet of the respectable goddess Hera in the *Iliad*. What links the image of Hera and that of the disreputable women is a male anxiety that such women are deceptive and dangerous. Their outward physical deceptions thus symbolise and advertise their innate deceptive nature. (p. 50)

As this research reveals, the demands on women to remain young

and beautiful at all costs and by all means are real, with tangent ramifications of punishments and rewards. When artificial means are used to achieve the appearance of youthfulness and beauty, however, women become suspect of deceptive character at best, questionable morals, sexual wantonness, and prostitution, at worst. This ancient Greek notion has survived throughout history.

The Romans imitated the Greek and Egyptian tenets on cosmetic usage. According to Donnan (1972),

busy with other matters, the Romans paid little notice to cosmetics until they moved into the area of southern Italy occupied by the Greeks. Then it was a good thing to be shared, and by the time of Nero, painting and powdering was definitely the thing to do. White lead and chalk whitened skin, Egyptian kohl darkened eyelids and lashes, fucus (rouge) was used on lips and cheeks, psilotrum was used as a depilatory, barley flour, and butter were used to discourage blemishes, and the prettiest Romans around were those whose teeth were polished with pumice stone. (p. 7)

Issues of cosmetic surgery must also take their place in the review of ancient beauty practices. According to Woodforde (Miller, 1997),

people have been having facial operations since civilization began. Noses, for example, were being restored and repaired in India thousands of years ago. The Roman doctor Cornelius Celsus drew on Indian experience for his work and for his book De Medicina of A.D. 30, in which he wrote about plastic surgery for noses, lips and ears (the first writings about such operations in surgical literature). It must be said, though, that these operations were to deal with injuries and gross defects of nature and not just to concoct good looks. Terrors, needless to say, were involved for the patients. (p. 14)

Biblical Considerations of Beauty

The use of ointments and fragrant smelling oils can be found

throughout the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. The ancient Israelites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Sumerians, and Syrians used cosmetics and perfumes "frequently and freely," according to Donnan (1972, pp. 4-5).

In the Old Testament, Proverbs 27:9a states, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart." The great love poetry of The Song of Solomon makes frequent mention of spices, ointments, perfumes, and powders of the merchant. Chapter 4, (King James Version) verses 10-16 state:

How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! And the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all the trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits. (King James Version)

In the New Testament, the life of Jesus begins with three wise men from the east bringing the most precious and highly valued gifts. Gold was one understandable gift, but it is of interest for this research that the remaining two gifts, frankincense and myrrh, were gum resins from Arabia and Africa, both used in the creation of perfume and incense. The great value of these cosmetic essences fashioned a gift suitable for a king.

Later in the New Testament, the adult Jesus was in Bethany, eating at the home of a leper named Simon. A woman entered with an

alabaster box of expensive perfume made of spikenard or pure nard. She broke the box and anointed Jesus' head with the perfume (according to Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9). She poured it on Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair (John 12:1-8). Members of the dinner party became angry, questioning why she was so wasteful with the expensive perfume. They objected, saying that it could have been sold for 300 silver coins and the money given to the poor. Jesus' reactions to the use of the perfume was clearly favorable, as He stated, "Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me" (Mark 14:6, Good News Bible).

Even after the crucifixion of Jesus, women prepared spices and fragrant ointments to anoint His body which laid in a burial tomb or sepulcher. One New Testament account states (Luke 23:55-56; Luke 24:1-2, King James Version):

And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

Throughout the Bible, physical beauty is assigned to both men and women. "But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him" (II Samuel 14:25, King James Version). In the book of Esther, King Ahasuerus attempts to show off his beautiful wife, Queen Vashti, at a prolonged feast

where royal wine was served in abundance in vessels of gold. The

Queen had other ideas. Esther 1:10-12 states:

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king, to bring Vashti the queen before the king with the royal crown, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on. But Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

Fearing women might imitate the Queen's rebellious nature, the king sent out decrees throughout all his provinces, in multiple languages, stating that "every man should bear rule in his own house" (Esther 1:22b). Fair, young virgins were then sought to replace Queen Vashti. In preparations to meet the King, the young virgins were purified with an extravagant, year-long treatment of fragrances and cosmetics. Esther 2:12 (King James Version) states:

Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of women;)

Esther became the queen, because she "obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her" (Esther 2:15b). Once again, the value of physical beauty and use of cosmetic treatments is exemplified.

Gray hair is praised on old men, but there is no mention of its appeal on old women. Proverbs 21:29 states, "The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head" (King James Version).

Beauty is also equated with vanity, however, in such verses as Proverbs 31:30, which reads, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (King James Version). The New Testament is even more explicit in grounding the locus of beauty internally, rather than externally, with artificial beauty aids. I Peter 3:3 (Good News Bible) states that

you should not use outward aids to make yourselves beautiful, such as the way you fix your hair, or the jewelry you put on, or the dresses you wear. Instead, your beauty should consist of your true inner self, the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of the greatest value in God's sight.

It is clear that fragrant oils, ointments, perfumes, and cosmetics were used throughout Biblical eras. At times they represented healing, great gifts, religious artifacts, ceremonial preparations, or items for death rituals. At other times, beauty was equated with vanity, especially in cases of artificial beauty treatments used by women.

European Cosmetic Usage

In England, cosmetics were imported from the East as explorations and travel took place. According to Donnan (1972),

the crusaders brought secrets of the Near Eastern harem back to Britain and their womenfolk were delighted with the fragrant cosmetics. Sweet coffers held the cosmetics owned by the ladies of the realm and were considered a necessary part of the furnishings of the bedroom. Lovely complexions during the time of Elizabeth I were thought to come from a brisk rub-down with wine following a steaming bath. For those less fortunate, milk had to suffice. (p. 7)

Women's delight in such products was met with such fears of female deceitfulness and moral deception, that cosmetic usage was

equated to witchcraft and grounds for a divorce. According to Donnan (1972), this was true to such an extent that the British Parliament introduced the following bill in 1770:

That all women, whatever age, rank, profession or degree, whether virgins, maids, or widows, that shall, from and after such Act, impose upon, seduce, and betray into matrimony, any of his Majesty's subjects, by the scents, paints, cosmetic washes, artificial teeth, false hair, Spanish wool, iron stays, hoops, high-heeled shoes, bolstered hips, shall incur the penalty of the law in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanors and that the marriage, upon conviction, shall stand null and void. (pp. 7-8)

It is important to note that women of all ages are included in this edict, whether they be virgins, maids, or widows. Older women are not exempted from caveats against beauty deception.

In other portions of Europe, the use of cosmetics was widely dictated by the perspective of the ruling king. Donnan (1972) also states that

in Italy, France, and Spain, cosmetics also went through on-again, off-again popularity, mainly due to the whims of rulers reigning at the time. France's Louis XIII approved and cosmetics were popular; Louis XIV disapproved and they were unpopular. (p. 8)

Ageism was rampant in sixteenth century Europe, according to Minois (1987), due to the Renaissance influence which loved youth and hated old age. Minois states that

by re-establishing its links with ancient Greece, the Renaissance instinctively rediscovered the Hellenes' horror of old age. Far from seeking to conceal, camouflage or ignore it, however, the Renaissance displayed and exposed it, showing all its repugnant aspects. At the same time, knowing how useless such efforts were, the Renaissance railed against old age, blackening, demeaning and damning it. (p. 249)

Despite the pejorative depictions found throughout literature

of the period, the creation and utilization of cosmetics was an inherent art expected in the repertoire of European women during the 17th and 18th centuries. According to Peiss (1998),

Englishwomen in the 1600s and 1700s knew 'cosmetical physic,' as it was called, just as they understood how to cook, preserve, garden, and care for the sick. Blending housewifery, therapeutics, and aesthetics, cosmetic preparation was a branch of useful knowledge women were expected to master. They learned to identify herbs, gather roots, distill their essences, and compound simple skin remedies. Clearing the complexion, producing good color, or taking away the effects of smallpox, these cosmetics combined the arts of beautifying with the science of bodily care. (p. 12)

Eighteenth century Western European men adorned their bodies in ways very similar to women. Ruffled clothing, powdered wigs, and makeup adorned both genders until The French Revolution (called The Great Masculine Renunciation) forced men to leave salons for offices and factories. Their success was then measured, not by their own adornment, but by the makeup, jewelry, fashion, and beauty of their wives.

Beauty in the American Colonies

The 1770 British bill forbidding the use of cosmetics to deceive men was adopted by the colony of Pennsylvania, and cosmetic usage was discouraged throughout most of the early American colonies. Donnan (1972) states that

during colonial times such (cosmetic) use varied in different parts of the country, depending upon the social climate of the area. In Puritan New England, cosmetics were banned on moral grounds; in the southern colonies of French origin, cosmetics were used freely. (p. 8)

The 19th Century

In the United States during the early 19th century, the Industrial Revolution again differentiated the social roles and expectations of men and women. With this dichotomy came a highly increased tolerance of femininity, as expressed through cosmetically enhanced beauty.

Beauty in women was not defined in terms of a wide variety of facial colors. The use of so-called paints or enamels indicated sexual promiscuity or prostitution. Rather, morally upstanding women used washes and masking paints known as lily white, white washes, and white cosmetics throughout the 19th century. According to Peiss (1998), "...skin whiteners remained the most popular cosmetic throughout the nineteenth century. Women ranked white powder-typically ground starch, rice, or chalk-most acceptable on sanitary and practical grounds" (p. 40).

The whitened flesh was also considered to be an indication of upper-class status, as it indicated lack of outdoor work performed by those of lower status. Some attempts at whitening, however, proved extremely hazardous to women's health. Again, Peiss (1998) notes that

women applying dangerous lead-based whitening lotions like Bloom of Youth began to appear in medical case records after the Civil War.... Going to great lengths to conceal their cosmetics use, they initially were diagnosed with hysteria or reproductive disorders, the usual suspects in Victorian women's ailments. Only after repeated questioning, their condition worsening, would they admit the truth. (p. 41)

In 1858, Madame Lola Montez published The Arts of Beauty: or Secrets of a Ladies' Toilet. Her text reveals that whiteness was a global concept of beauty throughout the 19th century, and the attempted achievement thereof was repeatedly detrimental to women's health. She writes:

In Bohemia I have seen the ladies flock to arsenic springs and drink the waters, which gave their skin a transparent whiteness; but there is a terrible penalty attached to this folly; for when once they habituate themselves to the practice, they are obliged to keep it up the rest of their days, or death would speedily follow. The beauties of the court of George I were in the habit of taking minute doses of quicksilver to obtain a white and fair complexion; and I have read in Pepys's Diary of some ridiculous scenes which occurred at dancing parties from this practice. Young girls of the present day sometimes eat such things as chalk, slate, and tea-grounds to give themselves a white complexion. I have no doubt that this is a good way to get a pale complexion; for it destroys the health, and surely drives out of the face the natural roses of beauty, and, instead of a bright complexion, produces a wan and sickly one. (pp. 79-80)

Naomi Wolf (1991) notes the importance of this era, compounded by the development of nascent inventions:

Most of our assumptions about the way women have always thought of 'beauty' date from no earlier than the 1830s, when the cult of domesticity was first consolidated and the beauty index invented.

For the first time new technologies could reproduce-in fashion plates, daguerreotypes, tintypes, and rotogravures-images of how women should look. In the 1840s the first nude photographs of prostitutes were taken; advertisements using images of 'beautiful' women first appeared in mid-century. Copies of classical artworks, postcards of society beauties and royal mistresses, Currier and Ives prints, and porcelain figurines flooded the separate sphere to which middle-class women were confined. (p. 15)

Kathy Peiss (1998) also illuminates the effect of the published word on cosmetic treatment in the mid-19th century. She states:

Women's access to information about cosmetics expanded even more with the publishing boom of the 1840s and 1850s. Ladies' guides to beauty and fashion self-consciously addressed bourgeois women-and all those who aspired to that rank. Like etiquette books, they explained how to navigate the genteel social world by cultivating a well-groomed face and form; cheaper paperback editions carried the same message to female millworkers and domestic servants. (p. 14)

New discoveries of this era also had great impact on the world of cosmetic surgery. According to Woodforde (Miller, 1997) modern cosmetic surgery began approximately in 1885 when various local anaesthetics replaced the less effective laughing gas. Woodforde reports that surgeon John Roe of Rochester, New York, published an essay in 1887 describing the protocol for a nose job. Howard Kelly of Baltimore removed fifteen pounds of fat in an abdominal surgery in 1889. Eugene Hollander of Berlin performed the first face lift in 1901 for a Polish aristocrat, and an actress also experienced the procedure in 1906, performed by Erich Lexer, a German sculptor, painter, and surgeon.

Despite these advances in technology and procedures, Peiss (1998) reports that "there was no identifiable 'cosmetics industry' in the nineteenth century, no large and distinct sector of the economy devoted to beauty products. In 1849, the total value of manufactured toiletries throughout the United States was estimated at only \$355,000 (p. 19).

The 20th Century

This soon changed, and cosmetic sales boomed between 1870 and 1900. According to Peiss (1998), the number of trademarks register-

ed for beauty preparations numbered 450 between 1890 and 1924, with the majority being filed after 1910. These products found recognition via the emergence of six women's magazines which appeared between 1885 and 1910. The so-called Big Six are Ladies' Home Journal, McCall's, Delineator, Woman's Home Companion, Pictorial Review, and Good Housekeeping. As Freedman (1986) states, "By the turn of this century, the commercialism of female beauty was evident in the burgeoning fashion industry, the growing numbers of salons, the increasing use of cosmetics, and the marketing efforts that accompanied all of these" (pp. 62-63).

When the new century arrived, it attempted to leave behind the Victorian morals which equated cosmetics with sexual inappropriateness. Peiss (1999) states that

the new mass-market cosmetic industry celebrated itself as both cause and consequence of women's modernity and emancipation. Victorian codes of morality and taste had constrained women in the nineteenth century, but now the 'movement for personal freedom' licensed the systematic cultivation of beauty. One trade journal applauded Americans' dawning realization 'that there is no sane connection between morals and cosmetics.' Cosmetics were 'merely symbols of the social revolution that has gone on' the spiritual and mental forces that women have used to break away from conventions and to forward the cause of women's freedom,' explained beauty writer Nell Vinick. (p. 135)

However, not all cosmetic usage was favorably received. According to Peiss (1998),

still, painted women remained spectacles to a significant extent before World War I, conspicuous among the curiosities and commotion of urban life....Working women were sent home for appearing on the job with an 'artificial complexion'; the manager of Macy's fired one rouged saleswoman in 1913 with the comment that 'he was not running a theatrical troupe but a department store.' Public authorities tried in vain to pre-

serve the older ideal of womanly beauty. In 1915, a Kansas legislator proposed to make it a misdemeanor for women under the age of forty-four to wear cosmetics 'for the purpose of creating a false impression.' Several years later, police-women in Newark collared teenage girls at the train stations, 'overawed them by a display of their police badges, and forced them to wash rouge and powder from their faces.' Juvenile courts granted parental requests to bar their delinquent daughters from making up. In these circumstances, paint still implied sexual enticement and trickery, a false face. (p. 55)

Issues of female beauty and a full range of cosmetic concealment of aging were present at the turn of the century. A Pompeian skin cream ad featured an adult daughter reassuring her aging mother with the words, "You're All Right." The same company, in 1923, published an ad depicting a young daughter exclaiming, "You're getting younger every day!" to her mother poised in front of a dressing table mirror. The daughter and mother were portrayed with the same face. One industry analyst stated, "Thanks to cosmetics, the mother of today is more the big sister and enjoys and appreciates the pleasures of her daughter" (Peiss, 1998, p. 141).

At the turn of the century, a radical medical procedure was employed to help women remain younger-looking. In 1903 a notable treatment for the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles appeared. Robert Gersumy of Vienna found an alternative to cosmetic surgery. Instead of cutting, Gersumy injected paraffin wax under the facial skin to remove wrinkles. This treatment did remove wrinkles for a short time, but, as can be imagined, the procedure caused severe discomfort and grotesque results as the paraffin melted and shifted. According to Woodforde (Miller, 1997),

such well-known doctors as Joseph Safian of New York recall

patients begging them in the 1920s to deal with the effects of paraffin injected into the face. Hundreds of cosmetic surgeons struggled almost hopelessly to remove masses of facial tissue infiltrated by solidified paraffin wax: the whole permeated part had to be taken away. Indeed, work on paraffinomas, as they were called, constituted a major part of the early cosmetic surgeon's practice. (p. 15)

The 1920s

Face lifts and cosmetic surgery were the rage in the 1920s. According to Woodforde (Miller, 1997), "Jacques Joseph of Berlin was genuinely concerned about the poor and the oppressed, and in 1921 gave accounts of wrinkle-removal to help prematurely-aged working women of forty-five to get employment" (p. 19). This theme is revived in the late 1980s.

During the flapper era, women's independence was socially exemplified by health, athletic ability, and vibrant make-up colors. Faludi (1991) states that

in the late 1910s and early 1920s, female athletes began to eclipse movie stars as the nation's beauty archetypes; Coco Chanel's tan launched a nationwide vogue in ruddy outdoor looks; and Helena Rubinstein's brightly tinted cosmetics made loud and flamboyant colors acceptable. (p. 204)

Radio advertisements greatly increased profit margins. According to Peiss (1998), "Between 1927 and 1930, the investment of cosmetics and toiletries firms in advertising on the radio networks climbed remarkably, from \$300,000 to \$3.2 million annually" (p. 105). Lady Esther cosmetics, responding to the Depression, delivered a cheaper product and realized a 400% sales increase within a year of its first broadcast.

The theoretical application of this research is evident in a 1929 campaign by Armand entitled, "Find Yourself." The company published and distributed 250,000 booklets which included the ad line, "The questions and answers will discover the real you-not as you think you are-but as others see you" (Peiss, 1998, p. 144). A true exemplar of Cooley's Looking Glass theory!

The 1930s

This era of flamboyant colorations was short-lived, however, as Faludi (1991) quickly points out that during the more repressive 1930s, "the beauty press denounced women who tanned their faces and companies fired women who showed up at work sporting flashy makeup colors" (p. 204).

Although women could now select from three thousand face powers and hundreds of rouges on the market (Peiss, 1998, the sentiments at the turn of the century returned, as cosmetics directly effected female employment. According to Peiss (1998),

a 1931 study of college women similarly reported that over 85 percent wore rouge, lipstick, face powder, and nail polish, and spent about twelve to thirteen dollars a year on these items. Young stenographers, typists, and clerks also applied color regularly to cheeks and lips, transforming the painted face into a business uniform. At Macy's, working women were 'the largest consumer of units of rouge and lipstick,' crowding onto the selling floor during their lunch hour, sniffing powder compacts and 'pay[ing] anything for Tangee, Incarnat, Indelible or Rubinstein's lipstick.' Even high school girls had begun buying cosmetics. (p. 171)

The medicalization of cosmetics is also evident in the early 1930s, as makeup became linked with psychology and psychiatry.

According to Peiss (1998),

psychoanalytic terms began to course through the trade press. Those 'who are conscious of their poor appearance' suffered from an inferiority complex, one psychiatrist judged. But help was literally at hand, industry spokesman Everett McDonough promised, for 'many a neurotic case has been cured with the deft application of a lipstick.' (p. 156)

The 1940s and 1950s

With men away, fighting World War II, women in the early to mid-1940s again surfaced as independents in the work force and society in general. Not surprisingly, their makeup colors again brightened and tanned female faces reappeared.

When the war was over, women were pink-slipped back into the home. Their sudden lack of presence in the work force during the late 1940s and 1950s was reflected in the paling of their cosmetics, exemplifying their societal invisibility. Faludi (1991) notes that

with the war over, however, the beauty industry restored that girl--encouraged by a new breed of motivational research consultants who advised cosmetics companies to paint more passive images of femininity. Beauty instructed women to inflate their breasts with padding or silicone, to front their hair with carcinogenic dyes, to make themselves look paler by whitening their face and lips with titanium--to emulate that most bleached and medicalized glamour girl of them all, Marilyn Monroe. (p. 204)

The 1960s and 1970s

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960's and 1970's rejected the use of cosmetics as a sexist tool of the patriarchy, used to enslave women in subordinate roles. At the 1968 Miss America pageant, a Freedom Trash Can was provided by picketers for women to

dispose of their bras, girdles, wigs, curlers, and cosmetics.

The Women's Liberation Movement was set into action and new Second Wave feminists soon rejected the use of cosmetic products. During the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, rejection of parental values, attitudes, and appearances gained admission and acceptance in the young and rebellious generation of hippies, rebels, and Women's Libbers. Women daring to discard the feminine tools of their mothers were revered more highly, taken more seriously within the Movement. Their newly found feminist epistemology was no longer located on the pages of some nascent text. They had embodied the feminist concepts by daring to allow their own faces to show rebellion against the patriarchy by not wearing makeup, not shaving, not adorning their hair. They rejected traditional male expectations of the female gender, in mind, as well as in bodily appearances. These actions did not go unnoticed in cosmetic company sales records.

According to Faludi (1991),

since the rise of the women's movement in the '70s, cosmetics and fragrance companies had suffered a decade of flat-to-declining sales, hair-product merchandisers had fallen into a prolonged slump, and hairdressers had watched helplessly as masses of female customers who were opting for simple low-cost cuts defected to discount unisex salons. In 1981, Revlon's earnings fell for the first time since 1968; by the following year, the company's profits had plunged a record 40 percent. (pp. 202-203)

The 1980s

Cosmetic and perfume companies scrambled to raise sales in the 1980s. Three basic advertising strategies were apparent during the

early 1980s, according to Faludi (1991). The first tactic employed flooded the market with five hundred high-priced perfume brands carrying designer names. This pandering to women at the highest ends of the socio-economic continuum did not pay off.

The second strategy involved pitching traditional marriage. Estee Lauder's scent labeled Beautiful and Bijan for Women's advertisements highlighted marriage as the most important moment in a woman's life. Again, the campaign flopped.

The third method employed involved the metamorphosis of adult women into innocent young girls. Faludi (1991) states, "Women in the fragrance ads who weren't having babies were being turned into them-as one company after another selected a prepubescent girl as the new icon of femininity" (p. 207).

Results were disastrous. According to Faludi (1991),

...none of these marketing strategies paid off. The flood of upscale scents, in fact, caused fragrance sales to fall in 1986-the first drop in years. At prestige outlets, sales of the upscale concentrated perfumes fell by more than \$20 million between 1980 and 1985. At Avon, by 1988, quarterly earnings were dropping 57 percent, less than half its beauty profits were coming from U.S. sales, and the company had to fire one-third of its sales managers. (p. 207)

By the late 1980s, however, the cosmetic marketing strategies struck gold. Marketing strategies targeted and attacked the "liberated" woman who had rejected their products in the 1960's and 1970's and were realizing the fruits of employment equality in the 1980's.

A 1988 Nivea skin cream ad asked, "Is your face paying the price of success?" Mademoiselle magazine warned that "The impact of work stress...can play havoc with your complexion," and "high-

achieving women are most at risk whose comely appearance can be ravaged by executive stress" (Faludi, 1991, p. 202). Faludi (1991) continues:

In ad after ad, the beauty industry hammered home its version of the backlash thesis: women's professional progress had downgraded their looks; equality had created worry lines and cellulite. This message was barely updated from a century earlier, when the late Victorian beauty press had warned women that their quest for higher education and employment was causing 'a general lapse of attractiveness' and 'spoiling complexions.'

The beauty merchants incited fear about the cost of women's occupational success largely because they feared, rightly, that that success had cost them-in profits. (p. 202)

The treatment for stress- and success-induced deterioration of beauty was a new cosmetic phenomenon which still grips the industry today. Women spend extravagant amounts of money on cosmetics. The once faltering industry now turns multi-billion dollar annual profits.

What technique has done so much in less than a decade? The cosmetic industry developed and promoted a modern-day cure or treatment which sent its sales soaring! This so-called cure, curiously enough, is not make-up or cosmetics. It is the sale of anti-aging beauty products, developed with medical terminology and sometimes Food and Drug Administration approval. What, then, is the disease? It must be the natural aging process in women.

In 1988 the Journal of the American Medical Association suggested that Retin-A, a prescription acne cream, could make sun-damaged skin look more youthful. Marketed without FDA approval, but with laboratory proof of severe face-burnings, cancer in mice,

with the oral version of the drug, Accutane, linked to birth defects, Retin-A sales none-the-less jumped 350 percent, from \$20 million to \$67 million a year (Newsweek, March 5, 1990).

The 1980's Ultima II ads issued the caveat, "Premature Aging: Don't Let It Happen To You." Oil of Olay focused on Baby Boomer women who were candidates for this disease of aging, but without the significant symptoms older women displayed. Their middle-aged models boldly stated, "I don't intend to grow old gracefully...I intend to fight it every step of the way." Chanel ads told women that fighting wrinkles was a "smart career move" (Faludi, 1991, pp. 209-210).

The 1990s

But surely, a decade later, these medicalized tactics are not still employed. Intelligent women of the 1990's cannot be hoodwinked into believing that the natural aging process is a disease which must be treated by medicalized anti-aging beauty products... or can they? Are women unquestioningly resigning themselves to the pronouncements that gray hair and wrinkles are ugly and must not only be dreaded, but medically treated by anti-aging products?

In 1992 Eugene Van Scott, a private-practice dermatologist collaborated with Avon to develop the product called Anew. It contained 4% glycolic acid, claimed anti-aging properties, and rang up \$70 million in first-year sales. By 1994 Avon introduced Anew Intensive, doubling the Alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) content to 8%. "No

studies have identified the lowest effective concentration or shown that a higher one is better" (U.S. News & World Report, June 6, 1994). Even though the FDA's office of Cosmetics and Color received complaints of serious burns from AHA facial peels, the beauty industry continued full steam ahead, nearly doubling the acid concentration anti-aging treatments on the market in less than two years (American Health, July/August, 1994).

The March 1997 issue of the upscale magazine Town & Country carried an article (not an advertisement) entitled "Dream Cream?" The article, peppered with medical terminology states:

Estee Lauder's newest weapon in the war against aging incorporates a little bit of each of its successful treatment products. The deluxe Re-Nutriv Intensive Lifting Creme (\$150) provides intensive therapy for the skin--intensive recovery (with anti-oxidants to help minimize past sun damage); intensive lifting (with botanicals and marine extracts to boost collagen for firmer skin); intensive hydration (special plant derivatives to help sustain moisture) and intensive smoothing (AHAs to smooth away dead skin cells and minimize fine lines and wrinkles). The price, admittedly, is high--but then again, it may be the only product you'll need.

In 1996 the medicalization of anti-aging products resulted in a \$20 billion dollar cosmetic industry in the United States. This is followed closely by the \$300 million dollar a year plastic surgery business, also devoted to the would-be ageless women seeking the fountain of youth. Faludi (1991) states:

By 1985, a cosmetics trade association survey of skin-care professionals found that 97 percent had noticed that their clients were markedly more worried and upset about the threat of wrinkles than just a few years earlier. By 1986, skin-cream annual sales had doubled in five years to \$1.9 billion. And for the first time, many department-store cosmetic counters were selling more skin-treatment products than color make-up. At I. Magnin, these treatments made up 70 percent of all

cosmetic sales. (p. 210)

Already in 1990, the March 5th issue of Newsweek stated that Americans spend \$2 billion a year on nostrums to ward off aging, and tens of billions more to disguise its effects with everything from hair dye to plastic surgery. "The market is exploding, thanks to anxious baby boomers staring middle age in the mirror."

Further examination of this medicalization follows under The Medicalization of Anti-Aging Products and Procedures in the Division Five: Female Midlife Body and Health Issues.

Division Four: Feminist Examinations

Feminist exploratory research has, perhaps understandably, shied away from issues of female beauty. Patriarchal society has historically defined women only in terms of their reproductive capacity and physical attractiveness. Nascent feminism of the late 1960s and early 1970s invested decades of consciousness-raising tactics to elevate the perception of woman as more than just the physical, more than prospective beauty queens or failures in that pursuit.

In Second Wave feminist rebirth, women fought the public ridicule that those who joined feminist ranks were physically too unattractive to capture a male mate and reap the patriarchal benefits of the traditional family. These feminists fought the sour-grapes stereotype of societally shunned women who joined forces to commiserate their loss of beauty, physical attractiveness, and its

societal rewards. The popularity of the aging Betty Friedan was preempted by the youthful, and very beautiful Gloria Steinem, who had the inherent ability to squash this too-ugly stereotype abounding in the media.

First Wave Feminists

This research on feminist perspectives of aging beauty will engage the writings of early First Wave feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft (1792), who wrote A Vindication of the Rights of Women, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1898), author of Women and Economics.

When Wollstonecraft published A Vindication of the Rights of Women in 1792, the text was so popular it was reprinted within the first year. Shortly after the first publication, editions appeared in Dublin, Paris, and America. Her work was undoubtedly provocative in its day, and has endured 175 years of republication (Poston, 1988).

Although often resigned to classical feminist thought, Wollstonecraft becomes a remarkable source when read for perspectives on female beauty. Even in this early writing, Wollstonecraft knew that beauty was intrinsically linked to the aging process in women. In a striking analogy, Wollstonecraft (1792) writes

the conduct and manners of women, in fact, evidently prove that their minds are not in a healthy state; for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have

arrived at maturity. (p. 7)

And with the use of the same imagery, she states, "...without cultivating their (women's) understandings, they are taken out of their sphere of duties, and made ridiculous and useless when the short-lived bloom of beauty is over..." (p. 11).

Wollstonecraft footnotes this statement, saying, "A lively writer, I cannot recollect his name, asks what business women turned of forty have to do in the world?" (p. 11). Additionally, on the issue of female aging, she states, "...when the pretty freshness of youth is worn off, these artless graces become studied airs, and disgust every person of taste" (p. 69). She continues that

at twenty the beauty of both sexes is equal; but the libertinism of man leads him to make the distinction, and the superannuated coquettes are commonly of the same opinion; for, when they can no longer inspire love, they pay for the vigour and vivacity of youth. (p. 70)

Wollstonecraft also addresses issues of cosmetic adornment as a pathetic female attempt at youthful beauty, stating, "Taught from infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison" (p. 44). Later, she develops the concept of women as plumed birds who meet their demise when age diminishes their beauty, and subsequent power.

According to Wollstonecraft,

And, why do they not discover, when 'in the noon of beauty's power,' that they are treated like queens only to be deluded by hollow respect, till they are led to resign, or not assume, their natural prerogatives? Confined then in cages like the feathered race, they have nothing to do but to plume themselves, and stalk with mock majesty from perch to perch. It

is true they are provided with food and raiment, for which they neither toil nor spin; but health, liberty, and virtue, are given in exchange....

The passion of men have thus placed women on thrones, and, till mankind become more reasonable, it is to be feared that women will avail themselves to the power which they attain with the least exertion, and which is the most indisputable. They will smile, yes, they will smile, though told that in beauty's empire is no mean, and woman, either slave or queen, is quickly scorn'd when not ador'd.

But the adoration comes first, and the scorn (with age) is not anticipated. (p. 56)

Wollstonecraft saw within her own culture that women were urged to develop beauty above all else. She knew that inner, intellectual beauty in women was secondary in power to physical attractiveness in the eyes of men and her society. She states that

...a pretty woman, as an object of desire, is generally allowed to be so by men of all descriptions; whilst a fine woman, who inspires more sublime emotions by displaying intellectual beauty, may be overlooked or observed with indifference, by those men who find their happiness in the gratification of their appetites. (p. 47)

Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft repeatedly notes the fallacy of investing in beauty, which is such a short-term source of power within the female life course perspective. Clearly, she states, "...if women do not resign the arbitrary power of beauty, they will prove that they have less mind than man" (p. 22).

According to Wollstonecraft,

women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of a man; and they should be beautiful, everything else is needless, for, at least, twenty years of their lives. (p. 19)

Wollstonecraft insists that the only way for women to address the loss of beauty's power with age is to develop the mind and the physical attractiveness, as men do. She states,

I apprehend that they reason on false ground, led astray by male prejudice, which deems beauty the perfection of woman—mere beauty of features and complexion, the vulgar acceptation of the word, whilst male beauty is allowed to have connection with the mind. (p. 69)

She goes on to say that "...though beauty may gain a heart, it cannot keep it, even while the beauty is in full bloom, unless the mind lend, at least, some graces" (p. 104). And, "...how can they discover that true beauty and grace must arise from the play of the mind?" (p. 118).

Wollstonecraft repeatedly warns female readers that investing the totality of oneself in ephemeral youthful beauty leads to societal depreciation in mid- and late life. She insists that in addition to beauty, the mind, reason, and rationality must be developed.

Men have superior strength of body; but were it not for mistaken notions of beauty, women would acquire sufficient to enable them to earn their own subsistence, the true definition of independence; and to bear those bodily inconveniencies and exertions that are requisite to strengthen the mind. (p. 85)

Issues of female aging, beauty, and its societal ramifications were essential to Wollstonecraft's feminist perspectives. The loss of this topic of research in subsequent centuries would be monumental to this First Wave feminist.

One of the last places one might attempt to find feminist perspectives on aging beauty is in a text entitled Women and Economics,

written more than a century ago. Yet First Wave feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1898) incorporates issues of beauty (often termed sex-attraction) throughout her dissertation on the economic status of women. She begins from that premise that "we are the only animal species in which the female depends on the male for food, the only animal species in which the sex-relation is also an economic relation" (p. 5).

Working from a species-oriented perspective, Gilman writes of primary and secondary sex-characteristics. Primary consists of reproductive organs and functions. Secondary characteristics are the horns of the stag or the plumage of the peacock. Her point is that no species, save female humans, depend upon exterior beauty for survival. Gilman (1898) states:

All the minor characteristics of beard or mane, comb, wattles, spurs, gorgeous color or superior size, which distinguishes male from the female,-these are the distinctions of sex. These distinctions are of use to the species through reproduction only, the processes of race-preservation. They are not of use in self-preservation. The creature is not profited personally by his mane or crest or tail-feathers: they do not help him get his dinner or kill his enemies. (pp. 32-33)

Gilman introduces the Theory of Sex-Ornament in which the human female species adorns herself, not only to secure a mate, but to survive via the sole support of that mate. She states that

she (female human being) now met the influence of natural selection acting indirectly through the male, and developing, of course, the faculties required to secure and obtain a hold on him. Needless to state that these faculties were those of sex-attraction.... For many, many centuries she had no other hold, no other assurance of being fed. (pp. 62-63)

Issues of beauty (sex-attraction), age, and power are intrinsic

sically linked for Gilman, who writes:

The young girl had a prospective value, and was maintained for what should follow; but the old woman, in more primitive times, had but a poor hold on life....the personal profit of women bears but too close a relation to their power to win and hold the other sex....woman's economic profit comes through the power of sex-attraction. (p. 63)

Gilman states that "wealth, power, social distinction, fame, home and happiness, reputation, ease and pleasure, bread and butter all come to women via their power of beauty or sex-attraction in securing a providing mate" (p. 71). The natural aging process of women, and subsequent reduction of youthful beauty, diminishes a woman's chance of such attainment. She states:

But--she must not even look as if she wanted it! She must not turn her hand over to get it. She must sit passive as the seasons go by, and her 'chances' lessen with each year. Think of the strain on a highly sensitive nervous organism to have so much hang on one thing, to see the possibility of attaining it grow less and less yearly, and to be forbidden to take any step toward securing it! This she must bear with dignity and grace to the end....

To what end? To the end that, if she does not succeed in being chosen, she becomes a thing of mild popular contempt, a human being with no further place in life save as an attachee, a dependent upon more fortunate relatives, an old maid. (pp. 87-88)

Gilman notes that the unfortunate punishment for not being beautiful enough to attract a mate is not only the deprivation of personal power and societal rewards, but that it brings with it the scorn of the entire species.

...failure to marry is held a clear proof of failure to attract, a lack of sex-value. And, since they have no other value, save in a low order of domestic service, they are quite naturally despised. What else is the creature good for, failing in the functions for which it was created? The scorn of male and female alike falls on this sexless thing: she is a

human failure. (p. 90)

In her concluding thoughts on the ramifications of aging beauty on the human female species, Gilman clearly sees the detriment of female consumption of beauty products. This causes injury, not only to women, but to society at large. She states:

Again, the consuming female, debarred from any free production...and her consumption limited mainly to those things which minister to physical pleasure, creates a market for sensuous decoration and personal ornament, for all this is luxurious and enervating, and for a false and capricious variety in such supplies, which operates as a most deadly check to true industry and true art. As the priestess of the temple of consumption, as the limitless demander of things to use up, her economic influence is reactionary and injurious.... Woman, in her false economic position, reacts injuriously upon industry, upon art, upon science, discovery, and progress. (pp. 120-121)

The concept of aging beauty and its concomitant loss of power were cornerstones in the writings of these First Wave feminists. The ensuing lack of attention to these matters by modern-day feminists may, indeed, be a substantive loss.

Second Wave Feminists

Although feminists have been harshly criticized for excluding women of age from their ranks (Macdonald & Rich, 1991), a large number of Second Wave feminists have shifted their focus from sexism in the 1950s to 1970s, and have written extensively on issues of women and aging in the 1990s. Consistent with past research, however, the inclusion of the topic of beauty is often conspicuously deficient.

The following Second Wave feminists are given with titles of their earlier, gender-focused work, and then their later examination

of the female aging process:

Simone de Beauvoir wrote The Second Sex on sexism in 1952 and The Coming of Age on ageism in 1972. Betty Friedan authored the feminist foundational book entitled, The Feminine Mystique in 1963, and The Fountain of Age concerning the aging process in 1993. Robin Morgan wrote Sisterhood is Powerful, another founding text of the Women's Liberation Movement in 1970, a book of feminist poetry entitled Monster in 1972, and a book containing issues of ageism, The Word of a Woman, in 1994.

Early feminist Germaine Greer wrote The Female Eunuch in 1971, but altered her focus to the female aging process when she wrote The Change: Women, Aging and the Menopause in 1991, and The Whole Woman in 1999. Gloria Steinem, original editor of Ms. magazine, wrote Revolution from Within in 1992, and Moving Beyond Words, in 1994. Feminist author Erica Jong wrote Fear of Flying in 1973, but also shifted her focus to female aging in her book Fear of Fifty in 1994. Caroline Bird wrote on sexism in her book Born Female in 1968, and she wrote on female aging in her book Lives of Our Own: Secrets of Salty Old Women, in 1995. Doris Lessing wrote The Golden Notebook in 1962, but wrote on the lives and realities of old women in The Diaries of Jane Somers, 1984, and Love, Again, 1996. Letty Cottin Pogrebin was one of the founding editor of Ms. magazine, and speaks of her own aging process in her book Getting Over Getting Older, published in 1996.

Even the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, who published

the first edition of Our Bodies, Ourselves in 1971, addressed issues of age in Ourselves, Growing Older, 1987, 1994, and includes the chapter "Women Growing Older" in their newest edition, Our Bodies, Ourselves for the New Century, 1998.

deBeauvoir's 1972 book, entitled The Coming of Age, is devoted to historical, biological, and social aging. It is, however, her earlier (1952) book, entitled The Second Sex (in the chapter "From Maturity to Old Age"), which more fully addresses issues pertinent to this research. In this text, she states:

Long before the eventual mutilation (of physical aging), woman is haunted by the horror of growing old. The mature man is involved in enterprises more important than those of love... the changes in his face and body do not destroy his attractiveness. In woman, on the contrary, it is usually toward thirty-five, when all inhibitions have been finally overcome, and full erotic development is attained...to hold her husband and to assure herself of his protection, and to keep most of her jobs, it is necessary for her to be attractive, to please. What is to become of her when she no longer has any hold on him? This is what she anxiously asks herself while she helplessly looks on at the degeneration of this fleshy object which she identifies with herself.

She puts up a battle. But hair-dye, skin treatments, plastic surgery, will never do more than prolong her dying youth. But when the first hints come of that fated and irreversible process which is to destroy the whole edifice built up during puberty, she feels the fatal touch of death itself. (pp. 575-576)

Much of de Beauvoir's early work will be used in the analysis of the research questions in this study. Her haunting observation marks her keen interest in the subject of aging beauty, as she states, "...before the glass stands a woman who in spite of everything has grown one day older since yesterday" (p. 581).

Betty Friedan (1993) states the catalyst for her extensive

tome on aging in The Fountain of Age, when she confesses, "I could not face being sixty" (p. 13). Amid myriad topics of aging, Friedan sprinkles comments on aging beauty, such as:

But the overwhelming effect of such (advertising) images is to create, especially in women, a devastating terror of not being young-and thereby to sell billions of dollars of skin and beauty cosmetics and surgical procedures, building whole industries on that fear. (p. 45)

Friedan's greatest contribution to this research lies in her observations on age-passing and female abandonment of the beauty myth.

Robin Morgan (1970) edited one of the most powerful documents of Second Wave feminism, Sisterhood is Powerful. Even in this inceptive period of the Women's Liberation Movement, Morgan knew female aging and attractiveness was essential to the forming doctrine. She includes the article, "It Hurts to Be Alive and Obsolete: The Ageing Woman," by 43-year-old Zoe Moss, which concludes:

Listen to me! Think what it is like to have most of your life ahead and be told you are obsolete! Think what it is like to feel attraction, desire, affection toward others, to want to tell them about yourself, to feel that assumption on which self-respect is based, that you are worth something, and that if you like someone, surely he will be pleased to know that. To be, in other words, still a living woman, and to be told every day that you are not a woman but a tired object that should disappear. That you are not a person but a joke. Well, I am a bitter joke. I am bitter and frustrated and wasted, but don't you pretend for a minute as you look at me, forty-three, fat, and looking exactly my age, that I am not as alive as you are and that I do not suffer from the category into which you are forcing me. (pp. 193-194)

Germaine Greer (1991) placed a black and white photograph of herself on the cover of her book The Change: Women. Aging and the Menopause. In it, she shows visible signs of aging. No make-up

masks her wrinkles or the circles under her eyes. No hair-dye hides visible streaks of graying hair. She creates a piercing visual image of aging beauty.

Although the vast majority of her research lies in the domain of the menopause, Greer addresses issues of beauty for women of age in her chapter "The Old Witch." She states:

Some ancient crones after all look good, very good.... Those people who deny to the fifty-year-old woman that she is old are the very people who find age shameful and obscene. They beg us to lie about it for their own comfort. (p. 361)

Greer's work will also be used in the examination of the research questions.

In similar manner, founding Second Wave feminist Gloria Steinem rebels against the societal edict that women must retain their youthful beauty at all cost. In Moving Beyond Words, Steinem (1994) states, "As you can see, I'm just beginning to realize the upcoming pleasures of being a nothing-to-lose, take-no-shit older woman; of looking at what once seemed outer limits as just road signs" (p. 280).

Erica Jong (1973, 1994) addresses issues of age and beauty in her book Fear of Fifty. She states:

But fifty is different for a woman than it is for a man. Fifty is a more radical kind of passage to the other side of life... You tell yourself you ought to be beyond vanity. You read feminist books and contemplate falling in love with Alice B. Toklas. But years of brainwashing are not so easy to forget. The beauty trap is deeper than you thought. It's not so much the external pressures as the interior ones that bind. You cannot imagine yourself middle-aged-cute little you who always had 'it' even when overweight. (pp. XVII-XVIII)

I look around me at fifty and see the women of my generation

coping with getting older. They are perplexed, and the answer to their perplexity is not another book on hormones. The problem goes deeper than menopause, face-lifts, or whether to fuck younger men. It has to do with the whole image of self in a culture in love with youth and out of love with women as human beings. We are terrified at fifty because we do not know what on earth we can become when we are no longer young and cute. (p. XIX)

Once again, these perspectives will be essential in the examination of the research questions in this study.

Caroline Bird (1995) examines the redefinition of beauty with age and alternative sources of power for midlife women in her book Lives of Our Own: Secrets of Salty Old Women. According to Bird,

the young standard is built into the language we all have to use. 'Healthy' means young, or as one woman told me, 'You aren't old as long as you're healthy.' For a woman, 'beautiful' means young and ready to reproduce. It is interesting to note that women are named April, May, and June, months associated with flowering. Men are not named for the springtime. (p. 227)

In "The Diary of a Good Neighbor," found in Doris Lessing's (1984) book, The Diaries of Jane Somers, middle-aged Janna contemplates following her elderly care-receiver, Maudie, into physical decline. She states:

I image, deliberately, all kinds of panic, of dread: I make myself visualize me, Janna, sitting up on high pillows, very old, being destroyed from within. I reduce my outer boundaries back, back, first from my carapace of clothes, how I present myself; and then to my healthy body, which does not-yet-suddenly let loose dirt and urine against my will, but is still comely and fresh; and back inside, to me, the knowledge of I, and imagine how it is a carcass I am sitting in, that's all, a slovenly mess of meat and bones. (p. 234)

At age 77, Lessing (1996) wrote the novel Love. Again, in which a 65-year-old woman falls in love with both a 25-year-old and a 35-year-old man. Lessing's aged, 73-year-old face fills the back

jacket cover, complete with unaltered wrinkles, dark eye circles, and gray hair. Again, a visual statement is pronounced.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin (1996) provides aging women with a full account of her aging process and rite of passage from age forty to fifty in her book Getting Over Getting Older. This research and anecdotal history will also be used extensively in the examination of the aging beauty myth.

Paula B. Doress-Worters and Diana Laskin Siegal (1994) wrote Ourselves, Growing Older: Women Aging with Knowledge and Power, in cooperation with The Boston Women's Health Book Collective. One chapter is devoted to "Our Looks and Our Lives," in which issues of loss of youthful beauty, the "Beauty" business, and power alternatives are addressed.

Women who are concerned about looking older seem to experience this concern during midlife up to their middle or late sixties. In fact, many women in midlife like getting older; they feel freer and more confident. What they don't like is looking older. (p. 40)

The Boston Women's Health Book Collective's most recent edition of Our Bodies Ourselves for the New Century, devotes a chapter to body image and another to women growing older. Both provide resources for this research.

The triangulation of research on feminism, age, and issues of female beauty provides vital data for the examination of rebellion against the beauty myth, the development of new roles for aged women, and the search for alternative sources of power.

Additional Feminist Literature

Other feminist literature is pertinent to this research, and will be used as influential sources for the development of theory, methods, definitions of beauty, research questions, and conclusions of this study. Some of the more impacting sources include: Amazon (Walker, 1992); Backlash (Faludi, 1991); Coming Home to Myself (Woodman, 1998); The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge (Smith, 1990); Daughters of de Beauvoir (Forster & Sutton, 1989); Down from the Pedestal: Moving Beyond Idealized Images of Womanhood (Harris, 1994); The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology (Smith, 1987); The Face of Love: Feminism and the Beauty Question (Lambert, 1995); Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing (Jaggar & Bordo, 1992); Gender Inequality: Feminist Theories and Politics, (Lorber, 1998); Generations: Academic Feminists in Dialogue (Looser & Kaplan, 1997); Les Guerilleres (Wittig, 1969); Like There's No Tomorrow: Meditations for Women Leaving Patriarchy (Gage, 1997); Look Me in the Eye: Old Women, Aging and Ageism (Macdonald & Rich, 1991); The Other Within Us: Feminist Explorations of Women and Aging (Pearsall, 1997); Reconcilable Differences: Confronting Beauty, Pornography, and the Future of Feminism (Chancer, 1998); Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective (Maynard & Purvis, 1994); To Be A Woman (Zweig, 1990); Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism (Grosz, 1994); Women as Elders: The Feminist Politics of Aging (Bell, 1986); Women, Feminism, and Aging (Browne, 1998); and The

Women's Wheel of Life: Thirteen Archetypes of Woman at Her Fullest Power (Davis & Leonard, 1996).

Division Five: Female Midlife Body and Health Issues

Changes to the female body in midlife, and health issues of middle-aged women are also pertinent to this study. The review of this literature examines general health of women throughout the life course as it relates to self-concepts of beauty, the effects of the climacteric (including perimenopause, menopause, and post-menopause), and the medicalization of anti-aging products and procedures.

General Female Health Throughout the Life Course

A great deal of research on healthy female aging has become available as women's health issues at last surface in research priority. Because the definition of beauty often includes issues of age and health, the following review of the literature is relevant for this research: Body (Gross, Stone, & Newman, 1994); Evaluating Women's Health Messages (Parrot & Condit, 1996); Every Woman's Health (MacLean, 1993); Feminist Perspectives in Medical Ethics (Holmes & Purdy, 1992); Listening to Our Bodies (Demetrakopoulos, 1983); Minding the Body (Foster, 1994); Outrageous Practices: How Gender Bias Threatens Women's Health (Laurence & Weinhouse, 1994); Reframing Women's Health: Multidisciplinary Research and Practice (Dan, 1994); Screaming to be Heard: Hormonal Connections Women Sus-

pect and Doctors Ignore (Vliet, 1995); A Woman's Book of Life: The Biology, Psychology, and Sprituality of the Feminine Life Cycle (Borysenko, 1996); Women and Doctors (Smith, 1992); Women and Healthy Aging (Garner & Young, 1993); Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom (Northrup, 1994); and Women's Health Care (Fogel & Woods, 1995).

In addition to traditional perspectives on health and women's health care options, much of the current literature provides information on alternative possibilities for health care. Time and time again, the alternative health care perspectives embody a holistic approach to women in midlife.

The Climacteric

All too often issues of the climacteric (peri-menopause, menopause, and post-menopause) dominate the information available on midlife women's lives. Although the climacteric is a significant, physiological transitional period, less scrutinized issues, such as transitional choices, aging beauty, and sexuality need not be lost in the climacteric clamor.

Janet Burroway (in Foster, 1994), states:

I have no way of knowing what changes in my body, psyche, spirit, for gain or loss, have to do with menopause, and which have to do with aging, or both, or how much of each. Jet lag, diet, muscle spasm, hormones-I consult the possibilities blind; I recognize recurrent feelings but I can't really judge what comes from which situation, what from chemistry. Why should the black mood represent imbalance anyway, instead of simple insight? How much honesty is there in despair? How much a figment is my usual busy cheer? Here, dark before the dawn, muffled in feathers, how much more truth may I touch than in a day of doing? (p. 222)

Literature focusing on the biological and physiological aspects of the climacteric are not the primary concern of this study. Rather, this research examines the origins and development of the menopausal stereotypes, which may impact self-perceptions of beauty and attractiveness in midlife.

In concert with the theoretical framework of this work, climacteric pertinence lies in the construction and nature of the societal looking glass for menopausal women. This midlife stereotype must be examined from a socio-historical perspective in order to establish an accurate context.

When the progressive elements of this mirror are understood, an essential understanding of the reflection is achieved. When midlife women are privy to only the societal reflection, without understanding of its socio-historical origins, negative reflections may be internalized without challenge.

Literature on peri-menopause employed in this aspect of examination includes: Perimenopause: Preparing for the Change (Teaff & Wiley, 1995); and PMS and Perimenopause Sourcebook (Futterman & Jones, 1997).

Climacteric data are found in such literature as The Change: Women, Aging and the Menopause (Greer, 1991); Coming of Age: Personal Insights on Menopause (Rabey, 1995); Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask (Reuben, 1969); The Healthy Woman: Menopause and Other Things We Don't Talk About (Davis, 1996); Is It Hot In Here or Is It Me? (Sand, 1993).

Other sources concerning menopausal stages of women's lives include Managing Your Menopause (Utian & Jacobowitz, 1990); Menopause (Stoppard, 1994); Menopause: A Midlife Passage (Callahan, 1993); The Menopause Industry: How the Medical Establishment Exploits Women (Coney, 1994); The Pause (Barbach, 1993); Politics and Medicine in the Estrogen Replacement Controversy: A Comparative Analysis of the United States and Great Britain (McCrea, 1981); Red Hot Mamas (Dowling, 1996); Red Moon Passages: The Power and Wisdom of Menopause (Horrigan, 1996); The Silent Passage (Sheehy, 1992); Woman at the Edge of Two Worlds: The Spiritual Journey Through Menopause (Andrews, 1993); and Women of the 14th Moon: Writings on Menopause (Taylor & Sumrall, 1991).

From ancient Egyptians to Romans and Greeks, from Hippocrates and Galen, to Trotula and Paracelsus, medical history repeatedly produces a wide range of gynecological diseases and functions which were believed to cause mental illness, depression, and insanity in widows, spinsters, and other women of age. In order to understand the self-perceptions of middle-aged women in this research, the historical gynecological theories linking uterine activity with mental disorders must be examined. This reflection of society's misconceptions (in theoretical alliance with Cooley's Looking Glass Self) provides insights into self-conceptions of midlife women today.

Within this revealing historical context, it is not surprising that the Victorians believed the menopause caused women to go mad.

Their official psychiatric diagnosis was labeled Climacteric Insanity, a diagnosis which was not removed from psychiatric diagnostic manuals until the 1960s. The sister diagnosis of menopausal depression, labeled Involutional Melancholia, was not removed for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-III until the 1980s.

One of the strongest myths surrounding the menopausal experience for women of age is the belief that natural symptoms of the climacteric include depression, a propensity for mental disorders, and possible insanity. Today the belief in menopause-induced depression and mental disorders continues to flourish, despite thirty years of repeated clinical and academic research to the contrary.

Ancient Gynecological Theories

The connection between uterine activity and mental health is as old as recorded history. As early as 1900 B.C. there are records in an Egyptian papyrus attributing disordered behavior in women to displacement of the uterus. In this so-called Wandering Womb Syndrome, the uterus supposedly roams throughout the body, with a vicious appetite, violently compressing vital organs. The Egyptians believed that there was an unobstructed channel within the female body which connected the womb to the head. Remedies for driving the uterus back to its proper location involved both placing unpleasant smelling substances to the nose or luring it back to the abdomen by applying fragrant douches or fumigations to the vagina. Failure to

drive the womb into place within six months meant certain death to the woman who embodies this independent animal called the womb (Dixon, 1995).

The word hysteria was also described as a uterine disorder in these ancient writings. According to Ballinger (1990),

The concept of an association between behavioral disturbance and the reproductive function in women is an ancient one enshrined in the word 'hysteria' derived from the Greek word 'hustera' (or 'hystera,' meaning uterus or 'of the womb.')

(p. 773).

Hippocratic treatises in the fifth century B.C.E. used the term hysteria as a condition exclusive to women and related to uterine migration. Not until 19th-century Freudian thought was hysteria viewed as a purely psychiatric disorder disconnected from the uterus.

Medieval Gynecological Theories

Medieval gynecological theories relied on the ancient writings of Hippocrates, Galen, and Soranus. Until the eleventh century these theories were based on ancient Greek and Roman medical tenets which accepted and perpetuated ancient beliefs. In fact, the belief that the uterus was an independent animal with a distinct abhorrence to certain smells persisted until the late 17th century. Early Christian theorists connect the ancient wandering womb syndrome with demonic and supernatural intervention.

According to Dixon (1995), "Pre-Enlightenment medicine made no distinction between mental and physical illness.... Both hy-

steria and melancholia were thought to be illnesses that heated and dried the body" (p. 7).

Menopause was not biologically understood during the late medieval and early modern periods. Menopausal women were thought to hold or retain their menstrual blood within their bodies. This phenomenon, called Menstrual Retention, carried the belief that the retained blood tainted an old woman's body, affecting her moods and disposition, and creating a slow poisoning that turned her evil and witch-like with age, as well as giving her the power of the evil eye (Bluhm, 1996).

Renaissance Gynecological Theories

In Renaissance gynecological theories, Paracelsus returned to the ancient Hippocratic notion that physical and mental illnesses were linked. He classified uterine disorders among the diseases that caused irrational behavior in women. He blamed hysterical behavior on the "souring of menstrual matter, much like wine returning into vinegar" (Dixon, 1995, p. 40) ...a concept very similar to the idea of "menstrual retention."

Symptoms of Renaissance uterine disorders sound amazingly like modern descriptions of menopausal symptoms. According to Dixon (1995),

the physical and mental symptoms associated with uterine disorders are documented in hundreds of medical treatises written over a period of 4,000 years... Medical texts from the Renaissance vividly described the psychic symptoms as well, the most common of which were weeping, sighing, anxiety, timidity, disturbed sleep, sadness, despair, depression and violent mood

swings. Symptoms such as these were believed to be caused by inflammation, suffocation or displacement of the womb or a combination of these factors. (pp. 13-14)

The 17th & 18th Centuries

The seventeenth and eighteenth century theorists retained medical concepts of hysteria and furor uterinus (a uterine disease involving hypersexuality in old women). During the seventeenth century and again in the nineteenth century, a disease appeared which was called chlorosis or green sickness, referring to the greenish tinge of the flesh of women who suffered from uterine disorders. The symptoms were used to limit women's social role and legitimate women's weakness. They included weakness, fainting, difficult breathing, appetite disorders, erratic pulse, pallor, and mental disturbances.

Several writings have survived which confirm the strong historical connection between uterine disease and mental disorders. In 1621 Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy attributed the symptoms of maids', nuns', and widows' melancholy to a misplaced uterus and spoiled menstrual blood poisoning the body by means of noxious vapors (Dixon, 1995). Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689) wrote an essay entitled "Of the Small-pox and Hysterical Disease" which was the first to define hysteria as an affliction of mind rather than the womb.

The 19th Century

The nineteenth century was a time of dichotomous views, un-

certainty, and contradictory findings. Both the best and worst perceptions of the menopause concomitantly appeared.

In 1851 an anonymous author contributed an essay entitled "Woman in Her Psychological Relations" to the Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology (Greer, 1991) in which it states

...with this change in the person (menopause) there is an analogous change in the mind, temper and feelings. The woman approximates in fact to a man, or in one word she is virago. This unwomanly condition doubtless renders her repulsive to man, while her envious, overbearing temper renders her offensive to her own sex. (pp. 84-85)

In 1856 Georges Apostoli began wiring up a selection of rods and knives to a battery, running an electric current through them and inserting them into the uterus of menopausal women, the cervix having first been dilated by uterine sounds and placing another electrode on the abdomen. There was great interest and many eager customers, according to Greer (1991). By 1896 electrogynecology was the rage and it had generated a large body of research.

As time went on, higher and higher charges were used, fibroid tumors were pierced and electrocuted, pelvic tissue was burnt and patients died of shock, infection, as well as the untreated original condition. The practice was abandoned in 1920s.

In 1857 Edward Tilt, an Irish physician, commented on "the evil effects of this time of life," stating that nervous irritability, hysterical states and uncalled-for lowness of spirits were common at this (menopausal) time (Ballinger, 1990, p. 773).

In 1858 John Charles Bucknill and Daniel H. Tuke published one of the few positive views of the menopause in the first textbook of

psychiatry entitled A Manual of Psychological Medicine. A review of 1,720 cases admitted to Bethlehem Hospital indicated that the change of life was the least common physical cause of insanity in women.

In 1865 Dr. Francis Skae published his analysis of the records of 200 patients treated for climacteric insanity over a period of 18 years at the Royal Edinburgh Asylum. This is the first known use of the terms Involutional Melancholia and Climacteric Insanity, with the common term being Old Maid's Insanity.

In 1874 J.M. Fothergilli writes in The Maintenance of Health that the climacteric is a time of crisis which tests women beyond their endurance. According to Greer (1991), "the records of the Divorce Court, the annals of asylums, the dates on the tombstones in the churchyard, all tell us of the severe strain put upon the system of the woman during the change of life" (p. 85).

In 1876 Merson repeated this negative view of menopause in a review of female admissions to a lunatic asylum. In 1880, however, Dr. A. Arnold, a Baltimore medical school professor, contended that all recent medical studies of menopause reported no pathology associated with it (Banner, 1992).

In 1887 a neurological textbook stated (<http://www.menopause-online.com/discomfort.htm>):

The ovaries, after long years of service, have not the ability of retiring in graceful old age, but become irritated, transmit these irritations to the abdominal ganolia, which in turn transmit the irritation to the brain producing disturbances in the cerebral tissue exhibiting themselves in extreme nervousness or in an outburst of actual insanity.

In 1897 a counter-perspective again appeared when Andrew Cur-

rier called the negative view of the menopause a hoary tradition with no basis in fact.

The contradictory perspectives continued throughout the century. Late nineteenth century doctors used crude, and sometimes torturous treatments, including bleeding, cupping, and purging. Yet doctors at the same time discovered that menstruation was not simply a purging of the blood, but was connected to the cyclical production of the ovum and directly related to conception. The rejection of humoral theory in this era bolstered the positive attitude toward menopause. Because menopausal women did not menstruate and lose energy through the menstrual flow, they were thought to retain energy and increase their vitality. The mixed messages continued into the next century.

The Early 20th Century

The association between reproductive physiology and menopausal psychiatric disorders continue to flourish. The outrage against such negative perceptions grew stronger. Again, the Progressive era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries presented the following two main thoughts: (1) menopause is an illness, bringing a breakdown of body and mind and (2) menopause initiates a time of strength for women.

In 1900, Dr. Mary Dixon Jones' writings in the Medical Record angrily called categorizing menopause as a dangerous period a "libel on the natural formation of one half of the human race" (Banner,

1992, p. 287).

In 1902, in the Medical Society of Tennessee Proceedings, M.C. McGannon wrote that menopause was in no sense a critical period. In 1905 the medical treatment of menopause took another setback when Halberstadter discovered that X-ray bombardment could kill the ovaries and induce menopause. Other doctors of the same era favored the insertion of radium rods into the vagina, causing local and intestinal burns, and death from ulceration of the bowel.

In 1906 Involutional Melancholia was introduced into the medical community by Kraepelin who distinguished it from manic-depressive illness. He found that it was more common in women with onset in the involutional years and included symptoms of prominent agitation and hypochondriasis associated with delusions of sin, poverty and disgrace.

This diagnostic label signifies that "the menopause has significant psychological and physiological effects that lead to depression" (McKinlay, 1987, p. 346), and "an increased susceptibility of women to depression in the menopausal years." The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-II) (Weissman, 1979) defined it as diagnosis 296.0, "a disorder occurring in the involutional period and characterized by worry, anxiety, agitation, and severe insomnia. Feelings of guilt and somatic preoccupation are frequently present and may be of delusional proportions..." (p. 742). This diagnosis was not removed until the DSM-III in the 1980s.

In 1911 a landmark novel appeared by Danish author Karin Michaelis, entitled The Dangerous Age. In this book the main character, Elsie Lindtner (in her mid-40s), states that the dangerous age is that period in women's lives between the ages of 40 and 50 when most women's menstrual cycle stops and their reproductive years end. During this decade, says Lindtner, "we are all more or less mad" (Banner, 1993, p. 273).

Gynecologists of this era also believed that there was a direct linkage between the uterus and the brain and that the treatment for hysteria was a hysterectomy. This surgical procedure (removal of uterus and ovaries) was used in this era for female mental imbalance and hysteria, and its presumed connection to female reproductive organs.

In 1912 Anna Garlin Spencer's book Woman's Share in Social Culture presented a positive view of the menopause, as a time which ended the mood swings of the menstrual years. In 1917 Freud stressed the loss of reproductive potential as an important issue in the psychoanalytic literature and related this loss to mourning and melancholia, in keeping with the psychoanalytic view that depression was particularly common at the time of the menopause (Ballinger, 1990).

Armed with Freud's new scientific formulation, the identification of menopause with madness could now bring about hospitalization of menopausal women. Between 1920 and 1930 Freudian terms such as physiological castration or species death were used to refer to

menopause.

The 1920s

After World War I any optimistic sentiments concerning menopause were overwhelmed by assertions that menopause equaled illness. American business flourished, especially advertising promoting youth as the preferred time of life. The Progressive notion of women's vital aging and positive attitude toward the menopause were overturned and menopause became connected with sexual deviance. Old women were pejoratively labeled flapperdames.

Scientists of the 1920s had discovered the relationship between body hormones and women's menstrual cycles. They had begun to isolate the hormone estrogen in laboratory settings.

In 1921 Kraepelin changed his mind about Involutional Melancholia, finding that the increase in new cases after age 45 was just a continuation of the steady increase in new cases of affective disorder with increasing age and did not indicate the onset of a separate condition. Although Kraepelin discarded the entire concept of Involutional Melancholia, the medical community found further interest in it when ovarian extracts were first introduced.

By 1920s doctors no longer believed that the uterus and ovaries directly determined a woman's character, but that control came from hormones and glands (including the ovaries). Endocrinology (study of these glands and hormones) joined gynecology in positing that a woman's physiology ruled her functioning.

In 1923 the fear of insanity in menopausal women was so great that corporate policies reflected the era's fears. Laetitia Fairfield examined data in a survey of the health of elementary school teachers in England and found that menopause phobia was so great many famous institutions adopt a practice of getting rid of women employees at age 45.

In 1924 The Household Physician: A 20th Century Medical listed the symptoms of the menopause as:

headache, dizziness, and a sense of suffocation.... Mixed up with these irregularities (of blood flow) will be palpitations of the heart, constipation of the bowels, a variable appetite, and broken sleep, weakness and inquietude, timidity, a dread of impending evil, irritability of temper, hysterical attacks, bad feelings in the head, with sounds in the ears as of the rolling of carriages, sparks before the eyes, and an unsteady gait. (p. 440)

Clearly the negative perceptions of the menopause were very much intact.

The 1930s

In the 1930s many doctors prescribed estrogen as a panacea for menopausal symptoms. In 1938 there was a distillation of an inexpensive form of estrogen which was taken orally and did not require injection.

Other treatments for the menopause included the Stenach clinic in Switzerland, where patients underwent daily bombardments of X rays directed to the genitalia. Abner Weisman established one of the first endocrine clinics in New York City and immediately it attracted for treatment 50 to 100 menopausal women every day (Banner,

1992).

Many large hospitals in the 1930s had sections for mentally disturbed menopausal women. Links between uterine function and sexuality again appeared. Menopausal madness could include heightened sexuality, hysteria or nymphomania, or the opposite, "erotomania," or "a psychic sentimental arising from a deep longing to be loved in the spiritual sense" (Banner, 1992, p. 295).

In 1933 the first study of frequency of symptoms during menopause was conducted by the Council of the Medical Women's Confederation, involving 1,000 women ages 29 to 91, many of whom were institutionalized. The study found that 900 of 1,000 stated "that they had carried out their routine tasks without a single interruption due to menopausal symptoms" (Greer, 1991, p. 97). Another 30 years would pass before another such study would be conducted.

In 1934 Werner, Johns & Hektor stated that they still considered Involutional Melancholia to be an extreme form of the menopausal syndrome caused by ovarian failure and quite separate from manic-depressive illness. The same year Edwin Hopewell-Ash also revived the identification between the menopause and Involutional Melancholia.

The 1940s

Estrogen replacement therapy became the rage in the 1940s. Even though it was discarded, authors (particularly in the U.S.) continued to promote Involutional Melancholia as a distinct syndrome

related to the climacteric. Wittson (1940) and Malamud (1941) concluded that it was "a distinct clinical entity with menopause being a significant aetiological factor" (Ballinger, 1990, p. 774).

In 1944 Hoskins saw the central issue as "anxiety arising from the threat of the ego and loss of reproductive potential, a woman's 'symbolic token of personal worth'" (Ballinger, 1990, p. 774).

In 1945 Helene Deutsch, American psychoanalyst and Freudian disciple, wrote Psychology of Women in which menopause is seen as a time of great loss of femininity and reproductive potential. Again, heightened sexuality and sexual neuroses (i.e., homosexual panic or desiring sons-in-law) are considered symptoms. Life at this time is considered pale and purposeless and Deutsch found that psychotherapy was difficult as there was little one could offer, except for resignation without compensation. She promoted the medical view that all women need to take the hormone estrogen (Ballinger, 1990; Banner, 1992).

In 1948 the Modern Home Medical Guide listed the symptoms of the menopause as nervousness, headache, marked irritability, periods of depression. It is commonly thought that there is great likelihood of "losing one's mind at the time of the menopause. In fact insanity is a little more common at this time, but not sufficiently so to be alarming" (pp. 357-358).

The 1950s

The 1950s were not a good time for menopausal women. In this

decade, most patient admissions to mental hospitals were women. Climacteric insanity was still a definitional category confined almost exclusively to menopausal women. In the 1950s Philip Wylie's Generation of Vipers attack on momism singled out menopausal women and accused them of malingering and using their menopausal symptoms as infantile tricks, wooings and wiles (Banner, 1992).

In 1950 psychoanalyst Laci Fessler argued that menstruation for women was "akin to possessing a penis" and she concluded that the end of menstruation was "like losing that penis, and the loss produced a menopausal 'castration anxiety'" (Banner, 1993, p. 301). She suggests that the menopause was a bad time for mental health in women because of the increased importance of penis-envy. Banner (1990) states that

during the time of recurrent menstruation, penis-envy was mitigated by the regular reminder of reproductive potential. However, when this was lost at the time of the menopause, women were said to return to infantile attitudes. (p. 778).

A battery of general population surveys took place from the late 1950s through the 1980s and they found no indication of major effect of the menopause on a variety of common psychiatric symptoms. If anything, women in the post-menopausal years show less evidence of psychiatric disturbance than younger women. Despite these findings, negative stereotypes of menopause and menopausal women continued.

The 1960s

Again, this decade saw the cultural dichotomy between research

facts with positive perspectives on menopause and extremely negative perceptions of the menopausal woman.

In 1963 Wilson & Wilson wrote a paper discussing the horrible fate of the non-treated post-menopausal women and included a plea "for the maintenance of adequate estrogen from puberty to the grave" (Ballinger, 1990, p. 782).

In 1968 the Involutional Melancholia diagnosis was dropped from the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases. In 1969 David Reuben published Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Sex but Were Afraid to Ask. Chapter 15 deals exclusively with the menopause. "What causes the change of life anyway?" asks the second paragraph. The answer: "A defect in the evolution of human beings" (pp. 360-385).

The ageist misogyny continues:

Once the ovaries stop, the very essence of being a woman stops. As estrogen is shut off a woman comes as close as she can to being a man.... Not really a man, but no longer a functional woman, these individuals live in the world of intersex. Many of them are emotionally marooned as well...

In addition to physical changes the menopause can bring a lot of mental alterations, too. Depression, irritability, and insomnia become the order of the day.

To many women the menopause marks the end of their useful life. They see it as the onset of old age, the beginning of the end. They may be right. Having outlived their ovaries, they may have outlived their usefulness as human beings. The remaining years may be just marking time until they follow their glands into oblivion. (pp. 362-366)

The 1970s & 1980s

Clinical, academic, and genetic studies of the 1960s, 1970s and

1980s repeatedly proved that there was no evidence to support the diagnoses of Involutional Melancholia and Climacteric Insanity. No increases in reports of psychiatric symptoms were found during the menopause in this research.

These studies included: Stenback (Britain, 1963); Hopkinson (1964); Hagnell (10-year longitudinal Swedish study, 1966); Kendell (Britain, 1968); Rosenthal (1968); Dunnell & Cartwright, (Britain, 1972); Thompson Hart & Durno (British, 1973); Winokur (1973); McKinlay & Jefferys, (British, 1974); Wood (Australian, 1979); and Weissman (genetic study, 1979).

In 1981 a World Health Organization (WHO) report concluded that vasomotor symptoms and vaginal dryness were the only symptoms convincingly related to menopausal hormonal changes and stated that no relationship had been established between the hormonal changes of the menopause and psychological symptoms or changes in sexual interest (Ballinger, 1990).

In 1987 the McKinlay study gave two perspectives on depression during menopause:

1. The Estrogen Deficiency Perspective, in which hormone replacement therapy is prescribed as a sort of mental tonic; and
2. The Social Circumstances Perspective, based on the Massachusetts study which found that menstrual change associated with the menopause appears to have no significant effect on depression as defined by a CES-D score of 16 or greater.

Also in 1987, the Weissman & Klerman's classic study found no

distinct pattern of symptoms among women outpatients.

The 1990s - 2000: Current Research

Several significant studies have been conducted during the 1990s, including the Manitoba Project (Kaufert, Gilbert & Tate, 1992), the Seattle Midlife Women's Health Study (1994), and the Massachusetts Women's Health study (Brambilla, McKinlay & Vass, 1994). Their findings are homogeneous across the board, and perhaps best paraphrased by the following researchers:

Ballinger (1990) states:

The belief that the menopause is a time of high risk for psychiatric disorder in women is not upheld in the psychiatric literature. The physiological changes of the menopause have little impact on mental health. The concept of a psychotic disorder specific to the involutional years has been abandoned.... There is no evidence so far of any direct relationship between changes in reproductive hormones and psychiatric morbidity at this time.... (p. 774)

Hunter (1996) stated that

defining the menopause as an estrogen deficiency disease implies that the cause of depression lies in a woman's hormones...correlation studies have reached a fairly clear consensus that there is no link between estrogen concentration and depression. There is no substantial evidence to support the view that natural menopause causes depression. (p. 1217).

Cawood & Bancroft (1996) found that the only positive predictor of depression during the menopause was tiredness.

Nicol-Smith (1996) examined thirty years of research (94 studies) on the relation of natural menopause to depression. In this encompassing study she concluded that "at present, there is no substantial evidence that either a natural menopause with its accom-

panying changes in hormone concentrations or psychosocial factors exclusive to middle age put women at increased risk of depression" (p. 1232).

In repeated tests, using valid and reliable instruments, current researcher conclusively finds:

1. Natural menopause does not cause depression. Women are no more susceptible to depression, mental disorders, or insanity during the menopause than at any other point in their life span.
2. There is no direct relationship between changes in reproductive hormones and psychiatric morbidity at climacteric. There is no link between estrogen concentration and depression.
3. There is no substantial evidence that psycho-social factors exclusive to middle age put women at increased risk of depression.

Maintaining the Myth

The evidence is clearer, more exact, more concise than this researcher had even hoped to find. Few questions remain unanswered, yet there is a tremendous unwillingness of society to accept this research. A cultural insistence on maintaining the myth of the menopause continues to this day.

Professionally, standard gynecological textbooks still list depression, irritability, lack of confidence and poor concentration as specific symptoms of the menopause, although this view is unquestionably erroneous.

In popular culture, the myth continues and is exemplified in multiple Internet Web sites which are supportive of menopausal women, while currently listing depression, crying spells, irritability, lethargy and mood swings as a specific symptom to be expected during the menopause (<http://www.menopauseonline.com/discomfort.htm>; <http://www.ka.net/video/>; and <http://www.usatoday.com/life/health/women/meno/ihwme002htm>).

The ramifications of ignoring thirty years of research in this area are great. Midlife women may not be taken seriously or they may receive inappropriate treatment for depression if it occurs during the menopausal years of their life. Many studies have found that depression and anxiety in menopausal women do not respond to estrogen replacement therapy and need to be treated for depression the same during these years as any other time during their lives.

According to Woods (1996), "Clinicians caring for midlife women will do a disservice to women if they do not look beyond menopause for explanations for depressed mood. Interventions beyond hormonal therapy need to be considered for this population" (p. 121).

Possible Reasons for Myth Perpetuation

This review of the literature produces a confounding question. Given repeated clinical studies, why does the myth continue?

Ballinger (1990) states that "Negative expectations of the menopause and the conviction that it presages a marked deterioration

in mental health persist in Western culture" (p. 784). She believes that the myth is perpetuated for three reasons: "(1) it is a tribute to the power of culturally-determined attitudes, (2) media pressure and (3) the promotion of estrogen sales that this menopause myth persists, despite all the evidence to the contrary" (p. 785).

McKinlay, McKinlay & Brambilla (1987) clearly state that the menopause as a physiologic process provides a single convenient, potentially treatable cause, which is attractive to the busy clinician. They believe that the continuation of the myth allows the physician to avoid the need to consider other, more complex and probably less treatable explanations.

Banner (1992) sees the perpetuation of the menopausal myth as the combined ravages of ageism and sexism, filtered through the centuries, to its current usage as an instrument of social control over women of age. She states that

according to Emily Martin, the medicalization of menopause has been advanced not only by negative cultural attitudes toward aging and by the medical establishment's characteristic drive to control women but also by recent identifications in medical rhetoric between the female body and capitalist modalities.... Thus the capitalist consumption culture may have created yet a new series of quasi-scientific metaphors, perhaps even more sophisticated than those of Darwin and Freud, designed to control women's bodies--and their aging. (pp. 308-309)

This historical context reveals minimal changes over thousands of years regarding beliefs in the physiological/psychological connection with midlife women. It is almost incomprehensible that multiple and concise research findings as these are readily available, but cannot find their way into professional or popular knowledge.

The need for further research on the usage of such myths for social control, ageist and sexist purposes seems apparent.

The Medicalization of Anti-Aging Products and Procedures

The medicalization of an otherwise benign product occurs when that product is labeled and/or marketed as a cure. Once curative status is established, the object of that cure must concomitantly be labeled a disease which requires medical and/or pharmacological treatment. An illustrative example lies in the development of synthetic hormones. Once Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) was discovered and made available to the general public, the object of that so-called cure (menopause) had to become medicalized, and, therefore, labeled as a disease.

Significant patterns of the medicalization of the menopause have been replicated by the cosmetic industry. Once the development of anti-aging beauty products offered a cure, the object of that so-called cure had to become medicalized and labeled as a disease. The disease, therefore, quickly became the natural aging process in women. The apperception of these patterns is essential to the understanding of medicalization of female aging beauty.

Treatment of the medicalization of age-passing or anti-aging products and procedures has been classified into four major areas of interest for this research. They are:

1. Cosmetic concealment, or the use of age-concealing products.

2. Topical treatments, such as the use of anti-aging creams,
3. Ingestion or injection of age-slowng or age-stopping hormones and/or botanicals.
4. Radical procedures, such as cosmetic surgery (including facelifts and liposuction,) and other radical procedures (such as cosmetic laser surgery, acid face peels).

Literature reviewed for this section include:

Beauty and the Beam: Your Complete Guide to Cosmetic Laser Surgery (Sarnoff & Swirsky, 1998); Dr. Susan Love's Hormone Book (Love, 1997); Lift: Wanting, Fearing, and Having a Face Lift (Kron, 1998); The Melatonin Miracle: Nature's Age-Reversing, Disease-Fighting Sex-Enhancing Hormone (Pierpaoli & Regelson, 1995); The Super-Hormone Promise: Nature's Antidote to Aging (Regelson & Colman, 1996); Welcome to Your Facelift: What to Expect Before, During, and After Cosmetic Surgery (Bransford, 1997); as well as a variety of articles and media messaging.

Few places in contemporary American society reify the combined ravages of sexism and ageism as strongly as department store cosmetic counters. Only two decades ago it would have been ludicrous, if not comical, to suggest even the most cursory connection between medical protocol and these cosmetic vending sites. But since the late 1980's, a curiously medical metamorphosis has occurred which is worthy of serious sociological and gerontological examination.

Symptoms of this manufactured disease of the natural aging

process in women are proffered as age lines and wrinkles. While facelifts and plastic surgery are considered the radical procedure for the treatment of aging in women, less expensive, topical treatments (anti-aging products) promise to be age-defying.

The medicalization of beauty products for the disease of aging in women becomes evident in the following ways:

1. Cosmetic sales clerks don white lab coats or even appear to be nurses in white uniforms; they are often touted as medically trained staff.
2. Products adopt medical-sounding names and report scientifically proven and clinically-tested ingredients.
3. Many products carry endorsements by physicians and are packaged in test-tube-shaped ampoules or capsules.
4. Application instructions refer to proper dosages and skin therapies.
5. Advertisements promote a cure for the visible signs of aging in women.

According to Faludi (1991),

the (cosmetic) industry aimed to restore its own economic health by persuading women that they were the ailing patients and professionalized their ailment. Beauty became medicalized as its lab-coated army of promoters, and real doctors, prescribed physician-endorsed potions, injections for the skin, chemical 'treatments' for the hair, plastic surgery for virtually every inch of the torso. (One doctor even promised to reduce women's height by sawing their leg bones.) (p. 203)

Who are the patients? Not old women with deep facial lines and prominent wrinkles. They would be considered terminal cases, too ravaged to benefit from treatments. The patients are the mil-

lions of middle-aged Baby Boomer women with fine lines and hopes of youthful maintenance, if treated in time.

Myriad sociological factors contribute to the stronghold of anti-aging products. An examination of the literature, however, suggests that five of the most important reasons include: Demography, Medicalization of Menopause, Ailing Medical Industries, Half-way Technologies, and Woman as the Too Good Patient.

Demography

First, demography is an important sociological factor because of the great influx of Baby Boomer women who began turning 50 in 1996. An estimated 14 million American women are at menopausal status in the United States today, with one out of four Americans at 50 years of age or older.

Advertising executives use three main stereotypes of Baby Boomer women. These women have a history of protesting the Viet Nam war, sexism, and racism. They are rebellious and revolutionary. They experienced natural childbirth, were always into natural products, and worked to protect the environment. They are natural and nutritious. And, although the majority of Baby Boomer women may not be scientists or physicians, advertisers know that they are more educated than any other cohort of women in history, and they want to be treated as intelligent women who would appreciate the latest enzyme technology. They are scientific and statistical.

But are these techniques really used in the 1990s? One month's

examination of seven popular magazines geared toward women readers revealed these ad lines:

1. **Rebellious and Revolutionary:** "I don't intend to grow old gracefully...I intend to fight it every step of the way" and "Don't Lie About Your Age, Defy it!" There are other insurgent phrases such as: Our most revolutionary complex; Age-defiant skin preservation system; Age-resisting makeup; Age-fighting ingredients; Fights free radicals; and "See your mother on holidays, Not every time you look in the mirror."

2. **Natural and Nutritious:** "Think of it as health food for the good looks of your skin"; "Use it daily to help prevent environmental damage"; Nutritious bio-protein moisture complex; Contains Vitamins E and C; Natural botanical extracts; pure plant emollients; and Environmental aggressors.

3. **Scientific and Statistical:** Chanel advertisements told women that fighting wrinkles was a "smart career move." Estee Lauder research has extracted beneficial proteins, ceramides and lipids of milk. There are also myriad statistical promises: Up to 49% increase in smoothness, 58% increase in softness, 64% increase in clarity, 55% improvement in evenness of skin color, 32% increase in moisture retention, 84% increase in moisturization.

Other so-called scientific terms listed without definition or explanation include: alpha and beta hydroxy formula, SPF and anti-oxidants, TRA Revitalizers, BioMedic's Conditioning, hyperbaric research, osmotics, soin optimal C complexe, Hydrience, Ceramide

intensive repair cream, Glycolic acid, Regenetrol, Collagen, Elastin, Retinoic acid, retinyl palmitate, albizzia, valerian, melasma, UVA/UVB, and many more.

Ivan Illich (1976) understood the demographic factor in the medicalization of everyday life when he stated, "Old age has been medicalized at precisely the historical moment when it has become a more common occurrence for demographic reasons." (p. 82)

Medicalization of Menopause

Second, as Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) became a cure, and the concomitant disease which had to be established was the menopause. If aging women were convinced by the pharmaceutical industry that menopause was a treatable disease, could the cosmetic industry follow suit and persuade the same Baby Boomer women to (literally) buy into the concept that wrinkles and gray hair are a disease which can be treated by anti-aging cosmetics and hair dyes? Profit margins indicate a resounding affirmative reply. Anti-aging beauty products are successfully mimicked the medicalization process of the menopause.

Ailing Medical Industries

Third, according to Faludi (1991),

physicians and hospital administrators, struggling with their own financial difficulties, joined the (cosmetic) industry in this campaign. Dermatologists faced with a shrinking teen market switched from treating adolescent pimples to 'curing' adult female wrinkles. Gynecologists and obstetricians frustrated with a sluggish birthrate and skyrocketing malpractice

premiums traded their forceps for liposuction scrapers. Hospitals facing revenue shortfalls opened cosmetic-surgery divisions and sponsored extreme and costly liquid-protein diet programs. (p. 203)

The marriage of the faltering cosmetic industry and the financially strapped medical institutions is not a coincident. Perhaps the medicalization of the aging process of women proved to be a lucrative solution for both.

Half-Way Technologies

Fourth, Lewis Thomas first coined the phrase half-way technologies to denote a piece of hardware, procedure, or drug which will prolong life without cure. Although most often used in connection with life support systems, ventilators, or organ transplants, it may have implications for the medicalization of anti-aging beauty products.

At the turn of the last century, the major cause of death was acute illness. Today, chronic illnesses, which have no cure, plague our populations. Our society, therefore, is inundated with medicinal products and procedures which promise no cure, except to maintain or curtail detrimental effects. The population has ceased requiring evidence of efficacy and has abandon standards of excellence in the purchase of most consumer products. This mind set makes the demand for proof of cosmetological effectiveness against aging virtually nonexistent.

Why can Estee Lauder issue the hubristic promise up to 32% increase in moisture retention in one ad, while promising up to 84%

increase in moisturization in another ad within the same magazine? Why? Because no one will demand proof. How can they promise of up to 49% increase in smoothness? Or a 40% reduction in the appearance of lines and wrinkles?

"The industry has no standard procedure to prove or measure wrinkle reduction," says Gary Grove of K.G.L. Inc., a lab that test for cosmetics companies (Newsweek, March 16, 1987, p. 48). The boldness of the specious advertising campaigns promising these percentages knows that Americans have become accustomed to unproved claims and docile in their demands for proof. Society now settles for half-way technologies which are not intended to cure, but only prolong (in this case, youthfulness) as long as possible.

Cosmetic companies argue with the FDA that their consumers are intelligent women who could always ask, "If these anti-aging products are such medical cures, why aren't pharmaceutical companies producing them, instead of the cosmetic industry?" According to American Health magazine (July/August 1994, v. 13), "Anti-aging drugs have yet to become major targets for drug companies, partly because it will take decades to prove they work" (p. 64).

Some consumers rely on the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to scientifically review all products, including anti-aging products, and forbid the sale of those making improper, untrue, or exaggerated claims. "When we tell consumers we don't know the product, don't know what's in it and don't know if it's safe, they're appalled," says Heinz Eiermann, the FDA's cosmetics chief. "People

assume the FDA is watching" (Newsweek, March 5, 1990, pp. 52).

In fact, Newsweek (March 16, 1987) stated, "The FDA generally stays out of the anti-aging controversy, saying it has more serious health questions to study" (p. 49). By April 18, 1988 the same magazine reported that "the FDA has found no substantive evidence that any product can actually prevent or cure signs of aging" p. 86). Also in 1988 the FDA admonished 22 cosmetic firms (including Revlon, Avon, and Estee Lauder) to tone down their "extravagant claims for anti-aging potions or risk injunction or seizure of their merchandise" (Newsweek, April 18, 1988, p. 86).

Although the threat sounded deterring, it was soon realized that the only edict the tutelary government agency was really issuing against anti-aging products was caveat emptor. By June 6, 1994, U.S. News & World Report stated: "...the FDA's only concern is safety. Whether a product meets advertising expectations is for consumers to decide--and based on sales, the claims are being taken, as it were, at face value" (p.79).

Chronic diseases which have no cure will become a way of life in the graying of America. Age (and its physical appearance or so-called symptoms), although unstoppable and also incurable, is arrested for as long as possible. Unfortunately, that's good enough for today's society.

Woman as the Too Good Patient

Fifth, women have been labeled the too good patient, in that

they often try to obey the authoritarian dictates of any physician, beyond reason and self-preservation. In a society in which women are subordinate to the authority of men, women are conditioned to be compliant, obey and respect the authority figures in their lives. Traditionally, the majority of physicians have been male and for many women (and especially older women), the prescription of a doctor must be followed--regardless of cost, effect of treatment, or lack of curative results.

This attitude provides fertile ground for advertisers to prescribe anti-aging cures to women who are already conditioned to follow doctors' orders. The combination of medical blind-obedience and the desire to retain highly-valued youthful beauty places women in a position ripe for victimization.

Paul Starr (1982) coins this god-like power of physicians cultural authority. It is this authority women obey. The conjunction of this authority with the sale of women's cosmetics is ingenious and nearly fail-proof advertising technique. Parsons (1951) referred to the sick role in which relief from duties is provided to the patient as long as "the individual makes efforts to seek professional help and to get well as soon as possible" (cited in Radley, 1994, p. 11). Taking seriously the patient role, women who are aging feel a moral obligation to do what they can to seek treatment in anti-aging products.

David Mechanic's concept of the Technologic Imperative states that if technology exists, one has a moral obligation to use it.

Although not conceived with anti-aging cosmetic products in mind, there are vital links to the concept of the Beauty Imperative, as discussed in the previous chapter. Women who, once informed of available treatments and technologies, will feel an innate obligation to use these aging cures. No woman wants to be labeled a malingerer.

Effects of the Medicalization Process on Women

What difference does it make if women chose to pursue or maintain youth as they age? What harm is caused by the medicalization of anti-aging beauty products?

Female bodies and minds have suffered the iatrogenic effect of this medicalized phenomenon. Since the 1980's so-called beauty doctors have made many women ill. According to Faludi (1991), anti-wrinkle treatments exposed women to carcinogens. Acid face peels burned their skin. Silicone injections left painful deformities. Cosmetic liposuction caused severe complications, infections, and even death.

Financially, women have been cajoled into spending tremendous amounts of often hard-earned money on products which have no evidence of effectiveness. Products tout unproved percentages, fantastical results, hyperbolic and immeasurable benefits. Wendy Chapkis (1986), in her book Beauty Secrets, claims that only seven cents of every consumer dollar spent on cosmetics goes for ingredients. But the industry knows what Tom Conry (Chapkis, 1986) perhaps said best,

"an item that promises a fantasy by definition must be priced fantastically.... If cream begins to sell at 50 cents it will not sell well nor will it be considered miraculous as a cream that sells for \$30" (p. 92).

Why, then, would women pay the money? Chapkis believes women are buying the fantasy. "Everything that is so difficult to attain in real life is promised for the price of a new perfume or eye shadow" she states, "even the promise of youth is bought for the price of a jar of cream" (p. 92).

Beyond the physical and financial detriment women experience, the psychological ramifications may be the most devastating. If old age is ugly and all women are aging, how can one's life course trajectory be anything but bleak? In a society where a woman's worth is so closely tied to her physical appearance, how can a woman maintain a positive self concept as she ineluctably ages? How can women age with an attitude of self-acceptance and love of one's own body when all media messages consider the aging state diseased?

Paying attention to the medicalization and disease-labeling of the natural process of aging in women is the first step. Only by paying attention and deciphering the so-called medical messages of the cosmetic industry can ageism be identified and eradicated.

Consolidation of the Literature

It is within the realm of this research to seek the amalgamation of these myriad literary sources in order to create consoli-

dated factors necessary for the analysis of the research topic. The examined literature is socially and historically interwoven. The following dovetailed extractions, therefore, are neither mutually exclusive, nor collectively exhaustive.

Fundamental integrated research findings include:

1. Concepts of female beauty and cosmetic usage may be traced from ancient civilizations to the present. Exact definitions of beauty vary by historical era and cultural influences. These complex definitions range from a macro-sociological level by global nations and cultures to an extremely micro-sociological level, by individual preference.

2. Beauty has been used throughout history to societally differentiate between men and women, men and boys, good women and bad women, upper and lower socio-economic classes, feminists and misogynists, the disabled and the healthy.

3. Depending on the historical era (and, at times, the decade), the aggressiveness or passivity of cosmetic color tones has often represented the social status of women in society. Flamboyant colors indicate a degree of female emancipation and work force participation. Paleness and bleached appearances are more often indicative of female domestication and absence of gainful employment.

4. Youthfulness is often considered the cornerstone of beauty, denoting an evolutionary or instinctual attraction to that which signifies high reproductive capabilities. Conversely, women of age who are no longer fertile and cannot assure continuation of

the species are considered both ugly and worthless within a patriarchal society which equates meaningful female roles with reproductive capacity.

5. Such concepts of youthful beauty limit women's life trajectories to an upward ascent of only twenty-some years, followed by a steady decrease in status, power, and prestige for the remaining years of their lives--the majority of their life span.

6. Real benefits exist for those considered beautiful by their society. Repeated research indicates that job opportunities, reduced court sentences, career advancements, less jail time, and basic respect are but a few of the perk afforded to the beautiful.

7. As attributes of beauty fade for women during the natural aging process, midlife women may opt for some form of age-passing in order to maintain the privileges of youthful beauty.

8. Foregoing attempts to look younger may result not only in labels of unattractiveness or witch-like ugliness, but worse, may render the woman invisible within her own society, unless she possess some extenuating source of power.

9. Physical and biological research on the climacteric dominates current literature on midlife women. Although physiological and biological changes constitute viable knowledge, it is also vitally important to understand the pejorative stereotypes of menopausal women throughout history, which are often interjected into current perceptions.

10. Socio-historical treatment of the climacteric lays the

foundation for the medicalization of the aging process in women. The pharmaceutical industry developed an effective prototype which was adopted by the cosmetic industry. In addition, uterine/mind and mood linkages are erroneously promoted to this day. At midlife, the menopause becomes a faulty wastebasket diagnosis for all sorts of maladies, including depression, anxiety attacks, insomnia, irritability, and the like.

11. A moral double bind exists for women of age. A Beauty Imperative exists which morally demands that women use all available means to maintain youthful beauty. The no-win conflict occurs, however, when the procedures which falsely create a youthful appearance are evaluated as flaws in female moral character, such as deceitfulness, subversiveness, sexual promiscuity, and dishonesty in presentation of self.

12. For midlife women, sexism combines with ageism to form a unique societal double jeopardy. Many Second Wave feminists have addressed both issues in literature, often with a twenty-to-thirty-year gap between concerns of sexism and ageism. This detrimental phenomenon remains unlabeled, as well as absent from both sociological and gerontological theories. As is the case with many social problems, until an issue is named and examined, it cannot be addressed to any significant extent.

Grand Summary

This chapter has continued to examine the literature on the

remaining four fundamental divisions of aging beauty. These divisions are Female Aging (including the gerontological perspective), a Socio-Historical Perspective (from ancient regards to the present), Feminist Concerns (specifically for First and Second Wave Feminists), and Female Midlife Body and Health Issues (which includes general female health throughout the life course, the climacteric, and the medicalization of anti-aging beauty products).

A consolidation of the literature resulted in twelve fundamental, integrated concepts, which are notably neither mutual exclusive, nor collectively exhaustive. The review of the literature on the topic of aging beauty for women has proven to be extensive and complex, but pregnant with great meaning for women of age, on both the macro-sociological and micro-sociological levels of examination.

The following chapter (Chapter VI) presents the research questions and responses from the in-depth interviews which were conducted for this study. The analysis of those findings is presented in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER VI

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

As stated in the Methods, Chapter III, this study examines the behavioral alternatives open to women as the power, status, and prestige of youthful beauty diminishes with age. The main research goal is more fully to understand midlife transitional options for women, by exploring and identifying the pathways they may (or may not) choose in order to replace the social advantages of youthful beauty.

Societal messages prompt middle-aged women to react to the devaluation which occurs when the natural aging process progressively deteriorates a woman's socially/culturally-defined beauty and, therefore, her social worth. Several pathways or behavioral alternatives are available as socially acceptable reactions, adaptive reconstructions, and/or medicalization of the aging process in women.

Because the purpose of this study is to explore, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options available to women of age, an extensive literature review has been used as the primary method of this research. In this chapter we will examine and report the findings of the secondary method which was employed: in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve Caucasian Baby Boomer women

(ranging in age from 45 to 55).

Research Questions

Development of the Basic Research Questions

Because of the highly exploratory nature of this study, three basic research questions were developed from the literature review for the in-depth interview process. They are:

1. Has the participant felt a devaluation of social worth as she ages, specifically due to the loss of beauty with age?
2. If so, what (if anything) has she done (actively or passively) in response to such social devaluation?
3. Exploratory questions were then asked within that field (specific to answers given) in an attempt to label, categorize, and analyze the appropriate responses. The researcher explored the answers given in detail in order to develop possible transitional categories and a more comprehensive understanding of this transitional period in women's lives.

Organizational Chart

Using the primary method of the literature review, the organizational chart (Appendix F) was developed and employed in the formulation of specific interview questions. This chart provided organization and moderate structure to examine the pathways or behavioral alternatives which might be midlife options for the research participants.

As noted in the chart, four major categories of options (with multiple sub-choices) were subsequently developed. They are: (1) Redefinition, or the altering of beauty definitions; (2) Resignation, or the enduring of consequences of the beauty myth without challenge; (3) Rebellion, or the abandonment of the beauty myth; and (4) Reconstruction, or age-fighting and age-passing behavior.

It is recognized that these are not necessarily progressive, nor mutually exclusive categories.

Redefinition

The first major category is that of Redefinition. The adaptive reconstruction process involves middle-aged women altering the normative definitions of beauty. Pertinent literature (cited in the responses to interview questions) suggests that there are three areas or means in which beauty is redefined.

1. Redefine What is Beautiful: Gray hair and wrinkles are traditionally seen as signs of aging in women which strongly signify loss of youthful beauty. In the redefinition process, some women may chose to redefine what is beautiful and make the assertion that their wrinkles, gray hair and changing body shape are, in fact, attractive, despite popular sentiment to the contrary. "I've earned each and every gray hair and wrinkle and I like them!"

2. Redefine the Standard of Beauty: Rather than comparing oneself to women of all ages or pitting oneself against youthful

exemplars of beauty, the middle-aged woman may redefine the standard of beauty against which she is willing to measure herself. She may find herself beautiful within her own birth cohort. "Compared to other women my age, I'm still beautiful" or "I'm beautiful for my age."

3. Redefine the Locus of Beauty: Instead of using the exterior body as the locus of beauty, women of age may chose to redefine the locus of their beauty, making it interior rather than exterior. "My body may no longer be beautiful, but as I age I realized that it's what's inside that really counts" or "Now it's my soul, my wisdom INSIDE that make me beautiful."

Resignation

The second major category is that of Resignation. The resignation process entails enduring the consequences of the beauty myth. It is the acceptance of the fact that society values youth-based beauty, and the midlife woman no longer meets the societal criteria for beauty. It is acceptance of the loss.

To accept the loss of beauty, and therefore, the loss of societal status and advantages afforded the beautiful is one option for middle-aged women. This may lead to many emotional responses, the two most common being:

1. One may have feelings of depression and anxiety. This is often labeled the midlife crisis.
2. One may experience a sense of relief, having outlived the

beauty myth. To no longer be measured against unattainable standards of youthful beauty may dissipate anxieties and provide a sense of relief to some middle-aged women.

Rebellion

The third major option for midlife women is to rebel against and abandon the beauty myth. By no longer attempting to compete or compare oneself with youth-based beauty, one or more of the following sub-options may be chosen:

1. Develop a new role. When the status which accompanies youthful beauty deteriorates with age, one may find life-meaning and satisfaction in new or different roles. One example may be that of grandmother which (over and beyond the biological role assignment) may be a source of self-definition, meaningfulness, and new status. Mentoring the young, volunteering, or developing other new roles may also be viable alternatives.

2. Find alternative sources of power. With the beauty myth abandoned, women may find or create alternative sources of power. These may include career advancement, returning to school for education and degrees, acquiring possessions or even luxuries not generally affordable by younger women.

Reconstruction

The fourth major category is that of Reconstruction. Reconstruction involves a fight against the natural aging process. Known

in the literature (Macdonald & Rich, 1991) as age-passing (discussed further in the interview response section), women who choose this route attempt to deny their chronological age and natural aging process. Their goal is to remain young-looking in appearance through a variety of procedures which vary in intensity, in order to receive the societal benefits of youth. Four sub-categories of this pathway are:

1. **Cosmetic Concealment.** This is the most benign form of the rebellion process and usually involves age-concealing makeup, youthful clothing, and young hair styles. Although relatively costly at times, no one item is usually considered a big-ticket expense. The concealment process is ephemeral and superficial.

2. **Topical Treatments.** This form of age-fighting involves the use of anti-aging beauty products. As previously discussed, the anti-aging business has been societally received with such popularity and demand it is now a multi-billion dollar annual business within the United States. The medicalization of the aging process in women becomes a topic of great interest in this examination.

3. **Ingestions and Injections.** Americans spend billions of dollars annually on nostrums to ward off physical aging. These include the ingestion and injection of vitamins, minerals, and botanical products, as well as hormones such as dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA), pregnenolone, testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, thyroid, melatonin, and the human growth hormone (HGH) (Regelson & Colman, 1996). Beauty injections also include injecting fatty

tissue around the mouth area and/or injecting minute amounts of the toxin botulism (Botox) to the forehead to remove wrinkles.

4. Radical Procedures. Radical procedures are the most intensive form of age-passing, in terms of financial, physical, and psychological costs to women of age. They involve cosmetic surgery and radical medical procedures (such as liposuction) which attempt to make women look younger than their chronological age. Expensive and potentially detrimental in its effects, this category represents the most dramatic (and literal) reconstruction of the face and body in order to fight the aging process in women.

Specific Questions Asked

From these basic research questions and the organizational chart, more detailed questions were formulated and asked of the participants. They are categorized as follows:

Research Question #1

Has the participant felt a devaluation of social worth as she ages, specifically due to the loss of beauty with age?

There were six specific questions asked which related to Question 1. They are as follows:

1. Have you personally noticed changes in your body image or appearance brought on by the natural aging process?

2. If so, do you feel comfortable talking to me about them?

What specifically are they?

3. Now tell me what reactions you have had or felt as you noticed these parts of your body image or appearance changing with age.

4. Do you think these reactions are all internal, or do you think society makes you feel this way?

5. Do you think people in general treat you differently now than when you were younger? If so, how?

6. Have you felt any loss of power, status, or prestige which you think is directly related to the fact you are aging?

Research Question #2

What (if anything) has the participant done (actively or passively) in response to any perceived social devaluation?

There were two specific questions asked which related to Question 2. They are as follows:

1. You have talked about appearance changes such as (repeated for validity here) and that these changes make you feel (repeated for validity here). (Changes, additions, corrections encouraged). What (if anything) have you done as a reaction to those changes?

2. Midlife women have responded to age changes in a variety of ways. Let me ask you if you have participated in or would consider participating in any of the following attitudes or behaviors.

As previously mentioned, four major categories were developed in relationship to Research Question #2 (redefinition, resignation, rebellion, and reconstruction). Several questions were also asked

which related to these categories.

In regards to the category of Redefinition, three questions were asked which are as follows:

1. Have you ever attempted to change the usual definition of what's beautiful...that is, have you ever felt that gray hair, wrinkles, and midlife body shapes of women are actually very attractive?

2. Have you ever found yourself changing the standard of beauty...that is, have you ever felt that you are still beautiful "for your age," comparing yourself to women your age, rather than all women of all ages?

3. Have you ever shifted the location of your beauty from something totally exterior to something that is now located inside of you...that is, does an increased sense of wisdom and inner beauty become more important than your looks?

In regards to the category of Resignation, four questions were asked which are as follows:

1. Do you think you have resigned yourself to the loss of what society rewards as youthful beauty? That is, have you abandoned the beauty myth and just accepted the loss?

2. If so, has this led to feelings of depression and anxiety?

3. Or has it given you feelings of relief?

4. Or some other feelings?

In regards to the category of Rebellion, two questions were asked which are as follows:

1. Have you developed new roles which replace your former role as a young woman? That is, do you now find your status and satisfaction in the role of grandmother or mentor to the young or some other role?

2. Have you found alternative sources of power, such as in career advancement? Returning to school for your education? Possessions, "toys," trips, nice house...things you couldn't afford in your youth? Other things?

In regards to the category of Reconstruction, five questions were asked which are as follows:

1. Do you fight age? Do you do things to keep your youthful beauty intact?

2. Have you or would you purchase age-concealing products? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

3. Have you or would you purchase topical treatments, such as anti-aging creams? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

4. Have you or would you ingest or inject products for the sole purpose of stopping or slowing the aging process...such as hormones or botanicals? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

5. Have you or would you consider radical procedures to remain young-looking, such as cosmetic surgery, extensive exercise work-out programs, and other involved procedures? What are they?

Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

Research Question #3

The researcher probes for other possibilities which may result in additional categories of reaction.

There was only one specific question asked which related to Question 3. It is as follows:

1. I have asked some very specific questions of you, but I do not want to assume that they are complete enough to capture your total experience. What else can you tell me about your reaction to the aging process you have experienced?

In-depth Interview Responses

Research Question #1

The first specific question asked in this initial category is: Have you personally noticed changes in your body image or appearance brought on by the natural aging process? All participants responded in the affirmative, which lead the researcher to then ask, "Do you feel comfortable talking to me about them? What specifically are they?" All respondents proceeded to talk about their aging changes.

Weight Gain

The number one response was that of gaining weight, with ten of the twelve participants citing it as an aging change. A few of the weight-based responses are as follows:

Ricki responded by saying:

I was 109 pounds when I got married. I'm 5'7" and ate like a horse always...but that was me my whole life. Now, after children I got up to about 115 and after age 40 I went from 130 to 140 to 145 which is where I'm kind of plateauing right around 145...which isn't a bad weight for my height...but it's a different feel to my body.

Rebecca replied:

...trying to lose weight and not having it be as easy. That would probably be the number one thing. Used to be, you quit eating for two days and you'd drop five pounds. Now you can quit eating for two months and you wouldn't drop any weight. And the exercise thing, you know, you have to keep doing something with that, where before it just kind of fell off and that was it...didn't have to worry about it.

The respondent herein named Mary said:

Sure. About three years ago I realized I didn't have a waist any more (laughter). That's the one thing that just infuriated me. It's funny, because I never thought of myself as somebody who was concerned a lot about her physical appearance, but then when that started to happen, I thought, 'Well, damn it! I don't have a waist!'

Jennifer stated:

Well, the first and most obvious is that as I've gotten older and after having kids I've gained a lot of weight...and I'm exceedingly displeased with that. When I was first married, I was exceedingly thin, and will never be again, I'm sure. That's been a struggle for me all of my adult life. I never gained weight until I had babies...and I never seemed to be able to lose it after I had babies. So that's been probably the biggest disappointment or struggle, I would say, in that sense of beauty.

Although weight-gain was considered a negative aspect of the female aging process for those who gave it as a response, one woman found the midlife weight-gain to be a positive thing which made her feel more womanly.

For example, Jill said,

Sure. Sure. One of the most phenomenal differences for me is that I was always a very petite person. I never weighed 100 pounds for the first time in my life, until I was like 35. Which meant I never had breasts, for one thing.

The researcher then asked, "You were under 100 pounds up to age 35?"

Jill responded by saying:

Yes. First time I got married, I was 22, and the day I got married I weighed 97 pounds..with my complete wedding gear on! That's changed immensely. Now I'm a good, solid size 12, which means I have these fabulous breasts, which I sort of always longed for, and I really like that. I like having them. But along with them, of course, has come this roundness. I have this belly. I have, I guess, more of me all over, but it's a sense of roundness...and more curves. I can remember lying on my back in a bikini and my hip bones stuck up so far that you could see down my bathing suit! I was that skinny. And I knew that at least a lot of people feigned jealousy over that. I never understood, I guess...never even really thought about it until my body changed as much as it has now...about what it means to be womanly. And I feel a lot more womanly now.

The researcher noted, "So a lot of that is positive?" Jill acknowledged this by saying, "Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah."

Vying for the second-most popular response to the question of physical changes with age, half of the participants listed some aspect of their hair, skin, and eyes.

Hair

Gray hair has always been a very visible sign of the aging process. It often exemplifies a point of decision for midlife women. Will they allow their hair to naturally go gray? Or will they choose to color it and hide the gray?

The book Age Erasers for Women, by Fisher (1994), states:

Besides wrinkles and sagging skin, few things say 'aging'

louder to a woman than gray hair. While some of us love the look and wear it well, a whole lot of us don't. And there's a multi-million-dollar industry out there catering to our needs to keep our changing true colors a secret.

'If you're going gray, I guarantee you're not happy about it,' says Philip Kingsley, a hair care specialist based in New York City. 'I have seen tens of thousands of people over the years, and none of them wants gray hair. It can really make people feel old before their time.'

...The gray is on the way, like it or not. That leaves you with two choices. You can accept it as an inescapable, even desirable, part of maturing. Or you can put it on hold for a while, using some form of hair dye. (pp. 179-181)

Wendy Chapkis (1986) relates the personal struggle she experienced over the issue of dying graying hair, when she writes:

I don't feel panicked about getting older. I went through that at twenty-seven or twenty-eight. You know, when you realize you aren't going to die before you're thirty and that you will go on and grow old. But now I feel like I have to make some practical decisions related to getting older: Do I wear make-up or not? Do I accept the way something looks or do I change it? Do I take out the gray in my hair or do I leave it? Those sorts of things.

My father always said that gray hair makes the lines in your face softer. Both my parents went gray young, and they both really liked it. So I internalized the value that gray hair is good. I've been watching my hair go gray and enjoying the silvery effect. And then I made the mistake of using henna on my hair and the gray disappeared. Now that it's gone, I feel like I'm pretending to be something I'm not-younger. I have the feeling that I robbed myself of the badge of maturity. (p. 23)

Participants in this study talked about hair in great detail, some echoing both the positive and negative aspects of their hair turning gray. June, for example, said:

Like...my hair, I've noticed...I've colored it for so long that I'm not sure what the natural color is...you know? But I'm always looking, and it's like, Are those gray hairs coming in? Well, if they are, it's my hair...I think it's natural, but now that I've got it sort of to the natural color,

it's going to turn gray. Oh, great! It's not fair.

Barabara commented:

I've studied this. I was working somewhere and I had brown hair, and then I let it grow out to white hair and, you know, you almost stop traffic. They want you to just kind of wobble across the street. I mean, I know that's my interpretation, but it's almost like...um...'where's your walking cane? I'm really trying to help you across the street here!' You know?

In response, the researcher asked, "So there was a lot of difference in the reactions to you?" Barbara said, "I think so. I really do. And the hair color, I think, made the whole difference."

Mary made the following comments:

See, I think gray hair is attractive. Because my hair is short...I get it cut about every three weeks...so I'm in a lot to get it cut and I remember (hairedresser) saying to me one day, 'You know I can put highlights in your hair to hide that gray.' And I said, 'What would highlights do?' And he said, 'Well, it makes it look fuller' (and I forgot what else), but I said, 'The gray is lighter, right (hairedresser)? So wouldn't the gray make it look fuller?' And he said, 'Well, yeah...' I said, 'No.' I really like this. I think it lends a maturity because I think I have a younger face and I think that they graying helps. So I've kept that...as opposed to my sister, who has beautiful salt and pepper hair, which she covers in this brown dye.

Ricki simply responded by saying, "Anyway...changes...umm... loss of color in my hair. I used to be a very deep brunette and now I actually have to add...I'm gray...you know...very, very gray so I've gone to a much lighter look."

When the October, 1998 the charter issue of More, a new magazine from Ladies' Home Journal, hit the news stands it was touted as the only magazine for grown up women. Editor-in-Chief Myrna Blyth called More the long-awaited answer to the problem that no publication entirely focused on women in the middle of our lives. The

first 18 pages contained five full pages of advertisements for hair color and superior gray coverage. More followed throughout the charter issue of the magazine.

One particularly interesting spread featuring Cheryl Tiegs is entitled "Going Gray." In bold letters the typeset reads "Softer than black, the new neutral is gray. When Cheryl Tiegs wears it, it's anything but subdued" (p. 126), and "Gray means glamour in shades that range from ice-cube pales to smoky darks" (p. 128). Yet it is difficult to see anything other than a blonde super star with dark roots by closely scrutinizing the five photographs of Tiegs. Sweaters unbuttoned to reveal cleavage, skirts split thigh-high, and sequined see-through sweaters could not hide the fact that the article on "Going Gray" featured a 40-plus model with blonde hair.

Readers did not miss this fact. In the following issue (December 1998) a letter to the editor from Sally Bennett of Oak Ridge, TN states:

I loved your charter issue-the fashion, the articles and the beauty tips. But not one of your models had gray hair or glasses. I have both and I think I look pretty good, but I'd sure like some reinforcement from the media from time to time. Please try to include some good-looking gray-haired women in your fashion spreads. (p. 18)

The editor responded that there was, in fact, a "gloriously gray-haired model" (p. 18) in this month's issue. No mention of the Tiegs article on "Going Gray."

Professional model Dayle Haddon (1998) wrote a book entitled Ageless Beauty in which she promises readers, "You don't have to go gray (even gracefully)." She states:

Coloring my hair was something I resisted for many years. At the time I thought that coloring my hair was cheating. That is, until the day I was being photographed for Harper's Bazaar in Rome, wearing fabulous Valentino gowns, and the hairdresser couldn't quite cover what nature was boldly revealing-my gray! I quickly came to the realization that coloring my hair would be exciting; it would simply mean I was taking care of myself. (p. 83)

Haddon (1998) admits that "a few women" look "head-turningly gorgeous when they go silver," but states "many more women can look sallow, washed out, and just plain older with gray hair" (p. 83). She then gives information on six different options of hair color (temporary, vegetable, semipermanent, demi-permanent, permanent, and highlights).

Although Haddon (1998) states that coloring the gray is the ultimate answer for aging women, she warns against over-reacting:

There's no getting away from it: your first gray hair is a real shocker. And your second and your third. As a result, there are some classic mistakes that women make when it comes to covering up that gray in your forties, fifties, and up.... A too-dark color screams, 'Dye job, dye job' and makes you look harsh and older. (p. 83)

The book Chic Simple Body, by Gross, Stone & Newman (1994), reveals a trade secret known as menopausal brown. It states:

When estrogen levels begin to decline with the onset of menopause, the cells in the hair follicles begin to multiply more slowly than before-slowing down the regrowth of hair, reducing the production of sebaceous oil and pigment, and thus making the hair finer, more sparse, and often gray. A renowned hairstylist who once worked at Clairol said the company had a little rhyme: 'When You Don't Know What To Do/Use No. 42.' No. 42 was 'Clairol Moongold,' a shade referred to in the trade as 'menopausal brown.' So before you reach for the dye bottle, you might want to consider the possibility of not coloring--particularly if you have blue eyes and ruddy or olive skin, the ideal complexion for gray hair. Gray can be aging; it can also be beautiful. (p. 82)

Gross, Stone, & Newman (1994) also explains the hair-coloring industry's shift over time, which now caters to aging baby boomers wanting to hide their gray. It states:

Hair has become, in a sense, a metaphor for the very human desire for renewal and reinvention.

...The concept of hair color has been around since the first Egyptian slapped some Nile mud on her head and noticed it turned the hair an orangey red. (Henna is, certainly, a 'natural' hair dye; but just because it's natural doesn't mean it's good for you. Used alone, it leaves hair dry and brittle.) The technology of hair coloring pretty much remained at the mud stage until the early 1900s, when several European biochemists discovered that dyes used in the manufacture of clothing, when used in conjunction with ammonia, would tint hair. Until the 1970s, the coloring process was still extremely unsophisticated: clients would have to have their hair entirely stripped of color, and then would have the tint added on top. Jean Harlow, Marilyn Monroe, and Lana Turner all simply had the color removed from their hair; Lucille Ball had her hair personally done by then makeup artist Max Factor, who would bleach it and add her signature tangerine shade. In the mid-'70s, products were milder and better formulated; it finally became possible to go into a top salon and become a bottle blonde, without necessarily looking like a bottle blonde.

Today, color is one of the fastest-growing segments of the hair-care industry. It's not that millions of people want a radical makeover; it's the surge in graying baby boomers, on a chemically formulated search for their former-and true-selves. (pp. 90-94)

The Beauty Imperative holds a strong grip on the issue of gray hair and the option to dye it. Frida Kerner Furman (1997) states:

On the one hand, women feel pressured to look as young as long as possible, for looking old reveals the dirty little secret that one is old; that is a devastating admission when it comes to social acceptability and self-esteem, not because of how these women live their older age-most are active and vital-but because of the cultural stereotypes that abound and that they frequently have internalized. Looking old transgresses contemporary ideals of feminine beauty, thereby denying women one of the only forms of social power and affirmation available to them. It is the individual's responsibility to prevent such

transgression: The woman who looks old, who 'lets herself go,' is seen as unvirtuous in this regard as well as potentially depressed. Hence older women are encouraged to rely on practices that promise improvement over the unimproved face and body.

On the other hand, measures taken to appear younger must be carefully selected lest one give away the carefully crafted but appropriately hidden strategies of age disguise. Thus, coloring the hair is acceptable providing it detracts from, rather than highlights, facial wrinkles. It must look natural, not artificial, for it is considered ridiculous when it departs too much from common-sense reality, as in the case of older women wearing pitch-black hair, practically a natural impossibility among older white women. The same careful choreography of self-presentation obtains regarding dress. Look youthful, but not too youthful, for you might give away your desperate need to stay looking young: 'Who are you kidding?' (p. 116)

Linda Stasi and Rosemary Rogers (1998), authors of Boomer Babes, are straight-forward in their directives to middle-aged women. In a section entitled, "Hair To Dye For," they give the demands of the aging Beauty Imperative concerning hair color. A few points they list are:

Gray hair always makes you look older. Period. Besides, it's very draining to the skin. If you look good with gray hair, you'll look spectacular as a blonde. Your skin color and eye color don't change, so why should your hair color? Most dark brunettes don't make great blondes. The operative word is softer, not lighter. Hair color is your most important fashion accessory. Be prepared to spend more time and money on it than you did when you were surfing and the streaks came naturally. Above all else, keep the color warm. It will allow you to use less makeup and make you look younger and more approachable. (pp. 133-135)

The counter opinion to the Beauty Imperative is perhaps best stated in Dr. Ann E. Gerike's (1990) article entitled, "On Gray Hair and Oppressed Brains." In the article, she details the sexual, social, and economic pressure middle-age women feel to dye their hair,

cover the gray, and deny their age. Ageism and sexism are linked within the article to fight off the Beauty Imperative. Gerike (1990) states:

Ultimately, the coloring of gray hair by women is an endorsement of both ageism and sexism. It also serves to perpetuate both those forms of discrimination. The world is full of gray- and white-haired women who are living testimony to the advantages of age for women, but the power of their testimony is greatly muted by their dyed hair. Older women entering the job market would probably find it much easier to be hired if the older women in the work force were more visible...

The advantages of leaving gray hair untouched are many. It saves a considerable amount of both time and money. The natural affinity of hair and skin color is preserved. Skin tone also naturally changes with age, and women who color their hair usually have to expend considerable time and effort to make their faces match their hair. Unfortunately, the combination of old face and young hair is often discordant...

Hair may gray in interesting patterns, which are lost when the gray hair is colored.... And they can preserve both their hair and their health: the use of hair dyes can contribute to hair loss, especially when combined with other harsh hair treatments, and petroleum-based dyes, usually in dark shades, cause cancer in laboratory animals and may pose danger to users.

The greatest advantage, however, is that a woman who allows her hair to gray naturally is accepting herself for who she is. She is also, in effect, challenging the ageism of a society that tells her she should be ashamed of her age and should make every effort to disguise it. (pp. 43-45)

Gerike (1990) admits that she knows of no study which proves that feminist women are less likely than non-feminist women to color their gray hair. The fact remains, however, that issues of gray and dyed hair are essential to this beauty research.

Skin

Although wrinkles constituted an assumed response to the ques-

tion of bodily changes with age, this researcher was not expecting the broad range of answers encompassing the feel, appearance, tone, pigmentation, and smell of the skin. The responses from the participants include the following, beginning with Ricki:

Changes in my skin tone...especially on my face...umm...again, change in the pigment color. I don't tan as easy. I have a more ruddy complexion. Of course, a little fuller around the chin line. I hope that smiling lifts it...and if you tilt your head just right when you're talking....

Anyway...my skin, how it feels and smells has changed, I've noticed. It's a little dryer. I've noticed because I'll wear a shirt for a short period of time and then hang it up and there seems to be a different smell. I talked to one of my very close girlfriends, who has been my best friend since seventh grade, and we've been through a lot together, and she noticed the same thing. It's like a change in how we smell.

The researcher said, "That's fascinating!" Ricki replied, "You'll have to check it out." The researcher said that she would.

Ricki continued:

It may have to do with the skin becoming dryer...you know...and colognes react a little differently and lotions...and I think that's where I've noticed the change. I don't use as much of those perfumed items as I did, because I feel it brings up the change...or it lingers stale or something.... Does that make sense?

The researcher confirmed that it did make sense, and Ricki stated, "I guess it's like...if you don't have the oil to carry a scent and keep it fresh, then it gets stale. Anyway, I have noticed that."

June made the following comment about her skin:

Or...umm...I think I've had really fine lines on my forehead for a long time, but probably because I'm getting older, and I...and I apply cosmetics or whatever into an ultra- ultra-magnifying glass...that I'm always looking...and I'm always looking to see what changes there are. And I think that there

are some times that I look in that mirror and say, 'Who are YOU?' What did you do with ME?

...I don't want my skin to become dried out or wrinkled so much so I'll do these things. I'll put these lotions on or whatever to try to protect that much of it or I'll use sun screens. Oh, it's just delightful to have pimples and wrinkles at the same time! It's not fair! How can this be?

Barbara made the observations, stating, "And then I used to have pretty skin and now it's kind of bunched up and it looks like threads are running through it. I have old age spots on my forehead and, of course, wrinkles."

Jill responded:

My face has changed a lot. I have more wrinkles. I have creases and I see a difference in my neck, and wrinkles here, but for the most part I don't think I bring a judgment to that. I'm a little curious. Sometimes it catches me, and I look in the mirror, and go, 'Wow. Gee...I don't remember that being there. That's kind of interesting.' But I'm not dismayed. As a matter of fact, I use a lot less facial makeup than I used to. I used to put a lot of time and energy into putting a lot of stuff on my face, and now I'm comfortable without any, and it doesn't take a lot for me to feel like I've made a difference with makeup.

Skin tone was closely associated with many sagging body parts, such as the chin, skin beneath the arms, breasts, legs, and buttocks. Two women also spoke about age spots and varicose veins. The researcher asked if they had personally noticed any changes in their body image or appearance brought on by the natural aging process. June replied, "Sure. Actually, what I think what I've noticed the most is just little spots on my hands. Some people call them aging spots. Some people call them, like, oh, they could be attributed to...whatever." Joyce also said,

I have varicose veins. I've noticed a couple of the little

spidery veins, but I notice them like when I get in and out of the shower and I just kind of blow them off. And somebody once said, I think a girlfriend or somebody said, 'You know, you can have surgery or something' and I'm not interested ...unless for some medical reason or comfort level or something.

Rebecca also responded by saying:

OH YES! YES! It's all right here!! (Participant raises her leg which has many varicose veins.) Well, part of it, you know, is having kids 'cause they...I have these Amazon children and they were all low so my veins just blew up. My Mom had veins like this, so it doesn't seem odd that this would happen to me. But this stuff just doesn't bother me. I've got friends that are getting lasered and getting the saline in them to make them go away, but I figure if people don't want to look at them, they don't have to.

I've got a sister who's got them worse than mine. She won't wear shorts. She says, 'They are just too gross.' I said, 'They don't have to look at them.' Why would you wear pants in the middle of 90 degree heat just so people don't have to look at your legs? Even when we were on vacation...when it was just us...I said, 'Put on a pair of shorts.' She wouldn't. Made me tired trying to talk to her about it.

Eyes

Participants also mentioned eyes when asked about age-related bodily changes. Again, responses encompassed a range of issues, from eye lashes to crow's toes, from dark circles to eyesight. Dawn stated:

I would say that the worst thing is that I definitely require more sleep to keep the black circles...I've always had dark circles under my eyes, but they seem to be worse. I notice that I'm irritated more by allergies and that kind of thing as I get older and that makes my eyes look puffy and weepy and red sometimes.

Ricki replied, "My eyesight...I wear bifocals now. Of course, they are the ones without the lines, but I do have to go back more

frequently...and that's a change." Brenda agreed, stating, "Nobody else really knows...the way glasses are these days you can hide the fact that you need bifocals, but your eye sight goes." Joyce had noticed even smaller changes, speaking about her eyelashes she said:

Umm...I look at myself sometimes in the mirror, and I think, 'You're not the person I saw in 1991 when I moved to Michigan!' My eye lashes are shorter...so I've noticed some of those kind of changes. My eye sight...I bought my first pair of reading glasses three months ago, and more than anything, it's just annoying having to always have to take them off, put them on, so you can see. It's those kinds of things.

Other bodily changes which were less frequently mentioned include: loss of memory, broadened shoulders, deterioration of teeth, loss of hearing, lack of vitality, inability to get a good night's sleep, and shortened menstrual periods.

The second specific question under Research Question #1 asked women what their reactions were to these age-related bodily changes. Following their specific responses, participants were asked if they thought their reactions were internal, or if they thought society made them feel this way.

Mixed emotions were found throughout the responses, expressed with feelings of both amazement at their own bodies and confusion over their personal reactions. As Dawn stated, "Damn, it's hell to get old. But having said that, you know, I really don't feel old. I probably never really felt better in my life...I don't know, really...." The researcher responded, "That's great! So you're not terribly upset by the changes you see." Dawn replied:

You take aspirin for a pain. You take allergy things if you

need to, if they bother you...umm...no, I wouldn't say I'm upset. It's one of those things that, 'Oh, geez, I didn't used to have to do this...' but, whatever...umm...I am taking some hormone-related kind of things. I don't know what that has to do with beauty, but I think there's some skin things hooked into that. I'm not sure what those are, but they don't seem to bother me too much.

The researcher then asked what reactions the participants have had to these changes. Ricki asked, "Me, personally?" The researcher replied, "Yes, you personally...reactions to your own body changes." Ricki responded by saying:

I think it wasn't even until this year that I really started thinking about it...and I think it's because I've always seen myself as thin and I've never thought about weight control. I've never dieted in my life, you know, and all of a sudden, it's like, oh, it's up again. Maybe I should watch what I eat a little bit...

Let's see. My other reactions are...I kind of like myself with lighter colored hair. It's a nice change and I kind of feel like it's okay to grow a change. That doesn't bother me. Again, my facial structure is so much like my mother's, it's not a negative to me, even as I'm growing older.

The researcher replied, "That's a good feeling," to which Ricki responded:

Yeah, it is, and I can see it in my three brothers' faces, how much I look like her when I'm with them...which is not very often...It's like once or twice a year...and every once in a while I have to tell them, 'I'm not your mother. I'm your sister. It's okay...but don't expect me to do that.' But it's just a little bit reassuring in some ways. Looking at my mother's sisters who became very, very large and obese...very large...and we all have the same kind of body shape...and probably will make me think a little more as I'm going into my 50s...because I really don't want to become that large.

June responded by saying, "Well, my reaction has been more of awe than it has been of disgust or frustration. It's more of kind of like an awesome experience. I think, similar to, say if a woman

goes through a pregnancy and you're kind of in awe of how your body changes?" The researcher urged her to continue, saying, "Yes?"

To which June replied, "And you notice those changes and you say,

'Wow! This is just incredible!' I think it's more that." The researcher said, "I hadn't thought of the pregnancy comparison."

June said,

Yeah, yeah...I think the body is such an unbelievable thing. You can go through so many different transformations, I think, during a lifetime. When you see the changes happening, whether you or society considers them positive or negative, and I think that's a whole other issue.... It's just wonderment to me.

Rebecca responded:

Well, you know, you have to look at what's important here. I spent 17 years working with cancer patients. I'm just lucky to be here. This stuff (pointing to varicose veins on legs) is minimal to me. I like my face to look natural. I like my hair to look reasonable. But, I'm not somebody who's going to be going to Eve Arden or Estee Lauder counter every time I turn around, finding their newest product for something. To me, it's part of life. It's coming. I can't change it. There's so little I can do to make any difference, you know, and that's about where I am with it. It's part of life. I'm just glad to be here celebrating it.

Sharon expressed her feelings by stating:

Well, I have actually had an appointment with a plastic surgeon which I canceled, but probably will in the next couple of years go in and see if I'm about the age for a face lift. I'm sure I'll do that. The same appointment I was going to have liposuction for the hips, and actually what happened then... bad timing--don't go in and have a mammogram right before you're going to have an area exam. They found a mass. I was going to do a breast augmentation. I was just going to do the whole business...because I wanted to...

That kind of worked out okay, but that whole process I decided not to undergo any more surgery or anything right now. I just needed some time. Anyway, I did those things. I also have looked up exercises for this (participant touches skin under upper arm) and this is actually getting better...so it

doesn't, like hang. It's there, but it's better. And I try to do 10 miles a week on the treadmill now. That's changed like in the last few months and strength training 3 or 4 times a week, because we have stuff in our basement that we work out together and I go to the Y and work out.

The researcher commented, "Great! So you are taking a lot of steps." Sharon replied, "They don't seem to be enough, but, you know..."

The researcher also asked Barbara about her reaction to the changes she has noticed. She said, "Oh. You know, at first, it's devastating. And then, you realize that you're just as beautiful as you ever were. You've just changed." The researcher asked, "Oh! When did you realize that?" Barbara responded, "It took me a long time." The researcher asked, "Did it?" Barbara replied in the affirmative. The researcher then asked, "Was there an event that made you realize this?" Barbara said, "Just living life. No. No special event. I wanted to change the boobs. I wanted to change the hair color. I wanted to change.... You know, you want to stay vibrant and beautiful. And, you're still vibrant...why aren't you still beautiful? And then, you know how others look at you?" "Yes," replied the researcher. "You realize that that's just not you," concluded Barbara.

Jill replied, "I'm even, I guess, a little bit excited about the fact that it's just going to continue to happen. I have absolutely loved turning 50 this year." "Really?" asked the researcher. Jill continued:

I feel like I have so much credibility now. I absolutely know I'm a grown-up. The first time in my life that there's not a

question in my mind about that. And, again, that combined with a sense of peace, in terms of liking who I am in total (and a part of that is spiritual, but a big part of it also what I see when I look in the mirror). But I don't separate what I see from my looks when I look in the mirror from the spiritual, either. That's part of who she is. But now when I look at that.... You see, I've come this far, and I can still see that 19-year-old in there, sort of, and then I see me, so it's almost as exciting to think, I wonder who's going to be looking back in another ten years. Is the hair going to be completely white by then? What other neat things are going to happen here?

Sarah admitted, "It takes...not more people, but it takes longer for me to feel comfortable with myself. You know, it takes more encouragement than it did." The researcher asked, "So, you are saying that more people would need to compliment you for some things?" Sarah replied, "Yeah. To make you feel okay about yourself." The researcher asked if Sarah had any other reactions to the changes caused solely by age. Sarah said, "I think that you try to block it...sometimes...And then it's staring you in the face and you can't any more." The researcher asked, "And how does that make you feel?" "Well, not good," said Sarah. "You think you're always going to be young and then you realize you're not."

Joyce commented:

Well, the weight I feel bad about. That's probably my biggest personal disappointment in myself...that I'm not controlling it...that I'm not dealing with it. Because I have been successful with it in the past, but for some reason, I'm just not disciplining myself to deal with it. So, that's a disappointment. That, to me, feels like a personal failure.

As far as when I see someone with different or shorter eye lashes, I think, 'Oh, I wish I had longer eye lashes...It would be easier to deal with those things.' The eye sight is more of an annoyance. That's annoying. The other stuff, like I have Crow's Toes (touches skin at outer eye). They're moving into wrinkles, but they're more toes yet. Things like

that.... Things that are sagging. Body parts that are sagging, you know, not as toned up. I probably should care more.

The researcher asked, "You don't care a lot about them?" Joyce replied, "No. I probably should care more."

Janice stated:

Real negative reactions to body...to the weight gain. I don't feel like I look very good in clothes any more. And I want to cover myself up because I feel, you know, ugly in that extra weight. And it seems like no matter what I do...like I eat very, very carefully. I don't eat junk food. I eat really healthy food. I haven't eaten meat for 25 years. I really have watched what I eat...and have increased exercise, yet all I do is maintain. I don't seem to lose weight. And I don't like it. I really hate it. That's the thing I hate the most. I don't mind the gray hair. I've tried dying it and I don't like it dyed. But it's the weight more than anything. I just really don't feel good about it. I don't feel like myself in my skin.

Jennifer responded:

Well, it's kind of like getting to know yourself all over... because when I was young and when I was first married I never had to give a thought to what I put on. I'm tall and was always very thin, and my father owned a department store, and so I had a pretty good supply of clothing. I worked in the store as a teenager, and I was the one that always got to model the clothes and do all the fun things, because I was the tall, skinny one. I never had to give a thought to what I wore, or what I wanted to wear, because it would always fit me. I didn't have to worry about: Does this make my hips look big...and, of course, that's no longer true. I'm constantly having trouble in buying clothes, or does this look right, or whatever. Since I am professional and out in the public eye a great deal, I'm always worried about it. A lot of times people are seeing me from my back side. I'm always worried about what does this look like from the back side. So it's that.... It's that outward image look that has become more in my forefront...in my thoughts. Never used to think about it.

The researcher asked, "And the reactions aren't particularly happy ones...or are they?" Jennifer replied:

No. I would say that if I could wave that magic wand and have anything I wanted to, I would be back to the way it was. I suppose there is a way...I mean, it's a big cycle...I suppose

there's a way to get there if I'm willing to pay the price... and maybe I haven't been willing to pay the price. I let it become bigger in my mind than it needs to be. It bothers when I go to get dressed, but it doesn't bother me so much when I'm doing other things. You know?

The researcher then asked if there were other actions taken as a result of those reactions to aging? Jennifer stated:

Well, I continually make my periodic attempts to lose weight. I've done several different things for that. I sporadically get very inspired to exercise. I do exercise some, but certainly not to the extent that I should. I have developed over the last few years, I think as a response to the accident (but that's an unprovable issue)...a fair amount of orthopedic problems. That seems to be my weak point in my body, is orthopedic...I've had a fair number of things in that line. That's starting slow me down. Certain parts of my body that don't work as well as they used to...and I can't do the things I used to...or I don't have the strength I used to have...or the flexibility. That's really bothering me.

So I've just started...in fact, just very, very recently...I was out in California and I ran into a massage therapist that seemed to have some pretty good ideas and I went into him for a couple of treatments while I was there. I'm going to follow up with that. He also got me on some natural herbal things to see if he couldn't relieve some of the pain that I have. I have carpal tunnel (syndrome) very badly...very badly...and it's into my arms, up into my elbows, very badly. The doctors tell me my only choice is surgery, and I'm trying very, very hard to avoid surgery.

So I just decided (you know it's always easy to make a decision...whatcha going to do with it? We'll see) but I just decided after working with him it was time to take time for myself. So this is going to be my year. Whatever that means!

The researcher said, "Great! That sounds good to me!" Jennifer replied, "Well, I've never done it...never done it. And I've just gone through a really awful year and it's just time to have a year for us...and for myself a little bit. So that's where I'm headed."

In summary, when asked if the participants' reactions to

to these aging changes were internal, or if society makes them feel the way they do, answers were nearly equally divided. Five women strongly felt their reactions were internal in origin. Five women strongly voiced their perception that reactions were external in origin. Two women felt their reactions were a combination of both internal and external messaging. June said:

I think maybe...um...I can't deny that I've been attracted by the culture that I'm in...because for the most part...for most of my adult life.... I have struggled so much with self-esteem issues, body-image issues...never quite feeling good enough...never quite feeling that my body was either the right proportion or that I was too heavy or that I was...and I think those things cause a lot of trouble for me over the years. I think maybe now I'm a lot more at peace with myself than I was when I was in my 30s, certainly, or my 20s, definitely...and I don't feel like I'd ever want to trade those years EVER again.

The researcher asked, "So it's actually getting better for you?"

June said,

It's getting better...and I think that that comes from just realizing too that there are these standards out there that I think put a lot of pressure on women. And they affect how men and women relate to each other and what they're looking for and their level of openness and acceptance about what they think is okay. I think I've had to come to terms with that internally, myself...so I think it's kind of a combination of both...but I definitely think that the cultural and the socialization has the biggest impact.

Rebecca replied:

Oh, societal messages!! My goodness, yes! They're everywhere. I mean, you can't turn on a TV or turn on the radio without hearing about some new anti-aging cream...or something new something or another that's going to be the best thing you ever had in your life...or some new diet program that's going to be the best thing you ever had in your life. You can choose to listen to it or choose not to listen to it.

The researcher commented, "It doesn't sound like you listen to them much." Rebecca responded:

No...It's just one more thing and every one comes up with... they have the newest thing on the face of the earth that's just going to clean up everything...and, when I was younger, I remember trying those...when I was still having kids, probably in my early 30s. Somebody...Oil of Olay would come out with a new something, you know...or Neutrogena or somebody would come out with 'Wow! You gotta gotta get it!' This makes no sense. You know, you'd have \$200 worth of junk in your... you know, you use it three weeks and it's not any different than anything else.

Sharon made the following statement:

I have always thought that women lost a lot of their value as they aged...and this is not the case with men. At least how men value women, because no matter what you can do in the professional or educational field, etc., no matter how intelligent you are, men tend to be rather superficial and value physical beauty over all those other things.

The researcher asked, "Over all of them combined. Okay. So you are definitely taking in societal messages, as well?" Sharon replied, "Well, society isn't telling me how I need to be, but I am aware of how society views women. Just look at the motion picture industry and if you're an older actress, you have very few parts, and the parts you have are not really choice." Barbara said, "I think society does this. The magazines...with the 'C' abdomen shape...and the men. I mean, if you watch the men's eyes...always to the younger women. Those are direct society-related."

Jill stated:

Oh, I think it's completely internal. Completely internal. And what's interesting about that for me is that the same value judgments that I used to bring to society's benchmarks when I was 20 now I really have developed a keen sense of humor about. I really kind of get a kick out of watching the struggle of young people. The whole dating/mating game...all of that.... Where it used to be so serious, and so important, and heart-breaking, end of the world, and all those kinds of things that ultimately all lead to self-doubt...Now I look at it and it's...I have a little bit of a superiority complex

about (and I'm almost probably a little patronizing about it) but it really is sort of funny.

The whole thing is kind of like watching birds. If you've ever watched birds. There's a bird that's called the purple-breasted sparrow, although it's red. But if you watch the male and the female, they do this thing where they kind of get next to each other on a branch, and one kind of marches up and down, and turns around, and shakes their butt, and spreads their wings, and it's sort of like that sort of thing that goes on around (and I think probably more intensive for young women, but for young men, also) that preening, that wanting, working on it, and all that stuff is really kind of silly.

The researcher then asked, "How do you block out all of the societal messages that say, 'Defy age...and fight age...and age is a negative'?" Jill replied, "I sort of feel like I've got it and they don't get it." "Oh!" commented the researcher. Jill continued:

Wisdom really is one of those things. I think you know if you have it, and you know when someone doesn't. And those who don't, don't get it at all. They don't have a clue. Again, I see that in terms of particularly television advertisements, and probably some ads in magazines, that kind of thing. There is that emphasis on hide what's happened to you. If I thought about hiding what has happened to me, it's like denying all that I am, and that sort of misses the point. You don't get to be wise, to be centered, to know who this is, until you've walked with her for a long, long time...and tested her, and watched how she bounces back, and seen all her capabilities. To cut any of that away, or try to deny it, then you deny what the sum total of that journey's all about. Absolutely don't want to defy anything about it. I embrace it. I absolutely embrace it. Can't describe it any other way.

Mary responded by stating:

Oh, I think society makes me feel not valued because I'm older. Everything is geared toward young women, young people, young women in particular, I think. That's the symbol of American beauty...the young, vibrant, effervescent blonde, bubbly person. So I think that that's there and that's a tough one. Just like it is for some younger women who go through eating disorders. I think it's also true for older women. I actually think it's helped me to be single...having to have my own career...and, you know, I have my own money and I have my own career, so I can make my own decisions and, so,

I think that has made me feel...or I am more independent, as opposed to living with somebody who might bring in all the baggage of 'You're getting older...'

The researcher said, "Oh, I see what you mean. So it's easier to deal with aging on your own than to be in a close relationship where that person might also be affected by societal messages?"

Mary responded, "Right. Right."

Joyce made the following comments:

I think it's both. I think it's both. I would say, most for me is internal. There are some social messages, yeah. In my relationship with my guy, he is incredibly supportive and we'll talk about it, or if something comes up regarding, like a friend of mine had a breast implant. She's 36 years old. And (her significant other) is very down on that kind of stuff. Why would anybody do something like that to their body? It's not natural?

Women, when they turn 40, they turn 50 or 60, certain things happen, and that's normal! So I get a lot of support from him. Other social messages, I would say, yeah, I think there's some. Yeah. Like I said it's both, internal and social.

Janice said:

I think most of it's internal. I mean, of course the societal messages are out there, but when I think about my own personal situation, and when I talk to people about it, I always get such positive feed-back, you know, "Yeah, you're not gross" or "No, you're not obese" or 'No...' I've always been a super thin person until I hit 45, and then it was like.... So, I think it's internal, which I'm sure comes from society...way back, WAY back, but yeah, it's internal.

Jennifer paused before she gave the following answer:

That's hard to answer. Internal in the sense that you react to them and you respond to them...but how to tell how much of that response come from what you think society expects of you...it's hard to say.

I guess I would have to say more internal, because I don't tend to go along with a lot of what society expects of us. I've always been kind of out of step with a lot of that, and so, I guess some of it is what I would like to see in myself.

I compare myself to my Mom...I'm built like my Mom...I look like my Mom...so I watched her age, and I see where I'm going. I know my Mom was extremely wrinkled and, of course, when I looked at her, she was beautiful. To her...She would say, Oh, she didn't like being so wrinkled. And I'd say, 'Mom. You look great.' But then in honestly, I have to say to myself, I don't want to be like that. But I know I probably will be because I'm just like her. So I guess it's more internal than external.

Participants were next asked if they thought people in general treat them differently now than when they were younger. One-third of the respondents did not think people treated them any differently in midlife. Dawn said, "I don't think so...I can't think of anything age-specific...nothing comes to mind."

June responded:

Hmm...well...that's an interesting question because I think about how when I when I was younger I was a lot more insecure, not as confident, and I think, of course, people are going to react to that. So if I'm more confident now and more assertive now, people are certainly going to react differently to it. I mean, I haven't had anybody say to me yet, 'Would you like a senior citizen discount?' (laugh) I guess I haven't had that experience yet, but...umm...no...no...

The researcher then commented, "And you are incredibly young-looking, too...because I could not believe that you were even old enough to participate...so that might have an influence..." June responded:

Yeah...I think that's probably true. I don't think that I've...with that sort of feedback, that people will generally guess that I'm younger than my age...and I admit that I'm not really out there, open, and saying, 'Oh, but no...I'm 45 years old.' I enjoy that feedback. And am I ashamed of being 45? I don't think I'm ashamed of it. I'll admit it if someone were to ask me. Most of the time I'll joke. If they say, 'Well, how old are you?' and I'll say, 'Yo! I don't know...in dog years I've been dead a long time...' But I think it's a matter of that I don't want to be judged on that basis alone...nor do I want to judge people on that criteria. Usually

when I find out how old people are, it sort of goes in one ear and out the other. It doesn't necessarily mean anything to me...because, again, I think it's how we relate to each other, whether or not we have good rapport, so that's not all that meaningful to me.

Sharon commented:

Yes, but...I...When I was younger, before I became a nurse, people just treated me like...I don't know...like I was just a mother to my kids, and stuff like that. Once I became a nurse, they then treated me with more respect. I didn't realize that until I tried to be a realtor for a short period of time. I got no respect at all, and I thought, 'No. I don't want this. I want people to treat me with respect because I'm used to that now.' And so now, pretty much everybody...I mean I can just feel the respect...but, it doesn't have anything to do, I don't think, with appearance.

The researcher asked if it has more to do with her occupation.

She replied:

Right. Right. That's why I don't tie that into appearances at all. Now, one phenomenon I noticed when I went through my divorce in the early 90s, I weighed 50 pounds more. I weighed 200. I lost 50 pounds in a three month period. Now, there was a huge difference in how men treated me after that weight loss. I was a nurse. I was a nurse since 1985, so, there was always that respect there, but I don't exactly know how to explain it...because I'm sure I was sending out messages during that time period because I was getting a divorce and I'd lost weight, and I felt good about myself. I'm sure I was sending out messages, but men were just THERE! They were interested. I don't know how to explain it.

The researcher asked, "So you have found that it is more with like things with weight, rather than age?" Sharon replied, "At that time, that was true. But now that I'm in an established relationship, no longer sending out signals, that part's different. I don't find men following me around or anything...by any stretch of the imagination." The researcher asked, "But you're not feeling that people in general are treating you either worse or better because of

your age?" "No. No," replied Sharon.

Sarah said, "Oh, I think more is expected of you as you get older. You're supposed to be a constant. When you're younger, you don't have the responsibilities, the accountability that you do as you get older." The researcher then asked, "And do you think that bodily changes make people treat you any differently?" Sarah responded, "No. I don't think so."

In summary, the remaining two-thirds of the respondents felt that people do treat them differently now than when they were younger. Six of the eight women felt that the treatment received was more favorable than in youth, often citing respect as an acquired response with age. The two women who felt their treatment was more negative with age included Ricki, who said, "I have problems with (fakes a gesture to turn off tape recorder) with...um...comments, impressions, reactions of young men in their early 20s." "About older women?" asked the researcher. "Yes. Reacting to me." The researcher asked, "Do you think people treat you differently than when you were young?" Ricki said, "Oh yes. Oh yes." The researcher asked her in which ways. She stated:

I think for young men it's almost...like a shut off.... It's like they're not interested. It's not sexual or anything... it's just...not interested...and it's not because they don't know me or know anything about me...it's just...they...are very self-focused on what is important to them. I don't think older women are important to them.

The researcher then asked if she was feeling invisible to them. Ricki replied,

Yeah...invisible...or...I have to struggle for the word here

... umm...inconsequential. That's a good word. I want that one. And I think that's what I feel. This is good because I've never really talked this out, but I do feel that way. And also now, in the workplace, I feel it more than anywhere else with younger people that are coming into the workplace.

The researcher then asked if this was true for men and women both. Ricki replied:

Men and women both. I'm also, I feel, it's almost as if women (this is my experience with high school girls through my son) are more involved with how they look, and what's cool, and what they wear, and what they eat, and everything than they ever were when I was that age. It's getting worse instead of better. I'm appalled. The conversations that I hear...it's like...you've got to be kidding me...you know...it's obsessed with appearance. And my kids feel that pressure. But women are definitely in charge at that age. I mean, they're calling the shots.

The researcher also asked Mary if she thought people treat her differently now than when she was younger. Mary responded in the affirmative. The researcher asked for her to further explain. Mary said,

Well...um...I think, for instance, I think the first time somebody called me 'Ma'am' in a restaurant, I almost cried. That, to me, meant, oh dear, it's not Miss any more, it's Ma'am. But I also think there's a difference to somebody you looks mature and some younger people do that very respectfully. I appreciate that, because I think part of what happens with aging is your knowledge of whatever it is you're doing or where you are or your life experience gives you something that a younger person doesn't have, just because they can't have...because they're not older. I haven't yet seen the negatives that you sometimes hear about with the older old...like in their 70s. That will be interesting.

As noted, six women participants said that they had noticed that people treat them differently in midlife than when they were younger, however, they perceived people's reactions as being increasingly positive with age, accomplishments, and achievements.

Their comments are as follows:

The researcher asked, "Do you think people treat you any differently now than they treated you when you were younger?"

Rebecca asked, "Like friends?" The researcher said, "People in general...anybody?" Rebecca replied:

No. I wouldn't say so. This is just my opinion, but I love the 40s. I mean, this has been my favorite so far. It's fun raising kids...but I wouldn't go back to that for a moment. It was fun, and we had a good time, and I'm glad I got to spend the time that I did, but I wouldn't want to go back. I really do like the 40s. I mean, this has been fun. It's been a good time. It's not anything I've regretted. It's been a good place.

The researcher then asked, "And you think people are pretty much treating you the same? Or with more or less respect? Or hasn't it changed?" Rebecca replied:

If anything, I would say it was more...only because I've done more things, I've been responsible for more things. People know that. They know if I call them and ask them to do something, (this is a horrible thing to say) they say, 'I have to say yes to you. You do too many things and I feel guilty if I don't.' Okay. Whatever you say. Doesn't bother me. Things like that, I think, you build up through the course of time. When you're just starting out with your kids in school ...I don't know if you were able to do much in school with the kids, but when you first start out, you're just learning the ropes and you do lots of stuff and that's how you figure out, 'Okay, this I can do.' And as you get going along, you realize there's a lot of things you can do, and so you do them. And then people see that over the course of time and they know that if you're there and you're in charge of it, it will go fine and they will help. It's not a big deal. Somebody's in charge, whether they don't know and they're not sure how it's going to go. If anything, I'd think it is more respect....

I wouldn't have half of what I do now at 25. There's no way. In fact, I wouldn't have even thought this would be happening at this age...but as you get older, wonderful things happen.

The researcher also asked Barbara, "So there was a lot of

difference in the reactions to you?" Barbara said, "I think so. I really do. And the hair color, I think, made the whole difference." The researcher asked, "Really? That was the number one thing? Barbara said, "But since my hair's been white, and since I moved out of the state for a little bit, I've noticed that being this older age does not make a difference to even younger men. They're still attracted." "Oh...that's great!" said the researcher. Barbara said,

Isn't that interesting? I don't know if it's the open-mindedness of another state or if it's...I don't know...maybe society's changing...you know, since there's more of us walking around now who are going to be middle-aged. Maybe there's a respect...I don't know."

"Do you think people treat you any differently now than when you were younger?" the researcher asked Jill, who replied in the affirmative. The researcher asked her to explain. She said:

I think in some ways I was probably not a lot of fun to be around, because I struggled so hard with my feelings and the internal struggles I was going through between...particularly in my 20s, being really involved in the women's movement when that was really at the budding of that...late 60s, early 70s, where we were still arguing whether or not it was all right to shave under our arms, and whether or not that meant you sold out...you know?

The researcher laughed and said, "Yes. I remember those days." Jill continued:

So I had a lot of anger. I was angry because I couldn't let go of those things. I had to shave my armpits. It just was who I was, and I needed to wear make-up, and I needed to dress a certain way, and I felt somehow like I was either letting women, or myself, or something down. So I think I was probably unhappy and angry most of the time. I think, probably, even people who don't know me very well right now, I think if you asked them, but certainly anyone who knows me well at this point in my life, I'm a joy to be around. I'm happy and I'm loving. I'm not needy. I've got a lot to give. I'm thinking in terms of people that I meet casually at work, or where ever,

I think, in general...I think I've always made an impact on people's lives. I'm not now, and certainly never have been, just another person. I think people either really, really care for me, or they really, really don't, almost right from the beginning. I think the pendulum has swung more now to the point where most people do like me...and I think that really is about the fact that I don't buy into all of that shit about what people have to look like and what's beautiful and what isn't. I think it's nice for people to connect with somebody who doesn't do that.

"It's just a relief," said the researcher. "Yeah. Yeah," replied Jill.

The researcher also asked Joyce if she felt people treat her any differently now than when she was younger? After a long pause, Joyce asked, "You mean, people I know or..." The researcher responded, "People in general." Joyce said,

People in general? Yeah, and I think some of it's good. There's ...some of it's good, I think. In some ways there's a different level of respect, because I've proven myself. And because of the confidence I have today that I didn't have when I was 20 (and I'm thinking here of career), people DO treat me differently. Sometimes I'm treated (and I've noticed this at work), I'm treated more like someone who counts for an expert ...or let's call (her name) and let's get (her name) involved in this...versus 25 years ago or 20 years ago when I wouldn't be considered. You know? And when I get a call like that, I feel flattered, and if I'm not the right person, I feel good about saying, 'Okay...this is the person you probably want. Let me refer you.' So I still feel like I'm helping...I don't know if this makes sense...

The researcher commented, "Yes, it makes a lot of sense..."

Joyce responded,

so, yeah, I think that's the positive side about being treated differently because I'm older. I can't personally say that I can recall a time when I've been discriminated against because I'm older versus younger. I'm sure it's happened, but I can't recall it at this time.

Janice was also asked the same question. She said, "Yeah. I think

they treat me more respectfully." "It's more positive?" asked the researcher. Janice replied, "Yes, it's much more positive. I think people value what I have to say. I think that they listen to me differently. Yeah, generally, in almost thing that I can think of...every instance, I feel like I get treated better now...and valued...and respected...and, just generally accepted more." The researcher asked, "And you think that is because of age?" Janice replied:

I don't know if it's directly because of age. Age really isn't too big of a deal for me. I mean, it is, and it isn't. But I think a lot of it just has to do with just my position in life. I've changed in ways that allow for more positive feed-back, too. I've changed my life situation. Where, you know...with the school, with the divorce, with all these different things.... When I think about my kids, they don't treat me any differently. I'm still the same old Mom, you know. Generally, people, I feel, maybe trust me more or something. But I think it's been mostly positive.

The researcher also asked the same question of Jennifer, who replied:

Within my profession, definitely...but all positively. Because I'm older. I'm experienced. I have a reputation. I am now one of the gurus of the field, if you will. I don't mean that to sound arrogant, but I'm at the upper end of the field, and so when I am someplace, I am treated with the respect that I feel I've earned.

Out in the shopping world, unless it's a real young person, I would say the only difference I see is that I'm not always used to being a 'Ma'am.' There is that...oh, you're that other generation...but also, it's kind of interesting because, as you well know, people in my age category nowadays are so numerous...and they have such shopping power that there's a lot of deference to that age, because somebody at my age walk in, they know bloody well they can pay for it. You know, that has affected me, because I was brought up that you're always very polite, and courteous, and you never rock the boat...and all these good, old middle-class values...and as I've gotten older, I've gotten a little less tolerant of some of the bad

service that we get and some of the arrogance that we get. If I don't get respectable service from somebody...or if I get talked down to...I'll just walk away from them, because I figure I've got the buying power, they don't. So in a sense, I guess, I maybe take a little of that away from them...you know, that attitude.

"Yes," said the researcher. "You take control of that." Jennifer laughed and said, "I tend to be a little 'take control.'" The researcher then said, "And that's good. When you said your hair turned gray so early, did that change how you were perceived? You said people thought you were older than what you were, but did you feel..." Jennifer replied:

I always liked it. I don't think others did. I have no memory of anyone responding that way. No. In the early times, my hair was very, very dark, and so a little streak of gray in those years was kind of different...you know, it was a little exotic...or whatever. It didn't really bother me. I remember when I turned 30 I had had a kind of ongoing joke with my husband that when I got more salt than pepper in my hair, it was time to do something. And just before my thirtieth birthday, I had it frosted. It was the first time I'd ever had any coloring put in my hair of any kind, and I decided to have it frosted. I really liked it, and it worked out very well for me. Of course, it was popular in those days to do that. It looked fine...and then as the years went by, we had more gray than frost, and we said This is not working any more. Now we are into three tones! So I quit doing that.

It really didn't bother me until I lost all the brown...until it went to the silver. Actually, we were in (state) with our oldest daughter and her husband, and we went on a tour and they took your picture when you went on the tour. When you got back, they're trying to sell you the pictures. We looked at the picture and all I could see was this shocking silver hair...and I made that comment to my daughter, 'Oh, my God! That's awful! Look at that silver hair!' And her comment was, 'Well, Mother, if it bothers you, do something about it.' I said, 'Oh! Well, maybe I will!'

The researcher commented, "And you did." Jennifer said, "Yep.

Yep."

The final specific question asked for Research Question #1 is: Have you felt any loss of power, status, or prestige which you think is directly related to the fact that you are aging? All but one participant said that they felt no loss of power, status, or prestige with their personal aging process. Many made it clear that they had already compensated for possible losses with educational degrees and occupational advancements. Others stated that they felt no loss because they never felt powerful during any period of their lives. Ricki, the one woman who admitted to feeling a loss, stated:

I think I'm feeling a sense of loss related to opportunities in career, which is really in a male-dominated, hierarchal company. Definitely. I think that's definitely true...which you tend to react by being a little bit more obnoxious or disagreeable to deal with that...which I don't like doing... which is not me. So, I think that's partly why I'm on that plateau, wondering where I'm at, because I don't know that I want to be that way.

The researcher said, "That makes a lot of sense. Do you think they would pass you over for promotions for a younger person? Is it that kind of..." Ricki replied, "I don't think they would at this point because of the area in which I work...with older adults. Now a man in that area might be perceived affirmatively in a service environment than a woman."

Other reactions received from women claimed that they did not feel any loss of power, status, or prestige with age. Dawn said, "I almost feel just the opposite." "Really?!" asked the researcher.

Dawn replied:

That I have reached a stage where I can work if I choose or not if I choose...I can work where I choose...when I choose... I can command a certain...I don't know if respect is the right

word, but ah I would say I feel just the opposite of that, because I AM older. I think I have more experience, better to deal with things, able to see the bigger picture, know that some things take longer. We just had an experience where our son turned down an opportunity that (my husband) thought he should take because he couldn't wait four years to make more money. You know, you have to take a cut in pay and then you work back up to four years. Well, we could see the bigger picture, but when you've got two kids and a wife and you can't afford a \$4 an hour cut in pay...even for four years kind of thing...so...it's kind of the ability to see the bigger picture and...no, I think it's better...I'm...I'm very comfortable where I am. I wouldn't go back. I wouldn't have kids... I mean, I don't want to have kids again. I don't want to be at that stage...ummm...I don't like people in and out...you know, I like having just the two of us and be able to go and come and whatever. I wouldn't go back.

The researcher commented, "You sound really...like it's been a much more positive thing than..." Dawn replied:

So far...you know...certainly we've aged, but at this point we don't consider ourselves old. You know, where the grandkids may think we're old...and even the kids may think we're old... but this certainly isn't old...hey...and you know there's more to come.... My mother-in-law just turned 82...you know, and you see our friend's parents are dying and you know that's coming, but certainly don't feel any of that right now.

"It doesn't sound like you had a transition period...or went through some midlife crisis when you realized you were aging," noted the researcher. Dawn said:

Doesn't feel that way. I had a menopause thing that started and was actually more physical than mental. You know, a lot of bleeding and that kind of crap, you know...well, a D & C and some hormones fixed it! So it wasn't like, 'Oh, my God, I'm getting old...I'm never going to have kids.' I don't want to have kids anymore...you know...I'd just as soon stop this business. Which was just fine with me...and, you know, I'm taking the hormones and I never thought of them as maintaining your mental as much as the physical part of it. Now supposedly they impact your mental part too, and maybe they do, and maybe that's why I don't feel anything...I don't know that... but it certainly took care of the physical aspect and we're done with that and that's just fine.

"So there wasn't a midlife crisis?" asked the researcher.

Dawn replied:

Doesn't seem to be at this point...maybe it's coming...I don't know.... Maybe I haven't gotten there yet! So...umm...sometimes I think this is kind of what we waited for...you know.... We've worked all our lives...the kids are doing well, you know...it's kind of.... This is a nice place to be...I can enjoy the grandkids.

June had a similar response, when she stated, "Not so far.

In fact, if anything, I feel like...again, I haven't had the experience of being rejected, knowing that that rejection was based on my age. So that would be a different matter if I had...but so far I haven't."

Rebecca was also asked, "Have you felt any loss of power, prestige, status which you think is directly related to the fact that you are aging?" She said, "Oh, no...no...If anything, I have more." The researcher asked, "It has increased, not decreased?" Rebecca replied, "Yep, yep...oh, definitely. You're still learning your way through life at 25, you know?"

When Sharon was asked if she felt any loss of power, status, prestige which she thinks is directly related to her aging process, she replied:

No. But part of that may be what you and I are achieving (doctoral degrees). That automatically commands respect, and so people...they might think that you're old, but they're not going to treat you like you're worthless because you have something else. So I haven't noticed any difference at all. I do know that in general, society doesn't value older women.

"Right," said the researcher. "But you think yours and mine might be compensated because of our educational degrees?" Sharon

replied, "At least partially. Yes."

In response to the same question, Barbara said, "No. I think you gain it." The researcher asked, "You think you gain power, prestige, and status?" "I do," said Barbara. "How so?" asked the researcher. She replied:

Just in people trying to take you across the street because you have white hair. In your own attitude...in your own ability to know how you are and get it across.... I think if you respect yourself more, others are going to respect you more. So you can't lose it.

Jill also felt no loss. She stated:

No. Nope. I think I've gained. I think I get stronger, and it's a different kind of strength, but it's about, again, an inner peace. The image that comes to mind is the hamster cage. I'm not expending all the energy that it takes to keep that thing moving. And as a result of that, I have more energy to use as I choose. To give to others. To give to myself. To just savor. To just be with. I don't have to do a whole lot of that.

Mary expressed similar feelings:

Wow. I don't think so. I can't even think of...I don't know that I have that much power...or thought of myself as having that much power in terms of where I work...so I don't know that I've lost any being older. I don't see women where I work as having a lot of power, so I don't see being older where I work making a difference. I don't think so.

When Joyce was asked if she experienced such losses, she said, "No. No." The researcher then asked if she felt any increase in power. Joyce responded, "Yes. Because I'm comfortable with myself. I often say I wish I was 20 again, being who I am today." The researcher commented, "Yes. I can relate to that." Joyce continued by saying,

I'm comfortable. I'm comfortable with me today. I wish there were things about me that were different...like I wish

I would be more disciplined as far as the weight thing. I wish there were things about me like that that were different.

The researcher asked, "But the comfort you feel gives you a sense of power?" Joyce said:

Yes. Yes. And I feel where 15 years ago...or 20 years ago... it important that I have a flat stomach and be in a bikini. Today, I would just settle for two sizes smaller, you know, to be happy being chubby. That's fine. Different perspective. I'm more concerned about health and looking nice, versus being thin and fitting in...and that's given me more of a sense of power.

Janice was also asked if she felt she had loss power, status, or prestige as she aged. After a long pause, she replied, "No. I can't think of anything." The researcher asked, "So, mostly it's been a positive experience?" She responded:

For me it has. Status...prestige...power.... No. Definitely my power has increased. I think my status has increased. Yeah, I really don't feel that loss. The only loss that I would feel would be the fact that I used to have the sense (when I would be out in the world, just doing what you do) that people would look at me and think that I was attractive ...and was in good physical shape...and I don't have that sense any more...but I don't feel that that's a loss... necessarily...

The researcher asked, "Why is that?" Janice said,

Because I felt too objectified. I felt objectified as a younger woman. When I get to know people, then I get feedback that they (who ever) still think that I am attractive. You know, I am an attractive older woman. But I don't have that same objectified feeling.

"So that's a good thing?" asked the researcher. She replied:

That's a good thing. I still struggle with these changes... you know, I haven't totally embraced them...I try to do a lot of positive self-talk. That, you know, yes...I'm losing this particular part of my persona, but I'm replacing it with another part. So, it's a lot of self-talk stuff...because it is a struggle for me. I'm happy not to have this feeling of being an object all the time, but when I look in the mirror,

I'm not real happy with what I see...but I don't think I was happy with what I saw as a young person, either. So I don't know that the aging part is really making that much difference. It's hang-ups I've had my whole life...It doesn't have anything to do with aging, really, except I would like to be in better shape.

"So it's self-perception?" asked the researcher. Janice said,

Yeah. Yeah. Maybe it's because of the education I've gotten, but even though I know those negative perceptions are out there about older women and older men, I think my education about it came at a time when it allowed me to not buy into it.

The researcher said, "Okay. You had something to counter all the messages with." Janice said:

Yeah. I get irritated when I see all the messages on television about it...because women are portrayed like they're so stupid! Like this is the only thing they have to worry about! And it just irritates me. I mean, I do get angry about it, because I know that so many women are buying these products and the stuff that goes along with it...it irritates me.

When asked the same question, Jennifer asked, "Losses in power...?" The researcher replied, "Status?...Prestige?..." Jennifer replied, "No. I cannot say I do. I really can't. I can see that that can come as professional involvement declines, but at this point, no."

In summary, all participants reported noticing changes in their body image or appearance brought on by the natural aging process. They were all willing to discuss their specific perceptions. The number one response was that of weight gain, closely followed by gray hair, skin (wrinkles and sagging, as well as the skin's feel, appearance, tone, pigmentation, and smell), and eyes (length of eye lashes, crow's toes, dark circles, eyesight). Other changes which

were less frequently discussed included loss of memory, deterioration of teeth, loss of hearing, lack of vitality, insomnia, and shortened menstrual periods.

Mixed emotions were expressed as specific reactions to these changes. They included both positive and negative reactions, such as feelings of amazement, confusion, awe, devastation, loss of self-confidence, disappointment, and a desire to hide their bodies.

When asked if they perceived their reactions as internal or societally-based, five women felt their reactions were internal, five thought they were external, and two felt that their reactions were a combination of internal and external messaging. One-third of all respondents did not think that people treat them differently now than when they were younger. The remaining two-thirds consisted of six women who thought their treatment by the general public had improved, and two women who felt their treatment was more negative as they age.

To complete Research Question #1, participants were asked if they have felt any loss of power, status or prestige based on their aging process. All but one woman said they felt no loss of power, status, or prestige. Prior compensation for the aging process (educational and career advancements) were given as the main reason for not feeling loss at the time of these interviews. Others felt they had never felt powerful at any time in their lives, and subsequently did not feel loss during middle-age.

Research Question #2

In a broad, opening query for the second research question concerning actions taken by participants as a result of their own aging experience, all women were asked what they have done (actively or passively) in response to noticeable body changes and any previous perceptions of social devaluation based on age. Although all women were found to have taken action, a great diversity among responses was found.

Dawn said,

You kind of deal with it as you go along on a day to day basis...and, you know, today I felt great.... I got up and went to the hot tub this morning. I walked two miles. Got ready. I have no idea how my eyes look, but they don't bother me today.

The researcher said, "You mentioned going to the hot tub...walking" "Yes," said Dawn. The researcher then asked if there were other things that she does in reaction to age-related changes. Dawn stated:

You know, I don't know if it's a reaction to the change, but it's just that at this stage there are things I can do more for myself. I love to have massages. (My husband) always gets me one for my birthday and I go several times a year. It's usually the time more than the money, but I love this lady. She's really nice. I have pedicures. I started doing that a few years ago...I do a lot of walking and a lot of in and out and my heels are always...my skin's always been dry... I don't know if that's old or not...but it's just always been that way...but they FEEL so good. So I don't necessarily do them because it helps my skin (which it does) but they feel so good and it's very relaxing. I've been doing a lot more exercise lately since I started Weight Watchers and...ummm... I had...um...at my physical in January my cholesterol was high and he had kind of been watching it and it went higher and that was enough cause for concern so I joined Weight Watchers, lost 25 pounds walking a couple of miles a day. The weight

off is tremendous. You know, I'd like to lose another 25. The energy level is just...so even though I love to sleep in, in the summer I don't...just because I like to get up and walk early...and I'm not tired...so that's really helped. And, again, I think those things make you feel better. I don't know how you look, but you feel better.

"So you also feel better about yourself, then?" asked the researcher. Dawn replied, "Absolutely. Yep...it's fun to have your clothes loose...and, um...I haven't bought any new clothes because I don't think I'm done yet. That would make me feel better. It's been good."

Ricki stated:

I do get my hair colored, as I mentioned. I have found one particular skin product that I use...and I don't use multiple ones...but one that I really like. Umm...I use sun screen which is something I never did when I was young. And, again, usually on my face...my hands.... I noticed my hands are turning into my aunt's hands.

The researcher commented, "Yes, I have my mother's hands."

Ricki said,

Yes. I have my mother's face and my aunt's hands...so...um...other actions I've taken: I changed some of the style of clothes I wear. You know. I used to wear everything tight at the waist...and cinched... emphasizing my waist...and now I wear longer coats...to de-emphasize my hips."

She laughed.

June made the following comments:

I think I've done things in reaction to the aging process (although I don't know that I necessarily defined it that way) most of my adult life. I think that was because...umm...for health reasons. But if you're talking cosmetically...so far...well...no, not really...and I don't spend very much on cosmetics. I'm rather cheap in that area, you know. Umm...I don't buy a lot of products that are supposed to be anti-aging...um...at all. I'm more into probably holistic health care...vitamins and supplements and dietary restrictions that I happen to believe in that may or may not have any impact at

all, but I think they might for me, so that's what I go with.

Sharon made the following comment:

Tomorrow is the day I go in (once a month) and get the hair color, because I think I'd be all white without it. I routinely do that. I spend more money on that kind of thing. I do probably take better care of myself now, just because I have to...Body is starting to break down...You know, the massages (I do that once a month) and stuff like that...

Barbara stated:

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah...the hair color...for years...20 years...30 years...long time. I think I started getting gray when I was in my early 20s so for a long time I've changed my hair color. Make-up and stuff...nah. I mean, I don't even wear it. It's just too much of a hassle. Knowing myself, yes. I feel like the older you get the more you need to know. You need to really stay on top of things. You need to be able to read why your toe hurts...and change it so that your toe doesn't hurt.

The researcher said, "So you are talking about knowing your body as well as yourself internally. You're talking about knowing yourself physically, as well..." Barbara said:

Yes...to be healthy. I think in order to retain health you've got to really be aware and be open and listen to yourself. You know, it's interesting. When you get older, I think...I used to have to go shopping and get the latest at the Limited or the Casual Corner or whatever Hudson's had on the rack. But when you get older...and maybe it's just a whole lifestyle change...but I just feel that you don't need but maybe one dress...or, you know, just to have the latest is just not IT any more, in my opinion.

"I've felt that...Less is more..." commented the researcher.

Barbara continued:

Yeah. Yeah. Oh, and then contact lenses. I toy with contact lenses all the time and it's so comfortable just to put those old glasses on, and you can see better...none of this monovision stuff...you know, where you don't know, because one eye's so blurry when you look up you can't see squat and the other eye you can't even read with. So, just being comfortable with who you are, knowing you, relax, and you're much

better for other people to meet and talk to and be with.

Jill made an unusual announcement in response to the question. She said, "I got a tatoo on my fiftieth birthday!" "Did you really?" asked the researcher. Jill said, "It's a fabulous tatoo," as she raised her pant leg to expose upper thigh with a large black and red tatoo. "Oh, my gosh! What is that a symbol of?" asked the researcher. "It's a Japanese symbol for peace," said Jill. "Oh, that's wonderful!" said the researcher. "Yeah. Isn't that nice?!" responded Jill. "I love that!" said the researcher. Jill continued:

I've always liked my legs and I like looking at my legs. I like my legs and feet. That's part of my body that I've always enjoyed the most. Even when I was really skinny, I liked that. So I decided I wanted something here to sort of commemorate. I was going to get in touch with you, because I really wanted to do some sort of croning ceremony or something. I felt this thing about being 50...so I settled on getting a tatoo, instead. That felt right. It felt good.

Jill was not the only participant who had recently gotten a tatoo. Sarah said,

I exercise more. I guess you try to keep active...more active than I ever was before. Dyed my hair. Fake finger nails, which I never had before. I guess there was one point in my life when I did...and it hasn't been for years, and now I'm doing it again. Tatoo.

The researcher said, "You got a tatoo?" Sarah responded, "Yes, which is kind of a faddy thing, I suppose. It still makes you feel like you're younger and still in the swing of, you know, that you can relate to younger kids by doing that. You feel better."

Mary commented:

I walk more. I mean, I know I was never somebody who did a

lot of physical activity. I cross-country skied and I learned how to play golf, because the man that I was seeing played golf, so I wanted to learn so I could play with him. When I started into the hormone therapy and I started to put on the weight, I thought, well, this isn't good...I mean, for a couple of reasons. You're not feeling comfortable about how you're looking and the other thing is extra weight isn't healthy, so you need to counter that. You don't necessarily have to get back to 120 pounds, but you need to do something, so I started walking more. I joined the Y. So that was one thing that I know I did purposely because of that.

The other thing I've done is that I used to wear suits at work. All the time I was in suits. That's what women at (place of employment) did and still do. When I started gaining weight and it wasn't comfortable and I was having a very hard time moving from one size to another, just because it was making me angry, because I couldn't fit into what I fit into before. So I started wearing looser clothes. I began to realize I felt really comfortable, number one, and so I felt better about how I looked and what I did. So now, that's what I wear. I wear jumpers, a lot of jumpers, loose things. Somebody said to me today, 'You always wear such cute clothes' and that's sort of a plus that I didn't even think about. I mean, I was trying to make myself feel good and comfortable.

Joyce said, "I don't really do, as far as cosmetics, I still use the same regime. No, that isn't true. I use a daily moisturizer, where I used to use it only in the winter. I do my darndest to avoid the sun. I don't want any part of the sun." The researcher asked, "And that's more recent?" Joyce responded:

That's more recent...and that's my fear now...of getting to the age where...cancer.... I'm afraid of melanoma. I'm afraid of what I've done to myself at the age of 17, with all those skin burns. That's a fear, so I avoid the sun like it's a plague. I've taken actions like that where I will avoid going to the beach...or (significant other) and I are out in the sun...he knows my feelings about the sun, so we'll find an edge so he can sit in the sun and I can sit in the shade. Luckily, so far, we've been successful. We've also been okay with, 'Okay, you sit in the sun and I'm just going to sit over here.' So, actions like that.

I do the mammogram yearly, which I started at the age of 40,

versus...prior to that, it was every other year. There's more of an awareness that at this point of my life I will more often will find myself thinking about when I hear commercials about cancer, ovarian cancer, the number of women with breast cancer, and stuff like that. I think more about that and how that possibility is facing me, versus how I felt and thought about it ten years ago in my 30s. I think I probably still had more of the feelings like that's distant ten years ago. And today I don't feel it's so distant. I feel like I'm probably going to be...the research shows I'll be one of the statistics...not necessarily in death, but at least in experience. I think more about that, so the actions change. I watch that more. I'm very conscientious about the gynecological exams...better in doing them than in pronouncing them....

The researcher commented, "They're both rough." Joyce said, "Really. And that's, again, I think, an awareness of my own aging, mortality, that kind of thing."

In summary, a great diversity was found in answer to a general, open-ended question concerning actions participants have taken in response to the aging process. They include exercising, keeping active, joining the YWCA/YMCA, massage, coloring hair, taking vitamins and supplements, restricting diet, wearing contact lenses, avoiding the sun, changing clothing style, having mammograms and gynecological examinations, acquiring fake (acrylic) fingernails, and getting tatoos.

The interviews next moved to more specific questions, asking women if they have or would consider participating in behaviors associated with the four major categories of Redefinition, Resignation, Rebellion, and Reconstruction.

Redefinition

Three aspects of the first major category of Redefinition are examined, consisting of (1) redefining what is beautiful, (2) redefining the standard of beauty, and (3) redefining the locus of beauty. (See Organizational Chart, Appendix F.)

Redefining What Is Beautiful. As discussed in the varying definitions of aged beauty in Chapter IV, the literature presents women (Macdonald & Rich, 1991; Wolf, 1991; Halprin, 1995; Greer, 1999) who are deeply offended by the societal assumption that their aging body shapes and changes are unattractive, offensive, and downright ugly. They call for a re-examination of beauty which is inclusive of their aging process.

In order to obtain the perceptions of the women participants in the in-depth interviews, the following question was asked of each: Have you ever attempted to change the usual definition of what's beautiful...that is, have you ever felt that gray hair, wrinkles, and midlife body shapes of women are actually very attractive?

The participant named Dawn paused before stating the following:

I guess I'd go back to say healthy looks better to me now, than attractiveness. Not THAN attractiveness, but healthy looks more attractive. I'd rather have a little color in my cheek than the pale, gaunt, skinny even...if that's what it is...so, have I redefined it? Probably. Body shape has never been a big deal particularly because I've always been big boned and sometimes I'm heavier than others...um...redefined...maybe a little bit. But, again, wrinkles don't necessarily mean people aren't attractive. You know...we probably look now at older women...and you know what I love? Is that hair

that's all gray...I look at mine and I see the gray hairs here and I think, 'Hmm...I wonder if I should do something about that?' And then I think, Geez, I get my hair cut so often if I put a rinse on it I'd cut it out every time, anyway...I don't even really care about it.

June stated:

In all honesty, I don't think I've ever thought to myself that wrinkles are beautiful. Although, you know it's funny, because my aunt is a really dear friend of mine and she's exactly 30 years older than me, and I look at her and I know I see her wrinkles, but I see such a beautiful woman...that, you know...while maybe I don't acknowledge it consciously...maybe I don't define it for myself as being beautiful...no...although I have seen people with gray hair and think, 'Wow! That is stunning!' But, again, I don't think I'd cut myself the same slack. You know?

The researcher responded, "Yes. I've had those feelings, too." June continued:

Yeah! And I don't know why that is, but you know, it's funny, because in one of my classes.... At school there was a young woman who had gray hair, and I guess she had turned gray in her early 20s. I think by the time she was 21 she was totally gray-haired and she did not color her hair. It was beautiful. And...she didn't look 20. She looked as old as I am chronologically, at least. I thought at the time, 'Wow...what would I do in that situation? Would I color my hair to look younger?'

"To reflect your real age?" asked the researcher. June said:

Yeah...So I think, if anything I'm probably similar...no...I think I am conflicted about that. On the one hand I can appreciate it and think it's beautiful in other people, but in myself...oh, I don't know about this! You know? I'm not so sure that I would define it for myself as beautiful. Where my husband can look at me and say, 'You're just beautiful!' And I'll say, 'Well, look at these lines!' or 'Oh, my god, I'm looking older!' And he'll say, 'You just look beautiful to me.' So I think, in some ways, having that sort of feedback from someone that I care deeply about has helped me. It gives me some confidence.

The researcher responded, "Yes...and it's an important opinion to you." June agreed, saying, "It is important to me."

Rebecca commented:

I guess just the way I'm looking at it. Not consciously saying, 'Well, gray hair's great. I love it.' I guess it falls under that category again of just being glad to be here. I haven't changed my way of thinking about any of it. Yes, I wish I didn't have gray hair, but that's just a part of life. People keep trying to tell me, 'Get your hair highlighted.' I'm not ready for that. I worked long and hard for these gray hairs. I am not adjusting to turn into Betsy Beautiful overnight. Every time I get my hair cut the gal that does my hair says, 'You know, I could highlight this for you in about a half hour.' You know, I'm not ready for that yet. The body-spread thing...that's also part of it. It doesn't really change how you look at things or change your thoughts about it. It's just there and, yeah, I wish I were thinner, but it's not a major issue.

The researcher said, "It sounds like rather than re-defining what's beautiful, you're more in an acceptance mode about it."

Rebecca replied, "Yes. I think that would probably be about right."

Barbara made the following comments:

No. No. I think I've changed my attitude. You know? Although I used to think my aunts were real pretty, and they were middle-aged. They just had a light about them. They'd say, 'This is my way, and nobody's going to change me.' You know? They were strong. They were committed to whatever they felt...and, who cares what they think?

The researcher asked, "So it was the strength that was more attractive than the physical appearance?" Barbara responded:

I think so. Yeah. Yeah. And if we're smart, we kind of know that from a real young age. Because I think you can learn more from your teachers if you don't look at them and say, 'Oh, that old witch! Look, her dresses are dragging the ground.' And, you know, whatever people say about the old teachers. If you can get beyond that, you realize that they really have quite a bit to share.

Jill made the following statements:

Yeah, I think I make that effort whenever the opportunity presents itself. Absolutely. I was thinking, one of the times that I do it the most, and I have fun with it, again,

is...I work around a lot of young men...young college students, 20 to 25 year old men, and they need so much nurturing, that immediately I become a surrogate mother, whether I choose to or not. And because I am loving and warm, it's okay. I mean, I enjoy playing that role and they need it. But I also then have tremendous fun with inserting just, even little tiny slips of something sexual...about myself as a woman, that makes them sort of, I hope, forces them a little bit to try to reconcile the fact that because this person is in the category of my mother doesn't mean that she's not a woman...maybe she's not just an old woman...maybe this goes on...

The researcher added the comment, "And a sexual woman, as well..." Jill replied:

Exactly. Exactly. I often have groups of students come over at the end of the semester when they've worked really hard, or whatever, and we do a gathering at my house. I have this really nice sun room. It looks out on a really nice view. There's a patio up on top and we sit and look at it at night. I've said many times, 'It's just a really great room to have sex in.' And this look that comes over them...it's like... (eyes open wide) I think what most young people probably think if their parents talk about having sex...except I think, and I know...I can feel it...it makes them question a little bit, you know, what is sexy and what isn't sexy. And is that just about somebody that looks like Madonna or whom ever it is. I think I kind of play with that a little bit.

And I try to do that with women my age and older who are struggling with it. I have a close friend who's just a few years older than I am, and she's...I think, probably always, been beautiful. But I think she's losing her grasp on it. She's not comfortable with the changes her body's going through. She struggles with it. I try in that sense...whatever opportunity presents itself...whether I can show it to her in someone else or I try to do it with her in a really personal way, to say, 'You look really good today! You ought to wear black all the time...It just makes you look really hot!' I think to try to convince her she hasn't lost whatever it is she thinks she's lost. It's there and could be even better if she let herself. Makes me sad.

Sarah said, "I did for a while with the gray hair. Not the body so much, but the gray hair, yes. But I guess it got old, too." "What made you change your mind?" asked the researcher.

Sarah said,

New attitude. New attitude. I mean, you don't have to stay gray. It's so easy to change that. So, you can do that. At first, it was like I earned every gray hair I've had...and I was going to be proud of it. But you don't have to stay there. That I can change.

The researcher asked, "So, you don't necessarily consider that particularly beautiful any more?" Sarah responded, "No. No."

Mary said, "The gray hair, I think, is attractive. The wrinkles can be, I think. And even the body shape...I think if you can become comfortable with not being a poster..." "A Barbie doll?" asked the researcher. "Yes!" said Mary. "A Barbie doll...I think that's really positive because you're saying something about the whole person, as opposed to what people look at." The researcher then urged, "Say something about wrinkles being beautiful or attractive." Mary concluded by saying,

Oh, I think they are, because I think that it's like a map. It's an outward sign that you...you carry a story...like wrinkles when you smile...wrinkles when you're sad. It's something defining to your face that a younger person doesn't have, because a younger person's face is smooth and without pattern or without a map.

Joyce responded:

Yeah! I don't dye my hair...and luckily I'm blonde, because I just don't want to deal with it. Now I have gray hairs, but they blend in, and I can tell because they're kinky or coarse, or whatever. I've seen many women with gray hair that I think are stunning. My mother has beautiful white hair. Absolutely beautiful. Just snow white. So I think gray hair is attractive. What were the rest?

The researcher replied, "Wrinkles...midlife body shape..."

Joyce answered:

I don't think wrinkles...wrinkles to me are fine. What I

notice in people that are severely wrinkled is...this goes back to physical beauty...is people who have come from Florida or live in tropics are extremely wrinkled. But as far as just age wrinkles, my Mom had a few...it's in her mid-80s and she just started getting wrinkles. I don't see wrinkles...I think you're supposed to!

And as far as body image...again, you're supposed to. I think what's really important is feeling good, feeling energetic, and feeling healthy. My concern for myself is more on that side of it, versus the physical.

Janice said, "Yeah. Yeah, I do. I mean, I do it to myself all the time. I say, 'I've earned every single one of these gray hairs' and 'The lines in my face are lines that I've earned.' So, in that, I try to re-frame it, like this is not an ugly thing. This is part of character-building stuff. Yes, I've very consciously done that."

Jennifer paused for a long time before responding as follows:

Hmm! That's an interesting question. I have to really think of how I want to respond to that. Umm...my first response is no. Now obviously, I don't like the gray hair, because I color it. But I know I'm not going to do that forever, because I'm not going to be an 80 year-old brunette. It's obviously not going to happen. So...in that regard, I'm well aware it's a temporary change. I tell (my husband) I'm recapturing my 30s when I was gray...now I'm not.

I don't think the older body shape is as attractive. I don't think when you sag and things are not the way they were that it's as attractive...but I don't think that that detracts from the whole person, if the whole person is attractive.

The researcher said, "Okay...back to your answer to the first question." Jennifer responded,

Yes. I don't know if that really makes sense, but to say that I redefine it...no...because I'm not as concerned...I mean, yes, I want to look nice and I want to be put together well, but I would rather people like me because of who I am...and what I stand for...than how I look.

In summary, the women's responses to this question were divided equally. Half felt that they had changed or expanded the definition of what is beautiful, to include such things as gray hair, wrinkles, and midlife body shape. One woman took the question even further, including sexuality as an important aspect for women of age. The other half felt that they had not redefined beauty to include the aspects of physical aging. One woman simply responded to the question by answering, "No!"

Redefining the Standard of Beauty. Because societal definitions of physical beauty and attractiveness are based in youthfulness, this question probes the possibility that women of age redefine the standard of beauty by which they compare themselves to others. Although the Contrast Effect (The Male Perspective, Chapter IV) has been studied in men's perception of beautiful women, similar studies have not been done on midlife women. Young women are found to increase in societally defined beauty when contrasted with old women (Rich, 1991), but the reverse effect of contrast from the perspective of the middle-aged woman is unknown.

This second specific question under the sub-category of Redefinition, therefore asks: Have you ever found yourself changing the standard of beauty...that is, have you ever felt that you are still beautiful for your age, comparing yourself to women your age, rather than all women of all ages? Dawn responded:

I don't think so...I don't think...um...I don't know that I've ever considered myself beautiful. I think there are days that I look better to myself than others...I've always thought

I've always been tall...I've always been big boned...I have this huge, booming voice. I've never really thought of myself as...you know...if there were a group of what I considered to be attractive people that I was really IN it, although I'm not necessarily out of it. Umm...so I don't know if that has changed as I'm looking at a different group of people over here now. Not really.

Ricki stated,

Oh...no...I've never done that. But again, I've never really thought of myself as beautiful or attractive. So, I guess would say...oh...let me think about what you're saying...I don't know that I've actually changed the standard. I'm struggling with that a little.

June stated:

I think so. I think so. And, you know, that's another thing about the way I tend to look at people as.... I'm a really bad judge of age. I have no idea how old anybody is, generally. I mean, they could be 32 and I don't know how old they are. I could never guess it. But, again, if I look at them and I see a really lovely person, I tend to think that they are beautiful. I know we are all different, and so, I think so. I think I try to say, 'Not bad for 45!' You know?

Rebecca responded as follows:

Oh, yeah! Oh, I think that all the time. When patients come in and I'm weighing them and they tell me how old they are, I think, 'Ah! My God, I hope I don't look like that!' Some of them I would have sworn were in their 50s and 60s and they're only 48 and I'm thinking, 'Oh, my Gosh!' Or they're my age and I think to myself, 'Oh, my Gosh!' But, you know, I think having a younger child (my youngest one is twelve) I think that helps a lot, because you're still doing (not that I have ever been June Cleaver, ever in my life) but you do weird things with your kids...I mean, fun things, little things that my mom didn't do.

I mean, she was June Cleaver and, you know, this is wash day, and this is change-the-bed day. I don't even remember the last time I changed my bed. And, you know, she did it once a week...and this is ironing day...and this is, you know.... And, of course, my life is totally different than that, anyway, but she just had a different way of looking at it.

Sharon said, "Well, yeah, I guess that's a fair statement.

Jane Fonda (she's our age)...if you want to copy a physical look, that would be a good one to copy!" Barbara paused before saying, "Hmm...that's interesting. I don't think about it that way."

"Okay," replied the researcher. "And many people don't..."

Barbara continued:

I enjoy watching interaction between young people. I like to watch other people interact. I think it's interesting, but I don't really think of myself as...well...look at me! I look 25...or...gee, I could pass for 25.... I just don't relate to that. Or, many times I'm shocked that other people are so much...they look younger. That's shocking. You know? So I relate them to age...and, oh...a lot of times I feel older than what I look...no, I look older than I am.

The researcher replied, "Okay. I see what you are saying."

Barbara said, "Somehow, beauty's beauty...you know...at any age."

Jill responded:

If I do (this probably all sounds really egotistical, but, oh, well...) If I do, it's because I assume most people don't realize that I'm 50. Not so much, again, because I tend to look holistically at me...not just because of the way I look, but because of where my head is, and all that kind of stuff. I assume most people think that I'm younger. Mostly, because, I think people plug into those stereotypes so easily. If you're 50, you're probably matronly and you probably don't swear, and you probably do this...and, you know? Particularly if I'm in a situation where I can do it with contrast.

I just recently bought a pair of really short, shorts. I have some of these big, platform, spongy shoes that are kind of fun...and I put those on, and to me they really sort of just thumb their nose at what everybody says you ought to be doing when you're 50. I find that when I've got those on, too, that I reference the fact that I'm 50 a lot. Because it almost feels like a merit badge or something!

"You're making a statement," said the researcher. "Yeah.

Yeah. Like...this is 50, too!" replied Jill. Sarah responded, "I guess so...and I guess I look at my mother and think, 'Well, she's

aged pretty well, you know. I'll be fine.' You do think about it."

The researcher asked, "So you feel like you are comparing yourself more to women your own age?" Sarah said, "Yes. Not younger."

Mary responded:

Oh, I've said that. Yeah, I've said that, but...I think I have changed it for myself...because I have younger women working for me, and it was kind of startling one day to realize that I was talking to this woman who's working for me and I realized that I am her mother's age. And, that sort of sets you back, because you think, 'Oh! This is a little different!' But I think I'm very comfortable where I am. I like this. I'm really fascinated with who I am now. I don't tend to look at my nieces, or young women on television, and think, 'Oh, Gosh, Yes. I'd love to wear a bikini,' because I wouldn't. It's not a big deal.

Joyce replied:

No. No. I don't hear myself saying, 'I look good!' I think, 'Oh, I'm having a good hair day. My hair looks nice.' And it did this morning until I left and then it was raining. There's something about that...or if I'm brushing my hair here or somewhere where I get to, and it looks really bad, you know, I walk in and I look like, 'Oh, God, I hope I don't run into anybody I know!' I think about that. Then when I'm finished with it or if I re-do make-up, what I do notice is that when I touch up my make-up I don't look as good as I did when I was 30 and touched up my make-up. I'll give it a thought, like I'll think, 'Okay...how come it doesn't look like it did? I'm like, okay, fine. I've got to go. Bye.' So I acknowledge it...I realize it...and I move on. I don't really dwell on it. I notice it, and then I just move on.

Janice said:

Yes. Yes. And look at other women my age and compare myself to them. I don't compare myself to those young girls any more...because there's no way that I could come out in some kind of positive way...except that I am finding...and it just struck me yesterday...I was looking at some catalogues I got in the mail...and I was looking at the models and their thinness looked sick to me. It was the first time that that has ever happened. Before I would look at them and sort of reminisce about the day that I looked like that. Now it's like, gosh, either they're getting thinner and looking really emaciated or I'm changing the way I look at a female body. So,

yeah...something's going on.

Jennifer's response was as follows:

I suppose so. I suppose that's a pretty common thing to do, especially if you see somebody who's your age, who looks a lot younger. You think, 'Wow! Look at that! And she's my age!' But that only says to me, 'It's possible. Get to work! Do more exercise...or...take it more seriously.' I don't feel it as a compromise. I feel like (although I'm not successful) I feel like I am continually striving to say, 'I can get more flexibility...or...I can get stronger'...or...whatever I'm trying to work on, and that age is not going to get in my way. So in that sense, I guess I fight the age.

In summary, the majority of women (7 of 12) felt that they had changed the standard of beauty from a youth-based societal perception, to a comparison or contrast effect with women in their own age range.

Redefining the Locus of Beauty. The final sub-category of Redefinition concerns the locus of beauty. Literature and popular press writings on old women continuously use such phrases as wisdom, sage, inner beauty, sweetness, kindness, and thoughtfulness to positively describe women of age. Concomitantly, old women's bodies are portrayed as wrinkled, shriveled, sagging, asexual, unattractive, and even ugly. This logically raises the question if there is, in fact, a societal expectation for women of age to shift their locus of beauty from something physical and exterior to something internal and spiritual. In order to examine this phenomenon, participants were asked the following question: Have you ever shifted the location of your beauty from something totally exterior to something that is now located inside of you...that is, does an increased sense

of wisdom and inner beauty become more important to you than looks?

Dawn responded as follows:

Yes! You see, I think attractiveness is not one of those things I think about. You know it's not like, 'I wonder if they'll think I look good when I get there.' You know...I don't think that. I think, 'Geez, what can I wear? Oh, this looks okay'...but it looks okay to me...not thinking well I hope everybody else likes it. It's not one of those things I'm bent to do.

The researcher then asked Ricki, "The next question you have somewhat already answered, but have you ever shifted the location of your beauty from external to internal?" She replied, "Definitely."

The researcher then asked, "When did you start doing that? Do you know?" Ricki said, "Probably late 30s through my early 40s and that's where I'm at right now. I shifted."

June responded to the same question by saying,

I try to do that. I really hope that I'm not missing the mark on that. I try to do that because I think that so much of the time.... When I see somebody that just really is a lovely person inside I think they're probably more beautiful than probably other people do. Also I think it helps that we have some...not a lot...but some representation out there in the public eye of older women who have more powerful positions. While they still might be few and far between...and I see these women as really inspirational. To me, that equates to some sort of beauty.

Rebecca said, "I think that has a lot to do with getting older." "Do you?" asked the researcher. Rebecca replied:

You ARE older. You ARE wiser...much wiser than you were when you were younger. You know more about people. You know about how to get them to talk, how to comfort them, how to be a friend to them, how to get somebody through a crisis...much more so than when you were younger. Not that you didn't care when you were younger, and you certainly went out and tried to help people, but you didn't have the background or the experience to do it. I think it made it easier, and maybe this is coming because of what I do for a living, but to me, it's

gotten much better. You know more. You've got more to offer. Sometimes you've been down the road, yourself, so that can be a little bit more helpful to somebody.

The researcher said, " I think that you're basically saying that interior beauty is very important." "Oh, yes. Far more. Far more," said Rebecca. Sharon responded as follows:

Well, I don't know that. I think it's a total package. I think that as you age you become more aware of your spirituality and your inner wisdom, that kind of thing. Your moral markers...and that all contributes to who you are or your perception of yourself...and your perception of yourself as in the area of beauty. But you can't entirely separate how you look physically from all that. So, it's just all combined.

The researcher asked, "Have you ever shifted the location of beauty? In other other words, saying, 'Well, beauty doesn't rest so much on exterior for me any more...it's more on the interior...inner beauty and inner wisdom?'" Barbara replied, "A long time ago." The researcher questioned, "Really?" Barbara answered, "Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah." The researcher then asked, "When you first came into middle-age, do you think that's when it happened? Or before that even?" Barbara responded:

Young. Young. I think a long time ago I could tell what people are about and tell their intention...and read more into them than maybe they even knew. You know? And that's just watching other people's interactions and stuff. I really like that. I really do well with.... And I don't like to play life like a game, either...I just like to enjoy it. I did notice a long, long time ago that people don't talk to certain levels of people. What are you? Okay, then you are not on my level. You're the custodian? Well, get over there and do your job! And I was never like that. Custodian, or whoever, bus driver, or professor...they are all the same because they're all people. And I knew that really young.

Jill made the following comments:

It definitely is all connected. I can't disconnect it. When

I look back, particularly if I look back and read journals that I wrote when I was young (19, 20, 21), so much of what my struggle was about was trying to reconcile those parts of myself. The part of myself that really wanted to go out and sit in a bar with my friends and have a bunch of guys hit on me, because I was the prettiest one there. And to go home, and read Ann Rand, and think, 'I have all this intellectual depth...and all this intelligence..and those things can't fit together.' I have this emotional side of me that connects with people.... It was fractured. The pieces didn't fit together. What's probably really tragic about that is that I let somebody tell me that they didn't. But they really do. They fit together. All parts of me fit together to make this 'me' that is now whole.

The researcher then asked, "What age were you when you got the pieces together? When you realized it did fit?" Jill responded, "Umm...I would say probably after I turned 40. It's probably been the last decade." The researcher said, "That had to be such a relief!" Jill said,

Oh, yeah...and I don't know that I could draw a line in the sand, because I've always had...the tide would come in and I'd feel that...and it would be right, and then I'd lose it. It'd come back, and I think it's really been the last decade that it's not this unknown sort of thing I go looking for. I know that it's there and I know when I lose sight of it, how to get it back. So it's not so elusive. It's there. I just sometimes get turned around, and then I have to....

The researcher asked, "Get centered, again?" Jill said, "Yeah."

Sarah said, "I don't know. I think if you say that, you know what? You're kidding yourself. Or you're just trying to compensate for it. So, I can't say that that's true. It's just harder for self-esteem as you get older." The researcher then asked, "But you haven't really shifted the location, and said what's inside is the only thing that's really important?" Sarah replied, "I don't think so. No. No."

Mary stated:

I think when we talked about what is beauty...that it's not just the outside, but it's inside of you and who you are and how you deal with other people...yeah, I think it's a whole package. They always say that people aren't interesting until they're in their 30s? Until they're 35? And I think they just get more interesting as you get older.

James Burke is a British author and a scientist and about ten years ago he had a program called Connections where he would try to connect past events to current happenings...or past inventions to current situations...and it was so fast-paced, and sometimes it was so difficult to see the connections of what he was getting to, but the one program I'll always remember is talking about why Gutenberg's invention of the printing press led to the devaluation of older people in our society.

Before the printing press, it was the older people in the society who carried the knowledge of the group. They knew who was who, when people died, when the people were born, and they had a history of why laws evolved, and why tradition was there, and what the myths were. Because there was no way to write it down and hand it down, it was handed down through this collective memory and the memories of the older people. So they were valued for that. If there was a tribal court, it was the older people who were the judges, because they carried all of this knowledge, and they knew who was related to who, and who owned what pigs and who owned what cows.

So Gutenberg comes along and invents the printing press, so lots of things happen. Books become available to lots of people. You write things down and you can copy them over and over again. We don't value that ability to remember and carry all of that knowledge and wisdom. I just thought, 'My God, that's fascinating!'

Joyce replied to the question by saying:

Yeah. Yeah. Because when I think about myself in my 20s and 30s, it was very important to me to be attractive...and I mean it in a more beauty sense...it was much more important for me to be attractive, than today. Today I just want to, you know, as long as I look nice and I'm presentable, that I'm neat, clean...wear make-up or fix my hair, or whatever...to look presentable, to look attractive. It's not the same way it was 20 years ago. Or ten years ago. I don't feel pressured about it today.

The researcher asked, "Oh...that's the difference, that you don't feel like you have to?" Joyce replied:

I think so. I feel like today I'm doing it more for pride, whereas I think maybe ten years ago I think I did it more out of...oh, what do you call it when you want others to notice you...vanity, maybe? Maybe more vanity...or insecurity, that's the word. Then I did it more out of insecurity, today I think I do it more out of pride.

The researcher commented, "That's a major shift...." Joyce said, "Yeah, I never really thought about it, though. You ask me all these questions..."

Addressing Janice, the researcher asked, "You're already addressed some of this, but have you changed the definition from external to more internal...the inner wisdom...?" She replied, "Yes. Very much." Jennifer responded to the same question by saying:

Honestly, as I look back, I think I probably always had it in the interior more than the exterior. But I don't think I knew that when I was younger. I look at things like...I've never been a person that primps. I comb my hair in the morning and go off for the day, and I never look in the mirror again. It would never cross my mind to go powder my nose and put more lipstick on, and that kind of stuff, in a normal day. If I'm going into a public arena, yes, I would...but in my normal day I would never do that. I don't carry a lot of cosmetics with me. I don't use a lot of cosmetics. That's just never been my style. But I never did that when I was young. So, in that regard, I don't think I've changed my patterns any, but I think I've become more aware of what my values are, and more comfortable with them...maybe.

In summary, only one participant answered with an emphatic negative response. All other women agreed that they had, in fact, shifted the locus of their beauty from something exterior to something interior. Three of those women agreed with the shifting of

the locus of beauty, but were not willing to totally dismiss physical beauty. They suggested that a combination of physical beauty and inner wisdom are essential.

Resignation

Woodman (1998) said the following: "If you can listen to the wisdom of your body, love this flesh and bone, dedicate yourself to its mystery, you may one day find yourself smiling from your mirror" p. 44).

The second major category is labeled Resignation. The resignation is from the tenets of the Beauty Myth, including its Beauty Imperative. The probe is to discern if women, upon reaching mid-life, drop out of the competitive mode of achieving society's expectations of youthful beauty. The first specific question under this category therefore is: Do you think you have resigned yourself to the loss of what society rewards as youthful beauty?

If the response is negative, the researcher moves on to the next major category. If, however, it is a positive response, probes begin to attempt to determine what emotional reaction such a resignation has upon the participant. The twelve women of this study are asked if resignation leads to feelings of depression and anxiety, or conversely, to feelings of relief. They are also encouraged to discuss any other possible emotional reaction they might have experienced as a result of such resignation from the Beauty Myth. The researcher asked the following question of Dawn,

Some women choose to resign themselves to aging...in other words, they abandon the beauty myth and say, 'Okay...I'm not in that race any more. Now I'm to a different point in life where I'm not trying to be the 20-year-old blonde model.' Have you felt any of that? Are you beyond the beauty myth?

Dawn replied:

Umm...I would say at this point I'll never make the cover of any magazine, but I never thought I would at any point. I don't think I've abandoned anything particularly. There are still certain things that I will wear or won't wear, but they've been pretty much the same...it's not age-specific, but more what I'm comfortable in. It's like shoes...I used to wear high-heeled shoes. I don't wear high-heeled shoes any more, but it's a comfort thing, not...it's the kind of job I have. I don't have to dress up every day. When I'm working it's in the school...and you don't need to wear high heels when you're tramping around the gym.... It just seems more appropriate rather than whether it will look good or not.

Ricki, however, stated, "Accepted the loss? I've abandoned the myth. I don't view it as a loss." The researcher responded, "Oh. Okay. Do you see it as something positive?" Ricki said, "It's positive to have abandoned the myth." The researcher asked, "And why is that?" Ricki stated, "Because it's an unrealistic myth ...to me, but, again...I know it's real to some people and I see it in young girls...it's very real to them. It's not that real to me." The researcher then asked, "Has it ever been real to you?" Ricki replied:

I was not one of those people who spent hours in front of mirror, trying different makeups, and all these...I just wasn't. I was more...um...athletic, out-doorsy, you know. I felt good about being active. Physical activity made me feel good and I never dwelled on trying to be beautiful. I just...that was not me... but that might have been from having three brothers and having to compete with them. I didn't have a sister to sit and talk and share all that with...and...I'm still not interested in that. I never have been.

The researcher asked, "Having given up the beauty myth, do you have feelings of depression and anxiety...or feelings of relief that 'I no longer have to be in that race...?'" Ricki responded:

I don't have any depression about giving it up. I don't have any anxiety about giving it up. But, again, I'm very driven internally. I do think there is relief in thinking, 'Ah, I don't have to spend any more time thinking about this...any more energy trying to decide what can I try next to make me feel more beautiful?' You know...I'm comfortable. I want to change. I want to change my hair style...but it's not because I'm driven to try to be more beautiful...it's more because I'm just ready for a change. Does that make sense?

The researcher commented, "Yes, it makes a lot of sense."

Ricki said, "I know you're not supposed to counsel on these questions." The researcher laughed and said, "No, I'm not counseling." Ricki said, "I just want to make sure I'm clear." The researcher assured her that she was. Ricki said, "I really do not dwell on that...and, to be quite frank, I get a little impatient with women that do. I find it...I find it exasperating...and I also find it a little bit...um...belittling...but that's just been in me since Day One." "So that hasn't changed?" asked the researcher. Ricki replied, "That has not changed...that's just in me."

The researcher said to June, "Some other women resign themselves to the fact that, 'Oh, I'm getting old. I'm going to just abandon the beauty myth. I don't have to do that any more.' Have you had any feelings of abandoning the beauty myth?" She replied:

Never. In fact, I don't know so much if it's...um...well, I have to look a certain way.... I think it's more that I want to look the best that I can all the days of my life. And part of that is that...I don't know...maybe this is based on some religious or philosophical or spiritual belief, or however one wants to define it...but I think it does, for me,

get back to that if I look at this body that I'm in as being a blessing, such a gift. It gets me around. My eyes are a camera on the world. My feet take me where I'm going to go. I want to keep that in the best condition that I can. I want to give it the most support and love that I can to carry me through, because I really...I think more than anything I don't want to be sick, and tired, and I never want to give up that commitment to myself. I think that does reach down into the soul of who I am...and that is that, if it's a fight, I will fight it tooth and nail. Although I don't feel like it's a fight. I feel like it's a daily...maybe sometimes hourly ...commitment.

I could get out of the shower and say, 'Ah, you know I probably should lubricate my skin to keep it from getting dried out.' I mean, that only makes sense. The weather might be really dry in the winter time. You're inside, in heat, and, uh, yes I care about the condition of my skin...like I would a beautiful leather jacket. I don't want it to crack and dry up and I spend some time on it. I've worked hard to be able to buy this piece and I want it to look nice on me...and feel good in it. That's how I want to feel in my skin. And so I have to take care of it. If I don't take care of it, I'd miss that opportunity at that particular moment to do that. If I don't take in the right nutrients to support my health, which is going to be reflected in my body, I think, then I've missed that opportunity and I don't want to do that.

The researcher commented, "That's a unique way to look at it."

June said, "Again, I just feel like I've been given this precious thing, like a child or like just something that someone handed me and said, 'Okay. How are you going to take care of it?'"

In response to the same question Rebecca said, "Hmmm...another good question. I guess it isn't as much abandoning, it's just adjusting it." The researcher said, "Oh...adjusting it. How so?"

Rebecca responded:

Adjusting to the fact that, you know, I'll probably never again weigh 119 pounds in this lifetime...unless disaster befalls me...and I'll never have a wrinkle-less face again, but it really isn't that big of a deal to me. It really isn't. If that's what people want, then they may have that. Go find somebody who's 45 and not wrinkled. I've got a couple of

friends who will bend over backwards...always have to look their best...not a hair out of place...nails have to be done...everything has to be done...and I think, 'Oh, man!' I mean, it makes you tired just listening to it. Or if you're ever in a group of women where they're talking about...they go on about this nail place or this hair place or this massage place or this guy who does facials...I must just be in another time zone, because I think to myself, 'You've got to be kidding me! Who cares where the cheapest nails are?' But that's important to them, that they always look very put together, but that isn't an issue to me.

The researcher asked, "Does that lead to any feelings of either depression and anxiety? Or any feelings of relief?" Rebecca responded, "I'd say more along the lines of relief." She continued:

You know when you're younger and you're hanging out with single women, and you're going places and you're doing things...everybody wants to look wonderful and everybody wants to have their hair and their face just perfect. When you're surrounded by that, I mean, I had a roommate one time...and I just love her...she's just the sweetest thing...she's absolutely gorgeous. I mean, without even trying. I was engaged at the time, but she had this trail of guys in and out of our apartment. It's like, 'Who's the flavor the week this time?' Just this constant flow. And it was funny. Living with her for a year, you get into that mode of always having to look perfect. I remember what a relief it was to get married. I don't have to worry about this any more. Every single thing has to be in place. She had beautiful eyes, and she just would just smile, and cute, and perky, and just beautiful. But it's amazing. I still remember that how...what a relief it was when that year was over. Then I didn't always have to look nice. Not that I trash myself, or anything, but you didn't always have to look like you just stepped out a magazine...you know?

The researcher asked, "Do you think it's more due to being married or more that age is the reason?" Rebecca said,

No. I think it's more as you age...I'm sure it depends upon who you marry, because I've got another couple friends who, if they put on five pounds, their husband's ragging on them.... 'Hey, you're looking kind of chubby...' I wouldn't have lasted five minutes with somebody like that. My husband is very...I still think he sees me the way that I was when we got married. Like, I have to tell you this...

He bought me this birthday present and I'm opening this in front of all of our friends.... It was this foo-foo thing from Frederick's of Hollywood! Now, I've had my gall bladder out. I've had two C-sections, so I have this pouch. The thing is open down past my navel! And it's this blue thing ...with white boa leaves on it! And I laughed so hard! I put it back in the box and I said, 'Who did you buy this for?' 'Well, you!' And I put it on and it was...I couldn't even talk I was laughing so hard. I called my friend (she lived behind me) and I said, 'You've gotta come down here.' She walked in the door and she burst out laughing at me. I said to (my husband), 'Does this look the least bit attractive on me?' You know, my belly's hanging out. I've got an incision here. And he goes, 'Well...I think it looks nice!' I said, 'Hon! What body are you seeing inside of this thing? It's not mine!' And he goes, 'Well, you know, well if you don't like it...' I said, 'I'll tell you what...and please take this the right way...this is sleeze. I like classy. So, could I take this back and maybe get something else?' And he said, 'That's fine. That's fine.' I went back to Frederick's. There was not one thing at Fredericks...and I said to the woman, 'I don't mean to be rude, but my husband came in here and got me this foo-foo thing. Not in two lifetimes would I ever wear it...Can I get my money back?' And she said, 'Oh, that's fine.' And Abbey's Lingerie was down the hall, so I went down there and got this beautiful, oh, it's just beautiful. And he said, 'Well, that looks really nice.'

I'll be fussing around or something and he'll say, 'You look nice.' I keep saying to him, 'What body are you seeing? Are you seeing the one you married or the one that's actually in me right now?' And he says, 'Well, you always look nice.' And I say, 'Oh, boy.' But, you know, that can be a blessing. That can be a blessing. Although sometime you'd just like to hear him say, 'Gosh, don't you look nice.' But it's always, 'You look fine. You look great.'

The researcher commented, "That's interesting...to think about..." Rebecca continued:

Yeah. It really is when you think about it, because I've got a couple of friends and we've talked about that before, too. How you wonder if they see you the way that.... You know how guys are all over you if you get your hair cut? 'Why did you get your hair cut??' Well, you're not the one who has to get up two hours early to get ready to go to work. And I said, when I got mine cut the first time, 'Hon. I've got three kids. I can't spend 20, 25 minutes on my hair.' I need a five minute hair-do. Blow it, curl it, and be out the door.

Oh...then that injured look, I mean, even people my age...guys my age would rather have their wife's hair long. I don't know what the big attraction is, because it's nasty...

The researcher asked, "And you wonder if that's because of the youth image or seeing their wives as still being 20-something?"

Rebecca answered, "Yes, and maybe it's part of their youth they're losing, too. If the wife gets her hair cut, they're losing a part of their youth." "Oh, that's a good point," said the researcher. Rebecca said, "She's aging. I'm aging. Oh, no...it could be. I mean, it does make you wonder."

The researcher said to Sharon, "Other midlife women have resigned themselves to what society says is the loss of youthful beauty. Have you ever abandoned the beauty myth and said, 'Well, that's for the young...not for me'?" She replied:

No, because I don't really think it is. I think a person can be physically fit (not that I'm entirely physically fit, but I am working on it) at any age and you can develop yourself intellectually, emotionally, spiritually, physically...the whole business...all through our life. That is kind of what we're here to do, I think. It's not just for the young.

The researcher next asked Jill, "Some midlife women just give up the beauty myth and say, 'Well, I don't have to do that any more.' Do you think you've abandoned the beauty myth in any way?" She replied,

No. I enjoy beauty in every form. I enjoy the beauty of humanity. I enjoy the beauty of nature. I enjoy music, and art, and books, and all that is, in my mind, beautiful...and I can appreciate it in myself so much more now that it is, again, not something that I'm waiting for someone to bless me with...or not something that I'm struggling to find.

But I think in part of being who I am and where I am at this

point, there is a freedom that I never allowed myself, in terms of ...that I can redefine as I need it to be, from moment to moment. If today I decide that what is beautiful is to cut all my hair off, then I'm going to cut all my hair off. Which I did recently...and prior to that, I had decided I needed it to be long, because that felt beautiful. It felt good to feel it on my shoulders. It felt good to feel it... but now this feels beautiful...and the same with what I wear ...whether or not I wear make-up...all of those things. They're all choices, but I'm not dependent on any of them.

The researcher observed, "You've taken the power to make those choices yourself." Jill said,

Yes. And the definitions are mine! They're not anybody else's. If I decide that I need to get into a three-piece suit, and look like a manager, I can do that and look in the mirror and say, 'What a beautiful woman!' And if I decide that I need to get my bibbed overalls on and head for the garden, I can look in the same mirror and say, 'What a beautiful woman!' Because the choices are mine, and the definitions are mine. It's a heady thing to have that much power. It is a heady thing.

The researcher then asked, "Did you just take that power, or ...how did you get that power?" Jill said,

Yeah...I think I kind of took it. I think it's a result of a long journey. I don't know that you could take it when you're 20. I don't think you're strong enough to take it when you're 20. I think it is, again, the sum total of my existence. All that I've done, all that I've been, all that I've suffered, all that I've earned, all that I've lost...and loss is a big part of it for me. I've had a lot of losses in the last decade, and I think that kind of puts the framework in a whole different place. When you're in your 20s, the worst thing in the world is if you get a zit on the wrong day. When you're 40, it's a phone call that says your sister died. It puts it all in a different framework. I think the power comes along with that. I don't think it's anything anybody gave me. I think it's something I took.

When asked the same question, Sarah responded, "No. No. Or I wouldn't be working on the things I need to do." The researcher asked, "Meaning?" Sarah said, "Oh, like the exercising and dying

the hair. If you really accepted it, you wouldn't do any of that. Does that make sense?" The researcher said, "Yes. So that really doesn't describe your position right now?" Sarah simply responded, "No."

Mary commented, "I'm sure I did, trying to get through all of the physical changes. I think that is part of it. I think you go through those things at various times in your life." The researcher asked, "Did it lead to depression and anxiety, or more a sense of relief to be out of that youthful beauty myth?" Mary laughed and said:

I don't have to be in that contest. There probably was some depression for me, trying to go through and work through that. But I like the idea of not having to compete and not having to stay with that standard of, you know, skinny, high heels, short skirts. It just really...it's almost...tiring...to think you have to do that.

The researcher said, "I was thinking of 'tiresome'...explain that to me." Mary responded:

I can be left alone to dress the way I want to dress and do what I want to do. I personally think that I...and I don't know if other people think this way, but I occasionally change...whether it's outwardly or it's the make up of how I see people or see things, but it's almost like going through a metamorphosis. At various stages in my life, it happens. It always is a positive thing for me. It's like when I went through my divorce, and when I got out of grad school, and when I came here...those things happen as you're going through other life changes. I see that as something that I went through, because I started menopause when I was 46 or 47... then I started to go through that again. It's always a very positive thing when it's done. I doesn't necessarily take a set amount of time, but, you know, I just see it as...I'm very comfortable with how old I am. I can't wait to be older. I look at my Mom and I think, 'Wow!' She's 77 and I think, 'If this woman could drive, I'd never see her...because she's out there all the time doing stuff.' I think this is really the way you need to be. You don't need to be in a grand-

mother's chair.

The researcher asked, "When you were talking about the transitional periods in your life, were those just since you entered mid-life, or have those been all your life?" Mary said,

They've been all my life. Because I was married when I was 21...I don't know that I remember that happening before that. But then, realizing that the marriage was bad and going through the divorce when I was 27 and then realizing that I wanted to go back to school. I needed to get a degree, and I had to get a Master's degree so I could work in a teaching hospital. So, I was taking steps to change who I was and what I could do. But at the same time, things were changing about how I felt about myself. Then I was in my 20s and 30s...

Next, the researcher posed the question to Joyce, saying,

Some women when they hit middle age, they say, 'Well, I'm going to give up on the whole beauty thing. It's no longer an issue for me. I'm just going to stop thinking about beauty and accept the loss. Do you have any of those feelings?'

Joyce responded:

No. I think it changes. To me, it's about self-appreciation or satisfaction, and there's things I really like about myself...that I think are beautiful things about myself. They're not physical, and yet they're beautiful. So I don't see it as a loss. I see it as a gain...that, luckily I've gained some wisdom, because I've known good people that I've learned from, or because I've had experiences that were painful and I learned from...so I gained some wisdom out of that. You don't learn that stuff in your 20s or 30s. You're experiencing it then. I see it as a change, if you look at that as a loss, then there's also replacement. I think there is something. And I think people do find people attractive who feel good about themselves...and kind of exude that. I think people find those people attractive.

The researcher questioned Janice, "Other midlife women decide that they have sort have lost out on the beauty thing, and in some respects, just want to accept that. 'I'm not in the beauty competition or the beauty myth any more.' Have you done any of that?"

She replied, "Yeah." The researcher then asked, "Does it leave you with feelings of anxiety and depression, or more feelings of relief, or some other emotion?" Janice replied:

Relief is there. When I totally embrace that concept, like I said...I still struggle with it. But, yes, it's a big relief. But, you know, I don't think that that would be so for me if I hadn't pursued other things. I think I still would have been stuck in that narrow definition of what woman is...and beauty...and the fact that I've gone to school and succeeded in that has sort of off-set this other dynamic.

When asked the same question, Jennifer responded:

I never thought of myself that way ever. Um...I can't say that I've ever had that because I never thought of myself as being beautiful. I never thought of myself as being unattractive, but certainly not...I mean, I did all the things in high school and college that one would say, 'Oh, this is a good looking woman...', the homecoming, and all that kind of stuff...but that never had a lot of interest to me. I just was never beauty-oriented. I just never was into that. So, I guess I never thought of myself in that way. I always thought of myself more as who I was, what I did, what I cared about, who I was with, where I was going...not what I looked like.

In summary, it is easy to report that seven women felt they had not abandoned the Beauty Myth and five women felt they had. What is more difficult to discern is the variations of perceptions of the Beauty Myth throughout the life course, and its resulting impact on women in midlife. Some women reported having never adopted the Beauty Myth, while others have altered it in midlife, rather than abandoning it. One interview question is hardly enough to scratch the surface of this issue, which could be a different research study in and of itself.

Of particular note for this study, however, is that all women who felt they had abandoned the Beauty Myth reported positive

feelings upon doing so. One woman reported an initial struggle with depression, but said she had overcome that and now perceived the abandonment as a source of relief. The others reported relief, peacefulness, and comfort at having abandoned the Myth.

Of significant value for this study is the insights of both Rebecca (who felt her husband had an altered and inaccurate vision of who she is as a midlife woman) and Jill (who claimed that she has obtained the personal power to define her own beauty). These insights will be discussed further in the following chapter concerning the analysis of findings (Chapter VII).

Rebellion

The third major category, entitled Rebellion, addresses the possible pathway of women rejecting the role of youthful beauty, but replacing its power with new roles, alternative sources of power, educational and career advancements, and possessions which may not have been affordable in youth. Within this optional response, women do not lose power, status, or prestige, but may, in fact, gain it by replacing the former source of power and advantage with alternative power sources which are not age nor beauty based.

In order to examine this particular pathway, the following two questions were asked of the participants:

1. Have you developed new roles which replace your former role as a young woman? That is, do you now find your status and satisfaction in the role of grandmother, or mentor to the young, or

some other role?

2. Have you found alternative sources of power, such as in career advancement? Returning to school for your education? Possessions, "toys", luxuries, trips, nice car, beautiful house... things you couldn't afford in your youth? Other things?

Following are the responses received:

New Roles. Dawn begins by highly valuing her role as grandmother, but does not feel it is a replacement role for the loss of youthful beauty. She states:

Oh, I definitely love the grandmother thing. Ohhhh, my... and this thing about you're too old to be a grandmother...I don't think those words have ever come out of my mouth because I've always looked forward to it and we are having such a great time with the kids...it is unbelievable! It's like watching your kids grow up all over again. They look like them. They act like them. We do a lot of things with our grandkids. That to me is not old at all. That's like fun. I think we have said at one point that we'd be young grandparents...so we can do a lot of things with the kids.

The researcher asked, "But you don't see the role of grandmother taking the place of a different role?" She said, "Not at all. It is in addition to...absolutely...." The researcher then asked, "It's not substituting for some loss you feel because of aging?" Dawn said, "Oh, gosh, no. No, I don't feel that at all."

In response to the same question, Ricki replied:

Um...I think especially in my mid-30s...um...girlfriends have become increasingly important and I've actually made several new girlfriends...much easier than I ever have earlier in my life. I wasn't really interested having girlfriends...maybe one close friend, basically, most of my life. But now I'm more interested in other women, and developing those friendships.

The researcher asked, "So, your role as a friend has become much more important?" Ricki answered:

Right. And that is resolved in the making of friends. I've always been interested in mentoring students. Not all students. An occasional person that you click with and you help find resources and help, encourage, and...um...one in particular is a very, very good friend of mine now who started way back in a training program for her. Now we will probably graduate with our Master's together.

June commented:

You know it's really funny, because I haven't yet, but I think I have these real motherly kind of urges, especially toward young, adolescent girls. I think a lot of that is because I have a 20-year-old daughter, and so when I see young women, I always reflect back on her. You know?

The researcher replied in the affirmative. June continued:

Even when I'm in class...on the one hand, people (I don't think) would relate to me that way because I don't look...and I don't think I look old enough, necessarily, but I don't necessarily want to be in that role either. I want to be supportive of people, and loving toward people, but on the other hand, I don't want to be thought about as stuck in one role...as only a mother, or only a grandmother, or something like that. Honestly, inside, those feelings I have for them are very maternal. Like some of the women in some of my classes were pretty young and two of them actually reminded me of my own daughter in different ways. I felt myself just feeling so drawn to them...but I didn't mother them. You know? The most I did was just tell them how beautiful I thought they were. They just reminded me so much of my own daughter. That's about it.

Rebecca responded by saying:

That probably is the biggest one. That is, working with the kids. I figure my job is to plant the seeds, and hopefully, down the road, in their lives, somebody will water them and out they will bloom! But it's been kind of fun. The eighth-graders I take down to Ministry with Community and we serve dinner down there every other Monday throughout the school year. The kids all love to come, but, you know at that age they're not talking about, 'Boy, do I love to come here!' And they say things like, 'This is really fun!' but I hear about it when they get to school. Their religion teacher

came up to me and said, 'Boy, were your ears ringing today?' And I said, 'No, why?' And he said, 'Well, your name came up a couple of times in religion class.' They were talking about the neat experiences they had, like community service things. He would ask them pointed questions about, 'Have you ever done anything that made you feel good about yourself? And to help others?' And they would list different things that they had done. So you know it's getting to them. Which is it! Which is exactly what I wanted to do is to let this be something that they remember and down the road, when they're out of college, they say, 'You know, I used to volunteer at a homeless shelter. I used to volunteer with the homeless. I can do this or do that.' That to me would be the most important thing...if they remember that. But that's probably, as far as mentoring goes, that would probably be it...and to my friends' kids who come over and hang out.

The researcher commented, "That's definitely a good feeling, when other kids come over." Rebecca said, "Yeah, it is. They're a lot of fun." Sharon responded as follows:

Sure...that grandmother role! I have a one-year-old son--grandson - and (her significant other) and I babysit every weekend because my daughter works two midnights a week on the weekend. So every Saturday and Sunday nights and all day Sunday we babysit him...and that's a lot of fun! So, yeah, I mean...life changes and you add roles and you subtract roles ...I'm hoping to subtract this student role really quickly and, um, life just goes on.

Barbara stated:

Not yet. I'm not a grandmother yet. I look forward to that. Will it boost my position in society? I feel fortunate just to see any little kiddos. They just make you warm and fuzzy. Have I been a mentor for any little people? I don't know. They haven't told me if I have. I have changed roles. I have a new perspective on life in the health field and it's really different than being in the business field.

The researcher asked, "So, occupationally you've changed?"

Barbara replied:

Yeah. And I think freeing up the time from my own kids and realizing that I was really not very happy for years and years doing what I was doing...and that now I have more respect for myself. Knowing what I know, learning what I've

just learned, being able to use it...and the business part of it, I still hate it. Have I been paid enough? When am I going to get paid? Is the insurance paying? I still don't like that part, and I think I just did that for years and years just to have enough money to get the kids through school.

The researcher observed, "But that's not where your heart is..." Barbara responded, "No. No."

Jill made the following comments:

Yeah. I still walk in and out of roles when I need to. I'm doing some elder care now with one of my older sisters who is going through some pretty serious health problems, and I know that the role I play with her is crazy young kid. And I can, with young people, play a role that is very much the mother. So I think I probably do that. For me, beauty isn't in one place or the other, though. It's a part of all those roles.

Sarah responded by saying, "Yeah. I think you take pride in that, and then you feel better about aging. You rekindle relationships and you realize that life is not forever. You know? You realize." The researcher asked, "And that leads you to pick up other roles?" Sarah said, "Yeah. You want to...well, not OTHER, but I think you intensify the roles you do have." The researcher asked, "Such as?" Sarah replied, "Mother...and try to do better at it. Because otherwise, the loss is too much. You lose your children."

Mary responded to the same question by saying,

Yeah. Last year I became a mentor to a young woman at the Y. The YWCA has a mentoring program. That's very interesting, because she's 23. I don't think I would have taken that on at an early age, just because I didn't think I had any knowledge or didn't have any wisdom to do that. I see myself doing that also in my profession, because I've been a librarian for a long time and I've been part of this State organization and I've been part of it since we started it, and now I can talk about what I've done over my career. So I've got

experience and opportunity to learn and doing new things, but I've still got this experience from being in the position, or in the career for a while. So it's kind of nice, and what I don't want to do is to be the 'Old Sage' who always has a story to tell...but I want to be somebody that people can say, 'Oh, she's got a piece of information that comes from doing this for years, and she knows.' So that's really gratifying.

Joyce commented:

No. And it might be because I've never had my own kids. I've always worked with kids and I've been involved with kids. I did a lot of youth group work through my 20s and 30s. I have five nieces and nephews I'm incredibly close to. (Significant other) has three teenagers. What I do find now, and maybe this is also because when I turned 40 I acknowledged that I wouldn't have my own kids...and I always wanted my own kids, but at 40 I just knew that I don't want to start a family at this age. I don't. And I know there will always be kids in my life one way or another. I don't want to adopt. At this point of my life, I'm not married, and we started a family, and at this point, I don't want to. Prior to that, I did. And that was fine. But what I do notice... and I was talking to someone about this today...when (significant other) and I go to furniture stores and talk about our future, you know, at the point at which we'll be married and living together... which will be a couple years from now, we talk about grandchildren. He'll say, 'Oh, what about this?' And I'll say, 'Yeah, imagine tiny little fingers and crayons on that!' I do that. I find myself doing that more than thinking about the future with (significant other) as a mother. You know, even though his kids are my kids, and they're involved...I'm involved...So, I define myself as that. I don't know if that answers it...

In summary, many women reported taking on new roles in middle-age or felt an intensification of existing roles in midlife. These roles included friend, caregiver, mother, some sort of surrogate mother role, grandmother, as well as formal and informal mentor to the young. Some women felt these roles replaced a loss of power, status, and prestige brought on by the aging process, while others did not see the new or intensified roles as a replacement. From Jill's perspective, for example, beauty is a part of all the roles

she engages.

Career, Education, and Perquisites. The second question under the major category of Rebellion asked women if they have found alternative sources of power to replace the social advantages of youthful beauty. Career and educational advancements are examined, as well as possessions or perks which might not have been affordable in youth.

The researcher first asked Dawn, "Have you looked for alternative sources of power, such as career advancement or going back to school? Any of those sorts of things?" She replied:

I think I'm done going to school. But, I don't think I've done that to replace a beauty kind of thing. I think I went to school because I enjoyed going to school and I finished my doctorate and it was a very great personal satisfaction ...almost more than a professional...because if I had wanted to do this for my lifetime, I'd have done it at 25 instead of 50. So it was really...you know...I want to take some classes and I'd like to be organized about it...so you're in a program...and all of a sudden you're done. It was really a good thing to be done. But, ahh, I wasn't seeking a new job particularly. It wasn't to replace because, 'Oh, my God, I'm getting old, so I have to have more education.' It wasn't any of those things...um...what else besides education did you say?

The researcher responded, "Career advancement?" Dawn said:

No, actually I think my career advancement will probably go laterally or down. I like what I'm doing. I like the university setting. I like the flexibility. I like that I can work as much as or as little as I need to or want to or... tomorrow I'm going to Ann Arbor to see the kids.... I would never go back to the 8 to 5...you gotta do this to get promoted, kind of thing. I'd never do that. I enjoy the freedom too much right now. I never had that and I don't know if it's because I'm older...it's just where I happen to be.... Not that I couldn't have had it when I was...except I had kids at home and I don't have that now.

The researcher then asked, "But it didn't really replace a power source in your life? Replace something you felt you were losing as you age?" Dawn said, "No...not at all." The researcher then asked, "How about any ...oh, I call them 'toys' or 'perks'... things you couldn't afford in your youth...travel...." "Like my convertible??" Dawn asked with a laugh. "Yes," replied the researcher, "Your convertible." Dawn responded:

That's fun! I do like that. I've always wanted a convertible. My folks had them when I learned to drive. We had two convertibles in a row...and I never had one after that...and I always wanted this particular one, as a matter of fact. So I did do that. Traveling...(my husband's) not crazy about traveling. He does like to go out west. But I do so much traveling in my work that any need that I have.... We both say that we see so many people or interact with so many people when we're working, we like to stay home. We'd just as soon sit on the porch or (my husband) works in the barn and I read or whatever...you know...where our friends go out every night of the week. They go someplace every night of the week. We kind of like to come home and stay. Part of that's because I do travel a lot. So when I'm home, I like to be home. So traveling is not...umm...is just kind of part of what we do right now...and he doesn't enjoy it a lot, so...it's not that we don't go places....

The researcher asked, "But your car and your ability to travel ...is that a replacement for anything or just something you always wanted to do?" Dawn said, "I'd say it's just like...you know...I can go out and buy this car now. I don't know that I'm replacing anything." The researcher said, "So, it's not age-related that you...." Dawn responded:

Yeah...except maybe I have more money now than I did...so instead of driving a station wagon, I'm driving a convertible. And I suppose I could have made more money and have made some good money throughout the years, but always had to spend it on college tuition or, you know, that kind of thing rather than on myself...but, again, maybe it's because I'm older, but I

don't think so. I think it's just because I don't have everybody else to spend it on.

Ricki made the following comments:

It's really more internal for me, because I've never sought status or power in positions...that's just not what drove me. Umm... possessions...I'm not after mega-houses and boats and stuff. That's just never been important. What I very much enjoy is peace...and I'm going to substitute the word 'peace' for 'power' in this interview...is being back out in nature. I spent lots of my younger, youth days there...um...in fact, I just called to volunteer to work out at the fish hatchery. Biking...my husband and I are avid bikers and we go every chance we get. Usually we like to bike through woods. We like lakes, wildlife...you know, I'm finding more peace that way than I did before. But, power for me...I struggle with that word...because power to me means 'control' and I think it's really important not to try and control.

"No," said the researcher. "I was using the word more in terms of what society rewards. Society gives power to youth and beauty...but then, as women age, society pulls that back...and you don't get as much..." Ricki said, "Okay...they give power to youth and beauty, which means they get material things? They get jobs? They get status? They get image? That's what I'm struggling with, because power is...I don't know...maybe I've totally missed the point of the question. I'm sorry." The researcher said, "No. You are clearly saying that these aren't the ways that you are compensating for your aging process." "Oh, no. The answer is no," replied Ricki.

June responded:

Well, I tend to do life backwards, I think. (laugh) You know, here I am...45...and I'm just finishing up my Master's and I'm going on to law school. I think those are the things I have held back. I didn't do them in my youth. I think I was afraid. I was more intimidated...a lot less confident in myself...and very disenchanted with feeling like I was always

going to be doing these support roles...and never really feeling like I had much power or autonomy in the world. I think a lot of it, again, is that society really does not appreciate these roles. Look at how many women will say, 'Well, I'm only a secretary.' Diminishing that because they ARE diminished!

I feel like what I'm doing for myself now...I wasn't ready to do when I was younger. I don't know if that's a measure of maturity and/or confidence, or what exactly it is, but the older that I get, the more important it is to me to do these things for myself. So, I feel more focused now and that on the other side of law school...I hope that I can both provide a good service to people, but also reap some benefits. I think for me, for us, being in school and jumping through the hoops and everything, it's been a sacrifice...and we don't have like a nice home and furniture and all those things that we really want. So maybe...I guess maybe that's something that I've had to come to terms with, too.

There are women in their 40s who have homes and cars and things and they've worked all their lives. Maybe they went to school right out of high school. They went and got their college degrees or did it in their 20s or 30s. Where, I feel that if I buy into that comparing myself to other people I can feel very bad...very easily...and I refuse to do that. I feel that, okay, in three more years...if I finish law school...and pass the bar...and I'm a practicing attorney...well, I'll be just shy of 50. And, I think, what's wrong with that? It doesn't matter if I did it earlier or now, I'm doing it for me for the right reasons.

On the one hand, you know, people could...and they have said, if they find out my chronological age.... 'Oh, you're too old to be going to school.' And I think, well, maybe for them... but for me...we have longevity in our family. What if I live to be in my 90s? Forty-five is really young! You know?

The researcher commented, "Yes. It's only half your life."

June said,

I think that if I have another 20 or 30 years ahead of me of work, you know, it's ridiculous for me to resign myself to 'Well, I'm too old.' That's just stupid. In my eyes I can't reconcile that. That just seems like I'm holding myself back, based on what some unwritten law says out there, that a person has to be 20 to go to college. That doesn't make sense.

The researcher asked, "But once you've finished law school..."

even if your age diminishes your social status...will you have replaced it with the prestige and status that comes with being an attorney?" June replied:

I think so. That's a big part of what I'm looking forward to the pay off. I believe that I would feel differently about myself if I were in my 60s and looked back on my life and said, 'I worked as a secretary all my life...and I was bored ...and dissatisfied...but too scared or intimidated or whatever to do anything more, because when I was 40 I gave up and said I was too old.' If I'm 60 and I'm looking back and I say, 'You know, I went for it...and I was a non-traditional student...but, by gosh, for the last 20 years I've done what fills my heart with joy and it's been a learning process.' I think that that's what's more important to me.

Rebecca said, "No. I'm not really in that place financially yet with kids in Catholic school. I can't buy cars that I want. What was the first part of that?" "Career advancement? Education?" answered the researcher. Rebecca said,

No. No. I love...absolutely love what I do. I don't want to be a teacher. I don't want to be an administrator. I just want to take care of people, which is all I've wanted to do my whole life. If I go back to school, it will be a quilting class or a pottery class. It won't be in nursing. And we have to take different classes to keep up to date, but I don't want a degree. No. No.

When asked the same question, Sharon responded with the question, "You call them alternative sources of power?" The researcher said, "Yes." Sharon said, "Hmm. I'm sure. Yes." The researcher asked, "Both the career advancement and returning to school?" Sharon replied, "Absolutely. Yeah, I'm sure that...I guess I've never thought of them as alternative sources of power...but...hmm ...yeah...." The researcher asked Sharon, "Is there a better term that describes it for you?" Sharon said, "No. I suppose that's

okay. I just hadn't thought of it quite that way." The researcher said, "Okay...but definitely going after your Ph.D. has been boosting?" Sharon said, "At times, yeah...."

When Barbara was asked this question, she responded by saying, "Yeah. Yeah. I think so." The researcher asked, "Which ones?"

Barbara answered:

I think all of them. Yeah. But to be honest, I think I'm spending whatever money in an odd way. I get more pleasure just giving my daughter and my son stuff. Normally people would be taking a trip or buying an Ethan Allen corner table or something...and, you know, my daughter would need the corner table and I'd rather give it to her and she loved it and you walk over to her house and she's got it...and I think I'm realizing that within five or seven years I'm going to totally retire...and there's going to be a whole new lifestyle, again. I mean, I've just changed a little, but I'm thinking that I need less...less and less.... You only need what makes the heart happy...sort of...and, you know, the funniest things make me happy. I think I'm kind of odd.

The researcher asked, "Like what?" Barbara replied:

Um...the freedom of a sail. There's no road you have to follow. You just direct the boat where ever you want to go and then you get to play with the wind. There's just a whole... it's almost as good as having a massage. You know, you just feel that liberation and it wells up from the inside. What can make you happier? So, I feel like that's all I need. I mean, I'm going to have to fix meals, wash clothes, and those are just necessities of life, but I think I'm thinking that it will only be pleasure that I'm seeking when I retire.

The researcher said, "That's a nice thought." Barbara said, "But it's not going to take a lot of money. Why would it?" The researcher said, "So it's not that you need to boost your status in society with possessions, house or cars or things. You are going with less, rather than more." She responded:

Yes. Yes. You know how you feel like you've always got to learn? I'm under the gun to learn. I need to have a cap-

tain's license in order to do everything that I want to do. There's going to be a big learning in the future. I've got to get a lot of stuff learned, and do some testing, and those are not my favorite things to do.

"But is there a certain amount of status and power that comes with being the captain of your own boat?" asked the researcher. Barbara said, "No. No. I can teach." The researcher said, "Oh, you can teach then." Barbara explained, "I can teach now. I'm certified to teach, but only on inland lakes...and I'm not going to live on an inland lake. I think it would be grand to be able to share my love of the water and sailing with people of any age."

Jill said, "I don't think I feel the loss. No. Aging for me has been very much a gain." Sarah replied, "I haven't, but I think I will in the future. I think you need to do that. Although I think education-wise, people almost think that's silly if you go back to school at your age. You know, what can you do with it? And I think that shouldn't be. Up until you die, you can learn." The researcher asked, "So that would be a viable source of alternative power for you?" Sarah replied, "Right. Right. And the finger nails are power!" "How so?!" asked the researcher. Sarah said, "They are! Finger nails are power!" "How so??" asked the researcher again. "I don't know," said Sarah. "Or maybe it's just feeling better about yourself. It's something you do for yourself, and then you can be proud of it, too...like the end results." The researcher asked, "So you feel better about yourself?" Sarah said, "Yes. Yes. I don't know why that is."

The researcher asked Mary, "You mentioned some things about

career advances and education. Do you think that those were alternative sources of power for you as you aged? Are they a replacement for something society might view you as losing as you age?" She replied:

Maybe they're a replacement, because I got divorced when I was 27. It took me eight years to get through undergrad and graduate school, because I had to work full time and go to school at the same time...but I knew I had to do that if I was going to support myself and have the kind of things I wanted, you know, to do, and to live, and just stuff like that. So I don't think it replaced things. I know when I was younger when I got married I wanted to have five children. Well, it didn't take long to figure out that I was married to probably the only child I was ever going to have...didn't want to add to it...but I don't know that I ever felt that I was going back to school to replace those children I never had. I don't think I felt that.

I don't have any toys. I mean, I don't have the convertible and the ostentatious place, for instance. I like jewelry. So if I'm going to spend money, it's probably going to be on jewelry or books. I tend to be very...um...not necessarily inward, but I think I've spent my whole life trying not to be noticed. So I'm not a flashy dresser and I'm not pointing out that I have a BMW (I don't have a BMW) or having things that people notice. It's when you come into my house and you see the books...and, like, I just had a hardwood floor installed, because that's my comfort.

Next the researcher asked Joyce, "Have you found any alternative sources of power other than from youthful beauty...such as, career advancement, returning to school for education?" She replied, "Yes." The researcher asked, "Both of those?" Joyce stated:

Yeah. And what's interesting is last Fall I was told that they were eliminating my position at (company), and I became very excited about that, because I saw that this was an opportunity to finish school. I knew I was going to get a severance package, and I also had an interview at Disney-world...who I always thought, Oh, Gosh! What a great place. I'd love to work there in my field. And, to make a long story short, the interview didn't go that great, and I was very mixed about what they were offering as a company. Actually, I

was disappointed, and it just wasn't right. It's just not right. And I didn't feel good about moving to Florida without (significant other). I didn't feel good about giving up school. When I did my 'plus/minus' decision-making chart, it was like, (her name), this isn't right. So I didn't get the offer to go on, and I was very philosophical. After an hour of feeling sorry for myself and feeling rejected, then I picked up my ego and said, 'This wasn't right.' But I allowed myself that one hour of self-pity and then moved on.

I haven't been working, and I have no prospects of employment...gainful employment...and I'm not pursuing any and I haven't worked since the end of April. Well, that's not true. I have worked, but it's been on a consultant basis, but I haven't really searched for a full time job. I kind of felt like, I've always been taken care of by God, and God's never let me down. I'm going to be fine. And I have felt nothing but peace about the decision to not pursue another job, but to pursue schooling. So in that I found some power. That's been this last year for me. And people would say...because I'm single, and I own my own house...I'm paying for my house...and it's not like (significant other) and I are joint, financially, so people would say, 'How can you do that?' And I'd say, 'Well, you know, from a practical standpoint, I do have a severance package sitting there...and I've also taken some consulting assignments, and I haven't even touched my severance program, but it's nice to know that it's a safety net.' But there's also real peace I've gotten from not pursuing a job, and joining a corporation, so I know that's not right. I felt very at peace with this decision, and I can't say I'd feel that way at the age of 30. I would have been pursuing the next step in my career, and now it's more like pursuing that's going to make me happy...which is going to be counseling, if it's going to be consulting, if it's going to be a tour guide... It's not pursuing a corporate career any more, it's pursuing What do I want to do that's neat, fun, and fulfilling, and that I'm really going to like?

The researcher commented, "Oh, that's great." Joyce continued:

And it feels great. It's the first time in my life and it feels great. I kind of look at it like this is an adventure. And, like I've said, I've been fortunate, because I've also picked up some consulting assignments, so I have periodically been paid, and that's enabled me to work a little bit here, a little bit there, not touch my package and still know that that's there until I can really ramp up and start building my own practice and business.

The researcher observed, "It sounds like going back to school has empowered you, too." Joyce said, "Yes. Yes. I just know it's right and there's a personal power in that. It feels really good. It's a good place to be. I don't think I'd be there in my 30s." The researcher then asked, "Any replacing a possible loss of power with possessions, toys, perks, trips, the convertible, the youthful things that you couldn't necessarily afford when you were younger, but you now can?" Joyce responded:

Not as far as the car. Not as far as a boat. Yeah, I'm financially more stable than I was when I was younger, and I have better opportunities in front of me that I did ten years ago...five to ten years ago.... But I can't think of anything that will fit...no.... The trips...I've always been a traveler. I've always had jobs that send me places.

The researcher asked, "Oh, so that's nothing new?" Joyce answered:

Yeah, and what I would do is just take my miles and extend my stay, and give my miles to (significant other) and say, 'Come and join me and let's play for a weekend.' You know...so we've been able to do that. I've done that with previous boyfriends. I've traveled with relatives, since I'm single, when I was in between boyfriends and sometimes even not in between boyfriends. I still travel with my sister-in-law. We went on a cruise about two years ago to Turkey and Greece.

"Oh, wonderful!" said the researcher. Joyce replied:

Yeah. Because (significant other) couldn't go and my brother didn't want to go, so the two of us went. It's not really been a replacement. I've done trips like that, I'd say, since I started in the job 20 years ago. You know, every now and then you get to go on a trip with friends. So I can't think of any other replacement. No.

The researcher asked Janice, "Have you found any alternative sources of power, like career advancements or going back to school?" She replied, "That has been so remarkable for me. It has been a

incredible experience...one that transformed me." The researcher noted, "I think I consciously did it (returned to school) knowing that I was losing some sort of status in society as I aged...but when I saw female professors around me that were highly respected, it brought the power level back up for me. I wanted to do that."

Janice replied:

See, I don't know that it was a conscious thing for me. In fact, I know that it wasn't, because when I started, it was simply a matter of getting an education to be able to support my children. I was going to get a bachelor's degree and that was it. And then (this was after the divorce) went on and I don't know that I ever really realized that that is what I was doing...but in retrospect, I was.

The researcher continued, "Still speaking of alternative sources of power...have you done anything like buying 'toys,' 'perks,' trips, house, a convertible...anything in that line that you couldn't do when you were younger, that now you do, that also bolsters up the status and the power...?" After a long pause,

Janice stated:

You see, I have a convertible...I bought it, but I always wanted a convertible. It just happened that this convertible was available and it was in my price range...but when I drive it and when I thought about actually buying it, I thought, 'This is the person I want to be...this free spirit.' Maybe it was something, because I always wanted to be an old lady who wasn't an old lady. I wanted to be an eccentric old woman who did whatever she felt like doing. I thought about that when I was young. That's the kind of old woman I'm going to be...and eccentric old woman...and I don't care what anybody says.

The researcher then asked, "So it's not to make you feel more youthful, but to bolster your status as an older woman?" Janice replied, "Yeah. I think that's more it. I like myself a whole lot

better now than I did then. That's more of an inner process, but I have greater challenges to be that...to like that person than I did when I was younger, because of all the changes in my body, and the changes in my face, because I'm old now...55...getting older..."

The researcher asked Jennifer, "Have you found alternative sources of power, say in career advancement or returning to school for education? Any of those things? She responded:

Well, there have been changes, but I don't think it has anything to do with aging other than the fact that the kids grew up. I chose to be a stay-at-home mom. We chose when we had our children that we were going to raise them. So being a (occupation), I had that flexibility...we had our first child ...and for the majority of their lives, all I did was part-time (occupation). I worked full time one year after they were both born, not immediately after, when (husband) was able to be home with them. He had that flexibility. So our kids were never in daycare. And that was by our choice. So when they were in high school, I started nibbling on the edges of a new interest that I had developed. And it wasn't until they left high school and went off to college (which was 10 years ago this spring that our younger one graduated) that I ever started developing any kind of a professional career for myself.

So, what I have built (which, I guess, when I look back on it being 10 years) is fairly substantial, but it didn't have anything to do with the fact that I was trying to supplant or replace the lack of youth. It was now my time to have that freedom to do it.

"It was your turn then?" the researcher asked.

It was a choice that I made willingly. I wasn't forced into it, but it was very clear that (my husband) was going to be the breadwinner, because he could make more money than I could at that time in our lives. We were having children and one of us had to be a parent and be there with the children, and we felt strongly, and so this is the way it was.

The researcher asked, "And I sense you have a lot of self-respect for your professional life, too. Does that empower you a

lot?" Jennifer said:

Oh, yeah. I feel very good about what I have accomplished professionally. Had I not had children, or had I made a different decision, I might have gone a different direction professionally. I now, looking back, would like to have had gone on to more graduate training. At that time it wasn't possible, and I didn't really want to at that time. When I finished my Master's, I was happily done.

I've thought about going back now, and going on, but I've decided that the value it gives me is not high enough for the price it would cost me. It just isn't worth it to me, so I'm not going to. But I don't regret the decision I made. I didn't go on for that degree, but we raised two wonderful kids, and I'm very proud of that! So it was a good trade-off.

The researcher then asked:

Some women, as they feel themselves aging, decide that the way to find alternative power is through possessions...the convertible, the perks or toys, the trips, nice house, cars, boats. Do you have any sense that things you couldn't afford in your youth are now available to replace any loss you might feel from aging?

Jennifer replied:

Things I couldn't afford in my youth are now available. We just built a new house. It's a much bigger house than I've ever had. There's much more in it than I've ever had. But I don't think it was any replacement. I think it's something we've worked bloody hard to earn. It's something that we jointly have worked for. We've been married 34 years and when we started we had absolutely nothing. Neither one of us came to the marriage with any resources, and everything that is there, we have earned, and we are very proud of that. So it isn't a matter of replacing...it's a matter of achievement...and now we could because the kids were grown, the college tuitions were paid, all of the things were done, and it was an appropriate thing to do. Earlier we would never had done that because we had other responsibilities. So, yeah...I've got a lot more than I ever had, but things don't make you happy.

"It's not replacing anything?" asked the researcher. Jennifer said, "No. No."

In summary, several of the women interviewed stated they have

re-entered schools or universities for educational advancement, increased their professional status, and have material possessions and luxuries they could not afford in their youth, including convertible cars, large homes, vacation trips, and the like. Responses as to whether or not the participants perceived these advances as a replacement for a loss of power, status, or prestige from youthful beauty were diversified. Although half of the women thought that issues of replacement were viable, the other half did not perceive this or did not assign power to material possessions. Their reasons for their accomplishments were often based in a lifetime of hard work and achievement, rather than on issues of replacing a lost power or status.

Reconstruction

The fourth, and last, major category is that of Reconstruction, or an attempt to remain youthful-looking in midlife. As previously discussed, myriad advertisements demand that women fight their own aging process, deny their age, and keep youthful beauty intact. In gerontological literature, this is often referred to as Age-Passing. The term is a derivative of the racial term passing, which refers to light-skinned African Americans who passed as Caucasians during the era of the pre-Civil Rights Movement, in order to reap the benefits of the more powerful, ruling stratum, rather than taking pride in their own race and ethnicity.

Age-passing, then, is a term which refers to those who attempt

to look younger than their chronological age in order to reap the benefits of the young, rather than take pride in their own age. And the benefits are not imaginary, nor insignificant. As Gage (1997) points out, "Many older women try to 'pass' in terms of looking younger, because there are very real penalties, especially in hiring practices, against being older" (p. 51).

Rich (1991) discusses the hazards of age-passing, stating

in blunter terms, the old woman tries to pass....'I don't think they know my age...people don't think I'm as old as I am, so I don't go around blabbin' it.' Another old woman recommends 'taking on the qualities associated with youth. People will never think about your age. They'll just think how young you are.'

Passing-except as a consciously political tactic for carefully limited purposes-is one of the most serious threats to self-hood. We attempt, of course, to avoid the oppressor's hateful distortion of our identity and the real menace to our survival of his hatred. But meanwhile, our true identity, never acted out, can lose its substance, its meaning, even for ourselves. Denial to the outside world and relief at its success ('Very few people think of me as old as I am. They don't. People can't tell how old I am.') blurs into denial to self ('I'm always surprised when I look down and see all that gray hair, because I don't feel gray-headed.').

Given the hazards of passing and the fact that so many old people themselves have lived a lifetime of fear, contempt, and patronizing of the old, it is easy to see why most old people share with other members of society the stereotypical view of old people and also refuse to define themselves as old. (p. 55)

The backlash for unsuccessful attempts at age-passing are, however, hazardous as well. Ridicule, ostracism, and disdain are but a few of the reactions to old women who have failed. Chapkis (1986) states:

You see an older woman with eye make-up piled on and a shrunk-en mouth with the bigger outline in dark red lipstick-it looks

terrifying. And then if she is dressed all in pink and giggling too-oh god. It's my image of a truly pathetic person. A younger woman could get away with it though, all of it. At least some younger women can. I could, I had those kind of looks, but I don't have them anymore. Or I won't have them much longer, anyway. If I'm going to be a real giggler, I only have a couple more years to do it in.

...But now I feel like I have to make some practical decisions related to getting older: Do I wear make-up or not? Do I accept the way something looks or do I change it? Do I take out the gray in my hair or do I leave it? Those sorts of things. (pp. 22-23)

An organization of the literature on the issues of Reconstruction allow a division of four sections which increase in intensity with each phase. These four divisions of youth-maintaining treatments are labeled as follows:

1. Cosmetic concealment (the use of age-concealing products).
2. Topical treatments (the use of anti-aging creams and topical ointments).
3. Ingestion and Injection (the use of hormones and/or botanicals which are either ingested or injected into the body).
4. Radical procedures (the use of cosmetic surgery and medical procedures).

Participants in the in-depth interviews were asked specific questions based on each of these divisions. They were asked if they have or would engage in any of the above-given treatments, asked if they thought the treatment has/would work, and asked how much they spend or are willing to spend on such treatments.

Cosmetic Concealment. Each participant was asked: Do you fight age? Do you do things to keep your youthful beauty intact?

Have you or would you purchase age-concealing products? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

Dawn responded as follows:

I think that Melanie Griffin advertisement is just the stupidest thing I've ever seen. Now I have gotten things where they've had those creams in special packages or something you get at Hudson's, you know, where you get a gift thing. I think I've tried it once or twice and they BURNED! I said, 'I don't think so.' My answer is no. I would never go to the store to say, 'How do I get rid of this?' (pointing at outer corner of her eye). This is not my biggest concern.

The researcher asked, "Meaning that wrinkles are not your biggest concern. What's the Melanie Griffin advertisement?" Dawn said, "Oh, it's defy age...ahh...I can't even remember how it goes. It's one of those creams...huh...I can't think...memory is getting worse as I get older.... But it's the whole defy age thing. No. That's just not big on my list of things to do." The researcher continued, "You already talked about hair dyes..." Dawn replied, "Yeah, I look and I think...hum...and then I don't do anything about it so it's not a burning need at this point."

June responded to the same question by saying,

Oh, definitely hair dyes! Oh, yeah...definitely hair dyes. Although it would be interesting to me to see how I would look with gray hair...and then decide from there. As far as concealing creams like for wrinkles and stuff, I don't know? Would I get a face lift? Probably!

The same question was posed to Rebecca, "Some midlife women really try to keep their youthful beauty, their youthful look in tact. Have you ever or would you ever purchasing age-concealing products?" "Like?" asked Rebecca. "Hair dyes...or..." "Ah, NO!" she emphatically replied. She was then asked if she would use make-

up that has an 'age-defying' slogan. She replied:

I can't say that I wouldn't, but it'd have to be pretty proven before I go out and do something like that! Like I said, there's 2,000 products...I mean, every time you turn on TV there's Cybill Shephard with a new one...some age-defying something or other.... Oh, I do have to say, though, I did get that one. It's called 'glow-tion' and it's made by...who makes it? But it's really neat. I don't wear foundation at all, except for in the winter time when you're looking so blah...and this is called 'glow-tion' and when you look at it, it like sparkles! You put it on and, I mean, your whole face doesn't sparkle, but it just...I don't know what it does...it brings out more of a color...I don't know...

The researcher stated, "Oh, I'm not familiar with it." Rebecca continued:

I saw it advertised and I thought...and, you know, it was for the older woman...and you know, a lot of people have age spots or freckles or whatever they want to cover up, but this isn't like...I mean, you can't see it on yourself. It kind of dries clear, but...I don't know how it works, but somehow there's some color to it. Like when you put it on you can't tell there's a line...sometimes, you know, it looks like they put it on with a putty knife. Nasty!

When the researcher asked Sharon if she would ever purchase age-concealing products, she said, "Sure." The researcher then asked, "Do you think they work?" Sharon replied, "Well, hair dyes definitely do. I don't know. Some of the products that say they're going to take the wrinkles away.... They're very expensive and I can't see where they would do a whole lot. But I haven't actually purchased them."

Sarah's response to the question was, "Sure. I want to look younger. I don't think society does that to you, though. I think you do it for yourself. You do that as a perk, as a lift. You know? You can either resign yourself to aging or you can try to

better yourself." The researcher asked, "And you've chosen the latter?" Sarah replied, "Yes. I think you can get very stagnant, too, and just accept it, but then, with that, I think even goes depression...probably..." The researcher then asked, "And so it seems a healthier route for you to try to do something to remain younger looking?" "Yes," replied Sarah. The researcher asked, "Have you or would you purchase age-concealing products?" Sarah said, "I have not, but I have thought of it. The thought has gone through my head. I have not done it yet." "What do you think is stopping you?" asked the researcher. Sarah replied:

I guess you can get taken by so much hype. I just don't want to it to be doing that. If I knew something truly worked, and it worked for someone in my age-class, and they told me about it, I'd consider it more. But I think a lot of times, it's just hype. Don't trust it. But if I knew from someone that I trusted that it worked, I'd probably go there.

When asked the same question, Joyce responded, "Buy them? No, I get them, like usually in a package of free samples. They look at me and throw some in there and I think, 'Okay, as long as I've got it and it's free, I'll see,' and I may use it for a weekend...and then I throw it away two years after the expiration date..." The researcher asked her, "Is that because you don't think it works? Or, what?" Joyce replied:

I just don't bother with it. I just use a moisturizer, because I have dry skin, which at one point was oily skin, so that's a difference I've noticed. I use a daily moisturizer, and sometimes I'll experiment with a different base, because of the color, or if it doesn't wear long enough. No, I don't...not concealing...I find that I do get circles under here (under eyes) but I find that's more usually, like last night when I didn't get any sleep.

Janice responded by saying, "Yeah, I've done the hair dye thing." The researcher asked, "And you don't any more?" She responded, "No. I didn't like it." "Why?" asked the researcher. She replied:

Because I didn't like the color. I mean, I don't think the color looked good on me. It made my hair look young and made my face look old. And I'd rather have it all blend together. It just looked so unnatural. Plus, that was a hair dye...then I tried some of this wash-in stuff that you just wash in when you shampoo your hair, and I just didn't like the looks of it. It looked fake, and it's a lot of work. I don't like to spend a lot of time on how I look. I mean, if it's there, it's there; if it's not, it's not. I don't wear any make-up, except blush...I mean, I never have.

In response to the same question, Jennifer said, "Well, I clearly use hair color. I don't know if you'd call basic cosmetics that conceal a blemish, or something of that nature, but other than that, no." The researcher asked, "You don't specifically go out looking for a product that's age-defying or age-concealing." "Oh, no. No. No," said Jennifer.

In summary, only three women said that they used cosmetic concealment to fight the aging process. The majority of those who do cite hair dyes as the most common product they purchase for such purposes. The majority of women said they would not purchase products to hide their age. Barbara, Jill, and Mary simply replied with an emphatic, "No." Others voiced skepticism over the worth of such products, using the word hype to describe their advertisements.

Topical Treatments. For the second division, participants were asked if they would purchase topical treatments, such as anti-

aging creams or moisturizers in order to remain more youthful-looking. The researcher first asked Dawn, "Would you ever purchase or have you ever purchased topical treatments, such as anti-aging creams or moisturizers?" She replied, "Nope." The researcher then asked, "Would you in the future?" Again, Dawn replied, "Nope. Not that I can say right now."

Ricki was asked, "Do you buy any age-concealing products?" She quipped, "Age-concealing...like control-top panty hose?" The researcher commented, "That's a good one. I hadn't thought of that." Ricki then replied, "Yeah...I do buy those slenderizing bathing suits. Um...anti-aging creams...Oh, I bought some out of interest, but I'm not religious about using any of that stuff." "Do you think they work?" asked the researcher. Ricki replied, "Umm...I think you can see just a little difference in some of the...um...hydroxy products...do you know what they are?" The researcher responded, "Yes...Alpha hydroxy products." Ricki said, "Yes...just a temporary...you know...that, you know...I can't use soap on my face because it will totally dry it out, so I do these...actually I use Victoria Principle products. They're not heavily scented..." The researcher asked, "So you think they work, at least temporarily?" Ricki replied, "Yeah, I think they do." The researcher then asked how much she would be willing to spend on them per month. She responded, "Per month? I'd say, maybe, \$12. Not a lot. I don't use that Alpha Hydroxy any more...just to clean, as a facial cleaner."

When posed the same question, June replied:

No. You know, I tried...I bought some alpha-hydroxy stuff a couple of years ago and I just didn't like it. I didn't see any noticeable difference. Maybe I just didn't give it time, but I think there's a part of me that says, 'Gosh, you know, this is really dumb to spend this kind of money on something where...you know...if you think it's too good to be true, it probably is.' I don't know. Maybe it works for some people and I think that's great. I just haven't...no...I bought it once, used it for a while, and said, 'This is not working. I don't notice anything.' So, no, I don't.

Rebecca replied to the question by saying, "If it was something proven and somebody I knew had tried it and it had actually worked, then I'd consider it, but it seems like all those things are so expensive." " You sound a little skeptical of what's out there. Are you?" asked the researcher. Rebecca said, "Well, they can just be forever coming up with something...and it's \$45 a bottle...and it's just perfect...and, I don't have that kind of money to spend on that kind of stuff, anyway. It'd have to be something that somebody I knew used first."

The researcher asked Sharon if she invests in or uses anti-aging creams. She said, "I'm hesitant...but I do try to use moisturizers and stuff that has like Vitamin E and stuff like that in it." The researcher asked, Okay...but you aren't out looking for things that are anti-aging or age-defying? That wouldn't sell a product to you?" Sharon replied, "No. No, it wouldn't."

Barbara had the following reaction to the question:

Oh, gosh, how can you do your future like that? I guess I cover up my skin when I go outside in the sun, but I can't promise you that I wouldn't purchase an anti-aging product. You know, if it truly helped me be healthier, I would purchase it. But I think that probably there's the chemicals involved

and it would just really mess up your liver.

The researcher asked, "But you're saying that you wouldn't really purchase them to try to look younger...or would you?" She responded:

If it made me healthier, yes. I don't think a look makes you healthier. I think that the feel...the feeling of health...I mean, are you comfortable? Do you hurt? Do you have pain? If it made me less painful, if my skin was in pain (and it's not, it just looks old) then if I could rub some of this anti-aging cream on it and it would make my skin quit hurting, or if I had cancer of the skin, you know, melanoma, and I rubbed it on and the melanoma went away, then, yes, I would buy it and use it.

The researcher posed the question to Jill, saying, "Okay. How about topical treatments, such as anti-aging beauty creams?" She replied:

Nope. And I buy beauty products. I buy creams, moisturizers, things like that, and part of what I look for...part of it feeds into a relatively new interest for me...in that I'm very much experimenting with the whole idea of aroma therapy, the sense of smell, and what that does for me. Sort of a new kind of awareness for me. So I smell a lot of things, and then it is about...It's a self-nurturing thing. I like to put cream on, and I like to watch myself put cream on. I will sometimes sit in a chair I have like this, like a Lazy-Boy, so my legs are up like this, and put creams on, and then just look at them. I like the look of almost being wet. Sort of a moisture kind of thing. But none of that is about off-setting or resisting. It's a way of taking the time to celebrate who I am...It's about self-pleasure. It's about pleasing myself.

The researcher noted, "Sounds like enjoyment...like you are enjoying yourself." Jill explained:

Yeah. I go through things sometimes where I'm into my finger nails, and I paint my finger nails different colors...and then, particularly in gardening season, I cut them back just as short as I can get them and take all polish off and enjoy the fact that they are dirty, terribly weathered and beaten. Sometimes I'll come in from working outside in the dirt and...you know, when you're in the dirt, it dries everything out...

so that they really start to look kind of gnarly...like pictures of working women's hands...and I get into that. I get into the feeling of that roughness. Again, it's so multi-faceted for me. There's a lot of dimensions to what I enjoy about myself.

"I can see that," responded the researcher. They're not prescribed..." Jill said, "Yeah...and I don't let anybody decide where the walls are on that. It's up to me!"

One the same question, Mary responded, "What is the one I have? It's called Healthy Skin so it's got...what's that one chemical that sort of..." "Alpha Hydroxy?" asked the researcher. Marge confirmed, saying, "Alpha Hydroxy. So that's got that in it and I use that at night as part of a moisturizer. But that's the only thing. I mean, I haven't...like I've got friends who have had their face peeled. I haven't done that."

The researcher asked, "How much would you spend on something that promised to take away wrinkles and give you youthful beauty?" Mary replied, "I wouldn't spend anything on that. I think wrinkles add to who you are. I mean, then there's a story there."

When Janice was asked if she would purchase topical treatments, like anti-aging beauty creams, she replied, "Yes." The researcher asked, "Do you still use those?" Janice said, "Yes. For moisturizing." The researcher asked, "Do you think they work?" Janice responded, "No. But my skin feels tight and dry if I don't use it, so I use it." "How much would you spend on a product that promised to be anti-aging or have anti-aging properties to it?" asked the researcher. Janice replied, "Ten dollars. No more than

ten dollars. That might change when I get this job, but I doubt it, because I don't believe that they work. I mean, I think they work in moisturizing your face, but that's about it."

When Jennifer was asked, "Have you ever purchased topical treatments such as anti-aging creams?" she asked, "Like the..." "Oh, the Alpha hydroxies," said the researcher. "Oh, sure. Oh, sure," said Jennifer. "I have very dry skin and I'm always trying creams. I probably have got more creams than the drugstore does." The researcher asked, "Do you think they work?" Jennifer responded:

Umm...no. I can't say that I think they work. I have to be honest, though, to say that I am the world's worst to tell. If I were the sample for the company, they would fire me. Because I'm the most inconsistent human being alive. I mean, I just don't mess with that kind of stuff. I just don't. So I may think of it once a week, 'Oh, Gee, I should put some of that cream on.' Maybe if you used it every day, it'd make a difference. I don't know.

The researcher asked, "How much would you spend on a jar of something that would promise to rejuvenate youth?" Jennifer replied, "Probably next to nothing, because I wouldn't believe it. I just wouldn't fall for that."

In summary, although many of the participants had tried topical treatments, such as anti-aging creams, no one strongly advocated their use or effectiveness. In fact, the majority of women would not use them, saying that they were skeptical of the promised results, hesitant to try them on their skin, and thought they were too expensive. In fact, when asked how much each woman was willing to spend on such products, the highest amount was only twelve dollars.

Ingestion and Injection. For the third division, women were asked if they would even ingest or inject a product for the sole purpose of slowing or stopping the aging process. Examples used for this division hormones (including Human Growth Hormone) and botanicals.

Dawn responded, "No. I would be afraid of what was in them, I think...more than the need to use them." The researcher asked, "You'd be afraid of the side effects?" She replied, "Yes. I really don't take a lot of any kind of medication and the hormones were a big thing, because I said, 'I'm not taking a pill every day for the rest of my life,' but of course I do." The researcher asked, "You wouldn't use botanicals or the Human Growth Hormone?" "No," said Dawn. "I say that, though, and then I took these hormones to replace whatever, but not that I can say right now." The researcher asked, "You wouldn't specifically do it just to stay younger?" "No. No," Dawn replied.

The researcher also asked Ricki, "Would you ingest or inject any products for the sole purpose of slowing your aging process?" She asked, "Slowing the entire body aging process?" "Yes," the researcher stated. "...such as Human Growth Hormone? Botanicals?" Ricki replied, "No. I wouldn't inject anything like that."

To the same question, June responded:

If it was a vitamin or an herb I might give it a shot. If it was a hormone, no way. The only hormones that I'm willing to take at this point is that I have an under-active thyroid and have for years, and I take that hormone...and thank God every-day that there is that hormone to take because it keeps me healthy. Umm..but as far as something experimental, no.

When posed the same question, Rebecca quickly answered, "No! No!" "You sound very definite," noted the researcher. Rebecca explained:

No! No! There's too many things out there that they come out with, like Melatonin. Our phone is ringing off the hook about, 'Can I take that?' And then this new one...umm...can't think of what it is. But every time they come out with something new the phone rings off the hook. And the trouble with these things, like Ginkoba and all these, like the Melatonin, they're not regulated by the FDA. So you have no idea how much of that medicine you're actually getting. Who knows what the long-term effects of this are? You know? Five or ten years down the road. Yeah, it might make you look wonderful for five years, and then what if your whole face just turns into a giant prune? You know! Forget it!

When Sharon was asked if she would ingest or inject something for the sole purpose of slowing or stopping the aging process, she said, "Sure." The researcher urged, "Tell me about that." Sharon replied:

Well, partially because it eases menopause symptoms, I take 400 to 800 Ius of Vitamin E every day and it's a really good anti-oxidant...and I take at least 500 mg. of Vitamin C, then a good multi-vitamin and various herbs and...I take Ginko. At different times I take different things depending on...like, if I'm coming down with a cold I take more Vitamin C and stuff like that. It's kind of individualized. I do a lot of reading in that area. I get Dr. Weil's newsletter along with probably about four other health newsletters that talk about a lot of herbs and vitamins and stuff.

The researcher asked, "And some of those you take specifically to slow or stop the aging process?" Sharon responded, "They may be. They're anti-oxidants, which supposedly get rid of free radicals in your system."

Barbara responded to the same question by asking, "Is Ginko a part of that?" The researcher answered, "Yes. You'd be ingesting that." Barbara replied:

Yeah. I did that when I was in school because I couldn't remember jack! Took my Ginko. I'm not sure that it helped. If I was diagnosed with early Alzheimer's or something, I would definitely take any herb or whatever to get rid of it. And I think that's an aging disease. I've never heard of real young people having it.

"Right," confirmed the researcher. "It's usually with age."

Barbara said, "So, yeah. I would do that."

When asked the same question, Sarah replied, "You know, I have been lately. And that goes with age, too. I've been doing a lot of the vitamins and the minerals, too, some. And I do notice a difference in myself." The researcher asked, "Can I ask you what they are?" Sarah replied, "Sure. There's a multiple vitamin with B in it, calcium and magnesium together, potassium, usually...what else? Can't think of anything else off the top of my head, but I made it a routine now, which I never did before in my life, to make I take my vitamins." "Do you think they work?" asked the researcher. Sarah replied, "They do for me. I feel stronger. It scares me about bones breaking as you get older. You just feel generally healthier. And I can tell when I don't take them for about a week. You know? I notice a difference then, too." "What kind of difference," asked the researcher. Sarah said, "Just slower and not as much energy...and, you know, you feel like...I hate to keep going back to the finger nails, but my finger nails are healthier when I take vitamins. My hair's healthier. So it does make a difference. It's not just me thinking it. It's true." The researcher asked, "So how much do you spend on them, say, per month?" Sarah replied, "I would guess, maybe \$50. They're not cheap." "But

you think it's worth the money?" asked the researcher. "I think it's worth the money, and for that price...you can't see a doctor for that price. If you can fend off any of that, and be healthier, why not?"

To the same question, Mary responded:

Well, I'm on hormone replacement therapy, but I see that probably, I suppose, in a sense to stop aging, but it's also a guard against heart disease and there's a possibility it's a deterrent to Alzheimer's. I didn't do it because I wanted to be young. I did it because I wanted to...you know, about the heart disease and osteoporosis and Alzheimer's.

The researcher asked, "It was the health concerns, much more than youthfulness?" Mary replied, "I don't think I'd be ingesting..." "Anything like the human growth hormone...or..." asked the researcher. "No. No," said Mary.

Joyce responded to the question as follows:

I would only do it if I was trying...I don't know how to say this...if I was trying to counter some reaction of it that was annoying or problematic. Like, hot flashes. I'm not sure, but I think I'm starting to get them...but I'm not sure, because if you've never had them before, how do you know? But I think I am starting to get them, so if that was something that became problematic and the doctor said, 'Okay, if you take this...not injections, I don't like injections, but if you take these age-defying vitamins or something or hormones, you know, then it will adjust your mood, it will balance your mood, you aren't going to get any more hair on your chin,' I'll go there. I will go there. I don't want hair on my chin. I don't want that, so I'll go there. I'll be vain... and I'll be the first to admit it. So, if it would counter some reaction like that, depending on how severe the reaction was, I would, but not just strictly for vanity, I wouldn't. If it was hair, lip hair, I would do that.

The researcher asked Janice, "Would you ever ingest or inject anything to stop or slow the aging process...like hormones, botanicals, human growth hormone, anything that now, at least promises, to

stop or slow the aging process?" "The physical aging process?" she asked. "Yes," replied the researcher. Janice responded, "I take Ginko Biloba, but that's more for memory enhancement and stuff. But not for any kind of physical aging. I didn't even know there was anything." "Oh, yes," said the researcher. "They're using Human Growth Hormone now...they're doing injections of botulism in the forehead to paralyze the forehead so there are no wrinkles..." "Oh!" said Janice. "I saw a thing on TV about that! No. I would never do that."

Jennifer responded to the question by saying, "Well I take hormone replacement. I don't know if that qualifies for that. Now I take it because I had a hysterectomy, so I've been on it for a long, long time." The researcher asked, "So it's not just to slow the aging process?" She replied:

No. And I don't know if it does that, but certainly the hormone replacement at least promises health benefits or fighting breast cancer and some of the other things...heart...and all of that. In that sense, maybe that's fighting aging. I don't know, but it's not because I think it will make my skin sag less. I don't know. If there were a natural product that would instantly tighten up all your skin, yeah...I'd be tempted. That would be all right. But I'd be very skeptical. I certainly wouldn't be a guinea pig.

In summary, the only time women were willing to be involved in the ingestion or injection of an anti-aging product was if it would fight a disease of aging (such as dementia of the Alzheimer's type), alleviate menopausal symptoms (such as hot flashes), and was found to be safe and effective. The emphasis on willingness to consume these products was overwhelmingly for health reasons, not to retain

youthful beauty. The women who were not willing to ingest or inject any anti-aging product said they were afraid of what was in the products, didn't know the possible side effects, knew that the FDA did not regulate many of these products, were skeptical of the products, and feared the long-term side effects. Only vitamins and some herbs were endorsed by participants, with Ginkgo Biloba reportedly being the most frequently-used herb. No one said they were willing to take Human Growth Hormone or Botox to reduce visible signs of aging or slow the aging process.

Radical Procedures. The fourth, and last, division of Reconstruction is that of radical procedures. This includes such procedures as liposuction, face lifts, body sculpting, and other medical procedures considered radical in the attempt to remain youthful-looking. Such procedures typically include involvement with medical personnel, possible hospitalization, surgery of some sort, painful recoveries, a greater risk to the patient, and a great deal of expense. The participants in this study were asked if they have or would ever consider a radical procedure to remain young-looking. Examples of cosmetic surgery, facelifts, and other involved procedures were given for clarification. They were asked for their perspective on the effectiveness of the treatment and how much they were willing to spend to remain younger-looking via this option.

Dawn replied, "No. I do extensive exercising...but for health reasons...not to try to stay younger-looking." The researcher then asked Ricki, "Would you ever consider a radical procedure to

remain young-looking? Such as cosmetic surgery? Other involved procedures, such as liposuction?" "No," she replied. "Why wouldn't you...for example, ever have a face lift?" asked the researcher.

She responded:

Why wouldn't I? I'll tell you...because when I was 23 years old I had a stroke and was hospitalized at the IU med center and the woman across from me was in a full face mask and I thought she had been in a car accident. Terrible pain. I was doing fine. I was recovering and I found out that she came in for a face lift and it was her fourth face lift. And I told myself that it was the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of. I'm lucky that I can walk and see and I would never, ever have elective surgery or an invasive process in my body.

"That was certainly eye-opening for you," commented the researcher. "Yes, it was," said Ricki.

In response to the same question, June said,

I would consider it, you know. In my mind, I think, yeah, I would consider it...but would I actually go through with it? I don't know. My aunt, again, who is 75, had cosmetic surgery. She had her eyes done and then a full-on facelift, probably in her 60s. She said at the time when she was all swollen and bruised up, 'I don't know if I'd ever go through with this again.' And, you know, I don't know that it did that much for her, really.... Before and after, I still thought she was a beautiful woman. So, I think that's a tough one to answer. While I could say, 'Oh, yeah, I'd do it in a heartbeat,' I don't know that I would. I think that I would...but would I do it? I don't know. I don't know. It's kind of like liposuction.

"Yes," said the researcher. "That's another one I want to ask you about. "June replied, "I thought about that. I thought about liposuction, and then the more I hear about, 'Well, you can really get damaged and all that...' Is the risk worth it? I don't know. Maybe it's just okay to have a little bit of cellulite on your legs. How many women don't?" "Oh, I know!" confirmed the researcher.

June said, "You know? And is it okay with me? Well, I guess it needs to be okay with me." "So there's a risk/benefit factor that you are really weighing out when it comes to these procedures?" asked the researcher. "Yeah," June responded.

The researcher also asked Rebecca, "Have you or would you ever consider a radical procedures to try to look younger? Such as..." "Absolutely NOT!" she exclaimed. "Such as cosmetic surgeries? Liposuction?" the researcher continued. "No. Not even for two minutes would I consider that!" she insisted. "Why is that?" asked the researcher. Rebecca stated:

You know, it's one of those deals. And this is just part of life. I have smile lines. I've worked hard for them. I'm not getting rid of them. When you look at a face (and this is just my own opinion here), but when you look at a face... like a pretty little 20-year-old who has never had any distress in her life and everything is just porcelain and perfect...and you look at the face that's got wrinkles, and has got laugh lines, and when you look at those two together, I am more comfortable with this face...because this face has been around and seen some things and maybe not had the greatest time in life, but it's still smiling.... This face is like, hasn't been out of town yet, you know? And for some people that is a great big thing. They always have to be perfect, and the no wrinkles thing, but to me, wrinkles are character lines. They really are...and they show you stars...and some of the cutest little old ladies I have are solid wrinkles. I mean, they look like giant basset hounds...and they are just the sweetest faces. You just want to squeeze them. So that's never been a real concern.

The researcher said to Sharon, "You mentioned radical procedures, as they are often called, such as cosmetic surgeries, liposuction. Talk to me about your interest and why you said you first looked into it and then why you are considering doing it in the future." Sharon replied:

Well, I first looked into it because (her significant other) has decided that it's a really good idea to work out about two hours a day.... Anyway, I'm not there yet. I'm not solid muscle. I don't know if I'll ever be solid muscle, but I'm a lot better than I was, actually. I just think that you feel better...you just feel better overall...if you look as good as you can look. That doesn't mean you have to compete with a 20-year-old. You can have your own standard, but you can still look as good as you can look. And it's very difficult to lose these little 'things,' love-handles, or whatever, growth. I mean, no matter how much you diet and exercise, they just like stay. So, that's one way to get rid of them more quickly. And I have extra money, and so it's something that, you know, people do...

"You are doing it for yourself?...for your own?" asked the researcher. "Right. Right, " replied Sharon. " I wouldn't do it for him. I mean, he has never said anything. Well, that's not entirely true. He said, 'You know...facelifts would be a really good thing for you.' And I'm going, 'Okay...'" "Talk to me about a face lift and about having one," urged the researcher. Sharon said,

Well, I don't know, I mean, you see the people like on TV and stuff and their skin is nice and tight...and, um, I think because for a lot of years I had at least 50 extra pounds on me, the skin is just not so tight any more. I don't know of any exercise you can do for this.

"I don't know," said the researcher. "I have that, too." "Nothing like I do, though," said Sharon. The researcher asked, "So, your basic philosophy going into any of this would be to look as best you can at any age?" Sharon replied, "...for as long as you can...yeah. Included in that is being physically fit, you know, eating the right kinds of food, and just taking care of yourself in general." The researcher asked, "You think that's important to have with the face lift or cosmetic surgery? You're doing a whole package?" "Right. Right," responded Sharon. "Because if you just do one of them that

just doesn't make it." "Okay," said the researcher. "What do you think you'll gain by all these procedures...vitamins, ingestions, surgeries?" Sharon replied, "The surgery isn't really going to contribute to a longer life, but exercise for sure has shown that you did it consistently and it does add years to your life. Eating right has to. Just decreases your risk of cardiovascular disease and all that kind of stuff. So, ultimately, just better health for a longer period of time." The researcher asked, "And the purely external, physical things?" Sharon said, "Oh, you just feel better about yourself." She then added, "Pretty darn shallow, isn't it?" The researcher responded, "No! I don't think so. It's interesting because of the perspective of different women. I've had some say, 'Absolutely. Without a doubt I'm going to have a facelift, or I'm going to do this or that...'" Sharon commented, "And there are some who would never consider it." "Right," said the researcher. Sharon stated:

Ah, that's life. I remember back when I was doing home care, we had a 75-year-old lady that was referred to us and she just had gotten a face lift. We're all saying, 'Wow! What! A 75-year-old lady!' And I went out to the side door to meet her and she was just the neatest...the neatest lady...and she didn't have a husband...and she was not intending on getting a boyfriend or anything. She said, 'This is going to make me feel better. I can look in the mirror every day and it's going to make me feel younger. And if you feel younger, you have more energy and more strength.' And she was just a neat lady. Because ten years ago I wouldn't have considered a facelift...but then I didn't NEED it!

The researcher asked, "So your perspective changes with age, as well?" "Yeah, it does," said Sharon. "Yeah."

Barbara was also asked, "Have you or would you ever consider

radical procedures to remain young-looking? Such as cosmetic surgery, facelifts, other involved procedures, like liposuction?" "Not any more," she replied. "Okay. A facelift is not on your agenda for the future," said the researcher. Barbara replied:

No. I don't think so, because I have been under the knife before and I think it is very dangerous and I think you have to sign a consent that, you know, says, 'I may die in this procedure.' And, you know, when you're giving a message and people, they want to talk to you, they tell you some interesting things. They have told me that my best friend's friend went in for their tubes tied and they came out with a nicked bowel...and one went in for outpatient surgery (for, I don't know what) and died! And it was elective surgery. So, do I want to die? No. Not unless it is a natural death.

The researcher asked, "So the risks don't equate to the benefits for you?" Barbara replied, "Not any more. No. Knowing that I'm a big girl now, and knowing what I know, and having been there before...no. No. We like the face just like it is. If it sags, it sags." In response to the same question, Jill simply stated, "No. I can't imagine doing that. And that may change, I guess. I don't know. I can't imagine it changing, but it all sounds really foreign." Sarah responded:

No. I think the risk of surgery is just too great, that I wouldn't do that. Now if I could do something for my bones, say, and if there was something I needed to do for that, I would. But, it would have to be a medical need. I wouldn't do it simply for the cosmetic. There would have to be a medical benefit to it.

Mary said, "No, I don't think so. Again, I mean, you're spending money on something that's probably still going to change, eventually, anyway. There's always a risk with surgery, so I don't think so."

Joyce responded by saying, "No. Not for purposes of that I wouldn't." The researcher asked, "Anything to keep looking younger?" Joyce replied:

No. Not for that. The only thing I did see once...and it did pique my interest a little bit...that's more driven out of the fear of cancer...is a face peel. They said they can do some sort of ultra-violet test now to check your skin level for sun burn. If you've had a lot of sun burns, they can see, like under an ultra-violet light, they can see some problem areas. A skin peel would help somehow. I only saw it once. That intrigued me. But, again, that's fear of skin cancer that's driving that...the skin cancer may be related to age. I'm more concerned about that than when I was 17 and fried myself with baby oil.

Janice replied:

I've considered liposuction. I mean I've thought about it. But whether I'd actually do it, I doubt that I would. Just because of the dangers associated with it, and because I think that...I don't think that I would respect myself very much if I did that. I think that I would see it as a cop out...of not accepting who I am. I would love to do it, though. I really would. If it was a 100 percent okay and I could be okay with it, I would do it. Like I'd love to get my eyes done. I'd love to get rid of these jowls. I'd love to get rid of this gobbler. I'd love to suck about 50 pounds out of my belly. I would never do it. No. I wouldn't do it. You know, it's kind of a joke thing, but I can't imagine ever actually going through with it. And, no I've never done anything, at all.

The researcher also asked Jennifer, "Have you or would you ever consider having a radical procedure to remain young-looking, such as cosmetic surgery, some of the other procedures...the acid face peels, or injecting botulism (Botox) into the forehead?" She replied, "I read about that. To get rid of this wrinkle right here" (points to crease between eye brows). "Yes," said the researcher. "Would you do any of that?" Jennifer said,

I don't know. I really don't know. It's funny, because that wrinkle has bothered me for about the last year. I keep look-

ing at it and saying, 'Boy, that's really getting deep!' But I don't know that I would want to take that kind of chance. I have a little...I don't know what it is...a little growth or something under my eye that I've had the doctor look at because I was concerned it could be a pre-cancer. It's not, but he says it probably should be taken out, and there is a lot of change to the texture of my skin under my eyes. And I teasingly said to him, 'Gee, shall I go to a plastic surgeon, so that when they take it out they can do the eyes at the same time?' My first response is absolutely not. I would not. I think if he said to me, 'I have to take that out, and I will have to re-do the eye,' I would say, 'Well, it's necessary, so go ahead and do them both.'

"Because you'd have a medical reason to do it?" asked the researcher. "Exactly. Exactly," said Jennifer. "I think I kind of almost feel the need for that. And that's stupid! I realize, I mean, Do it if you want to do it! But it would be real hard for me to do something like that and spend that kind of money and go through all that just for the vanity of it...but I still could..."

In summary, most women felt that radical procedures would not be worth the possible risk to their health. Although many expressed a desire to have the results of a facelift or tummy tuck, few were willing to say they would actually have the procedures done. If a medical need or justification was involved, the participant was more likely to consider a radical anti-aging procedure. One of the few women who has seriously investigated cosmetic surgery justified her stand by saying that it is important to look as best you can, for as long as you can. She also thought a facelift would make her feel better about herself, but then belittled that as a shallow reason for undergoing a potentially risky medical procedure.

Research Question #3

Due to the exploratory nature of this research and the aim to capture women's midlife transitional period from their own perspective, this final, open-ended question was asked of each participant: I have asked some very specific questions of you, but I do not want to assume that they are complete enough to capture your total experience. What else can you tell me about your reaction to the aging process which you have experienced? The rich and detailed responses begin with Ricki, who said:

I think that the way women change physically as they grow older is not viewed generally by society as beautiful. And I think the standard to try and keep a body as it did 30...40...50 years ago is unrealistic...but it's there. I think it's going to take a tremendous amount of education and assertive people that will stand up and say, 'This is not right.' Um... and I think it's going to happen. I think people are not going to tolerate being put to that standard for 95 years of their lives. I mean, think about it...and women, I think, do reach an age where it's not that way any more...where there's more introspection. I don't think society knows how to communicate what is beautiful in age...at this point. I don't know if they know in the media how to perceive it and reveal it. You know?

"Say more on that," the researcher urged.

I think they know how to do it with youth: You're young, active... you're slim...you're wearing flashy clothes...well, you try to put that same standard for what is beautiful onto an older person and that doesn't always look right. You know, people are uncomfortable with that. So until we can actually learn to perceive what is beautiful about being older, we're not going to be able to reveal it.

"Excellent. Excellent," commented the researcher. "How does all that impact you, personally?" Ricki replied:

I don't have a lot of respect for how media perceives age, but I have to note positive thinking. There are some changes

coming...that for me, personally? I don't know...and I'm still so much in an introspective soul-search. I hate to use those old cliches, but I have to decide for myself what's right and what feels right for me as I change. I'm not looking to judge anyone else right now about that.

"I don't hear you saying that youthful-looks are a part of your search, or that beauty...I mean, you are very beautiful as you are, but I don't hear you saying, 'I'm going to maintain youthful beauty because that's what's so important to me'," said the researcher. Ricki responded:

No, that's not important to me. Because it's not even realistic. And maybe that's part of me being a very pragmatic person, too. Why hang onto a goal that's not even realistic? Why not move on? What else is there? There's many other things...and once you get past that, and it's not important, it's like...it's NOT important! I don't know...I don't know...It...uh...I think as I grow older I'm going to look for the changes and I'm kind of excited about it. Part of that might be again that my mother died really young. I wonder what she would have been like had she still been alive. She was in her early 60s and she would have been in her 70s by now...and I have no idea what she would have been like...I don't know...I'm very much...I don't know...maybe it's different than most people. But, again, I think my experience I've had with working with older adults and my true love for working with them...I'm not afraid of growing older.

June stated:

I'll tell you something that I don't admit a lot, and that is that when I was younger I always looked forward to being in my 40s...and...um...I think it's a really sad commentary that in our society (and I don't know a lot about other societies) we can't look forward to it and not feel like...you know...you're strange or weird, because you say, 'Gee, I always thought that 40 would be such a trip.' And then, occasionally, when I have admitted that I've heard women say, 'Just wait until you're in your 50s...that's even better.' Or 60s. Because that was true for them.

And I've also heard women who will say that the inequalities and the social status diminishes and that has been a horrible, frustrating experience because if they age, they are not given the respect. They are kind of like, put out to dry. I think

it's also sad that we don't have a lot of representation in the media of women who are...you see men! You see men that are aging and they're just loved and appreciated. And you see women and it's like...they disappear from public view pretty much. I think that that's pretty sad...but, more than anything I think it's kind of like pregnancy. I just kind of look at it as being an awesome experience...and what lies around the next corner. How will I look if I live to be 60 or 70 or 80? Hopefully, I'll be okay with it.

I think, again, a lot depends on your social and economic status in life. If you succeeded (whatever that means) in terms of career, you've been able to work with some degree of respect and status...I think that would impact a person's feelings about aging.

"Because it's not based totally on the physical, but based on accomplishment?" asked the researcher. "Right. Right," said June. "But your questionnaire has been really thorough. It's been fun, too."

After a long pause, Rebecca replied, "Well, let's see...I can't think of anything. You've done a marvelous job of whipping up these questions! I'm not sure I could have thought of all those." The researcher noted, "Midlife women chose a lot of different pathways..." "Yeah, they do," said Rebecca. "And that's what I'm trying to find out about, because there really has been no research on that in the past," said the researcher. Rebecca stated:

No. Oh, no. It's like you get to a certain age and you just kind of drop off the face of the earth. There's so much hype about the younger...and what to do about this and what to use for that...and, the WonderBra...and, I can just see my Mom, 'A wonder bra. Why would anybody wear a WonderBra?' You know, you just have to laugh. There's always going to be something that catches somebody's attention, that's going to make them want to run out and buy it. You know, let's try it...see if it works...

"That drop off you talked about...that's sort of a mysterious

place, and there's not anyone seriously looking at that. That's what I'm trying to do with this," said the researcher. Rebecca said:

I think, a lot of times, too, that the younger generation sees the drop off when they get to this point. The thought of being 30, 45...oh, my God, you are so old...how can you stand yourself? But then when you get there, you're looking at, 'Hey, I am heading into some great area here!' You know? Like I can finally maybe travel, take the classes I want to take, spoil my grandchildren. There's lots of things that you never had time for before, that just get put on the back burner...

I've got some friends that had kids later in life, and she has a 6-year-old, a 4-year-old, and a 1-year-old. We hang a lot with them, and they're in their 35s and 40s. I think to myself how fun it will be when my kids are all grown and I can go to her house for a day and clean it. She can go do her stuff. All the things that you wish somebody would do for you? All my friends are in my same time frame, so we're all going crazy, but to be able to have the time to say, 'You know what? You're flying around...I'll make dinner tonight, and just drop it by.' Or, 'Why don't I take the kids for the afternoon and run them around and you go do something fun?' If you got to be able to do that for somebody, it be such a ...but, you just don't have the...right now...

"You can't do it when you have your own hands full," said the researcher. Rebecca replied:

No. No. And having your children raised and realizing that you did a good job. They're going to make it. They're not horrible people. To be able to just go in and just enjoy, without having that...you know...when you're bringing your kids up, wondering, Am I giving them the right lessons? Are they understanding what I'm trying to teach them here? And finally realizing that they did get it...and they are wonderful people...and you did something right. You didn't scar them emotionally...

"There's a lot of satisfaction in that, having mothered children," said the researcher. "Yeah," Rebecca replied, "but you don't have that when you're 25! And there's a lot to be said for that!"

The researcher said to Sharon:

I've asked you some very specific questions, but I don't want to assume that they would completely capture your thoughts about aging and beauty or the whole beauty process as it relates to you, personally, or women throughout the life course. So, what can you tell me that I haven't asked you about? What are your thoughts on the whole subject?

After a long pause, the researcher asked again, "How do you feel about your aging process?" After another pause, Sharon responded:

Well, menopause, in particular, isn't as tough as some people describe it as. I had gone through and I've read a lot of stuff about estrogen replacement therapy and decided, after much reading, that I didn't want to do it. My doctor was saying, 'Oh, you should do it. You should do it' and all this kinds of stuff, and I said, 'Well, you know it increases the risk of breast cancer...and he, like, jumped down my throat and said, 'Where do you women get all this stuff? Did you hear this on Oprah or something?' I thought, 'What an asshole!' And I said, 'No, absolutely not.' He said, 'Well, we'll talk about this next year.' This was about a year and a half ago. And then my symptoms...I started feeling worse. I started feeling really moody...like, no one would want to be...should be close to me, because it was really bad. Emotions were just, like, out of control, and I thought, 'I can't continue like this.' So, I was going to go in and ask him this last time (every Spring I do the physical thing). And I thought maybe it's time for some estrogen replacement therapy. Then the whole thing was...the biopsy happened...and I started reading even more and I checked out the meta-analysis and stuff on the connection between, you know, how much it does increase your risk, etc. Then, after everything was okay, I went in for my physical and I said, 'No, I've decided for sure I'm not going to do that.' And he looked at me. I said, 'There have been quite a few meta-analysis that show your increased risk.' He looked at me and he said, 'I agree.' Okay.

Then I got a lot of books (a friend loaned me a lot of books) on menopause, natural menopause and stuff. I haven't had as much time to really get into those as I would have liked, because of other commitments, but they're sitting right by my bed. She said the single most important thing that she did was to take Vitamin E. I started taking that and it's just been wonderful.

"Really?" asked the researcher.

Yeah. It really, really controls those moods, and makes the hot flashes and stuff so they are almost non-existent. You get, like, warm flashes. It's just like when you walk out into 90 degree weather. It's like, okay, well, it's warm... but it works. I'm just really pleased about that.

"Good to know," said the researcher. "You're not there yet?" she asked. "I bought Vitamin E, but I haven't taken it," said the researcher. Sharon replied:

It's really good. I mean, everybody should take it. It reduces your risk of cardiovascular disease and all kinds of stuff. But...um...so that was good and I feel a whole lot better about that. It's like having control. And, to me, that's what this whole aging process a lot of times is. It appears to take the control away from you, but if you can somehow maintain control over what's happening (and that's like exercise and diet) you maintain some control over what's happening to you...even though you may feel when you get up in the morning, your muscle start to creek, or make horrible sounds, or you know...It's like, okay, well, then I need to figure out what I need to do so that this isn't going to happen. Because there are all kinds of studies out there on natural substances.

You may need to check out what Germany has done. Actually, Germany is the best country, when you're talking about natural remedies. Because of the kind of health service that they have, you know, covering everybody for insurance and stuff, they went into researching a lot of the herbs and vitamins and stuff like that. Whereas almost no research has been done...good research has been done here in this country on various herbs, they did it a long time ago. So if a substance is found effective in some area for something, by German research, then you know it's a pretty decent product. So when I go to the health food store, I do check and see which things are approved in Germany. I also am taking...it's a natural hormone replacement...FemStatin...which is approved. You take it twice a day. You just get a little more estrogen and stuff.

The researcher asked, "When you mentioned being in control of what happens to you as you age, would that also apply to the appearance?" Sharon replied, "Sure. Sure. As much as you can maintain control and (sometimes I think control is only an illusion,

anyway), but as long as you think you have control, you just feel better. To me it's like...you're driving the car, as opposed to somebody sitting in the back seat...just letting life happen."

"Do you think that will make a difference for you professionally... or in how other people treat you...?" asked the researcher. Sharon responded:

Well, I think it does. I mean, I think that the control thing...It's not just isolated in one area of your life. If you are that kind of person, you try to take control in all the areas of your life as much as you can...politically, in what's considered wise, etc. And then you just kind of go from there... Then how people treat you, of course, depends on their interactions with you. But I don't think they treat you in a certain way just because of looks...unless that's all they have to judge.

"I see what you are saying," said the researcher. "So it would be a combination of things...but appearance would be one component of the whole?" "It's one component," said Sharon. "That's right."

In response to the same question, Barbara stated:

Hmm...You know, we haven't talked about care of the body. I think that when people are over-weight, they're miserable. And that can be at age 20 or 90. Let's see...I don't have anything to say. I think your questions are complete and covered it.

It's interesting...some people...how they feel about a perm looking attractive and, you know, my attitude is yuk! Some people who have white hair, they put blue shampoo on it and I just think, Yuk! To be honest, there was a time when, in the transfer from brown to white, my hair did look blue, because the dark hair was so dark that the combination of the two was blue! I didn't like that. But to just put a blue rinse on your hair and think that's attractive, I don't get it. You know, people smoke a cigarette and think that's attractive. So...the eye of the beholder...

I guess I do what I think is attractive. And I don't care if it's not, because it's what I want to do.

"I think you have a very positive attitude about the whole aging process," the researcher remarked. "You seem very, very comfortable with the aging process and growing older." Barbara commented:

Well, here we are. Would you cry every day? That would be miserable to think...Um...I rarely look in the mirror, any more. I mean, I look to see if the colors match...and I don't shop any more. I mean, I rarely shop. And, you know, when you shop you always look in the mirror. My daughter's getting married. I went to buy a wedding dress, and it took me 10 minutes.

"You're kidding!" exclaimed the researcher. Barbara said,

No. I walked into Talbot's and I said, 'Do you have one of these dresses that would be, like, for a wedding?' And they brought out one and I said, 'Fine. Give me a 14.' I tried it on, and it fit, so why look any longer? I had other things to do! Fun things! I don't know...it's just a whole new perspective in what I want from life. Being able to listen to myself has given me the opportunity to grow with it.

The researcher asked, "How does your voice (the one that you listen to) become stronger than all society's voices that tell you to defy age, fight age?" Barbara replied:

The happiness that comes with it. When you're happy, follow that! See, that started really young, because my husband and I got married and we lived in the same city as our parents and we knew we were miserable. They wanted to rearrange the furniture, and they wanted to put those pretty little shoes on you, and they wanted to...everything! And so, knowing that your voice should be louder than their voice, we moved away.

I think it's maybe God-given...or...it's much easier to listen to myself than to listen to other people who don't know me. Why would they know more about me than I know?

"That's excellent," said the researcher, "but it is difficult when you have so many messages coming at you about aging and women ...so many negative messages or perceptions of invisibility..."

Barbara responded:

You know what? You read People magazine or you hear what they're doing and this kind of thing, and, Oh! I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Then you hear about people exercising, and then I kind of have a whole thing on exercising, too. I don't think you have to go to the gym. Wax on, wax off. There's so many things that you can do...that you have to do... daily... that keep you exercised, that you don't need to go and show the body to the boys at the gym. They don't want to see it, anyway, because it's not 25 years old.

Jill said, "I think they're been great questions. Very interesting questions." The researcher asked, "Am I leaving anything out that gives insight to your ideas of beauty and the aging process?" Jill said:

I can remember...this was years ago...this was in a consciousness-raising group, that was sort of, again, a part of the emphasis on women's rights and all that...probably in my late 20s, early 30s...being in this group of women. We started one night at a session talking about what we would change about ourselves if we could. I remember listening a lot that evening and coming to the point where I said, 'There's something really sad about the fact that we're so critical...we're so self-critical.' Probably because this is not the first time that I've recollected that happening, that there was a fork in the road for me at that point when I first began to understand that a lot of my beauty comes from my own love. If I'm kind to myself, and if I value...more than value...if I understand and appreciate that I am a precious being...in a really sincere way...and I started on a path that night thinking more about how to be kind to me...how to take better care of myself...

I remember going through (there was a book I read, or some therapy after that)...I bought a doll and named it (her name with a 'y' at the end) and carried it with me for a while and began to learn how to take care of her...and be sensitive to how much it hurts her to be critical of her. And that, conversely, when I am loving toward her, she is more beautiful. I think people's pain, and neglect, and abuse kind of hides that beauty...not only from the rest of the world, but more importantly, from themselves. I tried really hard, I think, to remember that. That I'm worth being good to...and that the better I am to myself, the better I am.

I think that, again, maybe is something that I wish women would think more about, in terms of their own self-judgments in particular, but also in terms of self-love...just in terms of learning to treasure yourself a little bit. It is worth the effort! It's worth the effort!

"Isn't it amazing that we just don't know that?" asked the researcher. Jill responded, "Yeah. Yeah, it is. And it's tragic. It's tragic." The researcher stated, "Because you get so many negative messages to reinforce anything negative you already have going on inside of you, is it hard to separate from that...especially when you are aging." Jill responded:

Yeah...and it's hard not to jump on the band wagon...to look at these ads, and to look at the pictures, and to say, 'Oh, my God, my thighs! Oh, my God, my neck!' Again, because you're using someone else's benchmark somewhere...but I think that's a lot easier to do if you're not looking at the total packet. If you don't see that in a sense, by saying, 'Oh, my God, my thighs!' you really are sort of like smacking yourself in the back of the head! And that hurts! I can remember, again, first experimenting with this theory of mine at that point and time, looking in the mirror and I have a tremendous range of expressions on my face and it's one of the things that I think is attractive about me is that I'm vibrant and I'm alive, and you can see what I'm feeling, immediately. But when I'm in pain, I'm not beautiful. It just isn't pretty to look at. It's sad and it hurts and there's some kind of tragic irony if you're the one that's doing that to yourself...if you're causing that pain by saying, 'Oh, my God, my thighs!' My thighs are strong and they take good care of me and they get me where I need to go and I love them and appreciate them. And the more I do that, the better they look!

"So it's almost self-feeding?" asked the researcher. "If you're feeding yourself negative messages about yourself, you're not going to see yourself as beautiful, no matter what you look like?"

Jill replied:

Yeah. Neglect is an awful thing. I spent my early years being very badly neglected. I think that's why I continued on that path for a long time. It wasn't until I sort of,

gradually, came to the awareness that I was doing that by choice, that I could chose to nurture, instead of neglect. But it took even longer to realize that not only could I chose, but the result of the choice was really overwhelming. It impacted on everything...who I am...and what I look like ...and how I feel...all that stuff!

"Oh, that's wonderful," said the researcher. "I think you have a lot to say to midlife women." Jill said:

Yeah. I feel badly when...like I said, I have one friend who really is struggling with it now. And she's beautiful! She's just a beautiful woman! Including her lines and her belly and her thighs and all of that stuff.

I guess the other thing that I think about is that I think it's too bad we don't have more opportunities to be naked, because I think that's part of what makes it so hard for women, too, that we kind of secret our bodies away. I think the fewer opportunities you take to be close to your entire self, the easier it is to neglect...the easier it is to abuse...the easier it is to pass judgment. I try to look at myself naked every day. Every day. Because I don't want any surprises. I want to know what's there. But it's also that then you're not frightened by it...It's not a risk. Again, it's a part of self-nurturing and self-love.

"You must also feel that you know yourself better than anyone else, too," said the researcher. "Does that add some confidence when you get negative, external messages?" Jill said, "Yeah! Yeah!"

In response to the same question, Sarah said, "Well, we all know it (aging) is going to happen...but then to face it is a different thing. I surround myself with older people. Then you feel kind of young. You do. You feel better about yourself. I don't know...say it again to me..." The researcher asked, "What can you tell me about your reaction to the aging process that you've experienced?" Sarah responded:

There is no real benefit to aging. You don't have any options, so I guess you try to be dignified about that. And I know things will lie ahead for me...like post-menopause, and stuff like that, and it's scary. It's almost like when you become a teenager or you start puberty, or something, and don't know what's ahead. Nobody has ever talked to me about this. My mother has never discussed that with me. I think at her age, they were just very quiet about things like that. We're just supposed to know how to do this gracefully. Well, nobody teaches you how to do this gracefully, so you kind of stumble through it like you do puberty, or any other major life change...the best you can.

"So there's fear involved, too?" asked the researcher. Sarah replied:

Upcoming. Yes. Upcoming. But I think at my age you can be afraid of a lot of things. You're afraid of breast cancer. You're afraid of so many things. I mean, I do things now that I never did before, like breast self-exams, and stuff. Before, you know, you're going to last forever. And now when you start to age, you start to face that you're mortal. You're more concerned with yourself.

The researcher said, "It sounds like you are doing more health-related things than beauty-related things at this point. Is that accurate?" Sarah said,

That's accurate. But, all of a sudden, you take life a little bit more seriously, and you realize that nobody's going to be there for you if you're not...if you can't be there for yourself, doing the things you're supposed to do. You can preach to them all you want to, but until you take it seriously, yourself...

"Do you consider yourself beautiful as you age?" asked the researcher. Sarah shook her head no and said, "I never have, though. I never have. Not in my life. So, I doubt it. If I thought I was so beautiful, I wouldn't be changing things even now." "Because you're very attractive," commented the researcher. Sarah replied, "That's not how I see myself. So, as you get older, that also

decreases, you know?" The researcher asked, "So, where ever it was, it goes down from there?" "Right. Right," said Sarah. "And you see yourself addressing that by doing things to make yourself look younger?" asked the researcher. "Right," said Sarah. "And feel more comfortable with myself. So, you do these things. But some days it does get to you. Some days you get down about it. Where should your life be at this point? You know, I think other people see you differently than you see yourself." "Say a little more about that," urged the researcher. Sarah said,

I think that other people probably see me as...I don't feel as old as other people see me. I don't know if that's true or not, but I don't feel like I'm going to shrivel up and die. I don't feel as old as I perceive people seeing me. I don't feel like that.

The researcher asked, "So you think people perceive you as older than what you're feeling?" "Older. Wiser. Probably, inside, I feel younger than I am," said Sarah.

Mary commented, "You didn't ask about sexuality." "No. No, I didn't," responded the researcher. "Why not?" asked Mary. The researcher replied, "Because I think that is beyond the scope of what I am trying to do here. It's a fascinating topic. Do you see beauty and attractiveness connected to sexuality in a way that could be a part of this study?" Mary said,

I think sometimes that that's what drives women to change their appearance. Even the little bit of dying the hair, but probably the breast implants and the like of such things, because that sexuality thing is so much a part of the bubbly blonde thing that you see.

"Oh," asked the researcher. "You are talking about sex appeal?"

Mary replied,

Sex appeal, but I think that gets intertwined. Sexuality, see, that's so comfortable now, where it used to be, I might get pregnant...but that's not going to happen now, so now I can just enjoy being with the person, and enjoying each other physically without that kind of worry.

The researcher asked, "And what about a sexual partner's perception of you, your aging body?" Mary said, "I remember when I had my bowel surgery, so I have an 8" scar right here (points to abdomen) and that really bothered me, because I thought, 'Well, what's he going to do now? Is this going to be a big turn-off?' He said, 'No. It just means you're more interesting.'" "Really?" commented the researcher. Mary continued,

And I thought, 'Wow!' I began getting older and putting on a little bit of weight, and, again, who I am changes a little bit. But then my pubic hair started getting gray and he said to me one night, 'It's gray.' I said, 'Yeah. What do you think that means?' He said, 'It must be wisdom.'"

"Wow!" said the researcher. Mary laughed and said, "So it's no big deal." "That must lead to you feeling good about yourself, too, to have someone appreciate you like that. Any other thoughts?" asked the researcher. She responded:

I always think about women in the way I used to think about Black people...and a friend of mine said this to me a long time ago...she said that women can be angry about things individually or they can be angry about the fact that they don't make as much money as men do in the same job, or they don't get taken seriously, or they're taken only for their beauty and not their brains.... She said they never can get together as a group to voice those concerns or raise those issues or demand a change. She said that sometimes the same thing is true for Black people... She is Black, and she said that's the same thing that's true for Black people. We all voice these concerns, but there's all this in-fighting going on and so they can't get together. I think sometimes that might be true of women, that sometimes there's infighting so

you don't get to stand together to say, 'Wait a minute! We've got these things to offer...we've got these skills...and we've got all this wisdom from the ages...we can't put it together!'

"Yes," said the researcher, "...and being more than one voice complaining about the age-defying products." Mary said,

I think one of the funniest ads...and I wonder what women think of when they see it...it's a Kellogg's cereal ad, but it's the men talking, and it's black and white, and it's just a straight face on the man saying, 'I have to come to the understanding that I have my mother thighs.' And he's just straight-faced...and I forgot what some of the other guys say. I think, 'I wonder if women realize that those are the kinds of things that they say?'

Joyce made the following comments:

Again, philosophically, I think there's something to be gained from every stage. And, for me personally, to want to look younger, to want to have my boobs perky and upright again, to try to defy wrinkles, I don't see the value in it.... To me, there's a lot to be gained out of this period, just like there will the next period...and the last.

The most comfortable period of my life was the 30s. I was thrilled when I turned 30. I thought, the 20s were no great shakes, the 30s have got to get better. Turning 40 didn't bother me. It was exciting. But there's a comfort level I've gained in my late 30s and 40s. But there's also some fears I've picked up, like...I told you about those...the mortality piece, the cancer, the fear of the female-type problems...

But in terms of physical and emotional, I think there's a lot to be gained in this period. And I'm not looking to compete with it. I think probably I was more competitive with it in my 20s and early 30s, than I am now. Now I think more in terms of relaxed. That's why I feel more relaxed, which is probably what is defeating me in dealing with my weight. Too relaxed!

"But you sound comfortable with the whole aging process," said the researcher. Joyce replied:

Yeah, because I see the gain. You know, I see the gains in the confidence...and I see the gains in a stage of life...and I'm looking forward to retirement, because I want to go play with (significant other). We want to travel. You know, at

some point we decided we want an RV. We don't want a big house. We want a very small retirement home. Just big enough to have the kids or grandkids over for a weekend, or a week, or whatever. And big enough to keep ourselves, so we can go play.

The researcher asked, "So there are real positive things that you are looking forward to?" Joyce responded:

I want that. I want that. I'll feel cheated if I don't get it. So I look at this stage as, I don't know if I should use the word passage or whatever, but I'm very comfortable with it. I also have some fears...and the fears are mortality, the fears are that if I'm 55 or if I'm 50 and I need to be working, and I can't compete with a 25 or 30 year old, that's scary. That's scary, but I don't dwell on it. I don't know that's going to happen. But I guess it's just that I think each stage has something to offer...and I wouldn't have believed that in my 20s. Back in my 20s I'd think, 'What did I get out of that?' Well, I got a lot of experiences. I didn't get wisdom. I don't even know how much knowledge I got, but I think I got a lot of experiences that contributed to later knowledge. My 30s I spent doing that, you know, kind of assimilating things. My 30s I had the income level. I had the confidence. I had the power that I could enjoy that time period, without facing the challenges of mortality. Now in my 40s, it's a little bit different. So, the 40s, I feel are more relaxed. I'm feeling more power and wisdom. I'm feeling more comfortable...more comfortable than I've ever been in my life...with a male relationship, and that (significant other) and I have been together for four years. When I reached 40, I was at that point very comfortable knowing that I was not going to have children and that I would not be somebody's wife. And that was perfectly fine, because I knew I could take care of myself. I knew I could support myself. I knew I didn't need. And so today, I can honestly say, I want (significant other). I don't need him. I want him. And so that's very comfortable. And I know, too, if for some reason, God forbid, that something happened and I was by myself without (significant other), I would be fine. I still have friends who love me. I have a family who loves me. I love them. I won't be alone. I may be alone, but that's okay. I won't be lonely. And so that's a pretty comfortable place to be. In my 30s I wasn't there. I was like, I want to be a wife...and I want to be a mom...and by the time I hit my late 30s, early 40s, and that's not happening, I thought, you know what? That's okay. That is very okay. And maybe that's where, to me, some of that kind of relaxed confidence...maybe that's where I see beauty. I don't know. Probably heady and phil-

osophical. I don't know.

Jennifer made the following comments:

Well, I don't know if it's a beauty issue, but I think one of the aging issues that's more relevant to me than beauty is the change in the body, physically...the flexibility...the strength in the hands...the flexibility in the joints. That's much more distressing to me than physical appearance...that I can't work as long as I used to be able to...or I can't get down on my knees and do what I want to do like I used to be able to...those kinds of things. That consumes much more of my energy...and much more of my focus than anything with physical appearance does. Now, I don't know if that's typical...

The researcher said, "Well, that's important because..."

Jennifer responded:

It gets in my way! It slows me down! I want to do like I've always done. I don't want to have to think about, Can I reach up there to get that any more? or Is this going to hurt? ...or...I really makes me mad when my hands are so sore I can't do something, because I've always been able to do it. And that's insulting to me! I get very angry with my own body when it won't do something! So I guess I'm much, much more concerned about that than what my hair looks like.

"That more than the beauty part of it?" asked the researcher.

"Yeah," replied Jennifer. "Yeah. I really am." The researcher commented, "And that's insightful, I think, when it comes to women and aging...to be able to do what you want to do. Jennifer responded:

Well, that's part of being independent. Maybe this has nothing to do with what you're doing, but to my mind, it has to do with how you perceive yourself as a person. You know...do you see yourself as a whole person that has lots of different interests and activities, or is your persona built on the shell. And I feel sorry for people whose persona is built on the shell, because when the shell starts to fall, what's left? There's nothing there for them to fall back on. I've seen women my age who have done that. I know one woman in particular who is absolutely devastated because she was no longer the one that all the guys were trying to pick up when we'd go to conferences. And that's really sad. We're all a bunch of

married women, you know, and she's out there looking for who's going to be her friend that night.

The researcher commented, "If that's all there is, I think it makes the aging process devastating." Jennifer said, "And it was for her...it is for her. Absolutely devastating. Because how she identified herself is gone. And it's very, very sad to watch." "That would be a huge loss," said the researcher. "Very much so," said Jennifer, "and I just never chose to go there. I won't do that."

In summary, participants offered a wide variety of topics when asked in an open-ended question for additional comments which might more fully capture their aging experience. The negative stereotypes concerning the aging of women were expressed in many voices. Some women acknowledged that growing old is not viewed by society as something that is beautiful. Others mentioned the societal invisibility of women of age, comparing aging with "dropping off the face of the earth." The negative portrayal of women in the media was noted, as well as older women reporting feelings of inequality, lack of respect, and diminished social status with age, while the same is not perceived to be true for men.

Issues of fear of the unknown (with the approach of menopause) and fear of the future (diseases of aging and issues of mortality) were expressed. Concerns over Hormone Replacement Therapy and issues of control of one's body during the climacteric were also discussed.

Care of the body, loss of physical strength and flexibility, sexuality, and sex appeal were cited. Various sorts of denial beha-

vivors were also given, such as no longer looking in mirrors, not shopping, not trying on clothes, and ordering clothes from catalogues. In fact, one woman concluded that there are no real benefits to aging.

Those women who viewed the aging process from a more positive perspective saw it as a time to be free enough to help others, as well as an opportunity for more time for self interests and travel. One woman thought there were benefits in this stage of life, as well as all others which she has and will experience.

Two basic opinions for action resulted from this question. One is based on a micro-sociological level, which makes the individual responsible for the quality of their own aging process. This option was expressed by participants who said that women are too self-critical of themselves, they need to take better care of themselves, they need to avoid neglect and self-judgments of self by expressing more self love. One woman expressed the belief that a woman will accept age better if she can base her self-worth in accomplishments, rather than in her physical appearance. It was also noted that aging is devastating for women who have built their lives and based their self-worth solely on the shell of their exterior beauty.

A second opinion takes on a more macro-sociological perspective, suggesting that women must collectively fight societal ageism. It was noted that tolerance for media-promoted female ageism is growing thin and may soon become unacceptable. Women of age were

also compared to African American's in their struggle for equality. Because of infighting and competition, women of age were thought not to have one united voice which could effectively protest against ageism in society.

Both personal and societal changes were advocated.

Grand Summary

This chapter on research questions and findings begins with the development of three basic research questions, based on a review of pertinent literature. An organizational chart was then developed to display four major categories of options available to women as they age. These four major categories are (1) Redefinition, or the altering of beauty definitions (with three major sub-categories); (2) Resignation, or the enduring of consequences of the beauty myth (with possible reactions to the acceptance of loss); (3) Rebellion, or the abandonment of the beauty myth (with two major sub-categories); and (4) Reconstruction, or age-fighting, age-passing behavior (with four major sub-categories which progress in intensity and risks). (See Organizational Chart, Appendix F).

Under each of these four major categories, specific research questions were developed and asked of the research participants. A multiplicity of responses were received for each of the specific question asked, quoted, and were then summarized within the text of this chapter. These responses will be analyzed in the

following chapter.

The final basic research question was an open-ended probe, asking women to contribute their overall feelings of the aging process from their perspective, as well as add other issues which this research may have not addressed. Varied and rich responses ranged from sexuality and invisibility, to fear and denial of the aging process.

It was found that two basic opinions for possible actions were advocated: One, on a micro-sociological level, holds midlife women responsible for their individual aging process by caring for and loving themselves during this transitional period. It was also strongly suggested that women base their concepts of self-worth on achievements and accomplishments, rather than on physical appearance alone.

The second opinion, on a macro-sociological level, suggests that female ageism (as especially promoted by the media) should not be tolerated within society. It advocates that women of age abandon infighting and competitiveness, in order to develop one united voice with which to protest.

CHAPTER VII

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The analysis of findings for this exploratory study encompasses both the extensive literature review (primary method) and the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a small group of midlife women (secondary method). Because a convenience, non-random sample was used, the analysis of findings cannot be generalized to the population at large. It is not the goal of this research to define beauty, ascertain definitive life course trajectories for women of age, or reveal the healthiest attitudes or avenues for the female aging process. Rather, the purpose is to explore, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options available to women as they age, as they specifically relate to issues of aging female beauty.

This chapter, therefore, analyzes the findings of each research question asked, and examines patterns of responses. It provides additional information from the literature on various aspects of each topic, and re-examines the accuracy of the organization chart initially used to format the research questions. Finally, the important findings of this research are presented and discussed.

Epitome

Research Question #1

All women interviewed stated that they had noticed age-related changes in their body which they were willing to discuss. A wide variety of changes were proffered, with the four most frequently mentioned being weight gain, changes in hair, skin, and eyes. Other less frequently mentioned bodily changes included: loss of memory, broadened shoulders, deterioration of teeth, loss of hearing, lack of vitality, insomnia, and shortened menstrual periods.

A great range of reactions to these changes was also found. Positive reactions include feelings of awe of bodily changes (compared to the awe of pregnancy), wonderment, excitement, appreciation of appearance, and a sense of peacefulness. In the center of the reactional continuum, neutral feelings were found, including passivity, acceptance of changes, and a powerlessness to control the aging process. Negative reactions included feelings of devastation, personal failure and disappointment, denial, alienation of self within a changing body, a desire to hide the body, and ugliness. Concerns were expressed regarding the outward image, ability to buy appropriate and attractive clothing, and the loss of flexibility and strength.

Participants were equally divided on whether their reactions to age-related changes were internal, or if society makes them feel the way they do. One-third of the women did not think people in

general treat them differently now than when they were younger. The remaining two-thirds did, with two of the eight reporting more negative treatment, and six of the eight describing more positive treatment, usually focused on gained respect. Only one participant felt a current loss of power, status and prestige from her aging process. The remaining women stated that they had already compensated for any such loss, experienced no loss because they have never felt empowered, felt objectified in youth, or had already developed countering self-talk. The majority of women acknowledged the loss of youthful beauty, but also the replacement of its power, status, and prestige.

Summary

In response to Research Question #1, the participants had all noticed age-related changes to their bodies, had a wide spectrum of personal reactions to those changes, and were divided on whether their reactions were internally or externally based. The women of this age range (45 to 55) had already compensated for the loss of power, status, or prestige by means of replacement actions (discussed in the analysis of the following research question).

Research Question #2

When asked in general what actions the women of the study have taken as a result of a perceived loss of youthful beauty, the answers were, again, varied and extensive. They included: walking, going to hot tubs, getting massages and pedicures, exercising, join-

ing the YWCA/YMCA and Weight Watchers, using skin products and hair coloring products, ingesting vitamins and supplements, engaging in dietary restrictions, avoiding the sun, using daily moisturizers, accommodating differing body shapes with a change of clothing style, seeking comfortable clothing, avoiding clothing fads, having mammograms and gynecological examinations, wearing contact lenses, as well as obtaining fake (acrylic) finger nails, and tatoos. These actions reportedly brought positive feelings and increased feelings of self-worth to the participants.

Redefinition

Three aspects of the first major category of Redefinition were examined, consisting of (1) redefining what is beautiful, (2) redefining the standard of beauty, and (3) redefining the locus of beauty.

Redefining What Is Beautiful. "No spring, nor summer beauty hath such grace/As I have seen in one autumnal face" (Donne, in Gullette, 1997, p. 59). As discussed in Chapter IV, in the subsection on Aged Beauty, attempts are being made (primarily by feminists) to broaden the definition of beauty to create an age-inclusive, pro-woman definition.

Macdonald and Rich (1991), Wolf (1991), Halprin (1995), Gullette, (1997), Greer (1999) and others are deeply offended at the prevalent view of the aging female body as ugly and repulsive. Tish Sommers looks forward to the day cosmetics are sold to make

women look older, and therefore more attractive. Barbara G. Walker (1985) reminds us that "the ancients did not consider the signs of old age any uglier in women than in men. In some cultures, old age was even thought attractive; young people craved gray hair and wrinkles to show they had grown old enough to command respect" (p. 139). Wendy Chapkis (1986) advocates the definition of female beauty be widened to include all phases of a woman's life. She states that

the midlife trio of Linda Evans, Joan Collins and Diane Carroll (all over forty) prove week after week that Real Beauty defies the changes of time. In reality, though, the female body is a constantly changing landscape.

From the budding breasts of adolescence, through the rounded belly of pregnancy and generous curves of maturity, to the smooth chest of mastectomy and deep creases of old age, our bodies weather and reshape. To call beauty only the still life of unchanging 'perfection' is no praise for creatures so lively and diverse as womankind. (pp. 16-17)

The participants of the in-depth interviews were equally divided on this issue. Half said they had changed or expanded the definition of beauty to not only include gray hair, wrinkles, and body shape, but also sexuality. The other half said they had not redefined traditional societal evaluations of youthful beauty to be inclusive of age. One woman said she was "conflicted about that" and others also expressed some uncertainty and confusion about the application of the Beauty Myth to midlife and this aspect of redefinition.

In summary, the analysis of both the literature and the interviews indicates that women often wish the definition of beauty was more inclusive of all female aging. Societal standards of youthful

beauty are strong, however, and even though some women state they have internally redefined beauty for their own personal advantage, many women have accepted youth-based beauty and have not tried to alter the definition, either internally or externally in their society.

Redefining the Standard of Beauty. Anne Sexton, in Transformations, (1979) wrote:

Once there was a lovely virgin/called Snow White./Say she was thirteen./Her stepmother,/a beauty in her own right,/though eaten, of course, by age,/would hear of no beauty surpassing her own./Beauty is a simple passion,/but, oh my friends, in the end/you will dance the fire in iron shoes. (pp. 4-5)

This second area of examination under the major category of Redefinition investigates the possibility that as women age they alter the standards of beauty by which they judge their own beauty. Instead of comparing themselves to all women of all ages, this question attempts to determine if women in the study now compare themselves only to women of their same age cohort, self-defining themselves as attractive "for my age."

Margaret Morganroth Gullette (1997) maintains that there is only one standard of beauty which is taught to young girls and continues throughout the life course. She states:

...by fourteen my best friend and I (she was a beauty, and her sister looked like a model) knew astonishing things. I remember clearly one summer day when we were at Brighton Beach: one of us noticed that a shapely woman had slight sloping thickenings above her waist on both sides in back, and we each said, in turn, 'That will never happen to me.' What we then thought could be done about it I cannot imagine. The woman was probably thirty. Girls of fourteen-both those who are mediocre students and those who get top marks-can learn with absolute

conviction that beauty matters enormously, has a single standard, is going to tail off with age, and that choosing for that not to happen is a matter of individual decision and effort. Our one-liner summarizes all the female age lore a girl needs in order to grow up-soon afterward-into being an 'aging' woman. At fourteen she is already culture's female fool. (p. 59)

Just over half the women interviewed for this study (7 of 12) felt that they had changed their personal standard of beauty and no longer compared themselves to younger women. However, the abandonment of the youth-based beauty standard did not implicitly indicate that there was a replacement, age-based standard within society by which to judge one's self in midlife.

For young women, the standard of beauty is easily identified within our culture. Beauty pageants, magazines, television and movie stars all set a standard for youthful beauty which is amazingly similar across all media types. Chapkis (1986) confirms this homogeneity when she writes:

All the pieces of the picture begin to fit neatly together, confirming that there is but one vision of beauty. The woman on the imported American television program resembles the woman in the Clairol ad resembles the wife of the Prime Minister of industrial magnate who dresses in the latest French fashion as faithfully reported in the local version of 'Cosmopolitan.' (p. 40)

Middle-aged and older women are not provided a similar standard of beauty based on women their age. The aging female body has been hidden, air-brushed, computer-altered for press, and found to be invisible within our society. If midlife and old women are invisible in society, how can alternative, age-grated standards of beauty exist?

Halprin (1995) describes the societal invisibility and its assignment to the midlife woman:

Women my own age and some older women share glances of recognition, which I find entirely pleasurable. Men my age or older seldom seem to see me at all, and this is primarily, but not always, a relief. I understand that my new invisibility has great potential for my spiritual development, but I'm not entirely grateful for it.

It is one thing to claim invisibility as a privilege, to walk unchallenged down the streets of my neighborhood or through the aisles of my grocery store, protected from sexual harassment by my comfortable, middle-aged appearance. It is quite another to have invisibility settled upon me as a judgment, because I am no longer considered attractive, youthful, and therefore, important. (p. 65)

Women who are invisible cannot be role models. They also cannot develop standards of beauty.

Wolf (1991) describes the tactics used within the media to conceal the appearances of middle-aged and old women. She states:

Dalma Heyn, editor of two women's magazines, confirms that airbrushing age from women's faces is routine. She observes that women's magazines 'ignore older women or pretend they don't exist: magazines try to avoid photographs of older women, and when they feature celebrities who are over sixty, 'retouching artists' conspire to 'help' beautiful women look more beautiful; i.e., less their age.'

This censorship extends beyond women's magazines to any image of an older woman: Bob Ciano, once art director of 'Life' magazine, says that 'no picture of a woman goes unretouched... even a well-known (older) woman who doesn't want to be retouched...we still persist in trying to make her look like she's in her fifties.' The effect of this censorship of a third of the female life span is clear to Heyn: 'By now readers have no idea what a real woman's 60-year-old face looks like in print because it's made to look 45. Worse, 60-year-old readers look in the mirror and think they look too old, because they're comparing themselves to some retouched face smiling back at them from a magazine.' Photographs of the bodies of models are often trimmed with scissors. 'Computer imaging'-the controversial new technology that tampers with photographic reality-has been used for years in women's maga-

zines' beauty advertising. Women's culture is an adulterated, inhibited medium. How do the values of the West, which hates censorship and believes in a free exchange of ideas, fit in here?

This issue is not trivial. It is about the most fundamental freedoms: the freedom to imagine one's own future and to be proud of one's own life. Airbrushing age off women's faces has the same political echo that would resound if all positive images of blacks were routinely lightened. That would be making the same value judgment about blackness that this tampering makes about the value of the female life: that less is more. To airbrush age off a woman's face is to erase women's identity, power, and history. (pp. 82-83)

Women who are made to look younger through technology cannot set standards of beauty for their chronological age range.

Another reason youthful beauty is the only standard of beauty which exists is women's lack of knowledge concerning their own physical and biological aging process. Having taught the university course Women and Aging for several semesters, as well as a course on Feminist Gerontology, this researcher clearly recalls the comments, shock, and amazement of female students when lectured on the physical expectations for change in each decade of the female life span. Comments of relief from isolation are prominent. "I thought I was the only one." "Oh, so that's why my hair is so thin and baby soft. I thought it was just happening to me." "So this weight gain... these wrinkles...are normal for my age?" Even 25-year-old women pose the question they obviously have not been able to ask their mothers, "Just what IS menopause?"

Women of all ages simply do not know what to expect of their bodies as they age. As interview participant Sarah stated:

It's scary. It's almost like when you become a teenager or

you start puberty, or something, and don't know what's ahead. Nobody has ever talked to me about this. My mother has never discussed that with me. I think at her age, they were just very quiet about things like that. We're just supposed to know how to do this gracefully. Well, nobody teaches you how to do this gracefully, so you kind of stumble through it like you do puberty, or any other major life change...the best you can.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin (1996) provides an insightful commentary on this when she writes:

...most of us are not used to confronting the ordinary aesthetic of aging. Modesty demanded that our mothers hide their bodies from view and we have little experience observing other women unclad. While casual nudity is the rule in the men's locker room, shower, and army barracks, women have fewer opportunities for comparative viewing of female bodies of every shape, size, and age. Even in the ladies' locker or the communal dressing rooms at Loehmann's, older women drape their towels and maneuver their underwear so deftly as to keep the body under wraps.

...The cultural sphere is as unedifying as the locker room. Rarely, in the lively arts, do we glimpse the older female body, or read adorations of it in poetry or prose...or see it eroticized in the soft-porn of advertising.

...How can I help but judge myself harshly as I stand here monitoring every crinkle, sag, and scar? Had I grown up observing the many-splendored incarnations of the aging female body, I might have been more sanguine about its normal permutations and transformations, but failing that, I can only compare my present body with its former self, which is why, when I look into the glass, I see only my flaws. This is not atypical. In The Summer Before Dark, Doris Lessing writes of her aging protagonist: 'For the whole of her life, or since she was sixteen...she had looked into mirrors and seen what other people would judge her by, and now the image had rolled itself up and thrown itself into a corner, leaving behind the face of a sick monkey.' (pp. 129-130)

When there are no standards of beauty for midlife and old women, there is little choice but to compare one's self to a former, more youthful self, or compare one's self to media-based images of beauty. Either alternative can do little more than devalue the

self-worth of a woman of age.

In summary, middle-aged women within this study and within the literature often abandon the youth-based standard of beauty and no longer try to compete with the beautiful 20-year-old woman of the media and the beauty pageants. There does not, however, appear to be an age-graded standard by which midlife and old women judge themselves. Rejecting the youth-based standard of beauty and finding nothing with which to replace it certainly implies that older women have no beauty to measure.

It is suggested that this is due to the invisibility of the older woman in our society, media's alteration of the aging body, and women's own lack of knowledge concerning their own physical, age-related bodily changes. Women do not know what physical and biological changes to expect with age, let alone what a 40-, 50-, 60-year old or older body looks like. We have no other standard of beauty. We have no role models. As Baba Copper so succinctly states, "One of the primary definitions of patriarchy is the absence of old women of power" (in Pearsall, 1997, p. 122).

Redefining the Locus of Beauty. "On a big screen, seeing wrinkled lips, it's not as appealing. We older wrinkled-lips people have other things to do-like be wise" (Jane Fonda, on what she thinks of aging male stars playing opposite much younger women, Newsweek, 1998, p. 230)

The third and final area of examination under the major category of Redefinition addresses the locus of beauty. Both the review

of the literature and the participant interviews indicate that there is a societal expectation for women to shift the locus of beauty in midlife from something physical and external to something more aesthetic and internal. All but one participant felt they had, in fact, enacted this transition. Three of those women, however, said that they would not dismiss the importance of exterior, physical appearances, and suggested that a combination of both internal and external beauty was possible in midlife.

The push to make the midlife transition of the locus of beauty from the exterior to the interior is strong within our society. Barbara Sher (1998), for example, wrote the book It's Only Too Late If You Don't Start Now, which is subtitled "How to Create Your Second Life After 40." She clearly admonishes women to redefine beauty from an interior, rather than exterior stance. She states:

Don't you just hate that? Here you are heading for the fat farm or the gym, for the plastic surgeon or the hair replacement salon. You're willing to put in your time to dazzle the public, and in fact, it makes no difference.

But one of these days you're going to be willing to march out into the world disguised as no one but yourself. You'll understand when you idealize beautiful people that nobody ever lived an ideal life. And you'll be grateful you outgrew that illusion. Because something remarkable will take its place.

Developing a rich inner life.

To be constantly preoccupied by comparing your appearance with someone else's is to be trapped in a world where you can't have an inner life. If you don't change that as soon as possible, the years will turn you into a very bored-and boring-person. But if you use your brain and your gifts to develop a delightful mission of your own, it will drive away self-consciousness like the summer drives away the cold. (pp. 114-115)

Sher (1998) has no expectations that redefining the locus of beauty will be immediate or easy for women. Yet she challenges women to define and redefine themselves by their internal, rather than external locus of beauty. She continues:

Try it out. Just get your clothes on straight, and then don't look in another mirror for the rest of the day. Forget how you look. The results might astonish you. Because one of these days you're likely to realize something amazing: You've stopped being a thing and have turned into a person.

'I don't look like myself,' a 48-year-old woman told me.

No, and she wouldn't even if she'd miraculously stayed young-looking. Neither will you. You'll never look like yourself again. Because your self will never again be on your surface.

Sometime around midlife you're led (or thrown) off the auction block. You lose your value as an art object.... The real you remains inside, getting richer and more exciting every day, and unlike beauty, this will never wear out until the day you die....

Wouldn't you love to step into that wonderful world right now? Just thumb your nose at nature and vanity and youth and walk away from beauty? Well, you're almost there. You just have a few more illusions to get rid of first. But you can check in now and then and see how the process is going.

'Hey, heart, are you ready to quit the beauty contest? I'd like time off to do something more entertaining.'

One day it will say yes. (pp. 115-116)

Helen Gurley Brown (1993), in her book The Late Show, doesn't buy it. She refuses to advocate for internal beauty with age. She finds the rewards of youthful beauty to be so great that an altered, interior standard for aging beauty does not deliver the same power, status, and prestige afforded youthfulness. She states:

Are we older females utter nitwits to care so much (still) about beauty? Certainly we are, but the world rewards beauty so lavishly it's hard not to take it seriously even at this

late date. Men-if you want to use them as a yardstick-still value beauty in a woman-and we are talking here about the outside stuff as in Diane Sawyer, Kim Basinger and Cindy Crawford, not inner as in Mother Teresa-more than any other asset, no matter what they say, and they say a lot of silly stuff like what they care about most is intelligence, pleasing personality and 'she should be fun to be with.'.... What they mean is that after the requisite of beautiful is taken care of,...they can then start to appreciate other things. (p. 95)

Brown (1993) becomes even more emphatic as she continues on the subject. She writes:

An early film star, Dolores del Rio, may have started that 'beautiful on the inside is all that matters' crap. When reporters remarked her deep Latin beauty, she would always say it came from 'drinking weak tea and spending a whole day a week in bed.'...I was recently chatting with my gorgeous friend Georgette Mosbacher on the subject of beauty and she said, 'The most important thing a woman can do if she wants to be beautiful is exude a feeling of confidence.' I am pounding my forehead. 'Georgette,' I scream. 'Where are we getting this confidence if we aren't beautiful?!' Darling girl didn't know. Beauties are frequently well meaning on the subject of looks but full of shit! (pp. 97-98)

Brown (1993) indicates that the internalization of beauty with age would work in an idealistic world, but she does not believe that it is a realistic alternative in our youth-based culture. She states:

Some lovely day perhaps we will all be judged strictly by what we are-not one scrap of attention paid to creamy thighs, goddess cheekbones, Mona Lisa lips, but that isn't the situation now and I'm not sure we, the getting-up-there group, are the ones to strike out and demand love and appreciation totally without artifice. Should we really plan to attend the next charity dinner-or even show up at the office-in a gunnysack, with faces scrubbed like an Irish potato? You can. I'm not going to. Yes, there is a lot more important stuff than thinking about your skin tone, I know that, but no apologies...you can take the world seriously, do whatever you can to make it better and fit in exfoliation and lip gloss. Truth! (pp. 125-126)

From a feminist perspective, Letty Cottin Pogrebin (1996) be-

believes that the pursuit to retain youthful, exterior beauty is futile and robs midlife women of all they might become internally, and all they might accomplish. She states:

Daunted by the monster of our own mortality, we turn our attention to aging, the enemy we live with every day, the enemy our culture tells us can be vanquished, at least temporarily.

And so we get sidetracked into the pursuit of eternal youth--a time-consuming, labor-intensive, high-maintenance enterprise that is futile from the start. Some women become so preoccupied with physical aging that they are diverted from all that they might do, contribute, or accomplish. They turn into narcissists too myopic to notice that the world needs their help. They never realize that the time they spend fighting age is the time all of us need most to make our remaining years count.

What good is it to turn fifty with an unwrinkled face if there's no light behind the eyes, no passion in the voice, no new ideas happening inside the head? Why hope to live a long life if we're only going to fill it with self-absorption, body maintenance, and image repair? When we die, do we want people to exclaim, 'She looked ten years younger,' or do we want them to say, 'She lived a great life'?

In essence, the choice presented to people over fifty is this: time or aging -- which matters most? When time is the target, it changes the way you look at the world. You notice how most people mindlessly squander time and take life for granted. You feel in your teeth and hair and bones how achingly finite everything is. You panic. You make new resolutions. You fall in love with life. You pay attention. (p. 13)

Pogrebin (1996) does, however, preserve each woman's right to beautify and embellish her own body as she desires. She writes:

In the process of battling the beauty ideal, many thinkers have denied the undeniable, which is that we respond to one another's outward appearance before we have the opportunity to explore each other's inner beauty. What attractiveness boils down to is the capacity to attract, to draw others to us, and for a person to want that capacity is normal, non-sexist, and human.

So, too, is the pleasure we derive from putting ourselves together artfully, from bringing our particular aesthetic vision

to life on our own bodies and, yes, from looking at ourselves in the mirror and pronouncing the image fair. In her search for a more authentic self, her essential self, a middle-aged woman may discover that authentic doesn't necessarily mean unembellished. For some people, decorating the surfaces of life-the human body, a garden, architecture, the wall over one's desk-may be an expression of the artist in Everywoman, a deeper impulse to beautify the world. And without that impulse, the earth would be a gray and gloomy place. (pp. 140-141)

As previously discussed, feminists Macdonald and Rich (1991) are offended by the prevalent notion that women of age must alter the locus of their beauty to the internal, since the external is considered ugly. They also fight for the individualism of the old woman, and reject the notion of the homogeneity of old women which makes them all stereotypically wise.

Conversely, authors Schachter-Shalomi and Miller (1995) have written a book entitled From Age-ing to Sage-ing, in which a new model of late-life development called sage-ing "enables older people to become spiritually radiant, physically vital and socially responsible 'elders of the tribe'" (p. 5). They appear to instruct the old person to become a wise sage, if they have not already done so via an innate or evolutionary process. Old women have always been assigned the attribute of wisdom, regardless if they are wise, or not. As Pogrebin (1996) states, "I felt no wiser at fifty than I did at fifteen, only more experienced" (p. 24).

In summary, what initially appeared to be a simple question is far more complex than assumed. Do women redefine the locus of their beauty from something external to something internal as they age? Yes, some do. Do other women cling to preserving what they can of

their exterior beauty? According to Helen Gurley Brown (1993), they do and should. Do we have the right to discard an aging woman's physical appearance as ugly and unimportant, as long as we value their inner wisdom? According to Macdonald and Rich (1991), we do not. Do all women, including feminists, have the right to do what they wish to their bodies as they age, including adornment and embellishment? According to Pogregin (1996), they do, but she also warns against the obsession with youthful beauty which can rob one of all they might be (including internal growth) and do. Is wisdom little more than a positive stereotype assigned to women of age in a futile attempt to replace their appearance with something-anything-positive? Many questions remain unanswered.

Resignation

The second major category is that of Resignation. Its purpose is to discern if women abandon the tenets of the Beauty Myth, ignore the Beauty Imperative, and resign themselves to being out of the societal competition of youthful beauty. The second portion of this question examines the emotional reactions felt by those who do resign themselves. Does resignation bring a sense of relief, feelings of depression, or elicit some other emotion?

Resigning the Beauty Myth. "Once upon a time we all were gorgeous. And then it went away" (Sher, 1998, p. 96). Over half (7 of 12) women in this study reported that they had not abandoned the Beauty Myth and still endorsed the Beauty Imperative. Five of the

participants reported that they had abandoned the societal tenets of beauty, although a variation was found in their responses. Some felt they had never adopted it. Gullette (1997) addresses this issue when she writes, "Although I had never been 'beautiful,' I had always been more beautiful once" (p. 58). Other participants admitted to a continuous struggle with the issue. Chapkis (1986) portrays this struggle well when she writes:

Standing at the sink, I disinterestedly watch myself prepare to perform the three-times-daily ritual of cleaning my teeth. Just before the toothbrush reaches my mouth, I stop, staring at my arm. Loose folds of skin nestle in the bend of my right elbow. I muster a short laugh and resolutely carry on with the business at hand. But I am frightened by this new evidence of age. Can this be my body starting to sag? Obviously I still don't believe in my own mortality. This realization is as disturbing as the folds of flesh-I know that until I can accept that this body will itself be old, until I come to see myself in the older bodies around me, all my hearty pronouncements on the beauty of age ring hollow. Viewing the elderly as an oppressed minority is a trick of cowardice: we are all the old; for some of us it just doesn't yet show. (p. 15)

Sher (1998) is one of the more recent authors to advocate the abandonment of the Beauty Myth. She sets up her advocacy by first confirming that a major loss of youthful beauty does exist, and the loss is undeniable. She states:

Beauty has always been an issue in your life whether you are male or female, but at midlife it takes a special spin. No matter how differently each of us felt about our looks until now-happy or unhappy or totally unconcerned-at midlife we all feel exactly the same: unhappy. There's no doubt about it, you're changing-for the worse. Reason won't fix your opinion; your friends can insist you look exactly like you did ten years ago, but it doesn't help a bit. You're losing your looks, and you know it.

For once your irrational feeling is completely accurate.

There's a certain kind of beauty that is actually diminishing

in us as we get older, and it's this kind of beauty we hate to lose. Maybe other people can't see the change, but that's because they aren't paying attention. We're looking more carefully, and it's really happening. We look better than we ever have? Yeah, right. We don't look beautiful in that special way, the way young people look beautiful. (p. 96)

In no uncertain terms, Sher (1998) then advocates that all women take the pathway of Resignation. She does not expect women to instantly be able to do this, but advocates that they have an intensive effort to achieve the most important goal: Resignation. She states:

Beautiful or plain, you should walk away from the whole (beauty) scene as soon as you're able.

Leave the beauty contest to the people who can't afford to leave it yet. Walk away and call yourself lucky.

What do I mean by that? Just quit caring about your looks, and you can do any damn thing you like. You'll do exactly that someday, when you're sixty or seventy or eighty. Why not do it now? It's high time to detach happiness from appearance. For one thing, it diminishes you. There's no way to become fully human when you're glued to the mirror. Give it up. Throw off your burden. It's the only way out of this time-gobbling sideshow.

You're past the age of looking like food, so predators won't see you anyway.

And if nobody's staring at you, you can relax and get a good look at the world around you...

No matter what you think you look like, other people are always going to think whatever they want to anyway.... That's because your looks don't belong to you; they belong to the beholder.

Give them over and walk away. You have better things to do. (p. 112)

Pogrebin (1996) gives a fantastic first-person account of the struggle involved with the Resignation option. She questions out-

right if Resignation is the healthiest route or pathway for women in midlife when she writes:

...what's so admirable about 'accepting' one's age, and who's to say acceptance is always the healthiest attitude? Some forms of acceptance are indistinguishable from resignation, which is the last feeling anyone needs at this stage of life. It makes more sense to me to steer a course between acceptance and resistance, that is, to make a conscious distinction between those aspects of aging that I would learn to live with and those I would fight tooth and nail to prove to myself (and anyone else who cared to notice) that there's lots more life in the old girl yet.

In the meantime, I would not roll with the punches, go with the flow, look on the bright side, or abide wisecracks about aging that aren't funny. (p. 24)

However, Pogrebin also personally struggles with the futility of extended adherence to the Beauty Myth and Beauty Imperative.

She states:

I'm not sure how much time my looks are worth, or how many hours (months? years?) of the rest of my life I am willing to devote to the energy-depleting, high-maintenance effort to get the old carcass up to snuff. Is it worth the time it takes to follow the fashion magazines, the time it takes to prowl the cosmetics counters checking out the most up-to-date anti-age products, the time it takes to visit the hairdresser, or shop for flattering clothes (never mind what these things cost, for the moment, which is absurd in itself). Is it worth the time spent applying makeup and taking it off, over and over again, day after day, year after year? Is it worth the time it takes to earn the money to wage this incessant war against age? Right now, in the shank of life, the best of the last good years, how many quarts of this lifeblood, time, am I-is any woman-willing to sacrifice on the altar of youth? And suppose I decide to claim that time for other uses-suppose I 'let myself go' as they say-am I prepared for the consequences? (p. 148)

Finally, Pogrebin (1996) protests the abandonment of exterior beauty in midlife at the same time she protests the objectification of women's bodies as sex objects. She seeks a different alternative

than what which society currently offers women of age. Beginning with Carolyn Heilbrun's quote that women of age will have to "watch ourselves grow invisible to youth worshipers and to the male gaze" and that "our bodies will become the house for our new spirit,"

Pogregin replies:

Not me, thank you. I may protest women's bodies being objectified, but I don't want my body to exist solely as a container for my spirit. I don't want to be defined as a present or absent in the world according to the judgment of youth worshippers or the whimsy of the male gaze. Still, I'm confused: I admire accomplished women in gray buns—women like Heilbrun herself, and Mead, Golda Meir, Hannah Arendt, and Maggie Kuhn, the late founder of the Gray Panthers and a fierce opponent of age discrimination—women who care about ideas, justice, and other people, and I don't give a fig how they look. I admire what they do and what they stand for; the trouble is, I don't necessarily want to look like them. Of course, female human beings should be taken seriously, heard more and seen (gazed at, slobbered over) less, but in return we shouldn't have to be corporeal nonentities. 'You can be a sex object or you can be invisible' strikes me as a Hobson's choice. There's got to be another way for the older woman to be physically present in the world. (p. 148)

Once again, the answers are not simple, and sometimes not even available. Midlife women struggle with society's edict to drop out of the beauty race when one can no longer successfully pull it off. But just when is that time? Are midlife women struggling with a Catch 22 (sex object or invisibility) which has no possible positive outcome? Is there another alternative which would bring not only clarity, but a viable midlife option to women of age? More questions remain unanswered.

Feelings at Resignation. The participants of this study who said they had engaged in the Resignation option reported initial

feelings of loss and depression. Some still struggle with these emotions, while others claim they had worked through the negative emotions and now experience feelings of relief, peacefulness, and comfort.

Halprin (1995) perhaps relates one of the best descriptions of this emotional conflict when she writes the following:

I look at my own aging image in my mirror, and I see the tracks of time. How exciting! How disturbing! What a challenge to integrate what I see with what I feel and experience. As a young woman I constantly worried about making myself more beautiful. As an older woman I am realizing in my own body what I feared as a child, that youthful beauty does slip away, but the change is not what I feared. Something is fading, and something else is emerging. (p. 61)

Gullette (1997) also writes about the moment of regret and sadness associated with the Resignation process. She states:

A woman doesn't need a mirror to find herself having a moment of regret for her passing-or, if she's in a really foul state of mind, her past-'beauty.' The day I started writing this, such a moment was triggered for me when I caught out of the corner of my eye a certain cut of garment popular with women of college age and those who emulate them. 'Not for you,' said a sinister automatic voice. Out of fugitive visions, sudden sadness.

What should we think of this common phenomenon of painful self-depreciation in an era when semifeminists pointing to Gloria Steinem, Candice Bergen, Cybill Shepherd, and Jane Fonda are trying to convince us that midlife is a 'wonderful' epoch for women, physically? Agree with them, of course, and work to make it true for the rest of us. But what shall we do with that moment of sadness?

Let's give sadness its due, because feelings that aren't given full due never die: they lurch out of the murk, claiming they're authentic because they're so intense. Which part is falsely true, and what is the whole story? It seems that almost everyone remembers and some want to dwell upon better skin, better muscle tone, a stronger profile at some earlier period. Nostalgia is built into this exercise. Dangerous-intense, tempting, anxiety-producing, masochistic-life course

nostalgia. (p. 56)

In summary, there are clear societal messages and edicts demanding that women abandon the Beauty Myth in midlife and resign themselves to the fact that they are no longer able to compete in the world of youthful beauty. They are urged to turn their locus of beauty inward, and begin activities which will bring value for what they do, not how they look.

Some women feel they have engaged in this resignation, and have worked through the resulting emotional reactions, from depression and loss, to feelings of relief, peacefulness, and comfort. Other women (including some feminists) are not happy with the choices offered to them in mid- and late life. They express a desire to not be seen as a youthful sex object, yet not be made invisible by the resignation process. They seek another, better alternative for women of age. As Halprin (1995) states:

My only solution is to acknowledge the connection between painful world issues and my inner conflicts. One part of me is horrified by the weight I've gained, by the spreading white in my hair, by my wrinkles and sags. Another part loves to eat, to sleep, to walk majestically and slowly down the street, a large older woman in the impressive prime of life. Still another part dreams of leaping and running and being as elastic as the Olympic stars I watch on television. And a needy, childlike part can't bear to be deprived of a single treat, craves sweets and pastries and afternoon naps. These inner parts are at war with each other, and will keep my attention turned inward until I acknowledge their demands.

My figure is entirely unfashionable, and yet an inner voice comments, 'How wonderful you look! You have become substantial!' One part of me sees ugly fat and cellulite. Another part sees a goddess in my mirror. (pp. 64-65)

Rebellion

"Do not go gentle into that good night" (Dylan Thomas, written when he was 38, cited in Pogrebin, 1996, p. 3).

The third major category of Rebellion involves the midlife option to reject the role of youthful beauty, and replace its power with other roles, alternative sources of power, career and educational advancements, and the obtaining of possessions and opportunities not affordable in youth. Pogrebin (1996) begins her book with the following comments on rebellion:

In these pages, I focus on what has been happening to my body, mind, health, psyche, and spirit since I turned fifty, an event disconcerting enough to trigger a maelstrom of soul-searching and a full-scale reassessment of my life. I worry aloud about the things most people over fifty worry about silently-little things like loss, change, weakness, insecurity, illness, and death. I speak of my fears and subterfuges, the struggle to overcome them, and the slogan I've learned to live by-'Feel the fear and do it anyway.' I talk about love, sex, and plastic surgery. I try to achieve that delicate balance between accepting age and resisting it, and to explain why I think it so important not to accept all the depredations of aging but to draw a line in the sand and fight back in those areas where resistance can be a hedge against despair. (pp. 3-4)

Participants of this research were first asked about role changes in midlife, followed by an examination of possible alternative sources of power in their lives.

New Roles. Many of the participants of this study reported that they had, in fact, taken on new roles in response to their aging process. Some pointed out that their roles were not new, but had become intensified in midlife. These roles included: friend,

caregiver, mother, some sort of surrogate mother, grandmother, as well as formal and informal mentor to the young. Of curious note is the fact that no woman mentioned their role as a daughter. This is significant, given that fact that the added role of caregiver is often first realized, assigned, or imposed at midlife. It is also a tremendously demanding role which may dominate other previously held roles.

Halprin (1995) address the issue of expected role transition in midlife. She states:

One of the curious attributes of roles such as beauty and ugliness is that the more we experience these roles consciously, rather than sliding into them, the more we explore them with awareness, the more we are inclined to go beyond them. As we experience a sense of being trapped in roles and then forced to change, we are able to understand and transcend the roles.

No role is more volatile and subject to change than that of youth. When we think of beauty in terms of age or race, the problems that arise have a tendency to blow apart the carefully created role of beauty. For how can a woman be eternally and universally beautiful? And yet, if beauty is a woman's primary concern, what is she to do once her beauty fades? (p. 63)

She also describes the changes which occurred for her when her role shifted, and she was amazed to find that without any conscious role transition on her part, society now saw her in a different role: that of a mother figure. She writes:

Beauty changes shape as my experience takes on more dimensions.

One enormous change for me, which has come about gradually through my forties, is the change from being one who is looked at to being one who looks at others. Most of the time now I am responded to in terms of my actions and speech, but hardly ever in terms of my appearance. When others do respond to my

appearance, I realize with some shock that I'm often seen as a mother figure. (p. 65)

Alternative Sources of Power. The participants of this study provided a wide range of alternative power sources. The list ranges from returning to school to become an attorney or to acquire a doctoral degree, to getting acrylic finger nails and tatoos. When asked if this wide range of achievements and acquisitions were replacements for the loss of power, status, and/or prestige of youthful beauty, the responses were mixed.

Half of the participants felt that these alternative sources of power were a replacement (in some way or another) for youthful beauty. The other half denied this. A woman who received her doctoral degree in midlife, subsequently enjoyed career advancements, and drove a newly-acquired convertible sports car said that nothing was being replaced by these achievements and acquisitions. Another woman who had just built a beautiful home with her husband felt that this was not an effort to replace the power of youth, but the culmination of a lifetime of hard work and great effort.

Wolf (1991) does not appear to believe that the Beauty Myth is something that can be abandoned and replaced by other powerful alternatives and actions. In fact, she sees the Beauty Myth based in actions, not appearances. She states:

If the beauty myth is not based on evolution, sex, gender, aesthetics, or God, on what is it based? It claims to be about intimacy and sex and life, a celebration of women. It is actually composed of emotional distance, politics, finance, and sexual repression. The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men's institutions and institutional power.

The qualities that a given period calls beautiful in women are merely symbols of the female behavior that that period considers desirable: The beauty myth is always actually prescribing behavior and not appearance. Competition between women has been made part of the myth so that women will be divided from one another. Youth and (until recently) virginity have been 'beautiful' in women since they stand for experiential and sexual ignorance. Aging in women is 'unbeautiful' since women grow more powerful with time, and since the links between generations of women must always be newly broken: Older women fear young ones, young women fear old, and the beauty myth truncates for all the female life span. Most urgently, women's identity must be premised upon our 'beauty' so that we will remain vulnerable to outside approval, carrying the vital sensitive organ of self-esteem exposed to the air. (pp. 13-14)

Susan Sontag (Pearsall, 1997) also acknowledges the difficulty aging women experience if they attempt to define themselves as something other than beautiful. She writes:

...it is thought irresponsible for women to do what is normal for men: simply leave their appearance alone. During early youth they are likely to come as close as they ever will to the ideal image-slim figure, smooth firm skin, light musculature, graceful movements. Their task is to try to maintain that image, unchanged, as long as possible. Improvement as such is not the task. Women care for their bodies-against toughening, coarsening, getting fat. They conserve them....

Nothing more clearly demonstrates the vulnerability of women than the special pain, confusion, and bad faith with which they experience getting older. And in the struggle that some women are waging on behalf of all women to be treated (and treat themselves) as full human beings-not 'only' as women-one of the earliest results to be hoped for is that women become aware, indignantly aware, of the double standard about aging from which they suffer so harshly. (p. 24)

In summary, women freely admit that midlife is a transitional time leading to new roles, as well as the intensification of existing roles. A wide range of alternative power sources were discussed in this section. There is division, however, on whether or not these alternative sources of power are viewed as replacements for

the loss of youthful beauty and its advantages, or whether they are simply the culmination of a lifetime of hard work and life accomplishments.

Reconstruction

The fourth and final category of Reconstruction examines attempts to remain youthful-looking via a range of four types of procedures: (1) Cosmetic Concealment, (2) Topical treatments, (3) Ingestion and injection, and (4) Radical procedures. This option or pathway of Reconstruction is often referred to in the literature as age passing.

Age passing has been previously defined as attempts to appear younger than one's chronological age in order to reap the benefits of youth. The means by which this is done varies in intensity, risk, and expense. Halprin (1995) elaborates on the concept of age passing when she writes that

the concept of 'passing' is familiar to women and men of different backgrounds. Sometimes a way of seeking wholeness, it can also be a way of trying to conform to externally imposed standards. Light-skinned people of color pass as white; Jews pass as Christians; old people pass as young; lesbians and gay men pass as straight; women, for centuries, have passed as men, and men have passed as women. Passing may be seen as living a lie, denying one's own identity, or it may be seen as surviving, even growing, in a hostile environment.

In our quest for wholeness we adopt all sorts of survival strategies concerning our appearance, sometimes with awareness, sometimes unconsciously, always with a some degree of courage. It takes courage to pursue wholeness in a repressive culture. Sometimes, the strategies we adopt involve considerable creativity. (p. 233)

Helen Gurley Brown (1993) speaks of both physical age changes

and her gratitude that many of these changes may be "fixed." She states:

Confident or not, this is what befalls all of us sooner or later. Skin gets papery. Spots appear on hands, arms, calves ...we're no longer one smooth creamy surface. Hair, moisture, bosom disappear. We start looking a little neuter in photographs...you can't tell the girls from the boys.

A lot of that stuff can be fixed, thank God. A sure indicator that it needs fixing is when construction workers stop whistling. It was bad enough--well, many women thought it was bad, I never did--when you ran the gauntlet and they said things like 'Hey, Big Momma, you lookin' great!' Much worse is walking past now when they say nothing! (p. 98)

Other women, both in the literature and in the in-depth interviews reject the concept of Reconstruction and age passing as detrimental and futile exercises not worth the risk, time, effort, or financial investments.

Pogrebin (1996), however, tells how hard it is to just do nothing. She states:

In a society that reduces every woman to her appearance--a society where, according to Rutgers University psychologist Jeannette Haviland, being attractive turns up at the top of the average female's concerns from age ten on, a society where psychologists at the Oregon Research Institute in Portland found girls as young as twelve to be in a serious state of depression because of their negative body image, it's a brave woman who bucks the system and insists she couldn't care less when age takes the bloom off her rose.... We care too much and try too hard to resuscitate the rose any way we can. (pp. 131-132)

Rita Freedman (1986) claims that women who engage in Reconstructive procedures are doing more than just attempting to remain beautiful. She feels they are trying to avoid the negative stereotypes of old women learned in childhood. She writes:

Stripped of her youthful femininity, the aging woman may be

feared as a sorceress, taunted as a hag, or ridiculed as a mother-in-law. Every Halloween, little girls dress up in black to enact symbolically the image of the ugly old lady. Witch phobia, witch hunting, and witch burning are, of course, not merely the fiction of fairy tales but also the facts of life....

Deep down, most females are afraid of turning into one of the ugly witches remembered from childhood fairy tales. And so they devour 'magic' potions and professional advice on how to look thirty for the next twenty years. (pp. 209-210)

Cosmetic Concealment. "Powder and paint makes you what you ain't" (Anonymous folk saying).

The first procedure of Reconstruction is cosmetic concealment. It is the use of cosmetics to hide or cover signs of female aging. It involves the least risk, expense, and effort by the participants and women in the general public. Three of the women participants in this study said they had engaged in cosmetic concealment products and procedures, the most common being that of dyeing their hair. Chapkis (1986) quotes Lisa, a hairdresser, who confirms women's rights to engage in cosmetic concealment if it results in individual feelings of power. Lisa states:

My feeling was that women should be able to do their hair and dress up as much as they needed to feel their own power. And if those women wore beehives and felt more powerful inside the system they had to deal with, then why should we make it an issue? (p. 103)

Nine women participants of this research claimed that they did not engage in cosmetic concealment as a form of age passing. Sontag (in Pearsall, 1997) views a woman's face as a canvas on which she paints a "corrected" version of herself. She writes:

A man lives through his face; it records the progressive

stages of his life. And since he doesn't tamper with his face, it is not separate from but is completed by his body-which is judged attractive by the impression it gives of virility and energy. By contrast, a woman's face is potentially separate from her body. She does not treat it naturalistically. A woman's face is the canvas upon which she paints a revised, corrected portrait of herself. One of the rules of this creation is that the face not show what she doesn't want it to show. Her face is an emblem, an icon, a flag. How she arranges her hair, the type of make-up she uses, the quality of the complexion-all these are signs, not of what she is 'really' like, but of how she asks to be treated by others, especially men. They establish her status as an 'object.' (p. 23)

Chapkis (1986) confirms the general pervasiveness of this thinking when she writes:

Feeling unworthy of admiration, undeserving of the desire of another is partly a consequence of the Larger than Life culture promoted in film, novels, television and advertisements. These media reinforce the belief that passion, pleasure, even sunsets are only intended for a physical elite. Should we, in all our glaring imperfection, somehow manage to partake, we still suspect that this isn't quite it. Whatever it is we are now, have now, experience now 'doesn't count.'

Real life and real appearance are not enough when the goal is to live in a travel poster with a beautiful person at your side and in your flesh. If only we were more stylish, if only we had more money, if only we had accomplished something more remarkable, if only we were really beautiful, then life could begin.

But as it is, we know we are too flawed to deserve it-yet. Meanwhile we wait, buying the props if we can afford them, trying to turn ourselves into closer approximations of the beautiful. We wait aware that beautiful people are not old. (p. 140)

The Beauty Imperative plays heavily as a motivation to Reconstruct the self in midlife. As Chapkis (1986) notes, "A man has value just because he is a man. A woman has to constantly prove her worth by 'keeping herself up'" (p. 92). Chapkis (1986) writes not only of the Beauty Imperative, but the cosmetic industry's vested

interest in the female acceptance of this Imperative. She states:

Naturally, the industry wants you to treat yourself to the best, and convincing you to buy better is not cheap. It has been estimated that it now costs the major cosmetics firms at least \$5 million to launch a new product. In one extreme case, Olay, the company paid out \$20 million for advertising to bring in \$50 million in sales in 1977.

Cosmetics, soap and drug industries spend proportionately more on advertising than any other major industry group. In general, it is estimated that from 6 percent to 20 percent of company sales must go to offset advertising expenses. Yet despite the enormous advertising budgets of the beauty industry giants (in 1983, Revlon Inc., for example, spent \$232 million on advertising; up \$31 million over the year before) cosmetic industry leaders still earn high returns on their investments. This kind of profit is made possible by producing cheap and selling dear. Only seven cents of every consumer dollar spent on cosmetics goes for ingredients.

Why do women buy costly beauty products that demonstrably have little purpose other than participation in a fantasy? The purchase of a new cosmetic, the decision to change the color or style of one's hair the start of a new diet are the female equivalent of buying a lottery ticket. Maybe you will be the one whose life is transformed. Despite daily experience to the contrary, we continue to hope that maybe this time, maybe this product, will make a difference in our lives.... Everything that is so difficult to attain in real life is promised for the price of a new perfume or eye shadow.

...The beautiful woman enjoys a measure of respect and attention not generally bestowed on women in a misogynist culture. The beauty industry trades on this reality and the fantasy of escape. Believe in Magic urges the ad for Magie Noire Parfums. Oh, we want to believe. It is one of the ways we hold on despite the disappointments, and one of the pleasures we allow ourselves. The purchase of a \$5 tube of lipstick offers a world where women are valued and men pay homage. (pp. 92-95)

With similar insights, Wolf (1991) states that

magazines, consciously or half-consciously, must project the attitude that looking one's age is bad because \$650 million of their ad revenue comes from people who would go out of business if visible age looked good. They need, consciously or not, to promote women's hating their bodies enough to go profitably hungry, since the advertising budget for one third

of the nation's food bill depends on their doing so by dieting. The advertisers who make women's mass culture possible depend on making women feel bad enough about their faces and bodies to spend more money on worthless or pain-inducing products than they would if they felt innately beautiful. (p. 84)

Brown (1993) rejects the notion that midlife is a time when physical beauty no longer counts and cosmetic concealment is a waste of action, time, and finances. She states that

many intelligent people declare that women should quit worrying about looks. Germaine Greer in a "Vogue" article: 'You could fight matronliness. You could dye your hair. You could diet until you were as thin as a rail and then get your collapsed jowls hiked up and your crow's feet ironed out. You could get your empty bosom pumped up. And it would all be a dreadful waste of time, money and energy.' She goes on. 'The great privilege of the middle-aged is to make their own faces; gradually their personality obliterates their physical inheritance, the phenotype prevails over the genotype...now, at last, we can escape from the self-consciousness of glamour; we can really listen to what people are saying, without worrying whether we look pretty doing it.'

Oh, dear, I can listen like a maniac and still worry about pretty! (p. 99)

In summary, although three-fourths of the participants interviewed for this study denied the use of cosmetic concealment as a means of Reconstruction or age passing, the literature gives evidence that the Beauty Imperative (including the use of cosmetic concealment) is alive and well in midlife. The cosmetic industry profits also confirm that their lucrative profits are rooted in the fact that women continue to buy age-concealing cosmetics at great financial expense.

Topical Treatments. The second procedure of Reconstruction involves risks, expenses, and effort which are higher than those of

Cosmetic Concealment, but still relatively minor. Exceptions, of course, arise with the use of acid face peels and adverse reactions to some products.

Many women in this study had tried topical treatments, or anti-aging products in hopes of retaining a more youthful-looking face free of fine lines and wrinkles. No woman, however, stated that they were happy with the results and endorsed a specific product which worked for them. Many stated that they were skeptical of the promised results, and considered the treatment claims to be inaccurate or advertising hype. Some women claimed that they would be more willing to invest in such products if someone they knew and trusted had first tried them and found them to be effective. The largest amount of money participants stated they were willing to spend on a product that promised anti-aging qualities was only twelve dollars.

The literature review in Chapter V of this research goes into extensive detail on the development of anti-aging beauty products in the section entitled "Socio-historical Considerations of Beauty." The cosmetic industry's medicalization of age, and the tremendous success of such campaigns are discussed under the decades of the 1980s to the present.

In summary, a majority of participants in this study had tried topical treatments or anti-aging products to retain youthful appearances. No woman attested to their effectiveness or endorsed a particular product. Many were skeptical of the advertising claims

associated with these products, and no one was willing to state that they would pay a significant amount of money to try these products.

Both the current literature and the sales reports of the cosmetic industry bear out the fact that many women are buying these products (often at exorbitant prices) and complying with the Beauty Imperative, by using all available products which at least claim to defy age and ward off the disorders of female aging.

Ingestions and Injections. The third process of Reconstruction is concerned with the ingestion and/or injection of products to retain youthful beauty. This process involves an increased risk of harm, expense, and pain or effort to the female consumer. Women of this study were asked if they would ingest and/or inject any product for the sole purpose of slowing or stopping the aging process. Examples used included hormones (i.e., DHEA or the Human Growth Hormone), chemicals (i.e., Botox), botanicals, vitamins, and/or dietary supplements.

Participants were only willing to engage in such actions if they were fighting some age-related disease, alleviating menopausal symptoms, and knew the products were both safe and effective. In other words, the procedures would be strongly considered for health reasons, but not for the retention of youthful beauty. Many women expressed fear of the products, unknown side effects, lack of government testing, and possible long-term detrimental effects. Vitamins, dietary supplements, and herbs were more readily endorsed, with Ginko Biloba (for memory) being named as the most frequently

used product.

The hesitancy of the participants may be well-founded. A CBS report on dietary supplements relates what happened to Phoenix Suns forward Tom Gugliotta when he tried an herbal supplement that promised to help him relax. Gugliotta experienced a seizure and stopped breathing on the way to the emergency room.

The report (<http://cbsnews.cbs.com/now/story/0,1597,167362-412,00.shtml>) states:

Gugliotta is one of millions of Americans who assume dietary supplements are harmless. But it turns out what he took contains a dangerous chemical known as GBL which has been linked to eight deaths and more than 250 serious illnesses. We found products containing GBL easily available on the Internet, despite FDA warnings....

'They can put anything they want in those bottles and sell them,' says Dr. Marcia Angell, Editor-in-Chief of The New England Journal of Medicine. 'They may contain contaminants: heavy metals, lead, arsenic, mercury. You simply don't know what's in those bottles...'

'Dietary supplements are safe. We have good manufacturing practices. We have dosage limits on products. We have a rigorous code of ethics,' says John Cordaro, President of the Council for Responsible Nutrition.

The FDA admits it often can't control potentially dangerous supplements until after they're on the market. Still, that doesn't seem to be hurting business. Americans are willing to spend 14 billion dollars a year on dietary supplements, while questions about their safety and effectiveness remain largely unanswered.

A related CBS report entitled "Supplements: Beyond the Labels" confirms that Americans may not be getting what they pay for when purchasing dietary supplements. This report states that "many believe reading labels is the solution. But when it comes to unregulated universe of dietary supplements, what's on the label isn't

always what's in the bottle, meaning you're not always getting what you pay for."

Consumerlab, a new company dedicated to testing dietary supplements to see if they contain the products they say they contain, found that the three top selling products often failed their tests. The report (<http://cbsnews.com/now/story/0,1597,167776-412,00.shtml>) states:

Ginkgo Biloba, for memory: Out of 30 brands tested, seven failed. Saw Palmetto, for prostate health: Ten out of 27 failed. Glucosamine combined with chondroitin, for arthritis: Six out of 13 failed.... To get the advantages of saw palmetto here, you would need to take ten to 20 pills a day,' says Cooperman.

In summary, the women participants of this study were unwilling to consume various age-defying ingestions and injections. Their fears of such products were noted. But once again, the literature and sales records tell a different story. Midlife women within the general population are purchasing and administering a variety of age-fighting ingestions and injections into their bodies. Results and satisfaction with such procedures are unavailable, except through anecdotal claims of effectiveness or failure.

Radical Procedures. "Older women must literally remake their bodies in the pursuit of beauty. Scientific skin care, cosmetic surgery, and fitness programs promise to minimize the visible changes of living" (Chapkis, 1986, pp. 9-10)

The fourth and final procedure of Reconstruction involves radical procedures, such as cosmetic surgeries (i.e., face lifts, tummy

tucks, etc.) and other extensive medical procedures (i.e., liposuction). The procedures in this division involve the highest risk, potential for pain and discomfort, as well as the highest expense.

Many women in this study admitted that they would like to have the results of these radical procedures, but were not willing to engage in the perceived risks to their health. Some women simply exclaimed "No!" when asked if they would consider such procedures. Others readily admitted that a face lift is in their future. Some had already investigated surgical procedures to a significant extent.

Those women who foresaw their involvement with radical procedures to maintain a youthful appearance also expressed feelings of guilt, shallowness, and an embarrassing vanity associated with their desire to have these procedures done. They reported that they would feel much better, and experience fewer negative feelings if they could justify the procedure with a concurrent health problem which would also require medical treatment. Once again women dealt with conflicted feelings about wanting to retain the appearance of youth and at the same time not wanting to appear vain, self-absorbed, or taking significant health risks for the supposed triviality of beauty.

The August 9, 1999 cover article of Newsweek entitled "The New Age of Cosmetic Surgery" provides interesting data on the prevalence of such radical procedures. It states:

The bottom line, according to a new report by the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (ASPRS): a

153 percent increase in the number of cosmetic procedures performed by plastic surgeons since 1992, to more than 1 million last year. And that number is considered highly conservative, since it excludes work done by noncertified specialists, such as dermatologists, dentists—even gynecologists. Many of these patients struggle to cover the cost. Two thirds report family incomes under \$50,000 a year....

Women had 946,784 procedures performed in 1998—about ten times more than men.

For Baby Boomers, who account for more than 40 percent of the market, liposuction and eye lifts have become accepted as a generational rite of passage. They want to live to 100—but refuse to age past 35. (pp. 55-56)

Freedman (1986) addresses the issue of face lifts when she writes:

With each passing year, a woman must dip ever deeper into her cosmetic jars to control the 'fate of her face.' Gradually, she gives up the look of a cover girl for that of a covered girl (or the stereotype of the overly made-up old maid). Beyond a certain age, putting on one's face is tantamount to hiding it. Experts offer an alternative: the face lift. After all, the difference between concealing age with paint and with surgical reconstruction is only a matter of degree. And so, secret visits are paid to the modern witch doctors of youthfulness—the dermatologists, cosmetologists, and aesthetic surgeons who reset the face of time.

The decision whether to have one's face lifted relates to the larger question of how to face up to the aging process...many women (including many feminists) do decide, at that philosophic juncture, that personal integrity is best maintained by facing the knife. (pp. 210-211)

Greer (1999) provides a rare description of liposuction from a feminist perspective. She states:

Once upon a time men and women both admired dimply fat; it took twentieth-century marketing to render it disgusting. Most of what is written about 'globular fat cells,' 'poor lymphatic drainage' and 'toxins that have solidified' is cynical tosh. Dimplly fat will only disappear if it is starved off; no amount of pounding or vibrating or massaging will have any effect on it whatsoever. No cream whether made of placenta or the brains of aborted fetuses or ground glass will

break down cellulite. Your cellulite is you and will be with you till death or liposuction, which is expensive and extremely painful and sometimes more disfiguring than the dimply fat itself.

As fat distribution is hormonally regulated the fat will probably build up again gradually after liposuction. As cellulite will neither kill you nor go away it is a goldmine for doctors, nutritionists, naturopaths, aromatherapists, fitness experts and lifestyle managers. The manufacturers of creams, exercise equipment, skin brushes and dietary supplements all make a bundle out of women's carefully cultivated disgust with their own bodies, scarfed about as they are by 'unsightly fat cells.' Criminalizing cellulite is just another way of demonizing fat, any fat, anywhere. (p. 25)

Newsweek (August 9, 1999) also reports a new form of liposuction called the Ultrasound-assisted liposuction which "liquefies fat deposits with energy waves, making removal easier and allowing the surgeon to concentrate on sculpting. The risks include nerve damage (reportedly rare, but serious), removing too much volume may cause dangerous blood loss, and new fat tends to accumulate in untreated areas.

Laser skin resurfacing is also becoming more and more popular. In this procedure, outer layers of skin are vaporized, diminishing wrinkles, spots and scars and sometimes tightening the skin. The risks of overly aggressive treatment results in burns, scarring and changes in skin color. It could also trigger dormant herpes infections and allergies, according to Newsweek (August 9, 1999).

In summary, radical procedures are on the rise in our society, now extending their reach to younger women, as well as men. Women who are willing to engage in radical procedures do not necessarily do so with justifications of successfully complying to the Beauty

Imperative. Guilt, vanity, and the feeling that they are taking unnecessary health risks are also associated with women who intend to have these procedures done on their faces and/or bodies.

Summary

In response to Research Question #2, both the literature and in-depth interviews confirmed the existence of four categories, pathways, or behavioral options for midlife women. Redefinition includes redefining or expanding the definition of what is beautiful, redefining the standard of beauty, and redefining the locus of beauty from an external to internal location.

Resignation, the second option, involves the abandonment of the Beauty Myth, and resulting feelings of depression, relief, peacefulness, and comfort.

Rebellion, the third option, embodies the abandonment of the Beauty Myth, which is subsequently replaced by new or intensified roles, as well as various alternative sources of power.

Reconstruction, the fourth and final option, examines four procedures which may be used to retain youthful beauty. Each option increases in intensity, risk, pain, effort, and financial expense. The four procedures examined are (1) Cosmetic concealment, (2) Topical treatments, (3) Ingestion and injection of age-fighting products, and (4) Radical procedures, such as cosmetic surgeries, laser skin resurfacing, and liposuction.

All four major categories appear to be viable pathways for

women in midlife. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as some women may attempt to cope with their aging process by all or some of these options in random order.

Even when study participants all claimed they would not engage in certain processes, the available literature and industry profit margins confirm the popularity and widespread use of such procedures to ward off aging.

Research Question #3

The third and final research question was an open-ended exploration of what women felt had not been examined about beauty and the aging process. They were also asked their own thoughts on the aging process as a whole.

Although benefits of aging were listed as freedom to help others, more time for self and travel, and more comfort with themselves, the majority of responses to this question involved negative attitudes, emotions, and concerns. They included: negative stereotypes, invisibility, media negativity, inequity, lack of respect, diminished social status for women (which is not experienced by men), fear of the unknown (i.e., menopause), fear of looking like one's mother, fear of the future (i.e., diseases of aging and mortality). Participants also voiced their concerns about Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) and control over their own bodies during the climacteric. Care of the body was noted, as well as loss of strength and flexibility, diminished societal perceptions of

sexuality and sex appeal, and age-denial behaviors. One participant even concluded, "There are no real benefits to aging."

This question led the participants to formulate two basic options for midlife women. One, in the current trend toward individual responsibility for health care, placed the burden of aging on individual women, urging them to be more compassionate toward their aging bodies, indulge in more self-love, and engage in whatever activities make them feel better about themselves (including age-defying behaviors).

The second option formulated by the participants requires collective action by women of age. Women were urged to stop infighting and competitiveness, in order to more fully unite their voices against current social ageism.

Significant Conclusions of This Research

Although the two above-given options are important, the analysis of this research does not end with the culmination of answers to the three basic research questions. Even with this small sample, a diversity of general attitudes concerning the aging process is found. Some women truly love where they are and express great happiness at their midlife position. Others are not happy, fear the future, and find no viable options except acceptance of loss. Still others are fighting age and indulging in age passing procedures. Many women admitted feelings of confusion, perplexity, and struggle. Some have made adjustments by redefining beauty in a variety of

ways. Some have compensated with new or intensified roles. Others had already replaced the advantages of youth with career advancements, return to education, possessions, and/or opportunities not available or affordable to them in their youth.

This wide variation of perspectives, encompassing a continuum from negative to positive attitudes on female aging, begs the question: What makes some women happy about their aging process, while others fear and dread it?

Revisiting Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self for clues, the inferences for this study are reviewed:

1. Aging women "imagine" or perceive their appearances to others in society.
2. They have an "imagination" of society's judgment of their appearance via media messages and popular texts.
3. This process creates "some sort of feeling," including high motivation to select certain paths of action during the transitional rite of passage from youth to middle age.

The combination of these theoretical inferences, the literature review, and the in-depth interviews leads to the realization that "the Mirror" (or the reflection of self perceived by women of age) becomes the vitally-important touchstone of this research.

The Mirror

"On the subject of mirrors, you have to treat them like alligators: Don't surprise one" (Helen Gurley Brown, 1993, p. 101).

As this researcher listened to and followed the lead of the participants in their responses, another question emerged which appeared to require inquiry in order to more fully comprehend attitudes toward the aging process. In the later half of the interview process, this researcher asked what appeared to be surfacing as the quintessential question: Who owns your Mirror?

This question was developed from both the theoretical grounding of this research, and from the anecdotal disclosures of the participants. The so-called Mirror refers to the reflection of self which a woman of age perceives. Her Mirror (or reflection of self) tells her if she is beautiful or if her beauty is diminishing with age. It reflects what she senses as the conception of herself in which she can both believe and incorporate into her own basis of self-worth.

The Mirror may reflect physical appearance, telling the woman of age that she still looks very young, or conversely, that time is ravaging her former beauty. The Mirror, however, is not limited to the physical attractiveness of the midlife woman. For example, her perceived reflection may tell her that she has grown wise with age, is valued for her life experiences over the years, or is successful in her career. The Mirror might, instead, tell her that she has aged and is no longer regarded as beautiful by society and worthy of the cultural advantages of youthful beauty. The concept of the Mirror, in concert with the primary use of Cooley's theory, becomes essential to the analysis of this research.

As abstract a question as "Who owns your Mirror?" is, not one respondent appeared puzzled by the question or asked what the question meant. Respondents often paused at length to consider the question, but no one expressed confusion, an unwillingness to respond, or an inability to answer.

Three basic ownership possibilities emerged from the participants' responses. The Mirror, or reflection by which the women judged themselves and based their attitudes about aging and beauty, could be (1) owned by society at large; or (2) owned by a significant other, husband, lover, or other important person in their lives; or (3) owned by the woman, herself.

Society-Owned Mirror

If society (with its obsession on youth-based beauty) owns one's Mirror, all the negative imagery, stereotypes, and ageism connected with female aging beauty are reflected and imposed on the woman of age. Television and film stereotypical depictions of the aged woman reflect the societal norms and expectations expected of her. These most often include a depreciation of the aged woman, reflecting her as subject matter for ageist humor, as well as deserving societal invisibility (as previously discussed). Newspaper and magazine articles and advertisements tell her that she must dye her hair, use anti-aging creams, employ anti-wrinkle techniques, and retain a thin, youthful figure.

If society owns her Mirror, the midlife woman may choose the

pathway of Reconstruction in order to comply with the Beauty Imperative. She will do all that she can to retain what society accepts as youthful beauty, taking greater risks (to health and finances) in order to retain a reflection of youthful beauty which is still valued by society. This may include the more radical procedures of age passing, including cosmetic surgery and other anti-aging medical procedures.

Our society is abundant with ageist messaging for women of age, ranging from negative media portrayals to birthday greeting cards, from lack of positive role models to an invisibility and general depreciation. It appears only logical, therefore, that women whose Mirror is owned by society assume a more negative perception of self with age. The motivation to chose a midlife pathway which actively fights the natural aging process is great for those with a society-owned mirror.

According to Brown (1993), the Beauty Imperative embodied in this ownership option demands the closest of examinations, followed by concrete actions to change, alter, or improve one's societal reflection. She states:

I think if you have the time and the desire, you can surely benefit by trying on a lot of stuff with a lot of other stuff, then freeze the best look. Our age group is certainly in a good position to try this as we probably now have a ton of accessories to work with. An article in Cosmo a few years ago said French girls have no shame about spending hours in front of their mirrors with every scarf, belt, brooch, blouse, bag, bagatelle they own, working out little looks. Pauline Trigere says you must look (coldly) at yourself in a three-way mirror and see yourself from all angles. 'Do not turn away. Do not lie to yourself. Just know that your look can probably be improved but you have to see what you really look

like before that can happen.' (p. 140)

Of course, the improving actions do not stop with the creative employment of fashion accessories, but lead to more consequential alternations of appearances, including those radical procedures of age-fighting previously discussed.

The impact of the society-owned Mirror on the woman of age constitutes a major area of further research. How are societal reflections perceived by women of age? What feelings are created as a result of this messaging? Which actions do those feelings then motivate and justify? What messages are internalized, resulting in which self-perceptions?

Simone de Beauvoir (1952) raises another important issue for those whose Mirror is society-owned. What happens when the reflected image does not align with one's internal feelings and perceptions of self? She states that

one of the outstanding traits of the aging woman is a feeling of depersonalization that makes her lose all objective bearings. Individuals also who have in full health come close to death say that they experienced a curious sense of doubling; when one feels oneself a conscious, active, free being, the passive object on which the fatality is operating seems necessarily as if it were another: this is not I being knocked down by an automobile; this cannot be I, this old woman reflected in the mirror! The woman who 'never felt so young in her life' and who has never seen herself so old does not succeed in reconciling these two aspects of herself; it is in a dream that time flies and duration makes its inroads upon her. Thus reality retreats and dwindles, and at the same time it is no longer clearly distinguished from illusion. (p. 582)

It is at this point that a re-evaluation of Mirror ownership may be engaged upon. There are two remaining options which have surfaced through this research.

Other-Owned Mirror

If a significant other, husband, lover, or other person of importance in a woman's life owns her mirror, it is that person's attitudes, prejudices, ageism, and perspectives on aging beauty which are reflected onto the middle-aged woman. If the loved one has a negative conception of the midlife woman's appearance and owns the woman's mirror, that Other may suggest or even encourage a variety of alterations. For example, if the Other even mentions that a facelift could be beneficial, the woman onto whom this perception is projected may readily investigate cosmetic surgery, and may proceed to have it done. This pathway can work for the midlife woman whose Mirror is other-owned, since raising the Other's perception of her attractiveness results in a more positive reflection, and therefore, a better sense of self-worth for the woman. Unless the woman is able to retain this youthful appearance throughout her life span, however, the solution may be short-lived. Although Cher and other celebrities have the resources to retain a youthful, unchanging look, few midlife women are as wealthy or physically able to duplicate their procedures.

This option is so strong that it may be an elemental factor in intimate relationships for midlife women. Some women even elect to refrain from relationships, for fear that ownership of their Mirror will be usurped by an intimate partner whose attitudes toward aging beauty reflect an unwanted negativity. This becomes clear in the participant interviews, when Mary even thought that being single

helped her cope with her aging process. She prefers to preserve the self-ownership of her Mirror, "as opposed to living with somebody who might bring in all the baggage of 'You're getting older...'"

For other women, this midlife pathway works and is retained as a source of identity and self-appreciation. In the unusual book I Am Beautiful: A Celebration of Women in Their Own Words, authors Carpenter & Winfree (1996) placed an ad in national magazines urging women to "Tell us why you are beautiful." In total they received close to 500 submissions from women which were then published with a photograph of each selected respondent. One woman, known as Tess from Houston, Texas, provides a vivid account of a woman whose Mirror is owned by the men in her life, and has found it to be a positive and meaningful experience. She states:

I learned to assess my beauty in the mirror of men's eyes as a young woman in the '50s. Time and time again, I naively sought reassurance of my self-worth in that reflector. As an older and wiser woman, I have seen every kind of beauty a woman could ever experience. And, ironically, it was reflected in the eyes of men.

In the eyes of my husband, I saw the beauty of true love; in the eyes of three sons, the magnificence of motherhood; in the eyes of my grandson, the assurance of the cycles of life. (p. 125)

Unfortunately for women who chose this midlife option, the results are not always so favorable. Complications quickly arise when the significant person's reflection is flawed, or does not ring true for the woman of age.

Of particular note is the fact that women were greatly disturbed if their significant other or husband did not have an accu-

rate perception of their aging body and their midlife appearance. Again, in the participant interviews, Rebecca recalled the birthday present her husband bought for her, lingerie from Frederick's of Hollywood. She had experienced two C-sections, had her gall bladder removed, and in addition to scars, reported a "pouch" belly-all of which was exposed by the lingerie. Her husband thought she "looked nice" and she responded, "Hon! What body are you seeing inside of this thing? It's not mine!"

The intensity and emotional reactions were apparent. Significant disappointment was expressed, because her husband's reflection of herself was not accurate. Rebecca's account exemplifies women whose husbands or significant others have a distorted perception of their appearance. When such a person owns a woman's mirror, it may feel as if she is in some sort of carnival house of distorted mirrors, where the reflected images of the woman are too unrealistic to be trusted.

This may result in confusion, feelings of inconsistency, and most importantly, the same sorts of feelings which may result from a society-owned mirror. Again, a distorted reflected image which does not align with one's internal feelings and perceptions of self may eventually motivate women of age to re-evaluate their Mirror ownership.

Self-Owned Mirror

Finally, if a woman owns her own Mirror, or the majority of

her own Mirror, she appears to be empowered to take control of her own attitudes about aging. She seems to be able to create and enjoy a positive reflection of her own making. She appears to be more able to reject negative societal messaging about female aging beauty, and more able to redefine beauty in her own positive terms.

In the participant interviews, several women expressed the self-ownership of all or the majority of their Mirror. When asked who owned her Mirror, Janice replied, "It's mine. Without any kind of hedging, it's mine." The researcher asked, "And when did you take control of that mirror? When did you say, 'That's mine!'" After a long pause, Janice responded:

Probably...geez, I don't know...I'm not in 100 percent control of it. But that's the dominant thing. That's probably 85 percent of the mirror, because there are still reflections I get from other people that will cause me to really examine myself...to look and maybe feel bad for a short while, like, 'Do they think I'm old, or what?' It's been a gradual process for the last ten years.

"Okay," said the researcher, "but you own over 50 percent of your mirror, for sure?" "Right. Yeah," said Janice.

In response to the same question, Barbara said, "I guess I do what I think is attractive. And I don't care if it's not, because it's what I want to do...being able to listen to myself has given me the opportunity to grow with it." The researcher asked, "How does your voice (that you listen to of yourself) become stronger than all society's voices that tell you to defy age, fight age?" Barbara responded, "The happiness that comes with it. When you're happy, follow that!... I think it's maybe God-given...or...it's much eas-

ier to listen to myself than to listen to other people who don't know me. Why would they know more about me than I know?"

The researcher also asked Jennifer, "Who owns your Mirror?" After a long pause, she replied, "Boy...my first response to that is I do." "You do," said the researcher. "Okay." Jennifer responded, "I think that is really truthful. I think the only other person who has a piece of it is my husband. I truly don't care much what anybody else thinks." "How much does he own of it," asked the researcher. After another long pause, Jennifer said, "I don't know how to answer that. That's a hard one for me." The researcher said, "I hear you saying that it's not society, though." Jennifer replied:

Definitely is not society. Within the relationship, if (my husband) were to say to me, 'This is not good' or 'I don't like that' or 'This doesn't look good on you' or whatever...I would take that seriously. But I can't imagine hearing that from him. That is so unlike him. He is not a critical type person in that regard. He's very supportive. Now if I went to him and said, 'Does this look all right?' or 'Do you think this will work?' He'll give me an opinion, but almost always it's a very positive support.

I'm sure there's a part of me that chooses and dresses and things with at least in mind to be pleasing to him...but at no point in all the years we've been married has he ever had a voice or dictated in any way what I wore or how I looked or what I did or how I cut my hair...so...he's not controlling in any way, except when, I guess, probably I give him control just by my own choice of wanting to be appropriate for what he would like. Does that make sense?

"Yes," said the researcher. "He may influence you, but I still hear you owning your mirror." "I'm a very independent soul. My daughters will tell you," said Jennifer. "I think that's wonderful," said the researcher, "because that must cut out a lot of nega-

tive messages about aging that society can throw." Jennifer replied, "I pretty much ignore them. I really do, because a lot of it, I think, is garbage. We all get older every day."

Jill is also a woman who owns her own Mirror, as can be noted throughout her quotes in Chapter VI. From the beginning of the interview she views 20-year-old women as "running as fast as you can in this little hamster cage to catch up to somebody else's definition (of beauty)." Now at fifty she doesn't have sources around her telling her that she is beautiful, but she states:

I know I am. That sense of peace that comes from not questioning it, not feeling like it's something I'm waiting to be given by someone, and knowing without a doubt that it's mine to give, is a whole new sense of power that I don't question at all. I know I'm beautiful. Absolutely know it. There isn't a doubt in my mind.

When the Mirror is owned by herself, a woman of age expresses an increased sense of power and control, as well as confidence in her own beauty. She does not see age as a devaluation from the loss of youthful beauty. The advantages of youthful beauty wane in comparison to the peace, comfort-level, positive attitudes and self-worth she has about her own aging process.

Again, from the book I Am Beautiful (Carpenter & Winfree, 1996), a woman called Sarah states:

The beauty of my body is not measured by the size of the clothes it can fit into, but the stories that it tells. I have a belly and hips that say, 'We grew a child in here,' and breasts that say, 'We nourished life.' My hands, with bitten nails and a writer's callous, say, 'We create amazing things.'

It is obvious that this woman's body is not that which society

or perhaps even significant others would traditionally find attractive. Yet, seeing her own signs of aging, she has taken Mirror ownership and the right to interpret her physical appearance in very positive, self-rewarding fashion.

Another example of Mirror ownership by women of age comes from Ruth, of Gualala, California, who (within the same book) gives the following account:

Sixty-three years my body and I have been together. It has climbed a lot of trees, hung upside down on monkey bars, and pumped swings high up to the sky. I like the expression I see in the mirror; it's still familiar even though it has relaxed a bit and it is wearing age spots where freckles once were.

My long arms have spiked volleyballs, my long legs have wrapped around horses' bellies, bareback. In my strong body, two babies have floated in utero, split the ring, suckled my bursting breasts, and sagged in my aching arms.

My deft fingers, which once spread watercolor on more than two thousand original paintings, now fly over the keyboard of my computer, recording fairy tales complete with illustrations. My mind cooperates in this new job, even though my eyes are playing hide and seek.

My juicy, elegant, playful, beautiful body and I are still happy in each other's company. (p. 62)

The self-ownership of one's Mirror in some cases allows a woman to accurately view her physical appearance, interpret it in her own terms, and then search deeper for meaning. This does not involve the societal-based, ageist action of discounting the body, or looking past the physical to find inner wisdom. Instead, it appears to be an acceptance (if not love) of one's body which leads to an internal search for deeper meaning. When successfully accomplished, the midlife woman appears to retain a positive attitude

both externally and internally.

Rahven, of Fort Collins, Colorado (in I Am Beautiful) is an exemplar of this advantage of Mirror self-ownership. She states:

I am forty, graying fast, getting a belly and wider hips. When I was young I swore this wouldn't happen, and I even mapped out my goal weights until age 80 or so. All that changed recently when a 100-year-old woman from the nursing home where I work whispered in my ear, 'Watch what you eat, girly. Why, look at all those other women's butts. Don't you ever look like that. That's why I only want milk at lunch, so I don't get a big butt like the rest.' With that advice, I decided I really don't want to be worrying about my size at 100.

I've been searching on a deeper level to discover my beauty. I started by returning to school to dispel my old belief that I'm stupid. In developing mind, I've discovered that I have one. I've also found out that I have needs, I have a voice, I am beautiful. And I have the rest of my life to figure out what I want to be when I grow up. (p. 153)

The self-owned Mirror appears to be a positive option for mid-life women. This does not mean that women who claim Mirror ownership believe that their reflection is free from societal messages or the influence of loved ones. Instead, they claim to own more than half of their Mirror, which gives them the deciding vote of which reflections will be accepted and incorporated into a sense of self-worth at midlife, and which messages will be rejected. The realization that one has the ability to own one's own Mirror and discern which reflections are valid is, in itself, an empowering endeavor.

Summary

The third research question consisted of an open-ended exploration of the female aging process as it concerns issues of beauty

from the participants' own perspectives. The examination found a variety of negative responses to the aging process, as well as some positive comments. Women advocated two forms of action to alleviate the expressed negativity. The first involved taking personal responsibility for one's aging process. The second advocated the united voices of women of age to protest ageism and ageist attitudes concerning youthful beauty in society.

In reviewing the overall general attitudes toward aging, a wide continuum was detected. Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self was revisited for explanation of this phenomenon. The concept of the Mirror emerged as an essential factor germane to the conclusions drawn from this research.

For some women, their Mirror is societally-owned. The ageism and beliefs in youthful beauty are reflected onto the aging woman. For others, the Mirror is totally or partially owned by their significant other, husband, lover, or another important person in their lives. If this person owns more than half of a woman's Mirror, his/her attitudes, prejudices, and feelings about aging beauty are reflected onto the woman of age. Still other women claim total or majority ownership of their mirror. These women self-define what is beautiful, and appear to be more able to fight off and ignore negative societal messaging.

Organizational Chart

A re-examination of the original organizational chart used to

formulate the questions for this research finds it to be too stagnant, too immobile to accurately depict the pathways women may choose to follow as they age. The original chart (Appendix F) also does not take into account the quintessential finding of this study, that of Mirror ownership and resulting accuracy of its reflections. These findings indicate that the chart must be revamped to more accurately depict the fluid, dynamic actions women engage in during the transitional period of midlife.

The flow chart found in Appendix G, therefore, has been created to better portray the active options which women in midlife experience as they struggle with issues of aging beauty. Unlike the original organizational chart, this flow chart indicates the points at which women must make choices which will lead them down consequential pathways. These decision points are indicated in the following flow chart by octagon-shaped figures. Although all the options of the organizational chart are incorporated into the flow chart, the revised chart presents the foremost decisions which must be made prior to pathway selection.

The flow chart, (Appendix G), therefore, begins with age-related changes and asks women of age to then evaluate who owns her Mirror. The three options are self, significant other, or society at large. Once a choice is made, one proceeds to the next question: Is that perception accurate?

As previously discussed, a reflection which is too inconsistent with a woman's perception of herself will bring her confusion,

discontinuity, and a desire to re-evaluate Mirror ownership. The flow chart allows this re-evaluation and change of ownership.

The next decision point on the flow chart asks women if they intend to retain beauty as a source of power in midlife. If they answer in the affirmative, the chart leads them to the options of Redefinition or Reconstruction (as previously defined). If they answer in the negative, that they do not intent to retain beauty as a midlife source of power, they are given the options of Resignation or Rebellion (as previously defined).

The fluidity of this chart allows women to reconsider their previous decisions at any point, and try an alternative pathway. This feature was not available in the original organizational chart. Because all paths result in varying degrees of self-defined success and because women's perspectives of self change with the aging process, women must be free to re-evaluate and try alternative options.

The utility of this flow chart for research purposes lies in the fact that the research goals of this study have been herein met. The options available to women as they age are identified, examined, labeled, and categorized. Additionally, a priori considerations are diagrammed in the initial stages of the chart. Pathways are also defined as fluid, enabling re-evaluation and the option to experience other pathways throughout the life course period of middle-age.

The utility for women in general is the provision of a mapping agent which helps one locate self, understand various options,

and the select the pathway which appears to be most advantageous at any given time. Because midlife is often confusing to women, as substantiated by both the literature and the participant interviews, this flow chart adds clarity and information which it is hoped results in more conscious decision-making and realization of the transitional options in midlife.

In summary, the original organizational chart (Appendix F) used to formulate the research questions for this study is found to be too static and immobile to accurately depict the process women experience as they deal with issues of aging beauty. A flow chart (Appendix G) was, therefore, developed to more accurately portray the process by which women react to the loss of youthful beauty. The utility of this flow chart lies both in meeting the research goals of this study, and offering midlife women a mapping agent by which to more fully understand their options and choices concerning issues of aging beauty.

Grand Summary

This chapter has analyzed the findings of both the extensive literature review and the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with twelve midlife women. The purpose of this study was again noted as an effort to explore, examine, label, and categorize the multiple options available to women as they age.

Examination of Research Question #1 found that all participants had noticed age-related changes and were willing to discuss

them. They were divided on whether their reactions were internally or externally based.

Research Question #2 began by asking women what actions they have taken in general as a result of their perceived loss of youthful beauty. The responses were wide and varied. Next, responses to each major category of the organizational chart was analyzed. Both participant responses and the review of the literature was used to examine each category, and any sub-categories which existed.

The final research question (#3) consisted of an open-ended exploratory query which attempted to capture any vital information not included in the research questions, provide an opportunity for women to discuss their aging process in their own words, and express reactions in a non-structured format. They were also urged to give their overall perceptions on aging beauty.

A wide variety of responses were again found, with many negative reactions. Participants' reactions were categorized into two possible modes of action to alleviate this negativity: individual responsibility, and collective action.

Because a full continuum of overall feelings and attitudes about female aging was found, the research returned to Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self to explain the vast variations in responses. This resulted in the formulation of an additional question: Who owns your Mirror?

Three options emerged, being the society-owned mirror, the other-owned mirror, and the self-owned mirror. The advantages and

disadvantages of each was discussed at length, with the self-owned Mirror emerging as what appears to be the most advantageous of the three options. This is due in large to the empowerment of women to self-define their beauty, interpret the appearances of their bodies, and reject negative or ageist messaging from society at large, as well as from a significant loved one.

Finally, the original organizational chart (Appendix F) was revisited for accuracy. It was found to be too stagnant and immobile to accurately depict the active process by which women evaluate and plan courses of action concerning their aging process as it relates to issues of beauty.

A flow chart (Appendix G) was developed and presented to meet the research goals of this study, and to provide women with a mapping agent of active options available as they age.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This concluding chapter provides four final issues pertinent to this study. First, it provides a recapitulation of this research and elaborates on the findings of this study. Second, it discusses the limitations of this study. Third, it offers issues for future research. Fourth, in concert with feminist methodology, it presents an action component to ameliorate the combined ageist/sexist impact of youthful beauty on midlife women.

Research Recapitulation

As seen throughout this study, female beauty is highly correlated with youthfulness within our culture. Society bestows valuable status, power, and prestige on young, beautiful women. As a woman ages, she begins to lose the physical attributes which society identifies with beauty. It is at this point in midlife that women may experience a transitional period in which various options or pathways are available. It has been the goal of this research to identify, examine, label, and categorize these multiple options for aging women.

The primary theory used for this research is Cooley's theory of the Looking-Glass Self. The three principal elements of this

theory (the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his/her judgment of that appearance, and some sort of resulting self-feeling) were inferred onto the subject matter of this research. Two secondary theories were also employed: Goffman's theory of the Presentation of Self, as well as germane aspects of Feminist Standpoint Theory.

Two methods were employed to accomplish this goal. The primary method is an extensive review of available literature on the topics of female beauty, female aging, socio-historical considerations of beauty, First and Second Wave feminist examinations and female midlife body and health issues (including general female health, the climacteric, and the medicalization of anti-aging beauty products and procedures). The secondary method is in-depth interviews with a small target population of twelve Caucasian Baby Boomer women (age 45 to 55).

An extensive review of the literature resulted in the extraction of twelve fundamental integrated research findings (Chapter V). These findings embody the following topics: (a) The universality and diversity in beauty definitions, (b) The use of beauty as a differential factor, (c) The social status of women in society as reflected in aggressive or passive cosmetic color tones, (d) The role of youthfulness and reproductive capacity in beauty definitions, (e) The life course trajectory of female youthful beauty, (f) The social advantages and power given to those who are considered beautiful, (g) The use of age-passing techniques by midlife

women, (h) The unattractiveness and invisibility assigned to women of age, (i) The pejorative stereotypes conveyed upon menopausal women, (j) The medicalization of the climacteric and the aging process in women, (k) The moral double bind of compliance to the Beauty Imperative, and (l) The double jeopardy of the concomitant prejudices of sexism and ageism.

The research questions used for the in-depth interviews were presented in Chapter VI, with responses from the participants. The formulation of these research questions was based on a preliminary organizational chart (Appendix F) developed from the literature review. This chart organized the midlife options or pathways into four central divisions: (1) Redefinition, or the altering of beauty definitions (including redefining what is beautiful, redefining the standard of beauty, and redefining the locus of beauty); (2) Resignation, or the enduring of the consequences of the beauty myth (including the acceptance of loss which may lead to feelings of depression and anxiety, or feelings of relief); (3) Rebellion, or the abandoning of the beauty myth (including the development of new roles or finding alternative sources of power, such as career advancement, continued education, and/or luxuries not affordable and available in youth); and (4) Reconstruction, or fighting age which is known in gerontological literature as age-passing (including cosmetic concealment, topical treatments, ingestion and injections, and radical medical procedures, such as facelifts and liposuction).

The literature review is used in combination with the in-depth interviews to perform an analysis of the findings in Chapter VII. In addition to the analysis of questions formulated from the organizational chart, participants were also asked an open-ended, exploratory question on their aging process as it relates to issues of beauty. This resulted in the discovery of an essential step in the midlife decision-making process for women of age.

The Mirror (or perceived reflection of self) and its ownership emerged as a definitive determinate of the pathways which women may choose to follow. The impact of the accuracy of the reflective process was also discussed. These findings, in concert with the information collected from the analysis of both methods, resulted in a necessary alteration of the original organizational chart. After completing the employed methods and analyzing the findings, a flow chart was developed to more accurately depict the midlife options available to women as they age, and the fluidity and dynamism of their choices.

In summary, this research has accomplished its initial goal of exploring, examining, labeling, and categorizing the multiple options available to midlife women, as they specifically relate to issues of aging female beauty. The original organizational chart (Appendix F) was revised into a flow chart (Appendix G) which more clearly exemplifies the categorization, as well as the fluidity of choices and actions.

The Mirror

The concept of ownership of one's Mirror is a major finding of this research. It was found that a midlife woman's Mirror (or source of reflective information) may be owned in whole or in part by (a) society at large, or (b) a significant other or person of importance in their lives, or (c) the midlife woman, herself, who has made a conscious decision to take ownership of her own Mirror, and define and interpret her reflection within the context of her own ideologies and definitions of beauty. The ownership of one's own Mirror appears to be the quintessential factor which must be established in order to determine which subsequent course of action will be taken.

Given the myriad negative social messaging and common derogatory stereotypes of menopausal and midlife women, the society-owned Mirror reflects ageist attitudes, and demands compliance to the Beauty Imperative. If the midlife woman's Mirror is owned by a significant other in her life, the reflection she then receives may be either positive or negative, depending on the Other's perception of aging female beauty. Some women report that this ownership works very well for them, while others are very much afraid to form new relationships, for fear that negative, ageist attitudes will be reflected onto them and incorporated into their sense of self-worth.

Owning one's Mirror appears to be one way in which midlife women positively regain a sense of power and control within their

lives during the transitional period of midlife. The self-owned Mirror offers the opportunity for positive reflection, and the integration of positive messaging. But even realizing that one has the freedom to choose to own one's own Mirror is no easy task. It requires turning a deaf ear and a blind eye to vast media messaging, opinions of loved ones, and commonly-held stereotypical views of aging women.

It was also found that Mirror ownership is not as rigid a selection as choosing one option to the exclusion of others. Women spoke of owning 85 percent of their Mirrors, or owning over half of their Mirrors. This accurately acknowledges that the attitudes of society and loved ones do have impact. The self-ownership of one's Mirror appears to be a matter of owning the controlling majority, enabling the midlife woman to reject negative messaging and ageist attitudes from myriad sources.

If one's Mirror is owned by other than the self, there is also subsequent decision which must be made concerning the accuracy of the reflected projection. Gullette (1997) states:

It starts with the Mirror Scene of Midlife Aging: 'Possessing my precious age identity, when I look in a mirror I expect to see the familiar, expressive, benign face that has grown on me...but suppose one day I don't see that look? Suppose the gaze from my no longer native face reveals self-disgust? Middle-ageism shows me a self less perfect than my own younger self used to be. The Mirror is asking me to ask, Am I ugly yet?'

...When the culture holds up its mad Mirror, some midlife women can retort, 'I look fine now, naturally.' Thinking positively has been the advice of women's magazines, some pro-female novelists, even some feminist theory.

...It is not enough. (p. 67)

Gullette (1997) then explains the internal struggle midlife women may feel as they attempt to view themselves positively, despite cultural and societal messaging to the contrary. She continues:

...But when I choose 'I look fine,' I open myself to the middle-ageist retort, 'You don't.' (And this retort still comes too easily to me. The age gaze is always the gaze of a hostile Stranger. And the Stranger is not always or even often young, but keeps forever at all ages the culture's ideal of youth.) Repeating, 'I look fine' creates an impasse, as if two children were screaming at each other, 'Do so.' 'Do not.' Setting progress against decline constitutes a terrible, isolated, oscillating, emotional impasse....

There is a way out. (p. 68)

Again returning to the theoretical framework of this particular research, Gullette (1997) herein suggests that the societal reflection of Cooley's Looking-Glass mirror for many women in their midlife years is the age gaze of a hostile Stranger. Theoretically, however, this would lead to a negative imagination of society's judgment of their appearance, sometimes resulting in some sort of (negative) feeling. This feeling could then be the motivating factor which leads several midlife women to comply with the Beauty Imperative, and select different pathways of age-fighting and age-passing.

Gullette (1997) describes the way out of this negative perspective of self, by describing the take-over of one's own Mirror ownership is a very difficult task, considering the lack of problem identification and appropriate role models. She states:

My trouble is actually the culture's funhouse Mirror, reflecting what I have internalized of its hostile age gaze. True, something I take as 'personal' triggered the Mirror Scene-but my task will be to find out what the cultural causes were, not let 'my' 'aging' be the scapegoat. Then, in a ferocious movement of liberation, I am able to regain my age identity and criticize the culture of disgust. Soon I can see both looks, one after another-the smile and the grimace, the grimace and the smile. A curious emotional experience, proving that I was moved without will or conscious notice from my own story of my face to the false narrative provided by the ideology. Now, if I choose to say 'I look fine,' I see, as it were, both my physical features and the smile that is seeing them. (p. 68)

Gullette (1997) then directly addresses the issue of Mirror ownership as she concludes:

The shock that leads people toward age theory may come from seeing that they actually have a choice of gazes and a choice of narratives-between the dominant one that wars against their own best interest and an as-yet-to-be-written one that serves them. (p. 68)

Ellen Zetzel Lambert (1995) also addresses the issue of Mirror ownership, explaining that the many cultural and socialization factors both impose the Beauty Imperative, and play a very significant part in giving up the ownership of one's Mirror to other women. She states:

The voices all around us, voices we hear every day on the street and in the marketplace, in every advertisement addressed to the female consumer and on every T.V. sit-com, do not send out the message that beauty is the face of love. On the contrary, what they tell us is that beauty is a way of capturing love. Beauty is not inwardly determined and hence contingent; it is outwardly fixed. 'But,' this voice continues, 'if you've not been blessed with beauty, or have lost your beauty to the natural aging process, it is just possible that, if you work very hard, you can still make yourself desirable, and gain the precious commodity, a man's love.' Finally, we are made to feel, it is not we ourselves who will decide whether or not we are beautiful, but someone else. And not only do we hear that voice all around us; we have internalized it. 'How can I make myself beautiful so he will love me?' we ask ourselves. It is we women, not the men we know,

who ask ourselves anxiously whether we 'measure up.'

But how could it be otherwise, when the beauty myth on which most women of my generation were raised is one that insists our beauty is determined by others? (pp. 12-13)

Not only was it revealed in the many interviews with these women, it was also confirmed in the literature, that the issue of Mirror ownership becomes an initial and quintessential factor in mapping the pathway of choice for women of age.

In summary, it was also discovered that all these issues of female aging beauty are directly related to this quintessential issue of Mirror ownership. In concert with Cooley's theory of the Looking-Glass Self, the Mirror ownership determines if a woman actually receives positive or negative feedback on these many important physical changes she experiences in mid-life. Several other authors recognize the socialization process which leads women to give up ownership to the society at large, or a significant other in specificity. These sources, as well as the study participants, suggest that the most positive sense of self-esteem in midlife actually occurs when a woman understands that she has the choice to own her own Mirror. Rather than assign this ownership elsewhere, she normally opts to take possession of her own Mirror and its subsequent reflection.

Women who do this appear to feel more liberated from societal ageism, more able to block out negative societal messaging, and more likely to display attributes of self-confidence, powerfulness, and inner peacefulness with their own aging process. The identification of this issue, as well as its implementation, may be a formidable

task for midlife women, given both the uncharted territory of methods by which to preserve self-ownership of one's Mirror, and lack of positive role models.

Limitations of the Research

This research is limited on several important counts. First, because it is definitely an exploratory study, a pre-defined data base of literature on the topic of female aging beauty issues did not exist. As seen throughout this entire research, all the literature has been garnered from a very wide spectrum of disciplines, and streamlined to the appropriateness of this study. It is very much hoped that the extensive literature review developed herein offers an important organizational framework for further studies in this same area. The consolidation of the literature into twelve fundamental integrated research findings (Chapter V) also offers a conceptual baseline on which future research may be built.

A second limitation of this research lies in the fact that the sample population consisted of a small number of midlife women. Although the in-depth interviews were much richer and very much more informative than could have been hoped for, this study included only twelve women. A larger population of midlife women would, in fact, stretch the scope of insights to ever greater levels which not only would be very informative, it would be very interesting to all.

A third limitation, in the same vein, lies in the fact that

the sample population constitute a non-representative, convenience sample. Although their honest and detailed descriptions of midlife may ring true for many women, no findings may be generalized to the population at large. This is a particularly difficult aspect of this research. The need for in-depth, qualitative methods is essential to the depth, tone, emotions, and intensity of this study. The desire to quantitatively study issues of female aging beauty is also strong, however, in that a larger population may be empirically studied, and the results of a representative population generalized to the society at large. Of course, great caution must be taken to preserve the essence of standpoint methods, in order that quantitative work on the subject does not strip away the deeply intensive findings which qualitative work proffers.

A fourth limitations is noted in the following section on future research. There are many target populations which were intentionally omitted from this exploratory study. Until these studies are accomplished, there are no means by which to perform cross-cultural, cross-generational, and cross-gender comparative studies. Although the sample was selected without regard to socio-economic status or education, the women within this study represent disproportionately high levels of educational achievement, and subsequent higher levels of socio-economic class or status.

Fifth, Cooley's theory of the Looking Glass Self has been extremely appropriate for this study. The reflective qualities of his theory proved essential to the preliminary steps of midlife

women's evaluation of Mirror ownership. Unfortunately, a theory which innately combines the variables of age and gender does not exist. If such a theory had been available for use in this study, it may have offered additional insights, since age and gender are uniquely combined herein to research issues of beauty.

The sixth and final issue of research limitations lies in the fact that the research goal of this study to explore, examine, label, and categorize the options or pathways available to women in middle-age. This goal has been accomplished, but with the knowledge that more questions may be raised from this study than answers provided. The following section on future research proffers some of these questions and urges their examination. Of particular interest is the role of Mirror ownership to the participants, as well as the multiple points within the flow chart where women of age must make decisions. How and why those choices are made has not been addressed in this research, as it is outside the scope of the current research goals. It is, however, vital information, worthy of serious gerontological and sociological investigation.

In summary, the limitations of this research include the fact that a pre-defined data base of literature on the topic of female aging beauty issues did not exist. Additionally, the sample population for in-depth interviews consisted of a small number of midlife women. This sample population constitute a non-representative, convenience sample with disproportionately higher levels of educational achievement and socio-economic status. This resulted in the

fact that no findings may be generalized to the population at large. Many possible target populations were intentionally omitted from this exploratory study, and until these studies are accomplished, cross-cultural, cross-generational, and cross-gender comparative studies cannot be investigated. A theory embodying the juxtaposition of age and gender would have been useful, but was not available for this research. Although the research goal of this study has been accomplished by the development and revision of varying options of pathways available to women at midlife, this study does not examine the determining factors which influence the multiple choices women may make at midlife. Further research and closer examination of the decision points and their impending variables will offer an additional depth to these findings.

Future Research

"Oh who can tell the range of joy/Or set the bounds of beauty?"
(Sara Teasdale, 1915, p. 1).

Given the importance of Mirror ownership to issues of female aging beauty, future research is necessary to more fully examine the socialization process which enables and encourages women throughout their life course to relinquish their reflection or self-perception to the so-called hostile stranger. This hostile stranger may, in fact, be the culmination of societal sexism and ageism which reflects negativity on the midlife woman, imposes the Beauty Imperative, and leads to pathways of action which may be less than ad-

vantageous to women as they age. This discovery opens the field for further in-depth research on the initial steps of the analysis of female aging beauty.

As previously noted, a variety of populations were not employed for this study. Future research is advocated for women of all age ranges, from those younger and those older than the target population here employed. Also, women of color and women from a variety of socio-economic levels were not included in this initial exploratory research. Differences in cultural perceptions of female aging, as well as differences in cultural definitions of beauty constitute fascinating studies for the future.

Men were, for the most part, omitted from this research as well. Many statements and findings may well be applicable to the male gender, but were specifically and intentionally omitted from this study so that the focus was centered directly on the study of midlife women. Because midlife options for men may occur during a different age-range than for women, it would be interesting to study both men of the same age-range used herein, as well as men of older and younger cohorts.

This exploratory research has intentionally omitted these populations in order to focus on the transitional period of life when women reach middle age and may experience a socially-constructed loss of beauty. These above-mentioned populations are critically important to examine, both on the basis of their own worth, and as a means of comparative populations to the findings on women of age.

Additionally, within the context of this research, the flow chart (found in Appendix G) could be further examined at each point where a decision or action is required by the midlife woman (noted by octagon-shaped boxes). For example, which factors are involved in a woman's decision to retain beauty as a source of power in mid-life? Why do some women choose to redefine beauty, while others opt to resign themselves to loss of societally-defined youthful beauty? Why do some women elect a range of reconstruction procedures, while others seek to rebel and find alternative power sources? Why are some decisions re-thought? Are there patterns in the re-thinking process, or particular junctures at which rating occurs? Are there common outcomes?

In summary, this study raises many questions such as those given above without offering explanatory results. This provides a rich foundation from which future research may be conducted from a variety of vantage points. This research has obtained its goal by providing the examination, labeling, and categorization of options essential for future research on the subject of female aging beauty. An explanatory examination of decision-making points within the flow chart is urged, as well as a deeper examination of the quintessential issue of Mirror ownership. It is also highly suggested that other populations be examined within the context of this research, in order to gain information on women of all ages, women of color, women of varying socio-economic levels, as well as for men.

Action Component

In concert with feminist methodology, this final section embodies a list of possible actions which may be employed to impact the issues of female aging beauty. Although no suggestion is intended to ameliorate completely the complex outcomes of female aging in regards to beauty, it is hoped that both individual and collective actions which follow will enhance and positively affect the aging process for midlife women.

Embrace the Beauty Question

“As feminists, we can enrich our lives by reclaiming our own beauty” (Lambert, 1995, p. 16).

Not only has beauty been considered a topic of vanity and unimportance within a patriarchal culture, it has also been abandoned by feminists since the Second Wave of the 1960s and 1970s. The Women's Liberation movement unspokenly authorized the abandonment of the beauty topic. It categorized beauty, cosmetics, even female shaving as sexist tools of the patriarchy which should not concern or interest the liberated woman. In fact, the issue of beauty for women of all ages was regarded as part and parcel of the sexist objectification of the female body.

Feminists today are re-thinking those gross generalizations, and finding value in embracing the beauty question for all women, including women of age. Lambert (1995) states:

As a committed feminist, I've felt embarrassed that the

beauty question should still matter to me.... The beauty question (we've been told) is not really a woman's question, or problem, at all but a man's question: it's just one of the ways in which men have forced women to define themselves in terms of their desirability to others.

And yet this dismissal has never felt quite right to me; it has seemed a little too easy. For the beauty question, the question of appearances, is my issue too, is our issue as women, is indeed anyone's issue as a human being. For the question of who one is on the outside is intimately bound up with who one is on the inside; appearances are a very part of our identity.

...I don't think I'm alone among contemporary feminists in feeling that we have short-changed or oversimplified the question of appearances, and made taboo an issue that deserves to be explored in an open, nonjudgmental context. Sometimes at feminist gatherings, as well as in more intimate conversations with friends, I have felt the beauty question hovering in the air around us, like a guilty secret-or like a secret that, if 'confessed,' must quickly be exorcised. 'Well, of course, we shouldn't care about these superficial, silly things; it's so ridiculously vain, and yet...' Then nervous laughter, relief, and on to more serious concerns-like sex. For sex, interestingly, is not a taboo subject for us today in the way that beauty is. (pp. xi - xii)

No longer does the issue of beauty need to be a secret attributed to patriarchal attempts of sexism, or sheer female vanity.

The issue is essential to women as a whole, and especially to women as they age. Beauty is important as a topic of future research, especially in regards to issues of female aging beauty.

Create a Pro-Woman Definition of Beauty

As previously discussed, a pro-woman or woman-loving definition of beauty is both possible and essential to the self-worth of women as they age. It is a broader definition than the eclipse of stagnant youthful beauty. It does not abandon the aging female body

to an invisible status, nor does it demand replacement of physical, exterior beauty with soulful, inner wisdom. It encompasses the entire range of normal female senescence, from wrinkles to graying hair, from shifting body shapes to midlife weight gain. According to Lambert (1995),

we can redefine appearances so we can speak to the world and to those who love us with confidence and affirmation-at any stage of life-through our bodies rather than from 'behind' them. I would wish for women to resist the impulse to dissociate their personhood from their life in the body; for to do so is to deny (for a man or a woman) our wholeness. (pp. 16-17)

Later, in the same text, Lambert (1995) advocates a pro-woman definition of beauty which is different from the "wrong kind of male gaze." She continues:

But precisely because we have been trained for so long, as women, to see beauty in its dehumanizing aspect, because that tradition has such a long history in Western culture, I think it is important to look more closely at the history of the dehumanized 'male gaze'...it is only by understanding more clearly the 'wrong' kind of male gaze and the complexity of our responses to it as women that we can begin to appreciate that there is another way - a way of enjoying being looked at, and enjoying caring for our own bodies that does not separate us from ourselves. (p. 30)

Reclaim Mirror Ownership

It appears essential that midlife women examine the ownership of their Mirror or reflection of self (as based in Cooley's Looking-Glass theory). It is essential to the subsequent options or pathways which will be followed. The fact that women have a choice to retain or assign Mirror ownership is rarely suggested, or realized. The participant interviews in this study, as well as the pertinent

literature, suggests that those women who have made a conscious choice to claim ownership of over half of their Mirror are more able to fight off negative societal messages about aging which come from both significant others and society at large. Halprin (1995) merges the consequences of loss of Mirror ownership with the concept of the Other. She states:

A woman looks at herself in the mirror. A woman takes a snapshot of herself looking at herself in the mirror. The ultimate in narcissism? And yet the look I see in my eyes is one of interested detachment.

...The basic idea was that we project onto people we consider Other, different from ourselves, qualities with which we do not identify. We make these Others into objects, denying to them the status of perceiving, feeling, thinking beings we hold for ourselves. We think of ourselves as subjects, and Others as objects. In white culture, people of color are Other. In patriarchal culture, women are Other, for the dominant subject is male. Men and women both tend to identify with the male subject and project Otherness onto the female object. The act of noticing this identification and projection is the beginning of the awareness that eventually can change the entire cultural system. (pp. 259-260)

The difficulties of developing the tools needed to retain one's own Mirror has been previously discussed. It is time to challenge the beauty industry which equates aging with loss of beauty for their own financial profit. It is time to object to the internalization of ageist media messaging which is detrimental to women's perception of self, and time to object to the externalization of such ageist/sexist messaging throughout society.

Unite Our Voices

Individually, women must examine the aging process, their re-

action to negative messaging, and the consequential pathways they elect to follow. It is hoped that the identification, examination, labeling, and categorization of this research helps to enables such action.

Collectively, women must unite against the combined ravages of sexism and ageism, bridging the well-established gap between generations of women. Positive role models are needed for younger women, as well as women in the transitional stages of midlife. Only by personally and publically debunking the equating of age with loss of beauty can women of all ages hope to experience a positive life course trajectory which is long-term and enduring.

In summary, the action component of this research first urges the embracing of the beauty question on both personal and research levels. Second, it calls for a pro-woman or woman-loving definition of beauty. Third, it presents the importance of the Mirror, and urges women to make conscious choices regarding its ownership. Fourth, it calls for a uniting of women's voices on the issue of female aging beauty which spans generations. The inclusiveness of women of all ages is noted as essential to the building of positive life course trajectories.

Grand Summary

This concluding chapter offers a recapitulation of the this research. It elaborates on the unexpected findings of this research in regards to the issue of Mirror ownership and choices available to

women as they age. This chapter also discusses the various limitations of this study. It presents several possibilities for future gerontological and sociological examinations. Finally, it offers an action component which gives suggested courses of action which impact both the individual woman at midlife and the society at large.

The continuation of such research is vitally important for more than one reason. Our daughters deserve a positive life trajectory, not one based in the denial or defiance of the natural aging process. Our mothers deserve to be free from ageist stereotypes which depreciate or make invisible their exterior presence, replacing their right to beauty with unfounded suppositions of internal wisdom. Our society needs to expand its rigid, youth-based definitions of beauty to more fully enjoy a broader, more inclusive, pro-woman definition of female beauty. Midlife women deserve to understand that they possess a right to own the majority of their own Mirror. This action is empowering, as it affords women the opportunity to love their reflection as they age in beauty.

Appendix A
Protocol Clearance From the Human Subjects
Institutional Review Board to
Conduct Research

Western Michigan University
Department of Sociology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ellen K. Page-Robin
Research Associate: Sheila Marie Bluhm

Western Michigan University
H. S. I. R. B.
APR 02 1993
Sheila Marie Bluhm
HSIRB Chair

I have been invited to participate in a research project entitled "Aging Beauty: The Medicalization and Adaptive Reconstruction of the Aging Process in Women." This research is intended to examine what happens to women as the natural aging process changes their appearance, and, specifically, how it has affected me and what (if anything) I have done in reaction, as I have gone or am going through the transitional period of middle age. This project is Sheila Marie Bluhm's dissertation project.

My consent to participate in this project indicates that I will be asked to attend one private interview session with Sheila Marie Bluhm which may last up to two hours. I will be asked to meet Sheila Marie Bluhm at a place we both agree upon. This private session will involve an interview during which I will be asked questions regarding my appearance and body-image changes with age (i.e., gray hair, wrinkles, body shape), midlife changes in my personal and career life, feelings regarding these changes, personal cosmetic habits (i.e., the use of anti-aging products), and other age-based procedures (i.e., ingestion or injection of hormones and botanicals to retard the aging process) as well as cosmetic surgeries and procedures (i.e., face lifts and liposuction). I will also be asked a few demographic questions on education and household income.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. If an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or treatment will be made available to me except as otherwise specified in this consent form. One potential risk of my participation in this project is that I may be upset by the content of the interview. However, Sheila Marie Bluhm is prepared to make a referral if I need to talk with a professional (i.e., counselor). I will be responsible for the cost of therapy if I choose to pursue it.

One way in which I may benefit from this activity is having the chance to talk about my midlife experiences as a woman, the role which beauty plays throughout my life course, and the choices I have made as a middle-aged woman. Others may also benefit from the knowledge that is gained from this research.

All the information collected from me is confidential and that means that my name will not appear on any audio-tapes and papers on which this information is recorded. The audio-tapes and forms will all be coded, and Sheila Marie Bluhm will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for three years in a locked file in the principal's investigator's office.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corners of both pages. Subjects should not sign this document if the corners of both pages do not show a stamped date and signature.

I may refuse to participate or quit at any time during this study without prejudice, penalty, or risk of any loss of service I would otherwise have. If I have questions or concerns about this study, I may contact either Sheila Marie Bluhm (349-3887) or Dr. Ellen Page-Robin (387-2642 or 381-6352). I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study. My signature below indicates that the purpose and requirements of the study have been explained to me and that I agree to participate.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Student Investigator

Date

Appendix B
Recruiting Script

Recruiting Script

The script for the word-of-mouth subject recruitment was read to each potential participant, as follows:

"Hello. My name is Sheila Marie Bluhm and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Sociology at Western Michigan University. For my doctoral dissertation I am studying the perspectives of women between the ages of 45 to 55 concerning issues of beauty as they age. I will be conducting informal interviews which will last between one to two hours for each person who participates. I will be asking participants questions regarding their appearance and body-image changes with age, midlife changes, personal cosmetic habits, and a variety of anti-aging products and procedures. Women who agree to participate may stop the interview at any time and need not respond to any questions which they are not comfortable in answering. The interviews will be audio-taped for accuracy. The tapes will be coded, using numbers and alias names to insure that participants are not identified on the recordings. Are you a woman between the ages of 45 to 55? (If so,) would you agree to be a participant in my study?"

Appendix C
Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

The following informed consent form was employed for this research and signed by each participant:

Western Michigan University
Department of Sociology

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ellen K. Page-Robin
Research Associate: Sheila Marie Bluhm

I have been invited to participate in a research project entitled, "Aging Beauty: The Medicalization and Adaptive Reconstruction of the Aging Process in Women." This research is intended to examine what happens to women as the natural aging process changes their appearance, and, specifically, how it has affected me and what (if anything) I have done in reaction, as I have gone or am going through the transitional period of middle age. This project is Sheila Marie Bluhm's dissertation project.

My consent to participate in this project indicates that I will be asked to attend one private interview session with Sheila Marie Bluhm which may last up to two hours. I will be asked to meet Sheila Marie Bluhm at a place we both agree upon. This private session will involve an interview during which I will be asked questions regarding my appearance and body-image changes with age (i.e., gray hair, wrinkles, body shape), midlife changes in my personal and career life, feelings regarding these changes, personal cosmetic habits (i.e., the use of anti-aging products), and other age-based procedures (i.e., ingestion or injection of hormones and botanicals to retard the aging process) as well as cosmetic

surgeries and procedures (i.e., face lifts and liposuction). I will also be asked a few demographic questions on education and household income.

As in all research, there may be unforeseen risks to the participant. If an accidental injury occurs, appropriate emergency measures will be taken; however, no compensation or treatment will be made available to me except as otherwise specified in this consent form. One potential risk of my participation in this project is that I may be upset by the content of the interview. However, Sheila Marie Bluhm is prepared to make a referral if I need to talk with a professional (i.e., counselor). I will be responsible for the cost of therapy if I choose to pursue it.

One way in which I may benefit from this activity is having the chance to talk about my midlife experiences as a woman, the role which beauty plays throughout my life course, and the choices I have made as a middle-aged woman. Others may also benefit from the knowledge that is gained from this research.

All the information collected from me is confidential and that means that my name will not appear on any audio-tapes and papers on which this information is recorded. The audio-tapes and forms will all be coded, and Sheila Marie Bluhm will keep a separate master list with the names of participants and the corresponding code numbers. Once the data are collected and analyzed, the master list will be destroyed. All other forms will be retained for three years in a locked file in the principal's investigator's office.

This consent document has been approved for use for one year by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) as indicated by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corners of both pages. Subjects should not sign this document if the corners of both pages do not show a stamped date and signature.

I may refuse to participate or quit at any time during this study without prejudice, penalty, or risk of any loss of service I would otherwise have. If I have questions or concerns about this study, I may contact either Sheila Marie Bluhm (349-3887) or Dr. Ellen Page-Robin (387-2642 or 381-6352). I may also contact the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (387-8293) or the Vice President for Research (387-8298) if questions or problems arise during the course of the study. My signature below indicates that the purpose and requirements of the study have been explained to me and that I agree to participate.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Student Investigator

Date

Appendix D
Interview Script

Interview Script

The following script was used to elicit responses to the given research questions:

Code # of Participant: _____

INTERVIEW SCRIPT:

As I mentioned when you agreed to meet with me, I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation on the subject of Aging Beauty. Our society and its media highly values youth-based beauty and gives power, status, and prestige to the young women who possess it.

This study wants to examine what happens to women as the natural aging process changes their appearance. I specifically want to know how it has affected you and what (if anything) you have done as you have gone or are going through the transitional period of middle age.

Research Question #1: Has the participant felt a devaluation of social worth as she ages, specifically due to the loss of beauty with age?

.Have you personally noticed changes in your body image or appearance brought on by the natural aging process?

•If so, do you feel comfortable talking to me about them?

What specifically are they?

•Now tell me what reactions you have had or felt as you noticed these parts of your body image or appearance changing with age.

- Do you think these reactions are all internal, or do you think society makes you feel this way?
- Do you think people in general treat you differently now than when you were younger? If so, how?
- Have you felt any loss of power, status, or prestige which you think is directly related to the fact you are aging?

Research Question #2: What (if anything) has the participant done (actively or passively) in response to any perceived social devaluation?

- You have talked about appearance changes such as (repeated for validity here) and that these changes make you feel (repeated for validity here). (Changes, additions, corrections encouraged).
- What (if anything) have you done as a reaction to those changes?

Midlife women have responded to changes in a variety of ways.

Let me ask you if you have participated in or would consider participating in any of the following attitudes or behaviors:

Redefinition

- Have you ever attempted to change the usual definition of what's beautiful...that is, have you ever felt that gray hair, wrinkles, and midlife body shapes of women are actually very attractive?
- Have you ever found yourself changing the standard of beauty ...that is, have you ever felt that you are still beautiful

for your age, comparing yourself to women your age, rather than all women of all ages?

- Have you ever shifted the location of your beauty from something totally exterior to something that is now located inside of you...that is, does an increased sense of wisdom and inner beauty become more important than your looks?

Resignation

- Do you think you have resigned yourself to the loss of what society rewards as youthful beauty? That is, have you abandoned the beauty myth and just accepted the loss?
- If so, has this led to feelings of depression and anxiety?
- Or has it given you feelings of relief?

Rebellion

- Have you developed new roles which replace your former role as a young woman? That is, do you now find your status and satisfaction in the role of grandmother or mentor to the young or some other role?
- Have you found alternative sources of power?
- Such as in career advancement?
- Returning to school for your education?
- Possessions, toys, perks, trips, nice house...things you couldn't afford in your youth?

Reconstruction

- Do you fight age? Do you do things to keep your youthful beauty intact?

•Have or would you purchase age-concealing products? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

•Have or would you purchase topical treatments, such as anti-aging creams? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

•Have or would you ingest or inject products for the sole purpose of stopping or slowing the aging process...such as hormones or botanicals? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

•Have or would you consider radical procedures to remain young-looking, such as cosmetic surgery, extensive exercise work-out programs, and other involved procedures? What are they? Do you think they work? How much will you spend on them?

Research Question #3: The researcher probes for other possibilities which may result in additional categories of reaction.

•I have asked some very specific questions of you, but I do not want to assume that they are complete enough to capture your total experience. What else can you tell me about your reaction to the aging process you have experienced?

Demographic Questions: I would like to ask some demographic questions of you.... Please remember that you need not answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

•I see that you are a female, Caucasian woman. May I ask your exact age?

•Do you currently live within the Kalamazoo/Portage,
Michigan area?

•What is your educational background? Grade/degree(s) and
respective dates.

•Which of the following ranges best describes your total
household income today?

Below		\$ 4,999		\$40,000	-	\$44,999
\$ 5,000	-	\$ 9,999		\$45,000	-	\$49,999
\$10,000	-	\$14,999		\$50,000	-	\$54,999
\$15,000	-	\$19,999		\$55,000	-	\$59,999
\$20,000	-	\$24,999		\$60,000	-	\$69,999
\$25,000	-	\$29,999		\$70,000	-	\$79,999
\$30,000	-	\$34,999		\$80,000	-	\$89,999
\$35,000	-	\$39,999		\$90,000		or more

Appendix E
Instrumentation

Instrumentation

The following form of instrumentation was used to insure the confidentiality of all interviews. These code sheets were used for identification of the interviews which were audio taped.

INSTRUMENTATION

Code Sheet for Audio-Tapes

Name of Participant

Code Number of Participant

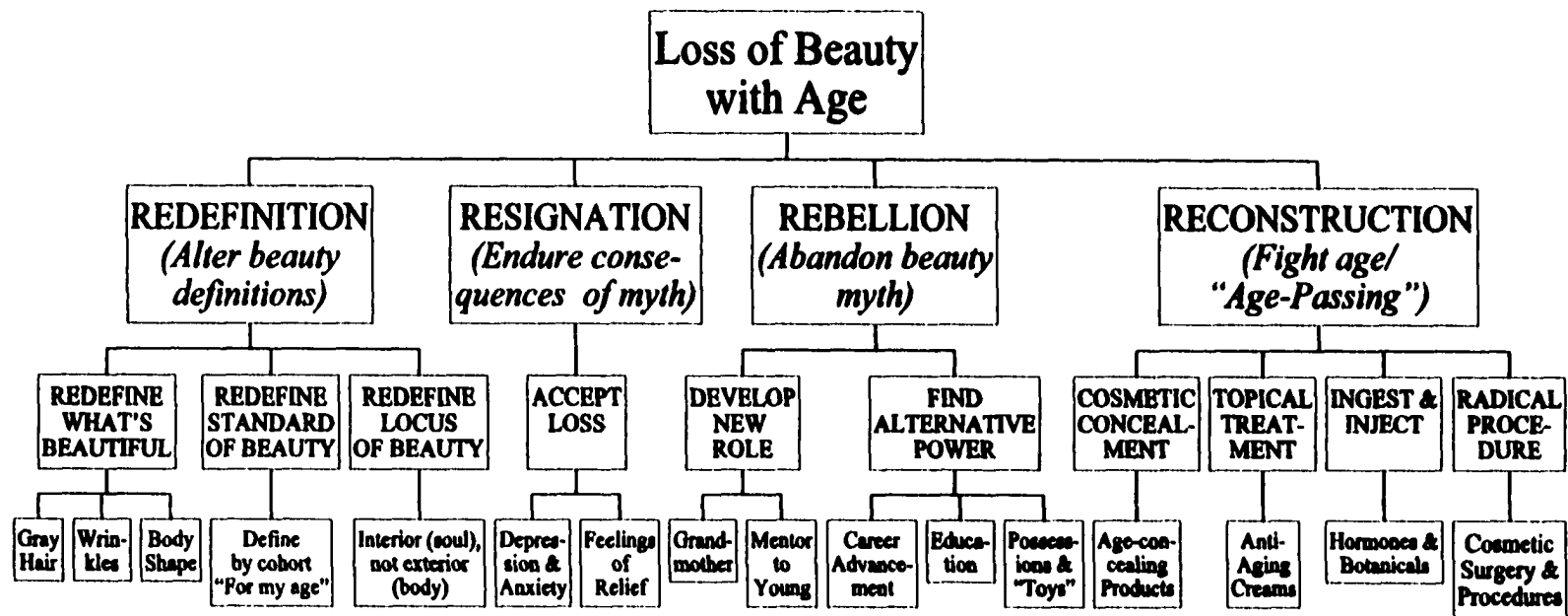
Date and Time of Interview Session

Place of Interview Session

Audio-Tape Code Number of Interview Session

Appendix F
Organizational Chart

AGING BEAUTY



Appendix G
Flow Chart

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