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THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT:
A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE AGE THIRTY
TRANSITION EXPERIENCE FOR SINGLE PROFESSIONAL
AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

by

AUDREY OWENS DAY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

2003

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT:
A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION
EXPERIENCE FOR SINGLE PROFESSIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN
WOMEN

by

Audrey Owens Day

Adviser: Professor Anderson J. Franklin

This study examined the Age Thirty Transition and the impact of social support on the Transition experience utilizing Levinson's adult developmental model as applied to single, professional African American women. Of interest was whether or not participants received support for the Dream; and use of the Dream as transitional phenomena (Ogilvy, 1983). One hypothesis was that the presence or absence of social support would impact on the qualitative ease or difficulty of the Age Thirty Transition. Another hypothesis was that shifting or reversal of priorities, one task of the Age Thirty Transition, (Roberts & Newton, 1987) would not occur if

participants did not exhibit developmental readiness (actualization of major components of the Dream).

Major findings of the study were as follows:

1) Though no causal relationship can be claimed, the five women characterized as experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition had social support for the Dream from at least one parent or surrogate before and during the Age Thirty Transition; 2) The women who exhibited a shifting of priorities or balance between work and love (Webb, unpublished paper) had actualized major co-components of the Dream.

The cultural/racial observations reiterate findings (Ruffin, 1985; Adams, 1983) that developing and sustaining adult male/female intimate relationships remains an important developmental task for African American women during this developmental stage. Male/female ratio imbalances among African American men and women make settling into long-term intimate relationships and marriage a formidable challenge for women in the 27 - 33 age group. In contrast to Levinson's (1996) female sample, these African American women tended to be more connected and

interdependent on members of their family of origin
with fewer conflictual feelings.

DEDICATION

To Mrs. Mildred Owens

and

In Memory of Mrs. Onnie Mae Hightower

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This work represents an important milestone for me, and many individuals contributed to the successful completion of this project.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In considering the broad context of the adult developmental process of women in the United States in the 1990's, one pre-eminent factor overlays the observational lens through which one views the developmental process and its contextual meaning - the women's movement of the 1960's. The women's movement in America in the 1960's with its beginnings in the 19th century, impacted on the political, educational and social landscape, and women's participation in the aforementioned arenas (Workforce, 2002). As women's relationship to work, family, social and political institutions changed during the 60's and 70's, women's studies emerged—with the goal that those studies would ...“ accurately reflect the lives and concerns of women as well as men” (Women's Studies Quarterly, 1997).

The feminist perspective of equality, parity and equal access for men and women impacted on societal institutions, psychosocial research and theory.

During the 1970's and 80's the women's movement and the feminist perspective fostered challenges to traditional psychotherapy practice and models (Cammear & Larsen, 1988). Most major psychotherapeutic models were critiqued from a feminist perspective (Maercek & Hare-Mustin, 1991). The emerging feminist perspective expanded the context in which psychopathology or psychological distress was viewed—from solely an individual intrapsychic response to that of a dynamic between environment or societal contexts (e.g. oppressive or sexist attitudes and environments) and an individual's response (Rosewater, 1998). The changing socio-cultural landscape of the 1970's and 1980's with shifting gender roles presented new challenges in psychotherapy practice (Gannon, 1982).

Traditional theories of gender, work and family from varied theoretical perspectives, posit highly circumscribed and constricted gender roles (functionalists - Parsons, 1949; psychoanalytic - Freud 1905; and sociobiologists - Trivers, 1972; Buss, 1989; Buss & Kenrick, 1998). Barnett and Hyde (2001) state that while cultural norms and

expectations reinforced gender role separation in America in the 1950's, (i.e. women as homemakers and men as wage earning providers) poor and working class women have occupied multiple roles throughout history in America (homemaker and worker) out of necessity, despite cultural norms.

With the advent of the women's movement, women began to enter into the labor force in increasing numbers during the 20th century, ranging from 20 percent of American women in paid employment in the 1920's to 60 percent of American women in the labor force by the end of the century (Workforce,2002). Increased access for women in areas of education and employment make multiple role occupation a reality for a majority of American women. Gender role whether viewed from a societal or individual perspective impacts on the adult developmental process, as work and family are two of the areas where gender role constrictions, expansions, and expectation manifest. The process of the negotiation, integration and balance of work and family becomes a pivotal focal point for examination when considering the female adult developmental process.

Adult developmental theorist Daniel Levinson, whose seminal work *Seasons of a Man's Life*, proposed that developmental processes that shape personality and functioning and the consequent importance of those processes were not restricted to the domain of childhood. Using a stage-driven model, Levinson proposed that adulthood encompassed key developmental tasks (with two primary tasks being forming an occupation and forming love relationships, marriage and family) at different eras or "seasons" in the course of a life. His model rests on the conceptual frame of the analysis of the life structure of the individual. Life structure as defined by Levinson is "the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time" (Levinson, 1978). Central to his thesis is the concept of normative periods of stability and changes or transitions in the individual's life. Levinson's theory was generated from analysis of the life stories (biographical interviews) from a largely Caucasian sample of 40 men. His theory generated feminist critique which endorsed certain tenets of his theory as applicable to female adult development, but which noted certain gender

specific differences not addressed by Levinson's 1978 model (Stewart, 1979; Droege, 1982; Furst, 1983).

Levinson's Seasons of a woman's life, published in 1996 posthumously, addresses criticisms of his 1978 model. This later study of 45 women corroborates the universality of the progression through the developmental stages previously outlined with attention to how women approach and negotiate certain developmental tasks differently. One major gender specific finding of Levinson's later study of female adult development was that societal expectations around gender roles most likely impact on how a woman is able to internalize and manifest her sense of an adult self—in essence manifest her Dream in her life structure. In essence Levinson states that one can not divorce a discussion of the adult developmental tasks of forming work and family relationships for women from a discussion about the larger societal context of gender role. Levinson coins the phrase "gender-splitting" to frame his discussion of the impact of gender on adult female development (Levinson, 1996).

Self-in-relations theorists offer another body of literature from which to examine the impact of gender and development. Writers like Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) have questioned developmental theory dating back to Freud (1905) which views women's development as regressive or less evolved. Both Chodorow and Gilligan argue that issues of autonomy, separation, individuation and dependency are experienced differently by males and females with societal reinforcement for the differences (i.e. the differences in the effect of the mothering process for girls and boys and the formation of a woman's identity through her relationship to others). The 'other' and one's relationship to 'others' then becomes an important consideration when examining the female developmental process.

The 'self' and 'other' interface in Object Relations theory (Winnicott, 1971) have analogues in the adult developmental process according to Levinson (1978).

He states that the adult developmental process of forming a Dream—an internalized compilation of one's fantasies, hopes, desires and possibilities for the

actualized adult self—has parallels to the transitional phenomena described by Winnicott in self/object differentiation. " Similarly, a Dream of adult life arises as a transitional phenomenon in the Early Adult Transition and Entering the Adult World. As a boy-man begins his entry into adulthood, he imagines exciting possibilities for his adult life and struggles to attain the "I am" feeling in this dreamed-of self and world." "As the novice adult tries to separate from his family and pre-adult world, and to enter an adult world, he must form significant relationships with the other adults who will facilitate his work on the Dream" (Levinson, 1978). Ogilvy (1983) discusses how the analogous transitional phenomena is characterized by the role of 'others' in the Dream development of her subjects. Ogilvy found that facilitators of the Dream were often key in assisting the women she studied in forming and achieving the Dream.

When one considers examining female development and the female adult developmental process in general, the impact and role of relationships—hence 'others' become inextricably part of the examination. As noted

by Williams et. al. (2000) " We are embedded in a social context from the beginning of life that may include parents, siblings, grandparents, extended family members, family friends, or paid caregivers" (Levitt, Guacci, & Coffman, 1993). One way to examine a woman's relatedness to others and the possible impact of that relatedness on her development is through her social support system. Examining social support systems and one's relationship to the supportive others-- is a way to examine one aspect of relating and it's possible influence on the developmental process (vis-à-vis facilitating the Dream, mentoring, etc.).

Purpose and Objectives

This study seeks to utilize the adult developmental model presented by Levinson (1996) to examine the lives of eight single professional African American women during a discrete developmental phase-- the Age Thirty Transition. As these women's lives and functioning are embedded in a social context, the role

of others--specifically members of their social support system--and the possible impact of those relationships on the process of the Age Thirty Transition will be examined. Two foci of the study will be Dream development (facilitation and actualization) and the subjective qualitative nature of the Age Thirty Transition experience. Attention will be paid to the participants' attitudes about central components of the Dream and the adult life structure--work, love and family. The developmental tasks and processes encompassing the Age Thirty Transition will also be examined. Hypothesis and questions for consideration will be generated from the following target areas:

- 1) Forming a Dream
- 2) Forming mentor relationships
- 3) Forming an occupation
- 4) Forming love relationships, marriage and family
- 5) Qualitative nature of the Age Thirty Transition
(smooth vs. rough)
- 6) Availability and utilization of social support systems during Transition

- 7) Shifting of priorities/balance between work
and love

Two major domains of literature and research will be utilized in the study including sub-domains as outlined below:

Adult Development

- 1) Adult developmental theory and stages
- 2) Criticisms of Levinson's theory
- 3) Levinson's revision of theory
- 4) Age Thirty Transition

Social Support

- 1) Female developmental theory, attachment and affiliation
- 2) Object Relations vis-à-vis transitional phenomena and Adult development
- 3) Social support and African Americans

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This adult developmental study on African American professional women utilizes the theoretical concepts of Daniel Levinson as a framework for analyzing a discrete developmental period--the Age Thirty Transition. A brief overview of early theorists is offered. Included are critiques of Levinson's theory in reference to female adult development, as well as additions by Levinson regarding adult development vis-à-vis gender differences.

Adult developmental theory to which Daniel Levinson has made seminal contributions, has its structural beginnings in longitudinal studies which began in the 1920's (Rossi, 1980). Researchers and theorists in decades past like Charlotte Buhler (1935), with her life span research of over 400 biographies of adult lives; Carl Jung(1933) and Eric Erikson(1959) have laid the theoretical groundwork from which adult developmental theory emerges (Kimmel, 1980).

EARLY THEORISTS

Psychoanalyst Carl Jung utilized his clinical experience to postulate those subtle and substantive personality changes may occur during the middle and later years of life. Jung argued that there were different developmental tasks to be addressed at different ages in one's life. This perspective which was a precursor to the idea of developmental tasks across the life span is reflected in his statement that "We cannot live the afternoon of life according the programme of life's morning; for what was great in the morning will be little at evening and what in the morning was true will at evening have become a lie" (Jung, 1933).

Erikson's (1976) stage theory of development divides the life span into discrete stages from infancy through old age. Of importance to this study are the three of Erikson's eight stages of development that occur during adulthood:

Stage six - Intimacy vs. Isolation

Stage seven - Generativity vs. Stagnation

Stage eight - Integrity vs. Despair

In Erikson's model each stage has a dialectic to be resolved and a resultant characteristic to be incorporated into the ever evolving personality. According to Erikson, when one has resolved the conflict of the dialectic of a given stage, the result is incorporation of a positive characteristic into the personality.

PRECURSORS TO LEVINSON'S THEORY OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Both Erikson and Levinson developed stage related theories with an emphasis on the developmental tasks to be negotiated during each stage or phase (Levinson, 1986).

Precursors to Levinson's stage theory of adult development are to be found in Erikson's dialectics of stages Six, Seven, and Eight. Salient to both theories (and relevant to this study) is the centrality of marriage and family; occupation; aspiration and achievement. The importance of *marriage and family* as a developmental task has psychodynamic roots in Erikson's stage Six--*Intimacy vs. Isolation*. One's ability to separate from the familial nest and establish a home and family of one's own is seen as a critical

developmental task by Levinson. *Generativity vs. Stagnation* or the ability to make meaningful contributions to one's community or society informs Levinson's idea that career and occupational commitment are critical adult developmental milestones. Erikson's premise of *Integrity vs. Despair* seems very related to Levinson's idea of the importance of the formation and actualization of the Dream in the individual's life structure. Forming a Dream is part of the task of consolidating an adult identity. The individual's hopes, aspirations and possibilities are the beacon and frame upon which the life structure is built, and upon which it takes shape. Failure to have the life structure reflect the Dream in significant ways can have repercussions—which can possibly precipitate developmental crisis at different transitional periods in the life course.

Life Span Research perspectives in Adult Development

There are two basic descriptive models utilized in adult development/life span research literature, which Rossi (1980) identifies in an overview article of women's lives and life span research. The two models are:

- 1) the timing of events model and
- 2) the normative/crisis model.

Underlying the **timing of events model** is the assumption that no general plan or stages exist; but that individuals' lives are synchronous or asynchronous with expected life events in the context of cultural norms (i.e. to be married by a certain age, having chosen a career by a certain time, etc.). The timing of events perspective states that developmental crisis in adulthood is precipitated by asynchronicity with the social/cultural clock.

An example of asynchronicity would be childbearing earlier or later than culturally or socially accepted norms. Hence an early adolescent pregnancy or pregnancy in the late 40's might present different stressful developmental challenges for a woman (around issues of employment, education etc.) from an individual and family systems perspective.

The normative/crisis model posits that not only are there sequences or stages through which everyone passes, but that the stages are hierarchical. Successful progression to later developmental stages is contingent on resolution and completion of earlier stages or sequences. In attempting to reach resolution

at any given stage, re-evaluation and/or crisis can develop which is seen as a normative process of development (Rossi, 1980).

Though Levinson's theory can be categorized under the normative/crisis model, his conceptualization of the progression through the adult developmental stages is one of successive rather than hierarchical progression (Levinson, 1986). Each stage or phase builds upon the preceding one, but one stage or phase is not more advanced or higher-levelled than any other (as opposed to a model like Piaget's). As Levinson's model does not utilize the pathology/health axis, successful negotiation of a stage is largely an internal subjective measure—determined by the suitability and viability of the life structure to oneself and the external world (Levinson, 1978).

LEVINSON'S THEORY OF ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Daniel Levinson, a life span theorist who utilises the normative/crisis model has made seminal contributions to the adult development literature. He systematically analysed adulthood from a developmental perspective in The Seasons of a Man's Life. Levinson

(1978) argues that adulthood is more than just the product of resolutions and re-enactment of childhood conflicts. Utilising the notion of 'life cycle' Levinson believes that the individual's life unfolds in stages with discrete eras or "seasons" which are qualitatively different from each other. Though the eras are roughly twenty-five years in length, the progression from one era to the next is marked by transition periods that precede and overlap the successive era.

The delineation of the life cycle into discrete developmental periods is one of Levinson's contributions to the body of adult development literature--the notion of age linked adult developmental periods. Central to Levinson's theory of adult development are the following points:

- 1) the premise that there are subtle and ever-evolving psychosocial changes in the adult personality and character, and that this feature is universal
- 2) that the changes in adulthood are consequent to discrete age linked developmental tasks

- 3) that there are alternating periods of stability and transition across the span of adult years for every individual

Levinson (1978) proposes that the life structure-- "the underlying pattern or design of a person's life at a given time" unfolds or evolves in an orderly sequence; and that the developmental periods with the consequent developmental tasks are common to all. The orderly sequence, through which the life structure evolves is marked by alternating periods of stability, and transition periods marked by change. There are developmental tasks and challenges specific to each Era and Transition period.

Table 1. SCHEMATIC OF LEVINSON'S DEVELOPMENTAL ERAS

Developmental Eras	
Childhood & Adolescence 0 -- 22 years	Early Adulthood 17 -- 45 years
Middle Adulthood 45 -- 60 years	Late Adulthood 60 years -

|

The Era specific to this study is the Early Adulthood Era which is comprised of the following stable and transitional periods:

Table 2. SUB-PHASES OF THE EARLY ADULTHOOD ERA

<p>Early Adult Transition 17 -- 22 years</p>	<p>Entering the Adult World 22 -- 28 years</p>
<p>Age Thirty Transition 28 -- 33 years</p>	<p>Settling Down 33 -- 41 years</p>

The Early Adulthood phase of development is composed of several sub-phases, some of which are structure building and others that are used to adjust or change the life structure.

The tasks of the **Early Adult Transition**, which is the first sub-phase of Early Adulthood, involve separating from pre-adult institutions and relationships and exploring choices for the consolidation of an adult identity.

Entering the Adult World begins around age twenty-two and ends roughly around age twenty-eight. The individual may make initial choices regarding occupation, relationships, life style, etc. The task of this phase is to create a stable life structure, but at the same time have enough flexibility to explore alternatives and options regarding career, family, peer relationships, etc.

From roughly age twenty-eight to thirty-three during the **Age Thirty Transition** an individual has an opportunity to modify or expand upon choices made regarding the life structure. An evaluation of one's choices may prompt the individual to make commitments or change the direction of life choices. The Age Thirty Transition serves as the link between the structure building phase of Entering the Adult World with its provisional quality and the initiation of the Settling Down period when the provisional quality of the preceding phase becomes more stable.

Features of Transitional periods

The transition periods can proceed smoothly or be problematic. An individual experiencing a smooth transition makes minor adjustments to the life structure. Basically, choices around occupation, marriage, family and friendship are consonant with the individual's strivings. Difficulties may arise when the individual's strivings and the actual life structure are in conflict.

When one's view of one's self in the world or the Dream (see next section) are dissonant with the elements of the life structure (occupation, relationships, etc.), one can experience developmental crisis (Levinson, 1978). Crisis is not an inherently adverse event. Levinson proposes that it is one's response to the dissonance or crisis and one's attempt at adaptation and adjustment of the life structure (or perspective) that is important. "No matter how satisfactory a structure is, in time its utility declines and its flaws generate conflict that leads to modification or transformation of the structure" (Levinson, 1978, p. 54).

The psychological implications of a developmental

crisis are that the individual may feel, albeit temporarily, unable to successfully meet the current developmental tasks and feel 'stuck' (Levinson, 1978). Conversely, crisis can precipitate action to change untenable aspects of the life structure. During the transition periods, the individual either chooses to make major changes and work through the conflict or risk re-emergence of the conflict at later developmental periods (Levinson, et al., 1978). When the Age Thirty Transition is difficult or stressful, it is termed the Age Thirty Crisis.

Developmental Tasks of the Novice Phase

During the Novice Phase (which is composed of the Early Adult Transition, Entering the Adult World and the Age Thirty Transition), the individual has several major tasks to accomplish. The tasks identified by Levinson (1978) are:

- 1. Forming a Dream and giving it a place in the Life structure**

The Dream, which seems to be a combination of an individual's strivings and vision of themselves in the world, hopefully develops from a vague notion to an

actualised and attainable component of the life structure. Developmental crisis can arise when an individual's Dream remains vague, is in conflict with the life structure or is perceived as being unattainable.

2. Forming Mentor Relationships

The mentor as part teacher, advisor and sponsor assists the individual with the realization and actualization of the Dream. The relationship with the mentor who is usually older than the protégé serves to solidify and reinforce the protégé's experience of himself as capable and effective in the adult world. The relationships can last from 2 - 10 years with average relationship length of Levinson's sample lasting about 3 years. Levinson admits that women may experience less mentoring than men--especially same gender mentoring. One rationale Levinson gives about same gender mentoring for women involves the scarcity of senior and accomplished women to sponsor younger women especially in male-dominated professions during the 1970's. Most women in positions of power (presumably in male-dominated work sectors) may have been more involved in survival and protecting their positions and less able to mentor others (Levinson,

1978).

3. Forming An Occupation

The task of forming an occupation occurs during the Early Adult Transition through the Age Thirty Transition. Though choosing and developing an occupation may be relatively clear cut with some people, establishing and forming a career is often a complex and on-going task with revisions along the way.

While career choices are made hopefully by the end of the Novice Phase, Levinson warns that an individual who makes an occupational choice/commitment too early in the Novice Phase may regret the decision later in life.

4. Forming Love Relationships, Marriage and Family

The task of separating one's self from the family of origin in order to establish mature healthy intimate relationships which lead to marriage and establishing a family is also part of the Novice Phase. In Levinson's research 'family' is defined as the traditional nuclear constellation; however, the underlying apparent task is that of establishing a healthy ability for intimacy outside of the family of origin.

The psychological implications of meeting the

developmental challenges and negotiating the developmental tasks of the Novice Phase are apparent. Creating psychological space between one's self and one's family of origin, while potentially anxiety provoking, requires that one consolidate an adult identity that incorporates parental and societal values, ethics, beliefs as well as self-forged values.

The Novice Phase highlights the dynamic between independence and interdependence.

WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY - ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Writers like Gilligan (1982) and Chodorow (1978) have viewed women's development through societal and intrapsychic lenses, with emphases on the importance of relationships in women's development and perception of themselves. One contribution of these two self-in-relations theorists is their observation that developmental theory dating back to Freud (1927) has not adequately addressed the differences in male and female development without bias (i.e. viewing women's development as less evolved or regressive).

Chodorow (1978) examines the effects and differences of the mothering process on personality

development and the individuation process for girls and boys. "Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (or of thinking that one is so experiencing another's needs and feelings). Furthermore, girls do not define themselves in terms of the denial of pre-oedipal relational modes to the same extent as do boys.

Therefore, regression to these modes tends not to feel as much a basic threat to their ego. From very early, then, because they are parented by a person of the same gender...girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world, and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well" (Chodorow, 1978, p.167)

Central to the concept of women possessing a relational self (Gilligan, 1982) is the idea that women's self concept and identity are tied to their ability and tendency (through societal reinforcement) to form and foster relationships. "Consequently, relationships, and particularly issues of dependency, are experienced differently by women and men. For boys and men, separation and individuation are critically tied to gender identity since separation from the

mother is essential for the development of masculinity.

For girls and women, issues of femininity or feminine identity do not depend on achievement of separation from the mother or on the progress of individuation. Since masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment, male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation. Thus males tend to have difficulty with relationships, while females tend to have problems with individuation. The quality in social interaction and personal relationships that characterizes women's lives in contrast to men's, however, becomes not only a descriptive difference but also a developmental liability when the milestones of childhood and adolescent development in the psychological literature are markers of increasing separation" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 8-9). The concept of the relational self (and the implied differences) becomes important as its presence impacts in several ways how a woman negotiates the developmental tasks of forming a Dream and forming an occupation. Though Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) are not addressing the Levinsonian model of development directly, the implications are that female and male development from

childhood through adulthood proceeds with different foci and emphases. In essence, from a societal, developmental and individual perspective, the issue of gender is critical.

Women's development and formation of the Dream

The research sample for Levinson's first study was exclusively male and predominantly white, which has been a source of controversy regarding his theory's applicability to women (Roberts & Newton, 1987). In a review article that examines four unpublished dissertations that utilize Levinson's theory to study women's development, Roberts & Newton (1987) found that the age linked stages of development were roughly the same for the women studied as for Levinson's sample. The four researchers reviewed in the article found "overwhelming corroborative evidence of an Age Thirty Transition in the lives of their female subjects" (Roberts & Newton, 1987). While all researchers found evidence of an Age Thirty Transition, the focus and/or developmental tasks of the Age Thirty Transition were perceived somewhat differently by each researcher. The data of the different researchers highlight gender differences regarding the manner in which developmental

tasks were approached and the consequent outcomes during the Age Thirty Transition. In summary, the four researchers found the following:

- Stewart(1977) - women formed more complex Dreams than men with relational and individual components
- Droege(1982) - women experienced a reversal of priorities during the Age Thirty Transition around issues of work and love
- Furst (1983) - women incorporated neglected components of the Dream during the Age Thirty Transition
- Adams (1983) - support for evidence of the Age Thirty Transition for African American female sample

Wendy Stewart (1977) in her dissertation on the formation of the early adult life structure in women, examined Levinson's concept of the Dream and the concept's applicability to women's lives. She categorized women's Dreams in three ways.

- A) *Individualistic* - a Dream in which the woman imagined herself as independent and achieving

occupational success

B) *Relational* - a Dream which contained images of the self primarily in relation to others (i.e. wife, mother, etc.)

C) *Split Dream* - a Dream that contains both individualistic and relational themes

Of the thirty-nine women studied in Roberts & Newton's (1987) review article only seven articulated individualistic dreams. Six formed relational dreams, four formed no dream and the remaining twenty articulated dreams with both individualistic and relational components. Roberts & Newton (1987) found that as with Levinson's subjects, developmentally, formulation of a dream was a central task of early adulthood for women. One of the gender differences highlighted is the greater complexity of women's dreams. Whereas the women's Dreams could contain individualistic and relational components, Levinson's male subjects tended to articulate individualistic Dreams. "Although men's dreams contained relational elements, the relatively low priority of these concerns was reflected in lives that were bound up in the establishment and maintenance of careers" (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

Droege's (1982) data suggests that the relational aspect of women's dreams influence life choices beyond the Mid-Life Transition even as the women attempt to actualize the individualistic components of their dreams. Marriage and family impacted on the self-perception of occupational achievement and choices for Droege's twelve subjects.

An additional finding noted by both Droege (1982) and Furst (1983) was that "many husbands seemed to actively thwart their wives attempts to pursue interests outside of the home" (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

In essence, marriage made it more difficult for some women to pursue the individualistic aspects of their dreams, including career goals. Roberts & Newton (1987) add that "...although children clearly complicated a woman's ability to attend to the individualistic components of her dream, it was the husband who actively blocked his wife's pursuits". As Furst put it, husbands rather than children appeared to be the most serious obstacle to the fulfilment of the individualistic aspects of women's dreams.

Kittrell (1998) argues that a comparison of the Dream development of Levinson's male subjects (Levinson, 1978) with the Dreams of his female subjects

(Levinson, 1996) reveals that the women tended to develop individualistic Dreams during the Age Thirty Transition—later than their male counterparts.

Kittrell (1998) believes that the lack of mentors coupled with "a priori commitments to marriage and family" (p. 113) resulted in the delayed development of the individualistic/occupational Dreams of Levinson's female sample. Kittrell further adds that though Levinson's female sample was part of a cohort of women born between 1935 - 1945 for whom marriage and family were expected priorities, the complexity of women's Dreams (the relational and individualistic components); the attempts at balancing the components; and the ensuing conflict that can arise, still impact on Dream and life course development for younger women.

Women's Development and Mentor Relationships

Levinson (1978) suggested that the opportunity to develop mentor relationships for women with other women was practically non-existent, because of the relative absence of women in positions of influence in the workplace. This observation is probably less valid now because of women's advancement in the workplace;

however, it is likely that a disparity between male and female mentorship still exists. Women may be mentored by men, however cross gender mentoring can be potentially vulnerable to disruption by sexual attraction on both sides (Levinson, 1978).

The research of Stewart (1977) and Furst (1983) supports Levinson's statements regarding women and mentoring. Both found that the women " with relational dreams cited role models but did not form mentor relationships in their 20's" (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

Women with individualistic dreams cited men and women who served as professional role models, but not as true mentors as Levinson used the term.

One can infer that if a mentor is an integral part of assisting the individual in forming an occupation and developing an occupational identity, lack thereof would serve to hinder one's occupational development.

This assumption about the centrality and importance of the mentor for women's development is not reflected in the data examined by Roberts & Newton (1987). They raise the question of the importance of establishing a mentor relationship for women's development since so few of the women in the studies they reviewed actually experienced such a relationship. They concluded that

the meaning of this developmental task for women is largely unexplored.

Women's Development and Forming an Occupation

The complex task of acquiring and committing oneself to a specific profession or career path occupies an individual through the Novice Phase and sometimes beyond. As Levinson (1978) stated, "It is near the end of the Age Thirty Transition that a man can complete his occupational novitiate and assume a fully adult status in their work world". For the women reviewed by Roberts & Newton (1987), forming an occupation could extend into middle age. It appears that child bearing and primary parenting responsibility precluded or interrupted the continuous pursuit of establishing a career by the Age Thirty Transition for most of the women. For the women in Stewart's (1977) study who opted to pursue marriage and family in their 20's, the task of forming an occupation and searching for a mentor began in their 30's - which was also true for some women in Furst's study. Droege found that even for women who had clearly defined and articulated career goals, the occupational novitiate lasted until

age 40 or beyond (Droege, 1982). For women, the task of forming an occupation may extend well beyond the expected occupational novitiate for that of men, especially if the woman is married and/or assuming primary parenting responsibilities. Only the women in Adam's study approximated the developmental task of the occupational novitiate of that of Levinson's sample. The eight women, all attorneys, had very clearly defined educational and professional goals. Unlike Levinson's sample, however, the occupational striving of these women decreased during the Age Thirty Transition and they "...began to seek increased satisfaction from their personal lives and relationships, as opposed to their careers" (Roberts & Newton, 1987).

Women's Development & Search for the Special Man

Similar to the relationship with the mentor, Levinson described another relationship that occurred in the lives of his subjects that he termed the relationship with the Special Woman. Of this Special Woman and her relationship to the man, Levinson states, " The special woman is like the true mentor: her

special quality lies in her connection to the Young Man's Dream. She helps to animate the part of the Self that contains the Dream. She facilitates his entry into the adult world and his pursuit of the Dream" (Levinson, 1978). The Special Woman relationship is not necessarily exclusively that of the marriage partner.

The women in Roberts & Newton's (1987) review were all in search of the analogous Special Man. This search seemed to be intensified for many women around the Age Thirty Transition. Even the attorneys in Adams's (1983) study experienced the desire for marriage, family and their Special Man even though professional training and success was a priority during the 20's. Although some husbands served as transitional figures in their wives' development, few were found to facilitate their wives' Dream or serve as a Special Man in an analogous way to Levinson's notion of the Special Woman. If as Levinson(1978) states the role of the Special Woman is that of a transitional figure—animating and assisting with a man's Dream development and actualization, then the role of the Special Man should be an analogous process for women's Dream development. None of the participants of the

1996 study identified a Special Man. Several possible reasons may account for this phenomenon:

- 1) The socio-cultural environment encouraged subordination of women's Dreams to the Dreams of significant male others.
- 2) The Special Man is not a central animating force in women's Dream development.
- 3) Other facilitators may play a more central role than a Special Man in women's Dream development.

LEVINSON ANSWERS HIS CRITICS

Even before the publication of The Seasons of a Woman's Life (which was published posthumously) Levinson was aware that there were possible limitations for the applicability of his previous study based solely on the lives of men. The Seasons of a Woman's Life, Levinson's study of 45 women, found that the overall developmental eras and sequencing were applicable to women with some distinctions. The study of 15 homemakers and 15 career women highlights how gender impacts on two central components of the life

structure—namely work and family—and how gender issues impact female adult development vis-à-vis culture, individual choices, etc.

Gender and Dream Development

Most noteworthy was Levinson's (1996) observation that gender (vis-à-vis gender roles, social roles, societal expectations, etc.) impacts on how men and women approach and negotiate the same developmental tasks. For example, Levinson acknowledges that Dream development for career oriented women can be a more complicated process than for men. If a career oriented woman wishes to be married, the extent to which she internalizes and balances the homemaker role (if she is in a traditional marriage) versus the career role is a reality that most men have not, until recently, had to make. Even the possibilities that a woman sees for her life professionally is influenced by gender to an extent—perhaps less so now than in previous decades.

As some women began to enter male-dominated occupations, a psychological dialectic surfaced of two internalized female representations reflecting the

changes in women's occupational choices--the *Traditional Homemaker Figure versus the Anti-Traditional Figure* (Levinson, 1996). As the name implies, the Traditional Homemaker Figure is an internalized representation of gender specific roles for women--namely wife and mother. The Traditional Homemaker Figure represents and embodies societal expectations and prescriptions about a woman's role and involvement in the Traditional Marriage Enterprise (with caregiving and family life as the central component of the life structure). The Anti-Traditional Figure represents an attempt to break from traditionalist thinking regarding marriage and occupation in regards to women's lives. This latter representation embodies more independent roles of women who share power, authority and parity with men.

Levinson found that internalizing and integrating the two representations was one important developmental task for the women in his sample (especially in the context of Dream development Levinson, 1996). The manner in which a woman integrates the internal representations and the manner in which that integration is expressed in the life structure directly

impacts on the centrality of work and family in her life structure. Acceptance, rejection or integration of the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure influenced the perception of the women in Levinson's sample regarding their viable family and occupational choices (Levinson, 1996). Integrating the two representations is a psychological analogy to balancing work and love.

As the observations of the 45 women of Levinson's sample represent a cohort of women who were among the first to move into the work force en masse in male dominated professions, does the importance of the Traditional Female Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure still affect Dream development of later cohorts of women in the same manner? Is the dialectic between the two internal representations still as strong for later cohorts of women?

GENDER SPLITTING

Central to Levinson's thesis of female adult development and its variance from male adult development is the construct of gender splitting. He advances that gender splitting is:

"...a sharp division between feminine and masculine that permeates every aspect of human life. Gender splitting takes many forms: the rigid distinction between feminine and masculine in the culture and in the individual psyche; the division between the domestic world and the public occupational world; the Traditional Marriage Enterprise, with its distinction between the male husband/father/provisioner and the female wife/mother/homemaker; the linkage between masculinity and authority, which makes it "natural" that the man be head of household, executive and leader within the occupational domain and predominant in a patriarchal social structure" (Levinson, 1996).

Hence, culture, internal and external expectations shape one's choices, perceived opportunities and consequently one's adult development especially within the context of gender. Culturally defined aspects of gender (i.e. domestic = feminine vs. provisioner = masculine) shape two core components of the adult life structure—marriage/family and work.

The traditional view of marriage and family, which

includes relegating primary domestic and childcare duties to women while men focus on providing the primary income and resources for the family, Levinson terms the *Traditional Marriage Enterprise*. A woman's expectation, participation in or rejection of the Traditional Marriage Enterprise along with management of work/career was the canvas and catalyst for change and growth during the adult developmental years for Levinson's female sample.

TRANSITION PERIODS IN ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Levinson (1996) advances in more depth the concept of transition periods as segues between the more stable developmental eras. While transition periods are often times of tumult and change, Levinson has identified an underlying ordered structure of transition periods including three tasks of termination, individuation and initiation.

Termination

As transition periods are segues between developmental eras, termination involves moving from one developmental era to the next. The life structure,

its components, one's relationships and perhaps even the Dream are reviewed and modified. Modifications inevitably involve shifting and releasing relationships, ideas, etc. that are no longer self-serving—hence an ending or termination is effected.

Individuation

Analogous to the individuation process in child development, Levinson views the process in adulthood as a refinement of the Self versus Other and the external world. The task in adulthood is marked by an attempt to resolve four sets of polarities—Young/Old, Destruction/Creation, Masculine/Feminine and Engagement/Separation.

Initiation

The initiation phase of a transition period involves embracing new possibilities, and facing new developmental challenges especially of the impending developmental era that one may be entering.

WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS DURING THE AGE THIRTY

TRANSITION: FOCUS ON WORK AND LOVE

Transition periods can be marked by a sense of instability and change. The two central areas that surface for reappraisal during the Age Thirty Transition are work and family/love relationships. Reappraisal of the life structure for women negotiating the Age Thirty Transition includes balancing the strivings for career and family. One primary developmental task becomes balancing work and love in the life structure. Another important and related developmental task during the Age Thirty Transition for women, is determining the order of importance that work and family will occupy in the life structure. This task is referred to as the shifting of priorities or reversal of priorities. The researchers in the Roberts & Newton (1987) article, in different ways, conceptualize the attempt to integrate these separate strivings.

The Stewart (1977) study found that subjects experienced a reversal of priorities during the Age Thirty Transition. The women reappraised the role and importance of career and family in their lives. Those

who opted for a more traditional lifestyle (marriage and family) tended to have goals and aspirations of a more individualistic nature during their 30's; while women who were more career oriented began to focus more on marriage and family during the Age Thirty Transition.

The Droege (1982) study was not designed to identify the Age Thirty Transition per se, but several of Droege's subjects reported reversal of priorities during the time frame characterized by the Age Thirty Transition.

Furst (1983) found that her subjects rather than experiencing priority reversal, merely added components or changed components of their lives that were intolerable or not working. One of the major tasks or life changes that occurred with these women involved attending more directly to aspects of the Dream that were "self-generated rather than reactive" (Roberts & Newton, 1987). Furst (1983) felt that while the reactive components of a woman's Dream may take precedence over more individualistic aspects, during the Age Thirty Transition the more individualistic components surface.

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The focus of Adams's (1983) study was to examine the Age Thirty Transition and the impact of racism and the Civil Rights Movement on the adult development of Black professional women. All but one of her subjects experienced a shifting of priority from career to marriage. For Adams's (1983) subjects the shift in priorities created considerable conflict and ambivalence about curtailing career goals and advancement.

Webb et al. (unpublished paper) found that the women in their study evidenced what was characterized as an attempt to achieve a balance between work and love during the Age Thirty Transition. From ages 20 - 28, the women in Webb's study focused more on career or intimate/family relationships. During the Age Thirty Transition, the women for whom marriage and family was the central component began to focus more on developing and integrating career goals into the life structure. The career oriented women began to devote more time to intimate relationships, marriage or family. Webb viewed the developmental tasks of the Age Thirty Transition as a time for women to "...achieve a greater balance between love and work, to regain neglected

parts of herself, and to broaden her areas of competence" (Webb, unpublished paper). Levinson's 1996 study supports previous research (Stewart, 1977; Droege, 1982; Furst, 1983; Adams, 1983) that developmentally, women reappraise and attempt to configure (if necessary) work and family/love relationships in a way that is syntonic with the Dream and goals for their life structures during the Age Thirty Transition.

Modifications to Levinson's Theory of The Age Thirty Transition

The fifteen homemakers and thirty career women in Levinson's (1996) sample made changes in the life structure during the Age Thirty Transition. His findings support the data of the aforementioned studies (Stewart, 1977; Droege, 1982; Adams, 1983) regarding the reappraisal and adjustment of the core components of work and love during the Age Thirty Transition. For the homemaker sample all fifteen women reappraised their Traditional Marriage Enterprise; limited their domestic involvement and expanded their participation in the occupational world. Levinson (1996) identified

three patterns that categorically describe the homemakers' relationship to love and work:

- Pattern A. Married Women Who Made Family and Occupation Co-central Components
- Pattern B. Married Women Who Kept Homemaking Central But Reduced Their Involvement in Family
- Pattern C. Women Who got Legally or Psychologically Divorced

Reappraisals and changes were also evident for most of the women in the career sample. By the end of the Age Thirty Transition, most of the career women had made significant changes in the life structure including getting married; embarking on a new job or career; getting divorced; having children or ending a serious matrimonial relationship. For the women who were married and/or with children, balancing family and career as co-central components of the life structure was extremely challenging. For some of the career women who had previously envisioned career and family as mutually exclusive central components of the life structure, the Anti-Traditional Dream of career success coupled with participation in a Neo-Traditional Marriage Enterprise became (at least mentally if not practically) a possibility.

Psychological Implications during Adult Development

The developmental tasks of the Novice Phase (of which the Age Thirty Transition is a part) are varied and complex. From a psychosocial perspective, the tasks of Forming a Dream, Forming Mentor Relationships, Forming an Occupation and Forming Love Relationships, Marriage & Family are formidable challenges. In addition, from an intrapsychic perspective the primary task of reappraisal during the Age Thirty Transition encompasses shifts from dependency to independence to interdependence. Not only does the individual life structure undergo possible alteration, but one's relationship to significant others and the world (institutions, etc.) often change during the Age Thirty Transition.

Shift from Dependency to Independence to Interdependency

In The Essential Other (Galatzer-Levy & Cohler 1993), the premise of the authors is that the theoretical paradigm of autonomy as an adult developmental milestone, is at odds with the reality of today's American family. "The essential other is our experiences of other people, and entities in the environment, that supports the sense of a coherent and vigorous self and its development. The essential other refers to an experience in the psychological life of the individual, not to the external reality of those people. We believe that the support of the self is always part of a total experience of other people and entities. This function is never isolated from the additional meaning these others have" (Galatzer-Levy & Cohler, 1993, p.3). The separation/individuation model does not explain the interdependent and reciprocal ways in which adult offspring and parents care for each other. The Essential Other explores the role of others

(people and institutions) in relation to the development of the self across the life span. As the young woman moves into Early Adulthood and beyond, she incorporates the values and attitudes of her essential others into her life. Having left the family of origin the young woman internalizes the values and standards of the essential others and attempts to organize her life around those or some modification of those standards. After consolidating an independent adult identity, one among many tasks is to form an attachment to a significant other, and establish an interdependence with others that does not negate her independence or aspects of her core self.

ATTACHMENT, AFFILIATION AND FEMALE DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

As previously mentioned, an examination of the female adult developmental process must be viewed in the context of relationships in the lives of women. Over the past two decades with the advancement of research literature on the psychology of women, attachment and

affiliation have come to be recognized as central to women's development. Psychoanalytic theory in the past has stressed autonomy (A. Freud, 1962 Bowlby,) separation and individuation (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975) as indicators of developmental maturity. Self-in-relation theorists (Chodorow, 1978; Miller, 1976; Gilligan, 1982) stress the importance of attachment rather than autonomy as critical to women's development.

Notman et al. (1986) in their article on female development reiterate the importance of attachment and affiliation. The concept of autonomy vs. affiliation as it is used in relation to adult developmental theory may be an improper characterization of a multi-faceted dynamic according to the authors. Notman et al. (1986) add that both autonomy and affiliation serve normative functions in adult female development. They state "...there is an emphasis on the attainment of differentiation and separation which becomes equated with independence". Conversely, desire for attachment and affiliation can be viewed as regressive - less than desirable. " A woman's optimal functioning emerges in part from interactions between individuals as well as

from her self concept as someone connected to others. Thus, a woman's relational ties are a major component of her self esteem" (Notman, et al., 1986).

Thus when examining the adult female developmental process, the woman's life in the context of family and other relationships as well as strivings for autonomy should be examined.

TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA AND ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Levinson realized that adult developmental process like child developmental process was integrally related to having supportive significant 'others' servings as facilitators and catalyts. He likened Dream development and the mentor relationship of the Novice phase to the transitional phenomena described by Winnicott (1960). Levinson (1978) envisioned Dream development and the mentor's relationship to the Dream as analogous to Winnicott's transitional phenomena of 'good enough mothering' and a 'good enough holding environment'.

Winnicott's (1960) contribution to psychoanalytic and child development theory center around his observation and description of the process of the emergence of the "separateness of the self" from others and the environment. The process of differentiation begins with the mother/child dyad—with the mother providing a "holding environment" in which the infant can gradually come to experience his separateness

(1965). The complex and intricate process of an infant in 'becoming his own person' involves the infant's ability to negotiate and balance feelings of omnipotence with responsiveness and integration of experiences of the 'real world'. The mother as the facilitator of the differentiation process provides, if the holding environment is adequate, the possibility for the child to utilize transitional phenomena -namely transitional objects to further demarcate self from other.

The nature of transitional phenomena and transitional objects is explained by Greenberg and Mitchell (1983):

"The emergence of the person entails a movement from a state of illusory omnipotence, in which the infant, through the mother's facilitation, feels he creates and controls all features of the world he lives in, to a state of objective perception, in which the infant accepts the limits of his powers and becomes aware of the independent existence of others. The move between these states is not a one-way, linear progression; both children and adults continually vacillate between them."

Thus, the child's ability to separate the 'me from the 'not me' is contingent on creating a mental space where transitional objects have characteristics of both an illusory and reality based nature. If the holding environment is adequate, or provides "good-enough-

mothering, normal development allows the 'true self' to emerge". (Winnicott 1960). However, a faulty or deficient environment (i.e. poor facilitation) can result in the development of a "false self" that appears more reactive and responsive to the external environment than to the needs, desires and drives of the "true self" (Winnicott 1960).

Levinson's Dream development is analogous to transitional phenomena in several ways. First, the mentor or facilitator of the Dream serves as the 'good enough' mother, helping the individual carve out an adult identity. The vast pool of possible careers and directions is narrowed until the resonant path or direction is chosen (the adult 'me'). In the language of transitional phenomena the mentor assists the mentee in separating the adult 'not me' in all its variations from the true adult self or 'me'. This differentiation process and the role of the mentor/facilitator is important to this study. This study seeks to examine the role of social support on the qualitative experience of the Age Thirty Transition. Specifically, the study examines the role of mentors and facilitators on Dream actualization. Do the participants receive

'good enough' mentoring/facilitation to actualize components of the Dream?

Secondly, the transitional phenomena of childhood with its 'good enough environment' involves the child's ability to utilize transitional objects in a way that is both fantasy and reality based. The child is allowed and encouraged to play, explore and experience the 'not me' (fantasy) juxtaposed with reality based experiences (the 'me'). These flexible boundaries and experiences help to consolidate the identity and self. Levinson does not extend his Dream development analogy to this extent, but Ogilvy (1983) argues that the application of the analogy of the 'good enough' environment with room for exploration in adulthood is an apt one.

Ogilvy and Transitional Phenomena

In her dissertation on women's Dreams and adult development, Ogilvy(1983) elaborates on the idea of the Dream and its development as transitional phenomena.

She postulates that Levinson did not go far enough in exploring the applicability of Winnicott's theory of transitional phenomena to the adult developmental process—and most specifically to the process of Dream development. Like the infant's use of ...“a neutral area of experience which will not be challenged...”

(Winnicott, 1971 p. 12), Ogilvy views Dream development and its facilitation as a process which utilizes an intermediate/creative/potential space that is both reality and fantasy based from which the life structure (and consequently the Dream) takes shape. The individual through exploration, trial and error and with support (from a mentor or other) creates, refines and shapes the Dream and the life structure from the area between the adult 'me' and 'not-me'. When examining the Dreams of the eight participants in this study one can ask if they allow themselves enough 'creative space' to test out alternative Dreams; or do they narrow the range of possibilities prematurely. Levinson (1978) warns that choosing too quickly or narrowing one's options too early in the Novice phase can lead to a Dream and life structure that are discordant.

AFFILIATION VIS-A-VIS SOCIAL SUPPORT

Women's Dreams, sense of self, and development are integrally connected to relationships with others. The psycho-social construct of social support is a useful tool in examining the relationships in a woman's life and the possible impact of the support on her development.

Social support can be viewed as a 'meta-construct' encompassing several dimensions (Cook & Campbell, 1979) Vaux et al. (1986) and House & Kahn (1985) outline several components of social support which are useful.

Vaux et al. (1986) view the components of social support as:

- 1) support network resources
- 2) specific supportive acts
- 3) subjective appraisals of support

House & Kahn (1985) identify social support of three types:

- 1) Existence - which involves one's interpersonal relationships

- 2) Supportive Content - which includes emotional or financial support, services or skills
- 3) Network Structure Support - which includes features of both Existence & Supportive Content as well as family values, etc.

A working definition of social support utilizes the overlapping enumerated components above. Social support and social support systems for the purpose of this study are defined as acts, whether emotional or tangible, which are provided by family members, friends, associates, etc., to assist the participants in a benevolent manner.

Importance of Social Support

Much of the research on social support assumes that having a social network of supportive others assists in buffering against stress (Brown & Gary, 1985). Vaux et al. (1986) argues that one's subjective appraisal of support--the perception that one is indeed cared for, loved, esteemed, etc.--is critical in predicting an individual's well-being. Other studies which support the importance of perceptions of support as a source of well-being

include Hirsch, 1980; Barera, 1981; Procidano & Heller, 1983; Sarason, Levine, Basham & Sarason, 1983. It is assumed conversely that the lack of social support systems increases one's vulnerability to stress and lowers psychological well-being (Brown & Gary, 1985).

Importance of Social Support to African Americans

Research suggests that for Black individuals family support is critical--more so than any other type of support (Brown & Gary, 1985; Raymond, Rhoades & Raymond, 1980; Cauce, Felner & Primavera, 1982). More recent studies and literature provide evidence of the importance and magnitude of social support networks for African Americans. The informal social support network can include family, extended family, fictive kin, neighbors, church members, etc (Taylor et. al, 2001). Extended family networks can be a prominent source of tangible and emotional support (Hatchett et. al, 1991; Hatchett, Cochran & Jackson, 1991; Taylor & Chatters, 1989). The importance and benefits (such as well-being) of social support resources and family/friend

support networks has been well documented (Campbell, 1981).

In terms of social support Brown & Gary's (1985) findings indicate that non-married Black women utilize family relationships as 'first closest relationship in lieu of a spouse. Other than first closest relationship, married and non-married Black women utilized family support systems in much the same way and with the same frequency. This underscores the importance of family support systems regardless of marital status for Black women.

In the social support literature, there is considerable evidence that the marriage relationship is one of the most important as it relates to individual subjective well-being (Taylor et. al, 2001). A 1991 study by Broman found higher levels of well-being in married versus non-married adults. Other studies support findings that marriage enhances well-being across emotional, psychological and physical domains (Coombs, 1991; Horwitz, White-Raskin, & White-Howell, 1996; Waite, 1995).

Citing statistics from the Bureau of the Census , Brown & Gary (1985) infer that almost two-thirds of

Black women will be "without access to a primary source of social support traditionally afforded adult females in our society". Brown & Gary (1985) state that Black women are statistically more likely than other women to spend part or all of their lives being unmarried for several reasons which include unemployment and incarceration of eligible partners, high divorce rates and marital separation.

Though the above statistics are dated, recent statistics reflect declining and worsening trends regarding the marriage bond for African American women over the past twenty-five years--trends which deleteriously affect the African American community at large (King, 1999). "According to the U.S. Bureau of Census, in 2000, 16% of African American males were married, as compared to 60% of whites; 37% of African American females were married (nearly twice as many unmarried) as compared to 57% of white females" (King, 1999). By 1993, households comprising husband and wife represented only 39% of African American households, down from 78% in 1960 (Billingsley & Morrison-Rodriguez, 1998).

One can ask, if the marriage relationship plays

such and important role in the social support and well-being of an individual, and the marriage trend is decreasing for African American women, what is the potential impact on a single, never-married African American woman developmentally, socially, and emotionally? The implications are not necessarily grim for the never-married, childless African American woman, as King points out in his 1999 study. ...the quality of life for never-married women who do not have dependent children is not negatively affected to the same degree as divorced/separated mothers and/or single-parent women.

One of the reasons that never-married, childless women avoid the problems that their separated/divorced and/or single-mother counterparts experience is because many never-married, childless women develop a social network of supportive relationships among neighbors, family members (mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers), and friends" (James et al., 1996; Thompson-Seaborn & Ensminger, 1989). "For the most part, these relationships reduce the social isolation many single women ordinarily experience, and these relationships provide them with important social, psychological and

practical support traditionally provided through marriage" (King, 1999).

LEVINSON'S THEORY AND BLACK ADULT DEVELOPMENT

There exist relatively few published studies on Black women or men from an adult developmental perspective (Ruffin, 1985). Some studies (Staples, 1973; McAdoo, 1981; Burlew, 1982; Fleming, 1983; Simms, 1986) which focus on various components under the rubric of adult developmental issues like social role, employment, aging, etc., do not necessarily utilize Levinsonian developmental theory when examining a solely Black subject pool. Though there is a body of literature and studies which utilize the Levinsonian model of adult development, (Srebnick, 2001; Ly, 2000; Artson, 1993; Brunson, 1993; Veeder, 1991) few studies exist which solely examine an African American female sample (Ruffin, 1985; Adams, 1983). Generalizing results from one population to a different population has inherent problems, as Coleman, et al. (1987) state in their research on middle aged and older Black women and social role. As Reginald Jones (1989) points out in

Black Adult Development & Aging, "There clearly are areas of the Black experience that are unique to Black Americans alone and therefore must be dealt with if a reasonably accurate picture of Black adult development is to be drawn. In particular, history and the impact of racism are two variables that must be accounted for in theories and explanations. How racism impacts on health and medical care, employment opportunities, career development, and identity development, to name a few areas, must be incorporated into extant theories and models of Black adult development".

Two studies that have utilized Levinson's model of adult development to examine the lives of exclusively Black samples are those of Ruffin (1985) and

Gooden (1989). Gooden states that while his research cannot be generalized to all Black men, Levinson's theory was useful in describing and understanding developmental issues in the lives of those he studied.

The lives of Gooden's interviewees followed the general periods and eras suggested by Levinson, but differences were also noted. One difference noted by Gooden was:

- 1) A subgroup of Gooden's sample ("street men") were found to exhibit a chaotic and unstructured life pattern at a time in their lives when structure and stability would be most expected.

Ruffin (1985) who also utilized an adult developmental perspective examined Black professional women as a subgroup with attention to (1) male-female relationships within the Black sub-culture; (2) occupational patterns among Black women and (3) socio-historical perspectives of Black women in America.

The study examined the interaction of age, gender, social class, culture and race / ethnicity in the context of adult development. As in the Gooden (1989) study, Ruffin found support for some of Levinson's premises on development for her sample, but there were also differences.

Ruffin (1985) found that some of the women's lives that she and others studied (Stewart, 1977; Taylor, 1981) did not follow the progression of alternating stable and transitional periods as Levinson's (1978) theory suggests. Examination of the life cycle of Ruffin's sample showed evidence of variability in the timing of accomplishing developmental tasks as compared to Levinson's male sample. Half of Ruffin's sample made changes to the life structure during the Settling Down period, which according to the Levinson's theory, should be a time of stability. In addition, Ruffin questioned the universality of the age-linked sequences. "Most probably, development proceeds along the staircase pattern which Levinson describes when lives are firmly anchored in a stable occupational identity. When individuals initiate major revisions in occupational identities and perhaps, other identities, development is unlikely to proceed along the lines of age-linked periods" (Ruffin, 1989).

Ruffin's dissertation also examined the effect of racial identity on the adult developmental process of her sample. Her eight subjects were part of a cohort

of women born between 1934 - 1941 whose adult years unfolded during a period of change for women socially and occupationally. Socio-cultural influences impacted on the Dream formation, occupations and marriage/family choices for Ruffin's subjects. Their Dreams included images of occupational success, and they were socialized to believe in the importance of education as a means to economic independence. These women were also socialized to perceive of themselves as androgynous in a positive sense and were able to easily integrate occupational identities as part of their self-image. All of Ruffin's subjects made occupational choices in female-dominated fields in which Black women's numbers were well represented (i.e. nursing, teaching, social work). Other socio-cultural factors influenced the developmental task of forming a marriage and family for the sample (i.e. a disproportionate number of Black females to males; a decline in husband-wife Black families; an increase in unpaired Black women; Rodgers-Rose, 1980). The result was that by the end of the Novice Phase most of Ruffin's subjects were..."pursuing lives in which autonomy and independence were emphasized. Marriages were viewed as either

unattainable, undesirable, or impossible to sustain. We suggest that the most primary developmental task of significance to these women's lives was forming the capability of adult peer relations with men, and increasing the capacity for heterosexual intimacy" (Ruffin, 1989).

There were similarities and differences in the findings of Ruffin (1985) and Levinson (1996) regarding adult female development. Levinson's study corroborates Ruffin's earlier study and thesis that cohort, gender and socio-cultural factors impact on the developmental process of women. Ruffin contends, for example, gender, vis-a-vis sex role socialization may have played a major role in the occupational patterns of the Black professional women in her study. She cites Hill, 1972; Turner, 1978; and Epstein, 1973 as support that Black women are often socialized in the Black family (possibly due to economic and social reasons) to be achievement and work oriented. Both Levinson and Ruffin realized that their samples represented cohorts impacted by the women's rights and civil rights movements--cohorts of women with unprecedented options and choices in their adult lives.

While Ruffin found that not all the women in her sample experienced the alternation between stable and transitional periods as Levinson's sample, all the women in her study experienced the destabilizing period of the Age Thirty Transition, with five of the eight women experiencing major shifts and/or disruption in the life structure (Ruffin, 1989).

QUESTIONS/IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

In an attempt to develop an analytical framework which utilizes an adult developmental perspective as well as findings on social support for examining the Age Thirty Transition for single, professional African-American women, several questions arise which may be useful.

- 1) Do inner conflicts arise from the striving for independence from the family of origin, and the need for family support?
- 2) What role does social support play in the Dream development of these African American women?
- 3) Is Dream development negatively impacted if social support is absent?

- 4) Given the dearth of suitable or available partners for single professional African American women, are there differences in the importance of marriage and family for them during the Age Thirty Transition?
- 5) Would Webb's (unpublished paper) paradigm of balance between love and work be applicable to single, professional African American women negotiating the Age Thirty Transition?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research seeks to study single, professional African-American women during the Age Thirty Transition period, giving particular attention to the character and quality of the subject's transition experience.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study will examine the qualitative aspects of the Age Thirty Transition, such as the participants' perception of the process, the

actualization of the Dream, and the character and utilization of social support systems.

The scope of this study will include:

I. Examination of Developmental Tasks

- A) Forming a Dream and giving it a place in the life structure
- B) Forming Mentor Relationships
- C) Forming An Occupation
- D) Forming Love Relationships, Marriage and Family

II. Examination of Qualitative Aspects of the Age

Thirty Transition Experience

- A) Perception of the Transition Experience
- B) Perception and Role of Social Support

HYPOTHESES

HYPOTHESIS I - The character and quality of the Age Thirty Transition will be a function of the presence or absence of a social support system. Women who have a social support system will experience the Age Thirty Transition differently (presumably in a more positive fashion) than women who do not have a system of social

support.

HYPOTHESIS II - The qualitative nature of the Age Thirty Transition experience would also be determined by the participants' perception of the adequacy versus inadequacy of her social support system. Women whose support systems adequately served their needs would experience a **Smooth Age Thirty Transition**. Women who felt that their social support systems were not adequately meeting their needs might conversely experience a **Rough Age Thirty Transition**.

A **Smooth Age Thirty Transition** experience describes women whose self-esteem and sense of achievement and accomplishment are consonant with their Dream. During the transition, these women will have made only minor adjustments to their life structure and will express a positive perception of the Age Thirty Transition period.

A **Rough Age Thirty Transition** experience describes those women who report low self-esteem and whose sense of accomplishment and achievement is discordant with their Dream. These women may report a sense of crisis

or drastic change in the life structure. Additionally, these women may report depression or dysthymia.

Studies on women and the Age Thirty Transition (Roberts & Newton, 1987) note the complexity of women's Dreams that often contain individualistic and relational components. An important and underlying factor for consideration is that the women in the studies actualized at least one major component of their Dream. The notion of reversal/shifting of priorities or an attempt to achieve a balance between work and love implies that individualistic or relational components of the woman's Dream have been actualized.

HYPOTHESIS III - Before a participant's life structure reflects a reversal/shifting of priorities or balance between work and love, major components of the Dream will have been actualized. Participants who are content with at least one component of their Dream (work or love), will be able to focus attention on shifting or reversing priorities or attempting a balance between work and love.

HYPOTHESIS IV - Those participants experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition will not have life structures that reflect a readiness to attempt balancing work and love or to shift/reverse priorities.

Since by definition participants experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition will have some difficulty around Dream development and actualization, they may be equally invested in developing the co-components of work and love or not yet able to shift/reverse priorities.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Participants

A small homogeneous group of eight African American women ages 28 - 33 years old was chosen to examine in-depth the study's hypotheses regarding social support and the Age Thirty Transition experience. All of the participants were never-married with no children—with seven of the eight being college graduates, and six of whom had advanced degrees. The occupational areas represented by the sample include Human Services, Social Work, Administration, Education, and Sales. All the women had experience or specialized training in their chosen career. The median salary was \$45,000 with ranges from \$30,000 to \$90,000.

Procedures

The participants were recruited through professional or informal networks of the interviewer, and were contacted by phone. Each was given a brief

synopsis of the study (time commitment, format, topic, etc.) and queried about a decision to participate. Two appointments two weeks apart were scheduled with each participant at their home or other comfortable setting conducive to in-depth interviewing. Before the interview each participant was asked to read and sign a consent form(see Appendix B). Each interview was audio-taped and later transcribed for review. All identifying information was changed to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Data Analysis

The study utilizes a qualitative analysis and specifically the biographical interview as the basis for data collection. The grounded theory approach, of qualitative analysis allows for a dynamic integration between data collection, analysis and synthesis of the material as an on-going process (Strauss & Glaser, 1967).

The biographical interview was designed to elicit detailed information about the participants' life structure from childhood through the present time of the interview. The format was loosely structured with

many open-ended questions to allow for and encourage self disclosure and elaboration on topics pertinent to the Age Thirty Transition experience.

The following areas served as guides for structuring the biographical data for each participant:

- I. Developmental Tasks
 - A) The Dream
 - B) Forming a Mentor Relationship[
 - C) Forming an Occupation
 - D) Forming Love Relationships, Marriage and Family
- II. Qualitative Nature of the Age Thirty Transition
 - A) Perception of the Transition experience
 - B) Perception and role of Social Support System

I. Developmental Tasks

The Dream

The formation, development, and actualization of the Dream is one of the core tasks of the Age Thirty

Transition (Levinson, et al., 1978). That women tend to have more complex Dreams is highlighted by Roberts & Newton (1987). Whether these participants present relational, individualistic or split Dreams will be examined especially in the context of views, wishes and hopes of marriage and family. Given the particular socio-cultural influences that impact on the availability of partners for African-American women in general and professional African-American women in particular, close attention will be paid to the role and importance of marriage in the scheme of Dream development.

In examining the participants' Dream the analysis will determine if the Dream is:

- A) vague or detailed
- B) individualistic, relational or split
- C) actualized or not
- D) in process of revision
- E) the importance of the Dream and its attainment to the participant
- F) Obstacles encountered in pursuit of the Dream

Forming a Mentor Relationship

The analysis will examine the presence or absence of mentorship and its relation to the participants' development. The analysis will:

- A) determine presence or absence of mentor(s) in the participant's life
- B) determine the role and importance of the mentor in the formation, actualization and revision of participant's Dream

Forming an Occupation

During the Novice Phase it is expected that one will be able to chart and commit to a specific career path though this task may extend into middle age. For these single, childless subjects, marriage and child rearing responsibilities would not present an obstacle to career development. This analysis seeks to examine:

- A) Career choices, paths, reappraisals and changes that these African-American women have experienced

- B) Participants' satisfaction with career as well as attitudes about achievement

- C) Career development in relation to that of other reference groups.

Forming Love Relations, Marriage and Family

Popular attitudes about traditional marriage and family constellation are ever evolving. For the previously cited studies on women's development, marriage and family have referred to the traditional nuclear family. While African-American women negotiating the Age Thirty Transition may have hopes and aspirations of traditional marriage and family, statistics for African-American women indicate that they are more likely than other women to spend all or part of their adult lives not being married; because of incarceration or unemployment of eligible partners, high divorce rates, marital separation, etc. (Brown & Gary, 1985).

This analysis will examine:

- A) If socio-cultural trends impact on participants' attitudes about marriage and family
- B) What are participants' attitudes about marriage and family and its importance in their life structure
- C) What are participants' attitude and level of satisfaction with current relationships
- D) Are participants more concerned about marriage and family than career advancement (i.e. reversal or shifting of priorities)

II. EXAMINATION OF THE QUALITATIVE ASPECTS OF THE TRANSITION EXPERIENCE

Perception of the Transition Experience

The Age Thirty Transition is marked by reappraisal and revision of the life structure with a consequent smooth or difficult progression through the stage. This study will also examine the character and quality of the Transition experience for the

participants. A participant will be characterized as experiencing a **Smooth Age Thirty Transition** if most of the following apply:

- A) a participant voices optimism about actualizing her Dream and life goals
- B) participant voices affirmative feelings about her ability to make decisions and choices that influence the course of her life and shape her life structure
- C) participant will be in the process of or have completed reappraisal of her life structure
- D) participant will voice a sense of fulfilment with her life structure and choices
- E) participant will express a sense of balance or an attempt to achieve balance between her personal and professional lives
- F) participant will characterize the Transition experience as mostly exciting or challenging versus overwhelming

Conversely, participants who do not meet most of the criteria for a smooth Age Thirty Transition will be characterized as experiencing a **Rough Age Thirty**

Transition. Some or most of the following might apply:

- A) participant may voice a lack of confidence or pessimism about achieving her Dream
- B) participant may perceive a lack of personal effectiveness and control over making choices and changes in her life structure
- C) participant will feel a dystonic immersion in her professional life to the exclusion of her personal life or vice versa
- D) participant may characterize her current life structure as unfulfilling
- E) participant may characterize the Transition period as overwhelming

Perception and Role of Social Support System

The focus of this parameter will be the examination of how social support systems impact on the unfolding and execution of developmental tasks, if at all, during the Transition experience. If for example, one key developmental task during the Transition is to develop mentor relationships, what is the implication for those women who do not have such a relationship? Might other key relationships serve as surrogate

mentorship? Some theorists have stated that women's development is integrally related to role and hence relationship to others (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982).

In examining the social support system, the interviewer will:

- A) identify key members of the social support system
- B) discuss frequency of interaction with members of the social support system
- C) discuss nature of support received as either:
 - (i) Tangible--money, food, gifts, etc.
 - (ii) Intangible--emotional support, nurturance, etc.
 - (iii) Professionally oriented--occupational related support
 - (iv) Personally oriented--support related to areas other than work
- D) determine if social support system members have impacted on participant's development during the

Transition experience by examining:

- 1) if members of social support system affirm
participant's life structure and/or
participant's reappraisal

- 2) if members of social support system affirm
or contribute to actualization of
participant's Dream

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The examination and analysis of the biographical interviews of the participants in this study support the existence of the Age Thirty Transition contrary to the findings and questions raised by Dunn and Merriam (1995). All participants reported a time of reappraisal, questioning and a sense of impending closure and departure from the life structure of their early to mid-twenties.

HYPOTHESIS I (Summary)

Hypothesis I states that the character and quality of the participant's Age Thirty Transition experience will be a function of the presence or absence of available social support. The expectation is that those participants who have and utilize a support system will experience as smoother transition experience than those who do not have such support. The two qualitative categories (see Methodology p. 59) of the Age Thirty Transition are:

- 1) **SMOOTH** Age Thirty Transition
- 2) **ROUGH** Age Thirty Transition

All eight participants in the study had a support system which they utilized to varying degrees. All felt that the network of their supportive others at least adequately met their needs. Three of the participants identified formal mentors as part of their support network. The distinguishing factor which determined the qualitative character of the Age Thirty Transition was not the presence or absence of a support system. Therefore Hypothesis I as stated was not supported by the data. However, the composition of the social support network was an important distinguishing factor in how the Age Thirty Transition qualitatively proceeds. Briefly stated, a participant's support network that included at least one parent seemed to impact the Age Thirty Transition experience. The grouping of the eight participants by qualitative category for the Age Thirty Transition experience was as follows:

I. SMOOTH Age Thirty Transition

Dana
Ann
Flora
Eleanor
Harriette

II. ROUGH Age Thirty Transition

Clarissa
Betty
Gina

HYPOTHESIS I (Summary)

As previously mentioned, Hypothesis I was not supported by the data. As all of the participants utilized a social support system and that the qualitative experience of the Age Thirty Transition (Smooth versus Rough) was not a function of the presence or absence of a social support system, this variable will not be part of the biographical analyses.

HYPOTHESIS II (Summary)

Smooth Transition Experience

All five women characterized as having a Smooth Age Thirty Transition had a support system which included at least one parent or surrogate that supported the Dream and its attainment

(financial/emotional) before and during the Age Thirty Transition.

It was also hypothesized that other characteristics of a Smooth Age Thirty Transition would be a synchronous life structure and Dream, and a voiced optimism about the current transition experience. Four of the five women (all but Flora) voiced optimism about transiting the Age Thirty Transition. Flora's report was mixed-optimistic about some aspects and pessimistic about others. All of the women felt a sense of empowerment and the ability to make any requisite changes. All of the women, except Hariette, had both the individualistic and relational components of the Dream well defined at the Age Thirty Transition. All the reappraisals made by the five participants of the Dream and life structure were made without severely altering the Dream or the life structure in major ways.

Rough Transition Experience

The three women characterized as having a Rough Transition experience had support systems as well, which they utilized and found adequate to meet their

needs. What distinguished them from the members of the Smooth Transition group was that at some point before and during the Age Thirty Transition, the women did not consider their parents as part of their support system. (Betty's mother became supportive of her revised Dream during the Age Thirty Transition).

The life structures and Dreams of Betty, Clarissa and Gina were not synchronous (individually), and all were contemplating major changes in the Dream and/or career direction. Optimistic and pessimistic feelings about the Age Thirty Transition surfaced for members of this group. Uncertainty about the future direction of the life course characterized this group of women.

HYPOTHESIS III (Summary)

In previous studies on women and the Age Thirty Transition, researchers have noted that a shift/reversal of priorities or an attempt to balance work and love occurred as part of the developmental work for women at this adult developmental period (Stewart, 1977; Droege, 1982; Furst, 1983; Adams, 1983). Hypothesis III of this study states that actualization of the individualistic components (work) or the

relational components (love) must precede shifting/reversal of priorities or an attempt at balance between work and love.

Two of the eight participants who had achieved major components of the individualistic and relational Dream experienced a shift in priorities (devoting more energy towards intimate relationships) and attempted a balance between work and love. Two others voiced a desire to shift priorities and attempt a balance between work and love, but were as yet not implementing any changes. The remaining four women who had yet to achieve major components of their Dream did not experience a shifting of priorities or an attempt at balance between work and love.

I. Major components of Dream actualized with shift/balance

Ann
Dana

Both Ann and Dana had individualistic and relational components of their Dream actualized. After reappraisal, Ann and Dana were making minor adjustments career-wise within the context of their stated Dream. Both women were in stable long-term relationships and hopeful that marriage was imminent. Both women were also committed to

making career and family co-central components of the life structure.

II. *Partial components of Dream actualized with desire for shift/balance*

Flora
Harriette

These two women were reappraising the role of intimate relationships in their lives. Flora had a boyfriend at the time of the interview, but neither woman had a stable committed relationship. Both women were reappraising the qualities and characteristics they felt were important for a successful relationship. Flora and Harriette had some degree of satisfaction with the individualistic component of the Dream; but both were in the process of acquiring additional accreditation in the service of career advancement.

HYPOTHESIS IV (Summary)***Partial components of Dream actualized with no shift/balance***

Betty
Clarissa
Eleanor
Gina

All of the women in this group were, at the time of the interview, seeking to make changes to the individualistic component of the Dream. As hypothesized, those three women experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition did not experience a shift/reversal of priorities or attempt to balance work and love. Eleanor, a participant characterized as experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition, was included in this group because she was ambivalent and unsure but poised to make major changes in her career direction in the near future. For Eleanor, and the other three participants, work and love remained co-central components of the life structure that were simultaneously pursued.

Betty, Clarissa and Gina were contemplating major changes in career direction. Eleanor and Gina ended serious long-term relationships during the onset of the

Age Thirty Transition, and neither woman was currently involved in an intimate relationship. Betty was in the process of ending a relationship that she felt had little potential for growth. Clarissa was uninvolved, but actively seeking a partner. The role of career and family remained co-central components of the women's Dream; but for all the women the relational component remained unactualized. Shifting priorities and attempting to achieve a balance between work and love appears to be a function of the relationship status (attached vs. unattached) in the lives of the participants.

CHAPTER V**ANALYSIS OF BIOGRAPHIES**

The following summaries of the eight biographical interviews of the participants of this study highlight the developmental tasks, challenges and often unstable quality of the Age Thirty Transition. Discussion of each woman's Age Thirty Transition experience is contained within the biographical summary. The summary is followed by an analysis of the participant's Dream, social support for the Dream and the transitional phenomena surrounding the Dream's actualization. Group trends and comparisons follow in the Discussion chapter.

ANN

Ann is a 27 year old woman and the middle sibling of three. She was born and raised by both parents in NYC until age 6. Her mother and father, who both have close intergenerational ties with their families of origin, were born and raised in NYC and Alabama, respectively. Ann describes her own nuclear family as very close knit. Because of her father's work as a merchandising executive, Ann and her family moved around the country (Maryland, Indiana, Arizona) every 2 - 4 years from the time she was about 6 years old until she was 13 years old.

Education was always important to Ann and her family, and she was a bright above average student. During the years in Indiana, she experienced some difficulties while attending public School. She truanted, failed classes, started smoking and engaging in other acts of adolescent rebellion.

Fortunately her father was transferred to an office in Phoenix. From the age of 13 through age 22, Ann and her family lived in a suburb of Phoenix. She lived in an ethnically diverse community but attended a

predominately white all-girls Catholic high school. She was one of five Black students of whom she was the darkest. She encountered her first experience of skin color discrimination by other Blacks during this period at high school. Despite her sense of alienation from the other black students, she was popular with the white students in Phoenix. She enjoyed many extra-curricular activities including student government, working on the school newspaper, etc.

EARLY ADULT TRANSITION (ages 17 - 22)

Ann decided to attend a college several hours away from home, but one close enough for holiday visits. She was excited about being on her own but unsure about her career interests. She had difficulty declaring a major and looked to her father for direction. Her father suggested a business major, and she initially majored in economics. Ann's father wanted her to finish college, get an MBA and follow his career path in merchandising. She was ambivalent at best about this plan, but attempted to comply with her father's wishes. Her first year was disastrous as she failed most of her courses. Ann became interested in

psychology and decided to major in psychology and minor in business as a concession to her father.

During her summers out of school, Ann's father and her uncle secured internships in several major corporations. Ann did well, but knew by her junior year that she was not interested in a corporate career, much to the dismay of her father and uncle. Ann had internalized her father's ambition and drive to be financially successful, but she was cynical about the trappings of corporate success. She had watched her father and uncle endure direct and indirect racism, as well as observed the intense pressure and scrutiny that they accepted as a way of life. At about age 20, Ann was sure that she would not pursue a corporate career, and began to explore the possibility of a social work career.

Ann and her family were very service oriented and she was encouraged to volunteer in community organizations from an early age. She enjoyed working in a variety of settings and considered that social work might be her niche. With a degree in Psychology and business, Ann began to gather information about graduate social work programs. After graduation Ann

returned home to her parents with the intention of finding a job, saving her money and moving to the east coast.

To her surprise she applied for and got a job working for a child protective services agency in NJ. Her mother was supportive of her decision to move to NJ, but her father was adamantly opposed to the job and the move. Though her father did not actively thwart her move to NJ, he continued to dissuade her from making social work a career. Pleasing her father was paramount at that time, and she deferred her decision to apply to social work graduate school. It was difficult leaving her family and moving so far away, but she wanted to be on her own.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE (ages 22 - 28)

For a few months Ann lived with relatives while adjusting to a new city and her first professional job. She moved into her own apartment, and was comfortable in her first job for two years. She quickly realized that she enjoyed her work even though it was not financially lucrative. Initially she worked as a caseworker. Her next position was as a social worker

in a group home for adolescents. She particularly enjoyed this position as it was more clinical in nature. For several years she shifted her career focus and worked with another city agency as an administrator. She became bored and rather cynical of the bureaucracy.

My former boss put me in a job where I was going to do nothing all day. I saw myself becoming a typical 'city worker'--feet up on the desk, two hour lunches. I said to myself, 'I've got to get out of here.'

In an attempt to find some job satisfaction she made a linear move and worked in human resources for a while. Eventually her desire was to return to social work.

While Ann's previous jobs in social work were personally gratifying, she recognized that advancement professionally and financially required additional credentials. Ann applied to graduate school in social work and was accepted at age 25. Her mother and sister continued to support her career choice, and her father offered financial support. Before Ann received her MSW, her father continually tried to convince her to get an MBA. She was unsure he would attend her graduation ceremonies and party. At her graduation he

finally reconciled within himself that her life and destiny were of her own making.

After graduation Ann took a job at a former internship site providing services and counseling to families identified with risk factors of substance abuse, teen pregnancy, etc. The agency's therapeutic perspective included working with clients in a holistic manner--factoring in cultural and spiritual beliefs, etc. The setting is far from ideal, but she feels that her experience there is invaluable. In addition, her work at the agency confirms her commitment to the social work field as the right choice for her.

While completing her graduate studies, Ann became interested in serving in the Peace Corps as a means of gaining work experience and an opportunity to travel, live abroad, and immerse herself in another culture. She applied for and was assigned a supervisory social work post in Africa. By the time the appointment was made, Ann was very conflicted about accepting it. She was involved in a serious intimate relationship.

Since moving to New Jersey, Ann had been involved in two intimate long-term relationships, and she dated

in between. The first relationship was with a physician, Samuel, whom Ann dated for one and a half years. Ann was 25 years old and felt an intense internal pressure to be married and start a family. Samuel seemed like 'a good catch to her' since he was attractive, ambitious and financially stable. Though Ann did not introduce Samuel to her parents, she was sure he was the type of man of whom her father would approve. Ann was fond of Samuel but found it increasingly difficult to tolerate his constant needling and attempts to change her. She began to feel an erosion of her self esteem and finally ended the relationship.

ANN: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

The onset of the Age Thirty Transition seems to have occurred around age 27 for Ann. She became more health conscious, quit smoking permanently and entered a new relationship which she felt certain would lead to marriage. By age 25 Ann was experiencing the Age 25 shift—already deciding and consolidating career choices. She was also experiencing an intense internal

desire to be married and start a family. By age 27, actualization of major components of her Dream seemed imminent.

I. THE DREAM

The individualistic and relational components of Ann's Dream have been specific since about age 18 or 19. It was then that she decided that she wanted to be a professional, unlike her mother who was a homemaker; and she was very motivated to have a career that afforded her economic parity with her parents. She wanted a large house, luxury cars, expensive vacations--an upper middle income lifestyle. Initially, Ann's approach to achieving her Dream of being a professional involved internalizing and attempting to actualize the Dream given to her by her father-- a False Dream--that of becoming a corporate professional.

Her attempts to please her father were fraught with ambivalence. The individualistic components of her Dream regarding career did not take shape and become detailed until around age 23. She wanted a career as a safeguard to economic dependency on a husband, something that her father stressed. Other

individualistic components of her Dream included attending graduate school and travelling around the world.

Ann has actualized her Dream of becoming a professional and obtaining an advanced degree. Ann's current career choice makes the likelihood of future economic parity with her parents less certain.

Relational Components

Ann has always wanted to be married and have a family, and imagined that by age 25 she would have attained both. Her ideal marriage would be modeled on her parents who have enjoyed a 30+ year union. Her father's influence was also evident in her ideal of a suitable partner. He encouraged her to date doctors, lawyers, etc. which was consistent with her ideals. Ironically, she desired, until recently, to only marry a professional man who would be able to provide the lifestyle to which she was accustomed. The two serious relationships she had with professional men were based on gaining her father's approval rather than true affinity.

Broader relational components of her Dream include developing economic cooperatives among family and friends for community development.

Reappraisal of the Dream

At around age 20 Ann began to re-examine the feasibility of the False Dream for her life. After several attempts and much deliberation, she abandoned the False Dream of joining the corporate elite, like her father. During the Age Thirty Transition, Ann has been able to define and incorporate, and actualize elements of her True Dream. Relinquishing the False Dream has meant a change from a Dream driven primarily by the influence of others to a Dream with her own unique perspectives on a desired life course.

II. MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Formal mentors have not been a part of Ann's occupational development. Though her father and uncle performed mentoring functions, neither allowed her the freedom of exploration and 'play' that Ogilvy (1983) describes as critical to the mentoring function. Ann

identifies one woman, Fatu, who served as an advisor and facilitator while she worked at the group home. Fatu's knowledge, willingness to teach Ann and her ability to work with troubled adolescents proved a valuable addition to Ann's professional development. As well as colleagues she and Fatu became friends, and she is a valued member of Ann's support system.

III. FORMING AN OCCUPATION

Forming an occupation is a complex and multi-layered task, but for Ann it was relatively straightforward after resolution of initial ambivalence. The continuity of her choices of education and training supports her chosen occupation.

Ann's career path has been linear with no detours from the goal of practicing social work. By age 25 Ann had moved to New Jersey and held several social work positions in both the public and private sectors. Reappraisal of her career choice around age 25, which stemmed primarily from her father's disapproval, brought confirmation that her career choice was right for her. She completed her MSW by age 27. Ann's occupational path parallels those of Adams's (1983)

subjects who were all attorneys. The career path of those women was characteristically linear with the focus of their energy being directed towards professional achievement.

Much of Ann's zeal and drive is fuelled by an identification with her father. It is expected by herself and others that she be a leader in her field. At the time of the interview she is not exactly sure what the role of leader would be for herself. Ann identifies with elements of her mother's role, but feels that the traditional roles of wife and mother solely would not be enough for her.

IV. LOVE RELATIONSHIPS, MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Ann's values about marriage and family are a reflection of her upbringing in a traditional nuclear family. She received several, sometimes mixed messages about marriage. Explicit messages from both parents were to:

- 1) get married to a wealthy and/or ambitious man to secure her financial future
- 2) have a successful career in her own right as a safeguard against dependency

The strivings to have an intimate relationship and marry have remained constant in Ann's adult life.

Reappraisal of marriage and family issues center around Ann's ability to expand her thinking of whom a suitable partner would be and the purpose of marriage in her life. This reappraisal and shift seems to represent movement to interdependency and mutuality in Ann's intimate relationships with less emphasis on status and financial gain or her father's approval.

Ann has not perceived the ratio of African American men to women or other socio-cultural factors as impacting negatively on her chances for marriage and family. Ann met her current boyfriend through a mutual friend about a year ago. He is from a different ethnic, cultural and economic group than she. They have been dating each other exclusively for about six months and Ann feels they will eventually marry. Her father disapproves of the relationship, and this has been stressful for Ann. She, however, has no plans for ending the relationship. She feels that this relationship is the best she has ever had as it is based on mutual respect and caring.

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participant's Age Thirty Transition experience would be a function of the presence or absence of social support. The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I, as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOTHESIS II: Analysis

Ann would fall into the sub-group of participants described as experiencing a Smooth Transition. Her sense of achievement and accomplishment are consonant with her Dream. She voices a level of discontent with her socioeconomic status; however, she has not been propelled to radically alter her career path or other components of her life structure that would change her financial status. She has actualized major components of her Dream; and she feels confident that those portions that are not as yet actualized are attainable.

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The social support system identified by Ann is extensive and comprised of a core group of her immediate family members and a wide circle of friends.

Throughout her life, Ann has enjoyed a close relationship with her immediate family as well as her extended family members. She is most likely to seek support from her family when in need. Ann maintains daily contact with her mother and sister since leaving Arizona for New Jersey five years ago. Ann's mother, sister and an adult adopted sister serve as her confidants. Ann's boyfriend also provides emotional support, and she credits him with assisting in her spiritual growth and development. She does not hesitate to utilize her support resources, and she feels that they are readily available when needed. More peripheral members tend to look to her for advice and support, and she is comfortable with this.

TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Support for the Dream

The transitional phenomena of Dream development and mentoring were not initially self-affirming processes in Ann's Age Thirty Transition. While Ann's father provided some aspects of mentoring, the effect was partially pejorative and did not reflect the intent of Levinson (1978) or Ogilvy (1983) regarding mentoring

as a supportive and creative process. While it appears that her father desired and attempted to serve as her mentor, he was unable to comfortably allow her True Dream to emerge fully, or to support any tentative movement towards her Dream.

The development of the False Dream with its individualistic and relational components was a response to paternal expectations which she initially attempted to embrace. The False Dream was rejected rather early, which created a vacuum. One can question whether the speed with which Ann's True Dream emerged was a function of her and/or her father's inability to tolerate ambiguity. Ann was not afforded or did not utilize a transitional creative space to explore various possibilities for the expression of her Dream. It has always been expected that she would achieve, and being achievement oriented, she set a path for herself early on. To her credit, she has been able to test the 'fit' of her chosen career, and so far it seems syntonic.

HYPOTHESIS III: Analysis

Ann can be described as attempting to balance work and love. She has attempted to actualize both aspects of her life simultaneously, though her professional goals have been more easily attained. She discovered that acceptance of a job placement abroad and her attempt to develop a long-term intimate relationship were currently mutually exclusive.

Ann was invested in devoting more time to the relational aspect of her life, and can be described as experiencing a shifting in priorities as well. Unlike some of the subjects reviewed by Newton & Roberts (1987), Ann did not devote herself exclusively to the pursuit of job OR career, but sought to actualize the individual and relational aspects simultaneously.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES**Dependence versus Independence**

Ann has accomplished major tasks of the Early Adulthood Era including establishing a vocation and the capacity for adult intimacy. She was in the Individuation phase of the Age Thirty Transition at the time of the interview, and her major issues needing

resolution seemed to revolve around the polarity of Engagement/Separateness.

The formation and structure of Ann's Dream incorporates values imparted by her parents. What she wants for herself is very much patterned on the life of her parents. When examining Ann's Dream, one is impressed by what appears to be a rather rigid and punitive Super Ego that prescribed (before the Age Thirty Transition) a very circumscribed path in which her life should unfold. She had timetables for achieving marriage and career goals. Her sense of urgency and structure was internalized from her father.

One motivating factor for Ann's internalization of the False Dream was her need for her father's approval. Her need to please her father manifested itself in the ambition and drive with which she approached her career development as well as her pursuit of marriage and family.

With the onset of the Age Thirty Transition, Ann has continued to reject ideas and values from her parents that are not syntonetic. There were precursors to Ann becoming more assertive and independent before the onset of the Age Thirty Transition. Her success at

determining her major in college and later setting her own career path were major feats of assertion. More broadly, defining her priorities and assessing those values that were so readily embraced during the Early Adult Transition and previously, was one of her major tasks and accomplishments during the Age Thirty Transition. Her parameters and definition of success have become more internally directed. The preeminent desire for financial success has been replaced with a desire to feel fulfilled. She now allows herself to be less than perfect, to make mistakes --relaxing her punitive Super Ego.

The issues that seem likely to arise for Ann center around whether or not she has released her desire to have an affluent lifestyle equal to that of her parents. During the interview, she appeared ambivalent at best around this issue. Her imminent marriage to a man from a different social class, who was not prepared to 'take care of her' financially coupled with her chosen career path are likely to be sources of concern for her, if she remains ambivalent. If Ann does not utilize the remainder of the Age Thirty Transition to resolve issues involving her personal

finances, one can anticipate that some dissatisfaction or perhaps crisis will emerge at a later developmental period—most probably during the Mid-Life Transition.

ANN'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

While Ann has experienced some difficulties during the Age Thirty Transition, the overall tenor of her attitude during the Transition experience can be described as optimistic. She has actualized major components of her Dream and set goals for herself which she feels are attainable in the near future. Ann also expresses a sense of satisfaction with her life currently; and her life structure and Dream are synchronous. The conflicts and reappraisals of this period are near resolution.

In summarizing her feelings about her life currently, Ann states that age 27 has been the best year of her life. When asked to elaborate she states that her achievements this year have contributed to her sense of well-being. Separating from her family of origin, establishing a long-term intimate relationship and completing her MSW add to her sense of satisfaction

with her life currently. She describes herself as empowered, competent and capable. Ann recounts positive changes she has made in her life during this period.

I quit smoking three years ago. I used to smoke a pack a day. At 24 I stopped and I would smoke when I was in a crisis. At 27 I stopped all together. I realized I had this thing beat. I used to drink. I became a total vegan two years ago. ...This has been the best year of my life. I've become more spiritual. I have a job that I love. I have a man in my life that I love. I feel okay about turning 28. When I was 25 I was flipping out and all confused. 'I'm getting old, what am I going to do with my life?' But at 28 it's okay. I'm amazed I feel this way. At 27 I finally achieved individuation. I know people in their 40's who haven't achieved it. I separated myself from friends who only want to be with me when they're down and surrounded myself with positive people. I feel more at peace with the world.

BETTY

Betty is a 34 year old woman born and raised in Bronx, NY and is the second eldest of three siblings. Her two brothers Charles and Jonathan are respectively two years older and one year younger than she. Betty's parents are originally from North Carolina (mother) and Virginia (father); but they met and married in New York. Betty's family lived in Brooklyn for approximately two years after she was born. The family bought a house in the Bronx in a working/middle class Black community. As Betty's father was a retired chief engineer on a commercial sailing vessel, she only saw her father a total of two or three days per year during her childhood. Her mother was a de facto single parent and hospital administrator raising Betty and her siblings alone. The extended family in NY included a maternal aunt and her family.

One of the most salient features Betty remembers about her childhood was the sense of loneliness. Betty's mother, Anna, was always a working professional who commuted four hours round trip to work daily. Consequently, Betty and her brothers were frequently with babysitters--a fact that she disliked immensely.

In retrospect Betty recognizes the great sacrifices her mother endured to have a career and raise her family as single head of household. She describes her mother as possessing incredible drive--commuting to work and completing graduate and post graduate degrees--with little assistance.

Daniel, Betty's father had been absent for her developing years. Her early memories of him include his coming to town for one or two days per year laden with toys for her and her brothers. Initially, Betty was very happy to see her father and receive the novel goodies from his travels around the world.

Daniel's lavish gifts did not diminish the fact that he was absent most of the time emotionally and physically. Betty does not remember calls or letters from her father, and eventually his absence became a way of life for her and her family.

From age seven or eight, Betty and her brothers attended weekly music lessons. Neither of Betty's parents were particularly musically inclined; however, music lessons were an expected component of her Black middle class community for parents who could afford it for their children. Betty perceived the music lessons

as her mother's way of keeping the children busy and out of trouble.

Betty and her brothers eventually began to enjoy music classes and exhibited talents for music. Betty had always enjoyed performing in school, and by the end of junior high school, she was advanced enough at piano to audition for Music and Art high school. She practiced diligently and won a space. To her dismay her mother decided against allowing her to enroll in public school, and she attended a Lutheran parochial school with her brothers.

Betty continued to study music and performing arts while in high school, and she and Charles performed with local bands in nightclubs around the city. She and her brothers also won contracts to perform with the NY Parks and Recreation Dept. for several summers.

Throughout her school years Betty had been an average student with no particular career inclination. It was expected that she would attend college unlike Charles who had become involved with drugs during high school. After considering several colleges Betty and her mother decided on a small historically Black college in the mid-Atlantic region.

EARLY ADULT TRANSITION (ages 17 - 22)

Betty was excited about the prospect of being on her own away at college. She was close enough to home to visit on some weekends and holidays, but far enough away to exert her independence. With few interests outside of athletics and performing arts, Betty was unsure of the process of choosing a major. She enrolled in several social work courses in her first year which she disliked and marginally passed. She also found that she did not particularly like attending college, but saw it as a necessary step to pursuing a career and attaining financial independence.

With her interest in performing and athletics still at a peak, Betty decided to audition for the resident dance company on campus. She passed the audition and was befriended by the director, Dr. Brown who was also the chair of the Physical Education / Therapeutic Recreation department. Dr. Brown was to become her mentor, and through their association, Betty was able to declare a major in therapeutic recreation which she felt combined some of her major interests. Many of her classes involved sports, training and arts related themes. Through a series of internships, Betty

was able to determine that the population she was most interested in working with was adolescents on inpatient psychiatry units.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE FOR EARLY ADULTHOOD (ages 22 - 28)

After completing her degree Betty decided to return to New York City. She was committed to making a career for herself in therapeutic recreation and decided to enter graduate school to secure additional credentials. She decided on her mother's alma mater, and she received her M. A. in therapeutic recreation. She found the experience grueling but was determined to finish. In her spare time she took dance and voice classes. While in graduate school she received financial assistance from her parents and lived at home with her mother in a separate apartment in the house.

During her mid-twenties, Betty met and fell in love with Marvin, a public high school teacher and single father of a small daughter and son. He was originally from Washington, D.C. and had recently divorced when they met. Betty was attracted to Marvin because they shared similar religious beliefs and common interests. Marvin was health conscious, a non-

smoker, did not drink or take drugs; and he loved athletics and working out as much as Betty. His children adored Betty, and she adored them; and they grew close. Betty spent a lot of time with the children, assisting Marvin with caring for them. The relationship ended after three years due to internal and external pressure. Neither Betty's brother Jonathan nor her mother was happy with the relationship. They felt that Betty was being exploited as a surrogate mother, and they repeatedly expressed their concern and dissatisfaction. Betty began to have doubts and wondered if Marvin truly loved her independent of her acceptance and care for his children. Near the end of the relationship the children's mother moved to New York City from Washington. While the children knew that Betty was not their mother, they were confused and their loyalties divided. Betty decided that the complexity of the relationship with Marvin increased beyond her capacity or willingness to cope. She ended the relationship reluctantly. Betty took months to mourn the relationship with Marvin and did not become seriously involved with anyone for approximately four years. Part of her hesitancy was her lack of trust and

a difference in mores with the men she did meet.

Though she wanted male companionship at times, she was so occupied with artistic pursuits during her leisure time that she rarely made time to date, and was not overly concerned about it.

At age twenty-five Betty completed graduate school and immediately found work at a large metropolitan hospital's adolescent inpatient psychiatry unit. She initially found the work challenging and stimulating. After a couple of years she began to find the work routine and stressful. Though she enjoyed working with adolescents, she felt that her position offered little opportunity for advancement without additional credentials and further graduate work--something she was not interested in pursuing.

She continued to study dance and voice and devoted most of her leisure time to those interests. After building up considerable compensatory and vacation time on her job at the hospital, Betty began to take time off to audition. During this period she met another mentor, Maurice who expanded her knowledge of African dance. Maurice encouraged Betty to study African dance technique, and she credits him with helping her to

become a stronger and more competent and confident dancer. She danced with several local African dance companies and secured a role in a Spike Lee video.

AGE 28 - PRESENT

Betty was feeling increasingly stifled and stagnated by her job as a recreational therapist at the hospital. A friend, Dele who was a drama therapist and artistic director of a creative arts therapeutic program, offered her a job at a community mental health clinic.

The decision to leave the hospital was made after much deliberation and was fraught with ambivalence. Her position offered no challenge, stimulation or possibility for advancement without additional credentials; but she was free to take time off whenever she needed to audition. The clinic position offered her an opportunity to be more actively involved in the arts--she would be teaching dance and music to a more functional population.

After accepting the position at the mental health clinic at age 32, Betty was accepted as an alternate dancer of a high profile African / modern dance company

in New York. She recalls that learning responsibilities for her new job and the demanding rehearsal schedule left her innervated with literally only enough time to sleep and eat on the run. She found the office politics and the environment at work rather disconcerting as she was used to a more congenial atmosphere at the hospital. Betty also began to question her commitment to the dance company. She had dreamed of dancing with such a prestigious troupe, but she found that as an insider in the company, conditions were less than glamorous--especially for an alternate. After approximately six months, Betty decided to resign from the dance company because of the demanding schedule; pay deferential; lack of adequate and appropriate rehearsal facilities and increasing tensions with an exploitative artistic director.

Intimate relationships or the lack thereof were not a focus for Betty during her late 20's. As most of her friends were married by their early 30's, Betty began to re-evaluate the importance of an intimate relationship in her life. She does not particularly like singles' functions or bars but does like cultural events and parties when her schedule permits. At age

32 she met her last boyfriend Cane at a party, and initially they seemed compatible. One of the things she liked about Cane was his low-key non-pressured style around sexual intimacy. She found men who pressured her about sex offensive, and she ended relationships in the past for that reason.

Dating is not fun for me, and the experiences have not been pleasant at all. I get to a certain point and I have to weed them [men] out for some reason or another. No one wants to take the time to develop a friendship or relationship, no one's interested in that. That's what I find. Even in the year of the AIDS epidemic, people are as sex crazy as ever, that's all it's all about. And one brother told me, "who said that if you date someone for a certain period of time, you should wait to have sex? What's wrong with having sex on the first date? There's no time limit. Where did you get that idea that things have to develop?" So I hate dating, and my experiences have not been good. I haven't really had that much success.

After approximately six months it became apparent to Betty that she and Cane were not compatible. She was initially resistant to become involved with Cane, because he was six years her junior. She perceived him as immature, but she decided to date and try to establish a friendship. Soon after they met Cane quit his job in a delicatessen as he felt the job was beneath him. To Betty, Cane lacked a clear career

direction. His response to Betty's attempts to help him clarify his goals was that perhaps he could go on welfare. Cane's lack of ambition and drive influenced Betty's decision to terminate the relationship though they remain friends.

At age 33, Betty was given an opportunity to teach ethnic dance classes at a well known dance studio in the theatre district. She took a dance class from one of the teachers at the studio, who asked Betty to substitute teach in her absence on several occasions. The response of the students was favorable, and Betty was asked to join the staff. Betty enjoyed teaching dance, but she still felt unfulfilled as an artist. She continued to audition and occasionally perform, but she wanted to devote more time to studying performing arts, honing her craft in preparation to perform more often. At this point in her life Betty is deciding whether or not to allow her artistic career to remain secondary or to pursue an artistic career full-time.

BETTY: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

For Betty the onset of the Age Thirty Transition

seems to have occurred around age 31 or 32. From that period through the time of the interview at age 34, Betty was reappraising her career direction. Her career reappraisal involves whether or not to augment her marginal artistic career which is a major aspect of her Dream. Themes of marriage and family are more salient now during the Age Thirty Transition than in the past, but Betty is still very ambivalent about the place that an intimate relationship or marriage and family would have in her current life structure.

I. The Dream

Individualistic Component

Individualistic aspects of Betty's Dream have been bi-directional. Since about age five, Betty has been a student of the arts, enjoyed performing, and increasingly throughout her life envisioned herself as a performing artist. Concomitant with Betty's desire to become a performing artist was a desire to establish a professional service-oriented career that would afford her financial independence and an opportunity to make a contribution to others. The service oriented aspect of Betty's Dream developed at around age 18 as a

compromise to having the artist aspect of her Dream thwarted. This Dream encouraged by her parents became a false Dream that Betty embraced.

Relational Components

As important to Betty as achieving career goals is her desire to assist her immediate family and members of her community in meeting their goals and improving their lives. For her family members, Betty's desire is to facilitate growth and nurture important aspects of themselves. Betty would like to assist her mother in accomplishing some of her life-long goals. She is hopeful about establishing a better personal relationship with her father; as well as mediating between her father and brothers. She has additional community-oriented goals.

Since early adulthood, Betty has imagined that her life would include marriage and family. Her concern with finding a suitable companion or husband has intensified during the Age Thirty Transition (but not necessarily her pursuit of the same). She is ambivalent about having children as she is a fitness enthusiast and pregnancy, albeit temporarily, would change her

fitness level, body shape and image.

Reappraisal of the Dream

Betty's image of self as an artist has remained intact if under-nourished since childhood. Artistic expression through various mediums have changed over time, but her self definition as an artist has grown and become more clearly defined. She has been able to actualize her false Dream of becoming a professional, and completing a graduate degree to please her parents. Her true or self generated Dream has been in her own perception marginally actualized. Rather than a revision of her Dream, the need to attempt sublimation of her true Dream has decreased during the Age Thirty Transition.

II. Mentor Relationships

Mentors have been a critical part of Betty's artistic and professional development. She identifies two mentors who served to shape the direction of her career choice and her image of herself as an artist. Dr. Brown, chairperson of the therapeutic recreation department, a dancer and director of the college dance

troupe, assisted Betty in expanding her concept of how to combine artistic and professional interests. Dr. Brown served as Betty's surrogate mother and mentor helping her to arrive at the then perfect compromise and sublimation which was acceptable to Betty's parents. Dr. Brown's example to Betty was that being a professional did not mean abandoning creative expression.

After returning to New York to enter graduate school, Betty was introduced to her second mentor, Maurice, who taught a dance class she took in her leisure time. Maurice, a young and charismatic dancer, noticed Betty's athleticism, drive and interest in his African dance classes. He encouraged her to take as many classes as she could afford as he thought she was a promising dancer. Consequent to Maurice's technical instruction in all aspects of African dance (dance history, drumming, music, etc.) she gained the competence and confidence to become a dancer and teacher of ethnic dance. She joined Maurice's company and danced with him for approximately two years (ages 25 - 27). Maurice's demanding and volatile temperament hastened the split between mentor and protegee, and the

relationship ended on less than favorable terms.

III. Forming an Occupation

Betty's occupational novitiate and career development have centered on managing dual career interests. Her experience in college under the mentorship of Dr. Brown enabled her to envision both a traditional and creative career for herself.

During the early portion of her occupational novitiate after college, Betty was unclear about how to proceed and perhaps not ready to enter the working world. She decided to enter graduate school as a way of gaining more experience and credentials in her field. Her professional career path can be described as linear and stable. Since obtaining her masters degree, Betty has held two positions--one at a metropolitan hospital for eight years and the other at a community mental health clinic. Reappraisal of her career decision and feelings of stagnation prompted Betty to make a lateral job shift to the community mental health setting.

The lateral job shift to the community mental health clinic at age 32 proved only slightly more

satisfying than her last position. She makes more money and is working with a more psychologically stable population than at the hospital. Though she has more opportunity for creative/artistic expression in her current position, she remains occupationally unsatisfied.

Artistically, Betty's career and development as an artist has been continuous despite seeming obstacles. Since her mid twenties, Betty has landed several major parts including music videos, and recording dates with rock and jazz artists. For approximately two years she has been teaching dance and exercise at a large dance studio in the theatre district in New York.

Reappraisal of Occupation

At this point during the Age Thirty Transition, Betty's occupational reappraisal involves taking a risk to more fully actualize the individualistic portion of her Dream that animates and motivates her. At a time in her life when she is seeking to be more assertive and independent, choosing to live as an artist would require continued dependency on her family (especially financially) and in particular her mother.

She seems to have exhausted her ambition, options and desire for further advancement in her professional career. Professional positions are viewed as a means of financing her artistic career. At the time of the interview, Betty stated that she was only recently admitting to herself and others how central performing is to her sense of well-being. She describes herself as confused as to how to proceed professionally and career-wise. At this time, Betty 's resolution to the angst that she reports experiencing regarding her career is not imminent.

IV. Forming Love Relationships

Part of Betty's Dream involves developing a long-term relationship that would eventually lead to marriage; however, actualizing this aspect of the Dream has been difficult. Betty always imagined that by her early thirties she would be married. When she reflects on why she is not married as yet she identifies several factors that have contributed to her pattern of relating in intimate relationships. First, Betty states that she mistrusts men which impacts on her ability to form intimate bonds with them. She

attributes this to the perceived abandonment by her father and the almost non-existent relationship that her parents endured.

Secondly, Betty's artistic career commands much of her leisure time which leaves her little opportunity to cultivate intimate relationships. When she is not at work Betty is in the gym working out or taking dance classes.

Thirdly, the two job settings where Betty has worked have not offered opportunities to meet available men in whom she would be interested. She feels that most of the available men were either socially incompatible with her or not interested in her.

Betty perceives the pool of potential available, acceptable and desirable African American men as rather small. She is also not interested in seeking potential partners from different ethnic or racial backgrounds.

Betty's single status is recently of concern to her during the Age Thirty Transition. While she is optimistic about eventually meeting a partner and getting married, she is the last of her peer group to be single. She has seen several girlfriends divorce and remarry, and she has decided not to succumb to the

internal pressure that she sometimes feels "just to be married".

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participants' Age Thirty Transition experience would be a function of the presence or absence of social support. The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I, as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOTHESIS II: Analysis

Betty can be characterized as experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition. The salient feature of Betty's Age Thirty Transition is the dissonance between her current life structure and her Dream. She is very busy taking classes, etc., but she is still unsure and unresolved about how to proceed and manifest the artistic component of her Dream. Additionally, Betty has a support system, but she is at times reticent to utilize it. She is much more likely to provide support to others than to receive it herself. Parental support of Betty's True Dream was absent before the emergence

of the Age Thirty Transition.

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The identified members of Betty's support system are her younger brother Jonathan; her mother; a former colleague at the hospital, Martha; and Delores a friend since college. When in crisis Jonathan is the first person Betty thinks of to contact. She feels comfortable discussing all aspects of her life with him though she rarely does this. It is she who most often listens--offering him advice, consultation, house sitting, etc.

Jonathan provides financial support for Betty as well emotional support for her Dream of becoming a full-time artist. It is unclear whether any of Jonathan's inroads or connections in the entertainment industry have been beneficial for Betty in any way, but he continues to encourage her artistic development.

Betty describes her relationship with her mother as close though she is less likely to share all aspects of her life with her mother. Because of her mother's religious belief, Betty feels her mother is sometimes judgmental; therefore, she selectively discloses

important issues to her mother. They have daily contact as they live in the same house. The support that Betty's mother provides is financial and emotional. The financial reprieve allows Betty to allot more money for classes and artistic training. Currently Betty's mother is supportive of her artistic aspirations.

Martha, a former colleague from the hospital has been Betty's friend for almost 10 years. They became close about 7 years ago while working on the same unit. In addition to their professional association, Betty found in Martha a woman with similar interests. Martha and Betty are close friends, and they contact each other 3 - 4 times per week. Martha encourages Betty to pursue her Dream, and she attends almost every performance that Betty may have.

Delores is the last member of Betty's support system of closest family and friends. They have been friends since Betty's junior year of college. Currently Delores lives in the mid-west, and the two talk infrequently by phone. Betty describes the relationship as reciprocal. However, she has spent a lot of time providing support to Delores who has been

through two very bad marriages.

There is a larger network of female colleagues and associates that Betty describes as members of her support system. These women in their 30's and 40's have offered support and advice about her professional career and encouragement about her artistic pursuits.

Betty's perception of her support system is that it is adequate, and its members are available and willing to assist her. Her issue at present is a tendency to under-utilize the support (around personal issues) which leaves her feeling alone at times.

One difference in Betty's current support system during the Age Thirty Transition is the lack of an 'essential other' in the mentor role. In the past Betty made effective use of the support provided by her mentors in defining and enhancing her career direction and goals.

TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Social Support for the Dream

Betty's True Dream has always been clearly defined (even if sublimated). A key piece of developmental

work has been utilizing her transitional figures (mentors) to shore up the internalized self image as artist.

During the Early Adult Transition, Dr. Brown assisted Betty in exploring the adopted or False Dream (to become a professional like her mother) and its meaning in her life. Their interaction also allowed Betty to explore her True Dream (of being an artist) and to eventually reach a synthesis or compromise that was workable at that point in her life.

Later during Early Adulthood Betty was able to envision and name herself as an artist (with confidence and pride) and revitalize her Dream under Maurice's tutelage. It was during her mid to late twenties in Early Adulthood that the synthesis or compromise of her True Dream became less attractive to her.

One aspect of transitional phenomena vis-a-vis Betty's Dream is the neutral ground she psychologically provides for herself to refine and accept her True Dream. Her mentors served as important transitional figures to facilitate this process, but it is she who ultimately redefines herself and attempts to make a place in her life structure for her True Dream. This

developmental work of providing a neutral space for herself psychologically has occurred during the Age Thirty Transition. Part of the confusion and angst that Betty is experiencing is the unconscious recognition that she currently has no mentors to provide the neutral space or to be carriers of her Dream. The mentors have helped her to see the possibilities; she must now choose whether or not to give her True Dream a place in her life structure in a satisfying way.

HYPOTHESIS III

Hypothesis III states that major individualistic and relational components of the Dream would be actualized before a shift in priorities or an attempt at a balance between work and love would be evident in the participant's life structure. Hypothesis III was not applicable for Betty as she had not achieved major individualistic and relational components of her Dream that were syntonic.

HYPOTHESIS IV: Analysis

Actualization of Betty's Dream of performing requires that she spend a great deal of her leisure

time training and improving her theatrical skills. She is still employed full time as a recreational therapist, and most of her day is devoted to work and / or training. Though she desires a long-term relationship, she states that the pursuit of her Dream may actually preclude such involvement at present.

As Betty has not attained significant individual or relational components of her Dream, but continues to pursue both aspects, there is no shifting in priorities. At this time there is not a balance between work and love. Most of Betty's drive and energy are directed towards attaining the individualistic aspects of her Dream.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

At the time of the interviews, Betty was negotiating the Termination and Individuation phases of the Age Thirty Transition. Of the four sets of polarities linked to the Individuation phase of the Age Thirty Transition, Betty's developmental work centers around three sets: Young/Old; Destruction/Creation; and Engagement/Separation. With so many issues to be resolved, there was no evidence that Betty would be

approaching Culmination of Early Adulthood at age
34.

Independence

Themes of psychological independence from her family of origin are emerging for Betty during her Age Thirty Transition. She is minimizing her need for parental approval especially as it concerns her career and Dream. One could say that it is now psychologically 'safer' for Betty to pursue her true Dream as she has proven herself capable of making a career for herself.

In the course of her development during the Age Thirty Transition, Betty has increasingly managed to be more assertive and decrease the detrimental self-sacrificing behavior in her close relationships.

Interdependence

There have always been close generational ties between Betty and members of her immediate family with her brother Jonathan and her mother being two of her confidants. Her family members live in close proximity to each other--something she views as a boon and at

times a disadvantage. Betty is preparing to assume more active involvement in her mother's life as her mother's age and mortality have become concerns. She makes an effort to have daily contact with her mother.

Improving her relationship with her father and encouraging dialogue among her brothers and her father has been a focus during the Age Thirty Transition for Betty. Her attempts to mediate have not been very successful, so she concentrates on building a relationship with her father that is grounded in the present and not in their painful past. Betty is discovering how her father's values and absence have shaped and influenced her as much as her mother's involvement.

Betty's challenges during the Age Thirty Transition involve giving the individualistic and relational components of her Dream a place in her life structure. One of her greatest challenges during this period will be to decide if she is willing to take the emotional and financial risks to incorporate her Dream of being a full-time performing artist into her life structure. The decision to make major changes or function at status quo involve sacrifice with far

reaching implications. To live as an artist might mean possible destitution--embracing the unknown. Another formidable task will be defining her artistic niche. At the time of the interviews she did not appear affected by the knowledge that many professional dancers are segueing into areas other than performing at age 32. Though she was in excellent physical condition, part of her confusion and anxiety probably stems from the fact that time is of the essence, especially for dancers. Growing older does not preclude a performing career, but may require Betty to shift her perception of viable, obtainable options. Not making changes might mean continued inner angst as Betty has suppressed her full artist expression for so many years.

Betty's Dream and her pursuit of it may also be seen as a defense against intimacy. She has utilized suppression and sublimation to submerge the True Dream. She is admittedly mistrustful of men, and she uses work to guard against developing an intimate relationship. She has picked a very serviceable defense, as it is tied up with her Dream; but it is probable that her flight from intimacy will resurface and become less

effective as she attempts to build a new life structure.

BETTY'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Betty's attitude about this period of her life is one of ambivalence. She is guardedly optimistic about finding a partner and stabilizing a long term relationship but more tentative and unsure about how to actualize the individualistic component of her Dream--living and working as an artist.

Adjectives that Betty uses to describe her life during this period include confused, frustrated, weak, strong and spiritual. Her descriptions embody the angst of the Age Thirty Transition and the recent reappraisal process that precedes resolution. Betty's drive, motivation and ambition do not appear to be affected as she mobilizes her energy to continue her artistic development; and she is attempting to develop a plan of action to bring her closer to her goals. When asked about her perception of this period in her life, Betty's focuses on the physical changes that she has noticed.

I was reading in Glamour magazine about things that were supposed to happen in these decades in your life and it was heavy. Your skin changes and all these things happen... My priorities have changed and I'm a lot more serious now and less serious about certain other things. I'm more relaxed about my appearance. Now I'm kinda bummy sometimes and comfortable. I take time to meditate and be quiet. I never used to do that. I'm learning to be more spontaneous. I panicked a little, because I've started to see changes in my physical body. Especially when you're a dancer. When you start feeling pain or additional pain more than when you felt in your twenties. You have to start doing more things like massage and putting creams on. I never used to have to do those things in my twenties. That at times is a little scary. That's always a challenge for me. How much can I build up my endurance. To me it's about staying healthy. You can maintain a good level of fitness. It's painful sometimes. My flexibility was wow in my 20's. But now it's probably because I don't stretch as much as I did in my twenties. Just little things, your strength. It's kinda scary sometimes because those are things that you don't think you're gonna lose. But they do lessen as time goes on. But I'm always fighting that.

CLARISSA

Clarissa is a 31 year old social worker who was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY . She is the youngest of three sisters who are six and eight years older than herself. Both parents migrated from the midwest to NY, with the origins of both the maternal and paternal families being in the South. Clarissa and her eldest sister have lived in the same house most of their lives. While in graduate school Clarissa moved out for several years but returned for financial reasons shortly after finishing school.

The relationship that Clarissa reports as most close has been that with her father. Her parents were divorced when she entered college, though they were separated from when she was seven years old. She remembers that he left one day and never returned. She remembers:

The first years I was Daddy's little girl. He was there and we had a very close relationship. And then he just left. I don't know how it was until we just didn't hear from him anymore. Then we started talking on the phone. It was very difficult for me all that time until more recently. My mother had a lot against him, so it was difficult to have a good relationship with him. But I think I have a very good relationship with him now.

As her mother and father had a strained relationship, there was little encouragement to foster

communication between the father and the girls. Her father's separation from the family was very difficult for her. Eventually contact with her father was sporadic during her school age years. She re-established contact with her father as an adult, and their relationship is again close. Clarissa's relationship with her mother and middle sister is good. She remembers that her mother was often absent as she worked to support the family while earning several masters degrees.

Clarissa and her older sister are only cordial with each other as the sister has been plagued by depression, substance abuse, and anti-social behavior which distanced the two since Clarissa was a child.

Integral parts of Clarissa's life while growing up were the church and music. She began taking piano lessons at age six (some of her fondest memories are of being accompanied to music lessons by her father), and she frequently gave recitals at school and church. She enjoyed performing, learned to play the clarinet in high school and was always 'first chair'. Much of the family's time together was spent in church. In retrospect she views her fundamentalist religious upbringing as very restrictive. She has retained a spiritual focus in her life but adapted a more relaxed attitude towards dictates prescribed by her church.

Clarissa always enjoyed school and was an honors

student. She attended an integrated public high school though the few friends that she had were also Black. She described herself as awkward during that period-- a gangly, shy girl with glasses. She was part of a small closely knit group of friends, with her closest girlfriends being the pretty, popular socialites. She was not very interested in dating in high school and her mother forbade it anyway until age eighteen.

EARLY ADULT TRANSITION (ages 17 - 22)

Although Clarissa attended a local college and lived at home, she found that college was a new exciting vast departure from her previously insular world.

I grew up in a really restrictive church--no make-up, no jewelry, no pants for women and things like that. [Then] I was basically with it [the philosophy]. When I got to college I was able to say oh no. I started wearing pants, I met all these men--different kinds of men. I was very socially isolated I would say to some extent. I was socially awkward. I started to wear contacts. People saw a lot of positive stuff in me that I didn't see. My mind was expanded. There was another way of thinking.

She began to associate more with men and people of other ethnic groups; to wear pants; to allow herself to be more outgoing.

Clarissa entered college with the ambition of

obtaining a degree in music education. Her mother and several others in her family are teachers, and she felt that combining her love of music with a teaching career was an easy and natural progression.

I decided early on music education, because that's what I did--music; and my mother was an educator with different educators in the family. I decided that pretty quickly. College was great because I didn't know anybody. My place wasn't already put in the hierarchy. I could be anybody I wanted to be.

Initially, she felt isolated by being the only Black person in many of her classes. The music department was predominantly white, and her feelings of isolation led to feelings of inadequacy as well. Eventually, she befriended others in her department, and her sense of isolation decreased.

As a freshman, Clarissa became involved with a Christian campus ministry which provided activities for her leisure time on campus. She served first as a student counselor and later became the group's president. Clarissa balanced coursework and her activities with the ministry and obtained her B.S. in music education after five years.

It was during her second year of college that Clarissa experienced her first major break-up with a boyfriend. It is the only intimate relationship that she describes in any detail throughout the interview.

I had my big heartbreak during

that time. My first love--and I loved that boy. I knew him from elementary school. We used to sit next to each other in school for two years. We knew each other pretty well. We split at high school and then we saw each other again on the bus. And we just sort of started up again. We broke up because he was away at school (college) and I was not. And other girls...His life was expanding, and mine was pretty still the same. We saw each other on and off for several years.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE (ages 22 - 28)

After graduation, Clarissa wanted to teach music in secondary schools, but was discouraged after seeking advice about the lack of opportunities. She settled for a teaching position on the elementary school level, and the experience proved to be more challenging than she ever imagined. Her job involved teaching groups of 40+ students per class. There were few materials or instruments, few staff consistently available to assist her and limited resources.

Clarissa was able to develop a school band and chorus which was personally gratifying. At the end of the school year however, Clarissa decided that her teaching days were numbered, and she made alternate plans for the upcoming school year. After her first year of teaching Clarissa was approached with an

opportunity to work in a professional capacity with the Christian campus ministry that had been an important part of her life. She worked as an advisor with administrative and fundraising responsibilities. Clarissa worked in this position for six and a half years before deciding that another career shift was warranted. She became bored with her responsibilities at the ministry and realized that there were no opportunities for advancement within the organization. Though the organization was Christian, Clarissa felt that racist attitudes and practices within the organization prevented her from advancing. The motivating aspect of the work at the ministry was the involvement with students--counseling and advising them. She also enjoyed working with two supervisors in the ministry that would later become close friends.

Sharon is not a particularly beautiful woman. She's not stylish. But her beauty is an Inner beauty. She's a very powerful woman. She's very wise. She taught me how to ask questions. She knows how to get to the root question--"What's the bottom line here?". She taught me how to do that. She was the first person to ever listen to me. She taught me how to do my job, and how to take care of myself, like taking myself out once a month. She's married but she's not waiting on some man to come and do something for her. And she loves me, and I love her back.

Tom taught me that when you say 'yes' to one thing, you say 'no' to

something else. You can't say 'yes' and then do something else. What ever you put on your calendar first that's what's on your calendar, and don't try to get out of it. Because I would flake all the time. I would say I was going to do something and never do it. He's a very practical man very fun-loving, very spiritual. And he's a leader. I like them [Sharon and Tom] because they're leaders.

AGE THIRTY TRANSITION (ages 28 - Present)

Clarissa decided to pursue a graduate degree in social work as she enjoyed counseling and felt that social work was an extension of the work she was already doing. The rigors of coursework and study were challenging, but she enjoyed it. During this period, she gained a sense of confidence about her talents and capabilities.

Clarissa credits her experience in graduate school and her exposure to Black intellectual thought with her growing confidence to question and critically examine issues of race, ethnicity, class, etc. and the impact of such on her life choices.

Going to graduate school and listening to those people speak. And their overt racism, and blindspots--this is the majority of the school. I took a really great history course about social work

and the African American community. The professor taught us so much history, and mental health in response to history--the political, social and economic impact on African Americans. It helped me to realize that my feelings about racism have some factual basis behind it--that I'm not making this up. I'm not paranoid. I'm not crazy. And that was very liberating and empowering for me. And that had an impact and made me say that I wanted to work with Black people.

Through this lens she began to question the inequities previously unchallenged in the college Christian ministry of which she had been a part. She then made a decision to work in a Black community after obtaining her MSW.

She quickly found work after graduation in a family services unit of a community outreach program. A number of alumnae from her graduate school worked at the program and she was excited about working with former colleagues. Her enthusiasm was short-lived as she found the work draining, intense and seemingly endless. The gap between the theoretical frameworks of school and real world scenarios left her feeling overwhelmed at times. She found the supervision increasingly inadequate in proportion to the casework demands made upon her. She was not as yet actively seeking a change, but felt that a new direction was imminent.

Music and involvement in the church have remained central in Clarissa's life. She teaches music and is the minister of music at her church. Many of her leisure activities have a socio-political or spiritual focus.

CLARISSA: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

For Clarissa the Age Thirty Transition seems to have occurred around age 28. She began reappraising her career choice and entered graduate school.

I. The Dream

Individualistic Component

When asked to elaborate on her Dream, Clarissa's responses are terse and the individualistic components of her Dream rather vague. Clarissa did not have a specific Dream that shaped or guided her career choices. Clarissa has imagined since her twenties that she might be a college professor of some renown, or engaged in public speaking. She wanted to be involved in a helping profession which assisted individuals with spiritual empowerment. Eventually Clarissa would like to obtain a doctorate, but she is currently unsure of what discipline she would pursue.

Relational Components

The relational components of Clarissa's Dream are more detailed and include her desire to be a wife and mother. She has several married Christian friends in her social circle that she considers as role models for marriage. As her faith is a central component in her life structure, she seemed prepared to wait for a partner who shares her sense of spiritual commitment. In graduate school, Clarissa experienced an awakening ethnic identification and pride, which fuelled a desire to 'give service' to the African American community in some way. Her ideal partner would share her sense of mission or purpose to be of service to African American community. She admittedly has high standards and seems somewhat rigid in tolerating deviance from her idealized partner.

Reappraisal of the Dream

During the Age Thirty Transition, Clarissa is dissatisfied with the individualistic aspects of her Dream—namely her occupation, but she did not appear ready to develop a plan and act on it. A clear picture of her options and career direction had not emerged at the time of the interviews. Clarissa's cursory ideas of change involve attending graduate school for a

doctorate, though which discipline she would take is not decided. Conspicuously absent from the discussion on change is the role of music in her life. She states that her artistic strivings are sublimated and satisfied in her role as a music minister at her church. The relational components of the Dream remain unchanged.

II. Mentor Relationships

Clarissa identifies two mentors who have shaped her development since early adulthood. She met Sharon and Tom who were advisors/supervisors in the campus ministry at her college. Their guidance and support influenced her decision to enter the ministry. Sharon provided practical information on how to negotiate and survive in the system which included fundraising for one's salary. Clarissa saw her as an example of how to conduct herself as an Afrocentric, Christian, conscious, intelligent woman given all the implied complexities. It was Sharon who also helped Clarissa gain a perspective and manage the subtle but constant assaults of racism within the organization. Tom's role was as supervisor and spiritual counselor. He helped Clarissa acquire management skills like prioritizing, delegating, and decision making.

III. FORMING AN OCCUPATION

Clarissa's occupational direction and development do not appear to be linear or uni-directional. Rather she incorporated the major area of interests in her life which are music and spirituality/religion into her career path. Competition with other talented students in college and lack of confidence in her own musical abilities at that time perhaps precluded a performing career. Teaching music was short-lived as a profession for Clarissa and was quickly replaced by spiritual counseling and administrative work, which she previously enjoyed. Occupationally, work with the campus ministry group appears to have been the most fulfilling and gratifying for Clarissa. Had she not reached the 'glass ceiling' she might still be with the organization.

Clarissa surmised that her desire to be a helping professional combined with formal training in social work would provide a gratifying career with numerous options for growth. Her current position as a social worker providing direct services has proved to be less than satisfying.

Reappraisal of Occupation

The first career reappraisal occurred around age twenty-nine when she decided to leave the campus ministry. Her most recent reappraisal at the time of this interview involves deciding if counseling and social work are her true vocation. The reappraisal is most likely precipitated by a sense of burn-out in her current position. She questions whether a change of venue will be enough, as she is ambivalent about continuing in the social work field.

IV. Forming Love Relationships

Marriage and family are part of Clarissa's plan for the future. She is at the time of the interview, not involved in a serious relationship or dating. She is not forthcoming about the nature or duration of previous long-term relationships except to say that she has had several marriage proposals which she did not seriously entertain. She prefers dating, but recently has had difficulty meeting new men and expanding her social circle. She views marriage as a right of passage.

Admittedly, Clarissa thinks more about marriage and children over the past couple of years as all of her friends are now married. Although at times she

feels a great deal of internal pressure to be married, she is single by choice. None of her previous boyfriends have met her criteria of what her mate should be. Religion and spirituality are areas that should be as central in the life of a prospective mate as they are in her own life. She is very specific and detailed about the qualities that she desires in a mate.

Clarissa feels that her decision to remain single until she finds a suitable mate has been best for her, though she admits that the prospective pool of mates is small. Her perception is that most of the African American men in her age group are and/or have been incarcerated, under-educated, or have values incompatible to her own. Also, because of her long commute to work and involvement in church activities, she has little time for more social activities where she would be likely to meet new men. Not having her own apartment contributes to her lack of social engagement.

She has not dated men from other cultures and is not interested in doing so. She is however, optimistic that she will eventually meet the 'right man' and get married. In the event that she does not get married, Clarissa is prepared to adopt children.

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participants Age Thirty Transition would be a function of the presence or absence of social support.

The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOSTHESIS II: Analysis

Clarissa can be characterized as experiencing a ROUGH Age Thirty Transition as her life structure and the articulated portions of her Dream are not consonant at the time of the interviews. Her self descriptions, perceptions and presentation during this period in her life are mixed. She is experiencing another reappraisal of occupation and career, and she is still shaping and defining the individualistic aspects of her Dream. She has an adequate support system (especially her mentors) that she has utilized in the past during times of reappraisal and transition.

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The friends that comprise Clarissa's social support network are younger or older than herself. Her closest friend Phyllis is her former roommate and nine years her junior. They have a sisterly relationship and talk with each other several times per week. Her mentors and three other women friends are the people she is most likely to share the details, joys and pains of her life. She points out however that she selectively chooses the extent and to whom she discloses. She is least guarded with Phyllis. Interestingly enough, though she is often not disclosing, she feels she utilizes her friends much more than they tend to utilize her support. Most often she and her friends discuss married life, and they encourage her. Though the relationships may not be strictly reciprocal she is available to them. Clarissa receives emotional and financial support from her mother though they are not close.

Most of the members of her support system know each other, and some are friends among themselves. They share similar spiritual values. Clarissa belongs to a women's group at her church that meets bi-monthly to discuss issues that impact on their lives as Christian women. Clarissa's support system adequately

meets her needs, and she does not feel isolated.

**TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION
Social Support for the Dream**

Prior to and during the Age Thirty Transition, Clarissa has provided for herself (with assistance from her mentors) the creative space to explore two different career paths; and she is considering following a third career path.

Sharon and Tom served as Clarissa's mentors in Levinson's traditional sense. They facilitated her Dream of being of service as well as provided a vocational entree into their organization. Her mentors and her job satisfaction in the campus ministry provided her with a sense of stability and security after her brief trial of teaching. As transitional objects, Clarissa's mentors supported and encouraged her vocational exploration and growth outside of the ministry which led to her eventual departure. Tom and Sharon were also willing to allow the relationship with Clarissa to grow beyond the parameters of work. Clarissa has watched Sharon expand her roles to that of wife and mother; and she admires and has internalized much of her attitude towards life. Tom and Sharon supported Clarissa through two transition periods in

adulthood and continue to be close friends with her.

HYPOTHESIS III

Hypothesis III states that major individualistic and/or relational components of the Dream would be actualized before a shift in priorities or an attempt at a balance between work and love would be evident in the participants' life structure. Hypothesis III was not applicable for Clarissa as she had not achieved major individualistic and/or relational components of her Dream that were syntonetic.

HYPOTHESIS IV: Analysis

At the current stage of Clarissa's Age Thirty Transition, she is not experiencing a shift in priorities. Although she has attained a graduate degree, her satisfaction with her current career direction is elusive. She is still refining her career options, and no definite steps or plans have been made.

While there is currently no love interest in her life, she is emotionally invested in the idea of eventually getting married. Satisfaction with the individualistic and relational aspects of Clarissa's Dream have yet to be realized; consequently she is not currently

experiencing a shift in priorities or a balance between work and love.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

Dependence versus Independence

Clarissa can be characterized as negotiating the Termination phase of the Age Thirty Transition. She completed graduate school during the Transition, and has decided that aspects of her life structure are unsatisfactory. She is approaching the Individuation phase and issues around Engagement/Separateness are surfacing after her return to the family home during the Age Thirty Transition.

During the Early Adult Transition, Clarissa was able to establish that following in her mother's footsteps as an educator was not what she wanted. She seems to have by default and unconsciously charted a slightly different path for herself than that of her mother.

The Christian ethic of caring for others is compatible with her choice of social work as a profession, and at times she seems overly responsible for others--especially her family. Her decision to return to her family home can be viewed as related to several factors other than just financial need. First, her pattern of returning to the familiar during times

of change and transition is adaptive and served her well during the Early Adult Transition. She returned to the organization and job that had previously provided her with a sense of security and purpose during her college years. Secondly, the psychological shift from the 'family profession' of teaching during the Age Thirty Transition; Phyllis' marriage (hence the end of their roommate relationship); and her graduation from social work school may have been psychologically unsettling. Thirdly, her expressed reason for returning home was for financial reasons; however, she was motivated by obligation to assist her mother with the time consuming care of her sister. Her ambivalence about separating herself physically from her family of origin manifested itself as the acquisition of debt that prevented her from living alone after graduate school.

Clarissa is currently questioning and acknowledging many of the unconscious conflicts, drives and motivations that have played themselves out in her life. She has internalized an expanded view of spirituality that is less dogmatic, practical and applicable in her life. She is resolving the guilt and ambivalence around her sense of obligation to her mother, and actively making plans to move into her own apartment. Though her mother and father have had a

strained relationship since her childhood, Clarissa loves her father and has chosen to reach out to him. They have been able to re-establish the close bonds they once shared.

Clarissa's developmental challenges during the Age Thirty Transition also involve becoming more definite about her personal and professional goals as well as taking risks to actualize her goals. Heretofore in her life she has been able to identify those elements which she does not wish to incorporate into her life structure. Professionally, she has yet to choose and settle into a satisfying career. There is time for her to explore various professional possibilities, but even exploration demands commitment in some direction or another.

There appear to be issues around avoidance of intimacy for Clarissa. She, voices a desire to meet new eligible partners, but structures her leisure time in a way that precludes this possibility. She does not elaborate about her past relationships except to state that her standards were not met. During the Age Thirty Transition, Clarissa must reevaluate whether her choices, expectations, and standards are aligned with the most developed and detailed portion of her Dream--that of being married. With so much developmental work still to be resolved around

occupation and marriage and family, Clarissa is not poised to enter the Culminating Life Structure for Early Adulthood with a sense of stability.

CLARISSA'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Clarissa's expectation and perception of turning 30 and the Age Thirty Transition seem to be combination of positive and negative experiences. During the Age Thirty Transition period, Clarissa has made major accomplishments as well as developed more self confidence in her abilities. She is optimistic about achieving her goals especially that of being married and raising a family.

On the other hand, the conflicts and reappraisals of the Age Thirty Transition do not appear to be near resolution. Clarissa seems dissatisfied with her present job of social worker, but has not taken any direct action to date to remedy this. Her occupational goals remain vague. About this time in her life [her thirties] Clarissa states:

I like my thirties. Because you have a nice perspective on life. I'm not too old, it's not too late. I think I've learned a heck of a lot. It feels okay. I've waited to be thirty-something since I was 27. Just mentally I thought I was 30. I guess 30 meant something wonderful to me. I have done a lot of good things. I got my masters; I started a new career; I

started making a little money; I got a new car and got into debt. I used to think I was dumb. And graduate school taught me I'm not dumb. Thirties are okay. I probably always had a positive spin on it [being 30].

DANA

Dana is a 29 year old project director of school based family services program. She is the eldest of three having a sister 2 years younger and a brother 16 years younger. Dana was born and raised by both parents in a rather strict and religious household in Washington D.C.

One of the things I remember about growing up was that my parents were very religious. So that a lot of things I wanted to do as far as being creative and expressive, my parents were against it because of religion. Like for instance I wanted to go to dance classes, but my religion didn't believe in dancing and things like that. I wanted to join the volley ball team and wasn't allowed to wear pants, so I couldn't join the volley ball team. A lot of my upbringing was centered around the church.

Of Dana's immediate family, her relationship with her brother is closest. She helped to care for him as an infant. She and her sister have always been opposites with Dana describing herself as studious, considerate of others, neat, etc. The opposition was a source of conflict during much of their adolescence and early adult years. She and her parents have never been close, though she says that her family relationships have improved since her mid-twenties. Dana is closer

with her maternal relatives and she and her family spent summers in the south.

Dana always attended public school and was a good student. Though she was not able to participate in many extra curricular activities, she was popular with peers and teachers. She had no definite ideas about career during high school, but knew she would have a profession as her mother and the rest of the women in her family.

During her last years of high school, her parents relaxed their religious views somewhat and allowed Dana to listen to secular music, wear pants and engage in more typical adolescent social activities.

EARLY ADULTHOOD TRANSITION (ages 17 - 22)

Dana decided to attend a traditionally Black southern college as a way of broadening her perspective and gaining independence from her parents. She enjoyed the diverse international student population as well as the opportunity to be self directed.

After college Dana returned to Washington without a clear career direction. Her parents gently pressured

her to make some decisions to look for work or continue her education. Her plan before graduation was to apply for graduate studies in clinical psychology. The pressure and termination anxiety of graduation immobilized her. She missed the application deadlines. Three weeks before the fall semester after her graduation Dana decided to apply to graduate school for social work, and she was accepted.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE (ages 22 - 28)

Dana completed her MSW and wanted to work a year or so and return for her doctorate in clinical psychology. She patterned her career after an older cousin who was in the social work field. Dana's first two jobs were in a hospital setting working with pregnant teens. She enjoyed the work, the clients and staff, however the pay was less than desirable. Dana also felt that her professional growth was being stunted. After two years at the hospital, Dana applied to a doctoral program in New Jersey, but was not accepted. Dana was momentarily disappointed about not being accepted in the doctoral program, and she decided

to relocate. She wanted to leave Washington, and moved to New Jersey after landing a better job with a foster care agency. The job offered more money and a chance for supervisory experience. After about two years, Dana began to search for another job because of burn-out and conflict with subordinate staff at the foster care agency. At age 27 she was being primed to assume leadership of that agency. She was given much support by the then present director, but many staff were against her appointment, and attempted to sabotage her efforts in passive-aggressive ways.

Dana's latest position as a program developer offers her more supervisory and administrative responsibilities, which she enjoys. She doubts, however, that she will stay more than another year in this position as the program is grant funded. There have also been personality conflicts that have made the job more stressful.

Since moving to NJ Dana has become romantically involved with Mitchell, an entertainment lawyer. Before meeting Mitchell, Dana dated casually or was involved in relationships for a year or less. She wasn't interested in a serious relationship and ended

them because of boredom, or having the sense that the relationships were not leading to a serious commitment by either party.

AGE THIRTY TRANSITION (ages 28 - present)

For Dana, this past year of her life has been full of reappraisals with the emergence of the expected themes of the Age Thirty Transition taking center stage during this process. She reports a sense of accomplishment regarding her career. The most important things in her life currently are having her peace of mind and cultivating her relationships with friends and family. Dana is aware of the physical changes in her body (weight gain and distribution) and the increased effort needed to maintain an appearance with which she is comfortable. The more subtle changes she reports are feeling more responsible and mature; and more stable and calm in her intimate relationship.

Her most pressing concern at present is the sense of internal pressure to be married. She enjoys the flexibility and independence that being single

currently affords her, but Dana is cautiously optimistic that Mitchell is 'the one'.

I'm in a relationship now, but if that relationship doesn't work out that means I'm gonna have to get back out there all over again. Which means you have to spend the time getting to know somebody and telling them all your secrets. And wondering if you ever will be with a partner permanently. It becomes a lot more real at 29. Because I always thought by this age I'd be married. Then I thought by the time I got out of college I'd be married. But that didn't happen. I don't have a problem with not being married at the age of 30 as long as I'm with the person I know I'm going to marry. But when you're 30 and you don't even have any prospects, that's depressing.

DANA: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

For Dana, the Age Thirty Transitions seems to have begun around age 26-27. Reappraisal themes involved career decisions and direction. She relocated during the Age Thirty Transition, and made career moves that advanced her salary and professional standing. At ages 27-28 additional reappraisal themes involved intimate relationships, and attitudes about marriage and family. During the Age Thirty Transition, her attitude regarding intimacy changed, and the desire for marriage and family became more important to her.

I. The Dream

Individualistic Component

The individualistic aspect of Dana's Dream initially involved working as a therapist (psychologist/social worker). Social work was an alternate but related field that proved to be occupationally gratifying for Dana. After achieving her goal of a graduate degree, she has refined her Dream to include supervisory and administrative components which she is in the process of achieving.

The latest individualistic component of her Dream involves working in a corporate setting, which she has yet to attempt. In the past year Dana has decided that another Dream is to retire early and move to the Caribbean before age 60.

Relational Components

The relational components of Dana's Dream have included her desire to be a wife and mother. This Dream has been constant since adolescence, but her optimism about its actualization has wavered. She views her parents' marriage as a solid one with her father being

a good provider for her family. Her ideal is to marry a man who could provide her with financial security.

Reappraisal of the Dream

Dana's Dream has been articulated and clear, and she has attained her goals in a straight forward manner. Her expressed goal during the Entry Life Structure of training as a clinical psychologist was revised during that phase, and she formed an acceptable compromise of training and working as a social worker/therapist. Reappraisals of the individualistic components of the Dream have centered around changes of venue or position for career advancement.

The provisional and experimental nature of the Dream as Transitional Object has not been evident in Dana's development. Dana formed the fundamental aspects of her Dream in adolescence and consolidated the details in Early Adulthood. There have been no obstacles to the actualization of her Dream; and the pursuit of the individualistic components has been a direct and linear one. The content and tenor of the individualistic and relational components of Dana's

Dream have remained constant with little modification or alteration.

II. OCCUPATION

Dana's occupational novitiate began after graduate school at around age 24. She has made continuous progress in her career, incorporating administrative, supervisory, and policy making facets into her occupational role.

Reappraisals have been few and primarily as a result of dissatisfaction with a particular work environment. At age 27 she questioned her desire to continue in the social work field, but with a change of venue rediscovered her commitment to the work. Her latest occupational reappraisal at age 29 involves seeking to find another more hospitable working environment in which she can enhance her skills. Another change of venue is imminent for Dana.

III. MENTORS

Dana reports no formal mentor relationships. Her elder cousin provided useful information about entrance to graduate school and tips for job-hunting. Dana initially modeled her career after her cousin, and for a while they both worked in hospital settings. She relied on the guidance and information that older colleagues provided about performing her duties etc. Though helpful, none of the women directly enhanced her career standing in the classical sense of a mentor. She is currently cultivating a relationship with a senior colleague whom she is hopeful will serve as a mentor.

IV. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Currently Dana is in an intimate relationship that she hopes will lead to marriage. Her desire to be married is not without ambivalence. While there has been an outward expression to be married and a self-described internally generated urgency to do so, Dana has managed to avoid committing to intimate

relationships in a serious way until the last three years. Admittedly, Dana states that prior to the present, she has not been ready for marriage. She prizes her independence, which she perceives would have to be curtailed somewhat if she were married. Though she does not state it directly, Dana implies that if she is not married by age 40 she would somehow experience being single as a 'failure'. She considers an alternative family constellation as a possibility if she is not married by age 40--perhaps adopting a child and being a single mother.

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participants' Age Thirty Transition experience would be a function of the presence or absence of social support. The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOTHESIS II: Analysis

Dana can be described as experiencing a SMOOTH Age Thirty Transition. Her Dream, goals, and

accomplishments are all synchronous with her life structure at this time. All of the changes she has made during the Age Thirty Transition have been relatively minor ones with no changes in the Dream. The only stated goal that is yet unfulfilled is that of forming a marriage and starting a family. Members of her support system have encouraged and facilitated the actualization of aspects of her Dream.

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The most important members of Dana's social support network include her boyfriend and two or three close friends from her college days. Her boyfriend Mitchell provides emotional as well as financial support. He has been particularly helpful in assisting Dana with clarifying her decision to seek another job, and she feels that their support of each other is reciprocal. Her two closest girlfriends provide emotional support, and serve as a surrogate family with whom she spends much of her leisure time. She is in contact with her girlfriends almost daily and sees them at least once every two weeks. The members of Dana's

support system are her age or several years older. The concerns and focus of discussion and support that Dana and her friends provide each other center around relationships and career. One of Dana's closest friends Tara, offered to allow Dana to move in with her while she (Dana) decided in which direction to move in her career after graduate school. Tara provided the encouragement and offered tangible assistance that contributed to Dana's decision to move to New Jersey. She has a wider circle of less intimate long-standing friends ,and she is comfortable with the level of support she gives and receives from her network of friends.

TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Social support for the Dream

Though Dana does not include her parents in the list of those she would most likely call if she were in a crisis, it is clear from the interviews that her parents have been financially supportive of her Dream before and during the Age Thirty Transition. The relationship she shares with her parents appears amicable and pleasant though somewhat distant. Dana's

parents have a different philosophical and spiritual view than hers, which may explain the emotional distance. Her relationship with her parents is not antagonistic, and they have not tried to persuade her regarding career choices. Her parents expected and encouraged her to have a career, and they assumed responsibility for her undergraduate and graduate tuition. Dana's parents hope that she will one day marry, but they do not pressure her around this issue.

When examining Dana's life structure and comparing it to the other participants in the study, her Age Thirty Transition has proceeded more smoothly than the rest. Unlike most of the other participants, Dana's Dream did not include multi-directional career aspirations. The latitude of possible career choices she allowed herself was narrow. When her desire to enter a clinical psychology doctoral program did not work out, Dana was able to distill the essence of her occupational interest—to be a therapist. She quickly found a suitable and related outlet for her career aspirations in the social work field. The fact that Dana's focus and career choice was made early and

without exploration of alternative directions has not impacted negatively on her adult developmental process. Her use of creative space for herself regarding the Dream has manifest as exploration within her chosen field. Dana has explored several niches within the social work realm including direct patient contact, administrative work and supervision. Though the latitude of her career aspirations has been narrow, the individualistic components of Dana's Dream and her life structure are the most synchronous of the eight participants.

HYPOTHESIS III: Analysis

There has been a partial shifting of priorities for Dana during the present phase of her Age Thirty Transition. Unlike Stewart's subjects whose shifts in priorities seemed more delineated, Dana's shift is more gradual. At the time of the interview with her, Dana was preparing to look for a better job; though she had come to the realization that the longevity of her career satisfaction may not be as long or as great as

she had once imagined. She has attained a large measure of her career goals.

Dana is focusing more attention on maintaining her intimate relationship. She is attempting to achieve a balance between work and love. She has made major achievements in the individualistic and relational components of her Dream, but there are still goals to be attained.

HYPOTHESIS IV

Hypothesis IV was not applicable to Dana as she was a member of the group experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition, and she experienced a shifting of priorities during the Age Thirty Transition.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

Dependence versus Independence

Dana has met the Early Adulthood tasks of forming a Dream and giving it a place in the life structure, and forming an occupation. The lack of formal mentor relationships has not hindered her career development.

At the time of the interviews, Dana was negotiating the Individuation phase of the Age Thirty

Transition. It is expected that Dana will have to negotiate the tasks of Termination and Initiation as she attains the relational aspects of her Dream. She is still financially dependent on her parents at times, and she is seeking to be less so.

Dana's parents and especially her mother and the women in her family provided a strong work ethic and an image of women as breadwinners and professionals. Though her upbringing was rather strict and very religious she internalized the notion of female competence and independence.

Psychological and physical separation from her family of origin happened at several periods in Dana's life. Her college experience in the south provided her with experiences and perspectives different from her upbringing. It was during this period in her early adulthood that she was able to make a break from the fundamentalist church of her youth and adopt a more relaxed position towards spiritual values.

Dana has been able to establish reciprocal friendships that meet her needs. More recently she has been able to enter into and maintain an intimate relationship that is satisfying. One can make

conjectures about her previous pattern of entering and ending intimate relationships as related to some difficulty with establishing intimacy or a proclivity for choosing inappropriate partners. During her Age Thirty Transition, she is seeking to develop a capacity for intimacy that will allow her to sustain a long term relationship.

Though Dana's progression through the Age Thirty Transition has been smooth, there are hints that there may be major changes later in her adult developmental process. Dana has attained all the occupational goals she has set for herself, and her interest in the social work field may be waning. In addition, Dana was feeling very pressured, at the time of the interviews, to find the Special Man to marry before age 30. The impression that one gathered from the interview with Dana was that her life course proceeded in a relatively smooth fashion with minor bumps along the way. Her approach and pattern of achievement has been to set a circumscribed goal and achieve it. One watch-word for Dana for the remaining portion of the Age Thirty Transition would be flexibility. Dana might benefit from allowing herself more creative space around

entertaining alternative career directions should she become dissatisfied with social work. Flexibility might also serve her well regarding her approach to intimate relationships and achieving her goal of marriage.

DANA'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Though somewhat cautiously optimistic about her chances for marriage at this time, Dana's overall outlook on her life and achieving her goals is a bright and optimistic one. She feels through hard work and perseverance, her career goals are attainable.

Currently, the individualistic and relational components of her Dream and her life structure as manifest in her career and intimate relationship seem to be synchronized and moving in the same direction. She has been able to actualize major aspects of her Dream with little need for revision, reworking or change of direction.

Dana shares her thoughts about being 29 and this period in her life:

It's so close to 30. And 30 of course is that age just like 25 when you reflect

on your life. And what you've accomplished. Am I a failure am I a success? What am I gonna do now especially in terms of like relationships and being married. It's a very, very difficult age. It's right on the border. I'm deciding whether or not I'm gonna turn 30 next year. I might not do it. Of course I'll do it chronologically, but I might not admit it to people. I might not be ready for it emotionally. At first I thought I would feel this way about turning 29, but when it happened I was okay with it. I don't feel any different than when I was 25, 24. I've gained more weight in my body. ...My metabolism has slowed down. I really do have to watch what I eat now. Which is not pleasant. Things like that. I think I'm having a much happier life now than I ever did...Because I'm able to do so many things. I'm really happy that I'm independent. I don't live with my parents. I have my own car. I have an apartment. I've been able to do a lot of traveling, and do things that I never thought I would do. So I'm really happy about that. And I feel really good about the accomplishments I've made in my career. I think I've been lucky to have a lot of the opportunities I've had at this age. I know a lot of people in social work at 29 who've never supervised anybody, never been a field instructor. So I think I've been quite blessed that I've been able to do so many things at 29.

ELEANOR

Eleanor is a 32 year old master's level psychologist currently living and working in New York City as an adolescent program coordinator and developer. When asked to describe her early life she states:

Our parents were always available for us which is really nice. And I look at that as the core of why I've been able to make it. If my mom was at work, my father was there. If my father was at work, my mom was there. And we also had a baby sitter who also lived in for those few times neither one of them could be there. We come from a very strong religious background. I grew up in the Church of Christ--literally as an infant. That brought with it a whole core group of extended family. And all mother's brothers and sisters live in Connecticut.

Eleanor is the youngest of three--with an older half brother four years older and a sister two years her senior. Her parents are both migrants from the south with very strong family ties. Each year during her school age years through adolescence, her immediate family traveled south to spend time with maternal and paternal relatives. Eleanor's maternal extended family members have lived within blocks of each other since

her childhood, and she remembers always having cousins around to play with.

Eleanor enjoyed school and excelled in academics and athletics. She is a self-described tomboy who was engaged in all sorts of sports since childhood including contact sports. In high school she played on the girl's basketball team.

Eleanor and her immediate family members have always been close. Of the two sisters, Eleanor was the more extroverted and playful while Trisha was rather subdued. Though Eleanor and her family are religious and have always spent a lot of time in church related activities, she remembers her parents as playful and flexible.

EARLY ADULT TRANSITION (ages 17 -22)

After high school, Eleanor chose a small college within a two hour commute from home. She lived on campus, made frequent trips home, and adjusted well to college life. She played basketball and was popular.

It was a nice experience [college]. It was an emancipation experience. When you leave home and build friends and family outside of the home. It was good. I played on the

basketball team there and liked the competition and camaraderie that comes with that.

In some ways Eleanor felt her upbringing was idyllic and sheltered, and that her parents had not prepared her for harsh realities like racism. Before college her social circle had been circumscribed with little contact with whites. Her assumption was that merit and competence were key factors in achievement--an assumption that did not factor in race. She does not feel that her late awareness of racism and its impact has negatively affected her self-esteem or sense of competence.

Eleanor considered a career in law before entering college, but decided near the end of her undergraduate training to take a degree in psychology. Knowing that an advanced degree in psychology would be optimal to ensure any career potential in the field, she enrolled in a masters program immediately after college.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE FOR EARLY ADULTHOOD (ages 22 - 28)

The focus for Eleanor during this period of her life was school and developing a career. She had two

long term relationships, but she was not interested in marriage. To her building a career and starting a marriage were competing interests.

While obtaining her masters degree she more clearly defined the population and type of work in which she was interested. Through her church and community service activities she found an affinity for working with adolescents. She combined her therapeutic skills with her interest in athletics and created programs in her church and community that aided youth in non-threatening, non-traditional ways. She was asked to develop and coach a church basketball team which she led to the church's city-wide league finals. Eleanor also developed a mentorship program at her church, and in her limited leisure time, shared activities with her young mentees. Frequently, Eleanor's professional and social/leisure roles overlap, which she prefers.

AGE THIRTY TRANSITION (ages 28 - Present)

For the first time in her life Eleanor lives alone. In the past year friends and family have moved

out of her apartment. She enjoys the solitude and sense of freedom, though it is financially difficult. Increasingly, themes of her relationship and dependence on others surface. She is still invested in work and enhancing her career, giving her little time to and for herself. She finally feels ready to make important decisions about her life's direction without waiting for external approval or consent.

There is no boyfriend in Eleanor's life at present, though she dates casually on occasion. She is interested in finding a long-term relationship and is hopeful but ambivalent about the sacrifices that marriage may mean for her sense of independence.

Though she feels that her life is in flux with no easy answers immediate on the horizon, she is confident in her ability to adapt.

ELEANOR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

Eleanor's Age Thirty Transition began around age 29. She lived alone for the first time at age 29 and began to reassess her job satisfaction and the future of the intimate relationship she had at that time. She

began to examine the consequences of her financial impulsivity of the past and sought to remedy the situation. Issues of marriage and family as well as career came to the fore for Eleanor and continue to be primary concerns at age 32. At present there is no evidence that Eleanor is concluding this developmental phase.

I. THE DREAM

Individualistic Component

Having a career inclusive of advanced degree training has comprised Eleanor's Dream since post adolescence. The specifics of pursuing a career in mental health developed near the end of her college years, though a service oriented career has always been the general direction for her. Her parents have supported and facilitated her Dream and have been unobtrusive concerning her choices.

Relational Components

Religious and spiritual values have shaped Eleanor's ideas about marriage and family. She

consciously decided to defer marriage until after completing college. Her representation of the ideal mate is a man who shares her religious and spiritual perspectives especially around celibacy before marriage. She is optimistic about marriage, but has realistic concerns about the feasibility of having children after 35. Eleanor does not consider alternative family constellations (adoption as a single parent) as an option for her at this time.

Reappraisal of the Dream

During the Age Thirty Transition, Eleanor has had two reappraisals of her occupational venues and positions. At the time of the interviews she seemed ready to make another reappraisal—this time regarding her career direction. The reappraisal was in the formative stages, and she did not seem ready to commit to any action or change of direction. The relational components of her Dream have remained unchanged.

II. MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Clara, a supervisor with 20+ years experience at the agency where Eleanor works has served as a mentor for Eleanor in the sense that Ogilvy(1983) uses the concept. Clara not only provides practical clinical supervision, but has encouraged Eleanor to broaden the definition of her role and job description. Serving as a transitional object in Ogilvy's concept, Clara provided buffering and reality testing for Eleanor against a chaotic and sometimes psychotic system which attempted to scapegoat her. Clara and Eleanor have a friendship outside of the workplace and have collaborated on projects for other agencies.

III. OCCUPATION

The choice of psychology as a major and a career as a mental health professional was made as a undergraduate senior. She decided to take two masters degrees in psychology after graduating from college. Her parents always expected her to have a career and financial independence whether or not she married. For

her mother, Eleanor's college and graduate training was insurance of financial security, but also a potential meeting place for a prospective husband.

After graduate school, Eleanor found work as a therapist working with a nonprofit organization serving adolescents in crisis. She enjoyed the work and took on a second job. Throughout her career, she has always had at least two jobs--partly for the extra income and as a means to occupy herself.

At around age 27 she was offered a position at a hospital working with emotionally disturbed adolescents. The work was challenging and gratifying for her, but she felt increasingly isolated as one of few African Americans on staff. After three years she left the hospital, and took a position at a youth and family center.

Her new position involved clinical work as well as program development for families and adolescents at risk. The work was demanding, the hours long, but she was given more responsibility and opportunities to expand her repertoire of skills. Eleanor enjoys the salary and increased responsibility, but is increasingly disenchanted with her working environment.

She perceives her difficulties as stemming from chaotic administrative policies; inconsistent and contradictory supervision, and low staff morale.

Reappraisal

Two major career reappraisals are evident in Eleanor's career during the Age Thirty Transition. Both reappraisals involve job specific grievances, at ages 27 and 32. At age 27 Eleanor left her job, with no switch in career direction. Her professional progression has been linear. The latest reassessment of her career seems precipitated more by unhappiness with the specific work environment. Eleanor envisions herself still involved with assisting families, but providing less direct services. She would like to direct her own center or clinic. Eleanor has achieved the individualistic goal of acquiring a career, however she is considering if a career shift or new direction is a possibility for her.

IV. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

From age 18 through the present Eleanor has been involved in two major relationships. When not involved

in either of the two relationships she dated casually. The first relationship with Darnell began in her senior year of high school, and was an on-again off-again relationship spanning 6 years. They were friends and companions but not lovers, and a critical level of intimacy and commitment never developed.

Eleanor considered herself more compatible with Joseph her second boyfriend, and they met at church when she was 24 years old. They dated each other exclusively for about one year and decided to date other people. After about three years, they reconciled and dated for another year. They split again and shortly thereafter Joseph married someone else. In retrospect Eleanor states that though she and Joseph shared many interests and religious beliefs, (including the decision to remain celibate before marriage) a certain level of emotional intimacy was never achieved. (She interpreted this as a defense against the ever-present sexuality inherent in intimate relationships).

Since the break up with Joseph two years ago, Eleanor only dates casually. She feels that marriage and career development could not happen concomitantly for her, and only now is she ready to entertain the

thought of marriage. Even now she is ambivalent about some of the perceived compromises and tradeoffs she would have to make in a marriage. Her preference for partners is African American, and she feels that this preference narrows the band of partners she would consider. Eleanor is nevertheless somewhat optimistic about eventually getting married.

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participant's Age Thirty Transition experience would be a function of the presence or absence of social support. The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I, as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOTHESIS II: Analysis

Descriptively, a SMOOTH transition would characterize Eleanor's current Age Thirty Transition experience. She has actualized elements of her

individualistic Dream, but her reappraisal indicates a need for expansion and development in her career in order for Dream and life structure to be fully synchronous. As her reappraisal is in process, it is not known whether her resolution around career issues will involve incremental or vast career changes. She has received extensive social support from members of her support system. The relational aspects of Eleanor's Dream and her life structure are currently not synchronous. She desires an intimate relationship which will eventually lead to marriage, and she is not dating at present.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Eleanor has an extensive network of support that is comprised of members of her immediate and extended family, friends and members of her church. She maintains contact with her parents at least once or twice per week, and she discusses most major decisions with them. Her parents have supported her personal and professional goals, and continue to provide both emotional and financial support. Eleanor amassed a

rather hefty debt during and after graduate school, and her parents have been instrumental in helping her stay afloat financially.

Eleanor and her sister, sister-in-law, and brother are very close as well. She is on the phone with them three to four times per week long distance. Eleanor and her sister are the closest confidantes, and her sister reluctantly provides financial support as well. The pastor and elders at Eleanor's church offer her spiritual as well as practical advice. Her support network is large and frequently utilized. She perceives the relationships as reciprocal, though she feels she is inclined to give more nurturance than she receives. In essence, Eleanor has a plethora of support to which she readily avails herself.

TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA IN THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Social Support for the Dream

Transitional objects and phenomena have been utilized in adaptive ways by Eleanor previous to and during her Age Thirty Transition. Her Dream was developed and consolidated rather early in adulthood

with little need or search for creative space or exploration of other potential Dreams on her part. The significant others in her family and community have provided support and tangible outlets for her creative strivings as a facilitator and helping professional-- which also provided structure for her.

During the Age Thirty Transition the role and relationship to others who have served as transitional objects is changing. These transitional figures are urging Eleanor to envision herself as competent, in control of her destiny and independent. This gentle push from others (especially her family) towards competence and control is manifest in her personal and professional lives. Personally she is expected to become financially independent. Professionally she feels the desire to take on more responsible leadership roles. The nature of Eleanor's transitional phenomena during the Age Thirty Transition involves expansion of role and identity.

HYPOTHESIS III

Hypothesis III states that major individualistic and relational components of the Dream would be

actualized before a shift in priorities or an attempt at a balance between work and love would be evident in the participant's life structure. Though Eleanor was characterized as experiencing a SMOOTH Age Thirty Transition, her life structure did not reflect a shift in priorities or attempt at balancing work and love.

HYPOTHESIS IV: Analysis

There is no evidence of an attempt to balance work and love nor a shifting of priorities at this phase of Eleanor's Age Thirty Transition. In fact she admittedly over-emphasizes work and career-related activities to compensate for the lack of an intimate relationship. She states that she is interested in dating and beginning a new long-term relationship. At the time of the interviews, her schedule did not realistically include time for either of those goals. Work is still the predominant component of Eleanor's life structure.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES**Dependence versus Independence**

At the time of the interviews, Eleanor was engaged in the Age Thirty Transition tasks of Termination and Individuation. As the task of reappraising her career path was still ongoing, it is unlikely that she will be developmentally ready to begin the Initiation tasks (precursors for the Culminating Life Structure of Early Adulthood).

Values instilled in childhood of the importance of religion and spiritual values as well as the necessity of education and having a profession are still very much a part of Eleanor's life today. She was able to make the pre-adult transition to college and physically separate from her family of origin, however, in many ways her pre-adult and adult life structure have not been so different until very recently. She has not lived alone until two years ago moving to college and then sharing an apartment with relatives and friends. She still remains very dependent on her family financially. The polarity of Engagement/Separateness was a recurrent theme and task on which Eleanor was working for resolution.

Eleanor's growing independence manifests itself in her awareness of her need to be more financially prudent and responsible. Concurrent with that understanding is her determination to be more inner-directed rather than relying on others to provide answers or rescue her. Her fantasy is that someone will come along and provide her with answers especially related to career direction. She recognizes, however that any real syntonetic and resonant choices must come from within.

Eleanor has always enjoyed an ability to be empathic and connected to others. Her ability to be engaged in intimate relationships has been more difficult. She has found a compromise for herself which involves providing service to her church and community as a temporary sublimation to drives/strivings for a more intimate relationship.

One major concern and task for Eleanor at this time during her Age Thirty Transition is establishing parameters for building an intimate relationship given her religious values and her possible fear of engaging in a one-on-one relationship. Previous to the Age Thirty Transition, Eleanor's relationships rarely

centered on the pair, but included frequent group activities with family and friends. Especially in her last relationship, any free time alone for the couple was rare and not 'quality' time, which served perfectly as a defense against sexuality. If she is to actualize the love component of her Dream, Eleanor must allot time to date and to negotiate acceptable boundaries within which an intimate relationship can evolve.

ELEANOR'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Though there are areas in her life that she would like to change or improve, Eleanor feels happy with her choices about deferring marriage and having a career and about the achievements she has made. She expects that her temporary uncertainty about career will be resolved in the near future. While she is currently not involved in an intimate relationship, she is optimistic that marriage is most likely to be a part of her future. One of her strategies is to structure her time in a way that she is engaged in activities that are pleasurable and rewarding. She states:

Contentment is a good word (for how I feel). Contentment is a state of accepting where you are and finding things within those confinements that make you happy. Or make you enjoy where you are. Happiness is based on things that are happening to you. So you can't really control for happiness. But you can control for contentment. So it's really a sense of contentment I've arrived at. I'd love to be in a relationship. But I don't sit home waiting, saying I wished someone would call. I've gotten myself involved with the basketball 'cause I really like that a lot. I work two jobs because I like money. I do the things at the church because I really enjoy the adolescents. And I really don't want to see some of the kids get lost out there...And I just have a lot of great people around me who I really enjoy. And I do a lot of things with them. That's part of the apprehension towards marriage right now. I know what I have right now, and I don't know what marriage would bring.

FLORA

Flora is a 27 year old teacher and the eldest of two brothers, a step-brother and a half sister. She, her parents and her two brothers lived in Westchester, New York with her paternal grandmother until she was about six years old. Flora's nuclear family moved to Queens, and she grew up there until leaving for college.

There are fond memories that Flora recalls of her father, a police officer, with whom she shares a close relationship. She describes herself as a "daddy's girl" and remembers that her father was very affectionate and playful. He had creative/artistic interests and involved the children in art projects at home as well as exposed them to many cultural activities.

Her relationship with her mother has always been tense and distant. Flora feels that her resemblance to her father and her identification with him was source of irritation to her mother.

She [mother] was always a lot harder on myself. But I really don't know why she did that.

Based on her past because I try to analyse a lot of things she's done, and why she is the way that she is. I mean she didn't have a mother growing up herself. that I do understand. Another reason I felt we never really got along is because she always reminded me that I'm so much like my father. And I resented that. I didn't like that. It's true, I'm a lot like him, but I didn't think that was right of her. As if it was a bad thing.

Marital difficulties caused Flora's parents to separate and eventually divorce when she was seven years old. She has suppressed many of her childhood memories, but remembers her sadness and frequent crying at the thought of not seeing her father. She was close with her paternal grandmother also, who was not affectionate but attentive. After the divorce, her grandmother moved back to Florida; and Flora lost a major source of support. Fortunately, she spent summers with her grandmother and experienced that time as a respite.

Flora describes herself as an average student in elementary school with a tendency towards underachievement, which she attributes to her traumatic experience of her parents' divorce. She spent most of

her time at school daydreaming, and she lacked focus. She became more serious about her studies around fourth grade, as she felt more stable and adjusted to the new family constellation.

In junior high and high school, Flora was popular with her peers and teachers though quiet and reserved. She was active in school government and extra-curricular activities, though she shied away from leadership positions, preferring to occupy supporting roles. Her high school was multi-cultural, and she associated with a diverse group of friends. Her scholarship improved, and she gained notoriety on campus as a teen model. Flora's teachers and her activities at school provided a nurturing environment which lifted her self-esteem.

EARLY ADULT TRANSITION (ages 17 -22)

It was expected that Flora would attend college though she received little encouragement or assistance from her parents. With the assistance of guidance counselors she negotiated the application and financial aid process. She enrolled in a state college in upstate

New York and lived on campus. Her freshman year was difficult, she felt isolated from most of the students on campus.

Flora's interest in dermatology and her lack of definite career direction contributed to her decision to declare a major in medical technology. She had a limited social life as most of her time was spent studying. After the freshman year Flora dropped the med-tech major and transferred to another college in hopes of having a more positive experience. She enrolled in another upstate New York college. With a major in psychology and minors in African American studies and sociology, her career goals were still nebulous.

In her senior year, Flora had taken several early childhood education courses and decided that she might enjoy working with children. After graduation, however, she took a job as an experimental researcher and found the work isolating and boring.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE FOR EARLY ADULTHOOD
(ages 22 - present)

Flora moved to New York City and began to search for work. She considered social work, but found casework unappealing. She accepted a teaching position in a special education classroom, but decided to leave after four days. Flora lacked experience with the special education population and was overwhelmed in a chaotic and hostile system. She found another position in a pre-school setting and remains in that position.

Flora's first serious intimate relationship ended shortly before her moving to New York City. She and her boyfriend dated for four years and then ended the relationship as he was away at another college. She has had several other long-term relationships, and is currently involved in another.

The focus of Flora's life currently is continuing her education, making decisions about her career, and finding a peaceful and stable intimate relationship. She views herself as one with high expectations and a tendency to worry. She is concerned about remaining

healthy, her pension and financial security in old age, and her ability to remain independent when she reaches old age.

FLORA: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

Reappraisals of career and changes in attitudes about marriage and family heralded Flora's onset of Flora's Age Thirty Transition at age 26. As she became increasingly unchallenged by her role as classroom teacher, she actively sought options for other career paths in education. It was also around age 26 that Flora seriously entertained the notion of having children of her own, in the future, as previously she was adamant about remaining childless even if she eventually married.

I. DREAM

Individualistic Components

During childhood and adolescence, Flora's Dream of being a professional and financially independent were consolidated. She allowed herself to entertain the notion of various career possibilities; and even until her Early Adult Transition her career direction and possibilities were rather fluid. The primary developmental task of Dream formation seems to have centered around Flora's ability to give her rather generalized Dream form and shape visa-vis a specific career direction. Even as she is refining the particulars of her Dream (i.e. what job description or title) the overarching motivation seems to be achieving financial security and retaining independence rather than attaining a particular title.

Relational components

Previous to the Age Thirty Transition, Flora desired marriage but no children. She lacked confidence in her ability to manage the demands of motherhood, though she described herself as a parentified child. With the onset of the Age Thirty Transition, and with the knowledge and expertise gained

from being a pre-school teacher, Flora has reassessed the potential role of motherhood. She now would like children of her own and is feeling "maternal instincts" and a "biological pressure" to have children in the next few years.

III. OCCUPATION

The road to Flora's chosen career as a pre-school teacher was not well defined or linear from her early twenties. Having considered a medical/technical career or and possibilities of journalism/television majors in college, her interests changed to the social sciences.

During the Age Thirty Transition, Flora has begun to reappraise her current career and her options for growth. While she enjoys working with children, her job has become routine and presents little challenge. She channels her artistic expression into arts and crafts projects for the classroom, and expresses no desire to pursue a separate artistic career. For Flora, a change of venue would not be adequate to re-stimulate her interest in the classroom as a career

end. Her interest in working with children and her concern with financial and job security prevent her from abandoning her current career path in search for another. She is however, willing to risk incremental changes in search of career fulfillment; and she is exploring administrative and supervisory avenues in education as a way of filling the vacuum that she presently experiences in her work. Flora is completing another masters degree in educational supervision which she hopes will give her the exposure and immersion necessary to make a decision about how to plan and proceed with her career.

III. MENTORS

Flora identified no mentors during or after college to facilitate her entry and advancement in her career. One senior colleague was instrumental in assisting Flora with organizing her classroom initially, and she suggested helpful reading material. Though Flora felt that she could benefit from her association with her colleague, she was reticent to share job-related concerns and difficulties for fear of

possible ramifications in a hostile, politically charged work environment. Even though she and her senior colleague are not close they remain in contact.

IV. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Flora has always wanted marriage for herself despite some of her negative feelings about her parents union. She assumed that she would be married by age 25 or so, and until the Age Thirty Transition she was not particularly concerned about marriage. More recently she feels pressured to at least settle into an intimate relationship that will eventually lead to marriage.

At present, Flora is involved in an intimate relationship with Jack that is of two years duration. She loves Jack, but she is ambivalent about whether their union would make for a good marriage. She characterizes Jack as selfish and immature in some ways--things that she hoped would have changed over time. She is reappraising the future viability of the relationship. She states that marriage to Jack would entail large sacrifices on her part, and she seems

inclined to end the relationship, as painful as that may be for her.

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participants' Age Thirty Transition experience would be a function of the presence or absence of social support. The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOTHESIS II: Analysis

Flora can be described as experiencing a SMOOTH Age Thirty Transition. Major aspects of the Individualistic component of her Dream are reflected in her life structure. Though she has not enjoyed parental support for her Dream before or during the Age Thirty Transition, her uncle has served as a parental surrogate providing support. She has a support system in place that meets her needs however infrequently she utilizes it. As this period in Flora's life includes

re-evaluation and reappraisals, and she is making and/or contemplating changes, her life structure and Dream are either consonant or moving more into alignment with each other. The changes that she is making or will make are consonant with her internalized self-image.

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

Since childhood, Flora's maternal uncle Hector has been a major source of emotional support for her. She is close with her father, but explains that Hector's presence and unwavering support have been constant. Hector assumed a paternal role during periods of her father's absence, yet they were and are able to relate to each other as friends. Flora credits Hector with helping to build her self-esteem with constant displays of praise and affection. He also convinced her that she was beautiful and gave Flora her first exposure to modeling. Hector aided Flora financially especially during her college years. Their relationship remains close, and they speak or see each other several times per week. Flora is more inclined to utilize her uncle's help rather than the reverse, and she feels at

times that he is over protective of her. She values the relationship as one of the most important in her life.

Flora's circle of 'close others' is by choice small, as she does not easily trust others. Because of several experiences of betrayal in the past, she does not openly share her inner-most thoughts and feeling often, even with those she considers confidants. She has developed a fairly close relationship with a cousin in the South with whom she keeps regular (monthly) contact. They became friends in their early twenties, and found that they shared similar familial experiences. Flora and her cousin provide advice and emotional support for each other. Flora counts several other women among her close friends, but admits that the relationships are probably less than reciprocal by choice. They serve as emotional supports and confidants (she much less so than they), but they rarely socialize. Conspicuously absent among members of her support system is her boyfriend, whom Flora feels does not support her goals.

**TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA DURING THE AGE THIRTY
TRANSITION**

The Main dimension of the transitional phenomena before and during Flora's Age Thirty Transition has been Flora's ability to carve out a creative space in which her Dream could emerge. Flora's Dream and picture of herself as different from her mother (i.e. capable, independent, and financially secure) has served as a primary motivation to achieve from adolescence through the present. She seems to have fashioned for herself the creative holding environment which fostered experimentation with various career directions. Flora's Dream has been characterized by both generalized (though not vague) and increasingly specific characteristics. She has been effective in managing the ambiguity that a generalized Dream can bring; and she has been able to shape her life structure in a manner that reflects her idealized picture of herself as competent, and capable.

HYPOTHESIS III: Analysis

There has been actualization of the individualistic aspects of Flora's Dream concerning her career and she is in the process of augmenting that aspect of her life to make it more personally satisfying. She has had several long-term relationships in her adult life and one during this Age Thirty Transition; but none has matched her internalized picture of what she wants for marriage.

Flora has pursued both career and relational goals towards achieving her Dream during the Age Thirty Transition. Her life structure does not reflect a shift in priorities per se, but her changing attitudes reflect a shift in her perception of the importance of a satisfying (versus tolerable) intimate relationship. She expressed a desire to shift priorities when she finds a partner with whom she feels more compatible. As such, her life structure represents a midway point between the Hypothesis III (a shift/balance between work and love) and Hypothesis IV (no shift/balance between work and love).

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES**Independence versus Interdependence**

When interviewed, Flora was negotiating the task of Termination and attempting to resolve issues involving the Engagement/Separateness polarity. Flora's sense of separateness and independence has a long precedence even before she reached adulthood. The most evident challenges that present themselves during the Age Thirty Transition involve Flora's need to balance her needs for independence and intimacy.

From an early age Flora felt as if her parents did not or could not meet her dependency needs. As she spent most of her childhood with her mother, she feels that her mother was especially remiss, creating the need for Flora to assume a parentified child role in the home. She assumed responsibility for assisting in care-giving for her brothers as well as generating motivation to achieve for herself. She has remained principally self-reliant, and the pattern of her Dream formation as well as her life structure reflect this tendency.

In her intimate relationship she has chosen a partner who replicates the dynamic with her parents-- that of an Other who is unavailable or unwilling to meet her emotional needs. Her presentation of independence, self-reliance may mask her actual needs and sabotage having those needs met by others. Flora is introspective and recognizes that her previous choices for intimate relationships have not matched her needs. With the reappraisal of her current relationship, she is beginning to ask the meaningful 'WHY' questions about her role in the recurring drama of her search for intimacy.

FLORA'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Flora reports that her life is currently stressful and scary. She is periodically depressed by her own report, but she is also optimistic that her goals will be achieved. Of primary concern to her are issues of attaining marriage and family goals. She has not mapped out definite career plans but feels that she is on track with her career and that she will eventually move into a position that is to her liking. Flora is

able to acknowledge her fears that are augmented during this transition period, and she is not immobilized by them. She understands that the changes that she desires in her life must be initiated by herself, and that change requires taking some risks. About this current period in her life she states:

I'm anxious to find where is my purpose in life. Where do I fit in all of this? That's a big thing for me now. And I really want to do everything possible before I'm 30. That's my goal. It's gonna be hard, but I want to at least have the foundation. So now I'm more motivated to finish school. I want to find my place. I want to have all my credentials out of the way. And maybe something else will come up later. I want to do things that interest me...
Stressful. It's been very stressful. I can't say that I'm happy right now in my life. And I am trying to find more peace with my life. And I know it has a lot to do with some of the choices I've made to a certain degree. I'm just not happy with some of the choices I've made. That's with my relationships. As far as my career, I'm not happy that I feel stationary. Isn't that funny? I don't feel that I'm moving the way I should be. I feel there are some things I need to get in line before I can move on and feel secure doing that. And I know that's gonna come. I give myself another year. It will come, I know that. I don't worry about it too much. As long as I know I'm doing what I need to do.

GINA

Gina is a 30 year old executive sales representative born and raised in a middle class suburb near Boston, MA. She is the eldest of three sisters and describes her early relationship with members of her nuclear family as rather distant.

I was the typical eldest and used to terrorize them. But I also saw favoritism not from my mother but definitely from my father towards them. And at around 21 that's when I realized that that's why I have so much animosity towards them because they are clearly favored. I teased them, taking candy and stuff. I can't really say I was friends with them. I have no idea why that was.

Gina's relationship with her parents was/is not much better than that with her sisters though she is closer with her mother than her father. Her mother was a homemaker until Gina was approximately seven years old, when she returned to work as a computer programmer. Gina's father is an architect, and she describes her parents, especially her father, as non-social, conservative and 'straight-laced'. Her parents expected compliance from Gina but realized when she was quite young that she was strong-willed and self determined. These personality traits caused her father

particular consternation, as he was controlling and prone to be manipulative.

As a respite from the sibling rivalry and the consequent animosity she felt, Gina used school as a welcome escape. She attended public school and participated in as many after school activities as she could in elementary school. She was talkative, and very social and easily distracted, but she managed to maintain above average grades.

The public high school experience was one that Gina enjoyed as she continued to immerse herself in extra-curricular activities. She was active in sports year round, in the school orchestra as well as a member of the student government. Because of her diverse interests and activities, Gina had an eclectic group of friends from different ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds. She recalls that her first association with other Blacks outside of her family happened in high school. Although she lived in an all white community and spent much of her leisure time with whites, she did not experience any racism.

EARLY ADULT TRANSITION (ages 17 - 22)

It was expected that Gina would continue on to college as most of her classmates did. Her parents encouraged her to pursue a math/science/technical degree at an Ivy-league college near home. Gina did not excel in nor was she interested in math or science careers; and her desire was to attend a historically Black college in the south because one of her best girlfriends was going there. She wanted to be far away from home, and she desired to immerse herself in a Black social and cultural environment that she lacked in her upbringing.

Gina's parents dissuaded her from attending the college of her choice by refusing to finance her education. They chose a small affluent college about an hour away, and Gina reluctantly attended. She was unhappy the entire freshman year and decided to apply to the college of her choice. Her parents attempted to conceal her letter of acceptance, but eventually consented to allow her transfer.

Fairly early in her undergraduate studies, Gina decided on a business and marketing major, after working as a summer intern in banking and finance which

she disliked. She earned her degree with honors in marketing. After college she returned home for approximately one month, and to her delight quickly found a position as an assistant marketing manager in another state. Through marketing Gina became interested in sales, and eventually entered a training program at a major business products and services corporation.

Gina demonstrated an affinity for sales and was quickly promoted. She was the youngest female and only Black in her division of middle management. The position was interesting and challenging, but after three years she decided to seek another position elsewhere.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE (ages 22 - 28)

Since her first position in sales, Gina has moved around the country pursuing better positions in different sales markets including medical and pharmaceutical sales. She became proficient at science and math technology as related to a new position in neuro-surgical equipment. She was frequently in the

operating room with neurosurgeons instructing them on the use of technology and instruments. She enjoyed her work and was #1 in sales in the country. Gina decided to leave the position due to mounting pressure from a manager who repeatedly sabotaged her work. She felt that the intense tension between herself and her manager was exacerbated by the fact that she was the only Black female in the office or region.

Gina entered another training program at age 29 in pharmaceutical sales and graduated at the top of her class. She was promised a position in a major urban setting with ample teaching hospitals, but she was instead placed in a small rural remote northeastern town with few opportunities.

For the past year Gina has felt disappointed in the growth potential of her job, as well as isolated and alone. She has no regular interaction with other Blacks at work or in her community. Her limited leisure time is spent travelling to visit friends and or dating in hopes of cultivating an intimate relationship.

Since her mid-twenties, Gina has been involved in two long-term relationships of approximately three

years each. The most recent relationship was with Tracy with whom she had hoped to be married. They shared common interests, though his occupation offered much less upward mobility than her own. In retrospect Gina feels that socio-cultural differences as well as her insistence on marriage led to the demise of the relationship. She recognized that the shared power in the relationship was never equitable; and that she utilized subtle manipulation, through lavish gift-giving to control Tracy and the level of intimacy in the relationship. Eventually, Tracy, who had begun to see another woman, called Gina to end the relationship by phone. She felt blind-sided and completely devastated. Over the past six months, Gina has begun to date again.

GINA: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

The onset of Gina's Age Thirty Transition began at age 29. It was at that time that reappraisals and changes in her occupation and relationship status occurred. Though she was experiencing difficulty earlier in her career, it was not until age 29 that she

began to consider the implications for her future and her perception of limited career growth opportunities in her field. The ending of a long-term relationship of three years refocused her attitude about marriage, and Gina is poised to make significant changes in both areas of her life.

I. THE DREAM

Individualistic Components

Gina's individualistic Dream of having a career and being independent of her parents was well defined in her late teens and into Entering the Adult World phase of her life. She discovered her field of interest and aptitude in high-end sales during the Early Adult Transition; and she was self-motivated to excel. The shape and character of her individualistic Dream were not so different than those of her parents for her-- (i.e. she went to college and chose a profession with lucrative financial potential) though she was adamant about choosing her own field of interest. A recently developed component of her Dream includes returning to school and taking an advanced degree, most likely in the social sciences.

Though Gina has been able to actualize major portions of her individualistic Dream, some aspects of it have eluded her. She has been able to secure very prestigious positions and excel; however, her success has been short-lived. Factors and obstacles beyond her control have operated in a way to thwart her true potential and thus her sense of job satisfaction.

Reappraisal of the Dream

Individualistic Components

The frustration in her career has led Gina to consider a major shift in her career direction. Changes of venue and even switching to different product areas within sales did not render the desired advancements in her career. Now at age 30, Gina is committed to exploring other career directions that include possibly teaching or a career in the social sciences.

Relational components

Gina views her parents as seriously flawed as spouses and parents; and one major aspect of her relational Dream is to have a very different marriage relationship than that of her parents. Owning and

having a home in a tangible and psychological sense is very important to Gina as she has spent many years away from home as an adolescent and on the move as a career woman.

II. OCCUPATION

The career path and development have been linear and stable for Gina up through the Age Thirty Transition. Her plans for her marketing and sales career were well thought out, and her approach to execution were methodical; but obstacles outside of herself including institutional racism affected her mobility. Repeated experience of sabotage and interpersonal difficulties with male management at various venues contributed to Gina's decision to leave sales.

Though her future career direction is not clearly defined, Gina has taken definite steps to make occupational changes. She is enrolled in a Graduate Record Examination course as well as exploring various disciplines and graduate programs in the social sciences. She does not relish the thought of experiencing a greatly diminished standard of living as

a graduate student, but she has made arrangements to move in with a friend in another state to lessen her financial responsibilities and relieve her isolation. Within one year Gina anticipates that she will be enrolled in a graduate program at least half-time.

III. MENTORS

During her career, Gina has identified few allies, but states that a Black female senior manager, Sylvia, has served as a mentor. Sylvia trained Gina for her current position in pharmaceutical sales, and became her advisor. Gina began to confide in Sylvia about job difficulties, and solicited practical and effective strategies for managing difficult colleagues and managers. The interpersonal styles of Gina and Sylvia are very different; and Gina has at times utilized Sylvia's relaxed and stoic approach. Though Sylvia is not Gina's manager, she has utilized every opportunity to highlight Gina's talent before superiors. Sylvia was not able to effect an immediate transfer for Gina from the isolated rural setting to a more desirable urban area for the fear of being perceived as playing favorites. The women are close associates at work, but Sylvia maintains very clear boundaries in the

relationship that do not support familiarity outside of the workplace.

IV. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Not surprisingly, Gina thinks more seriously about marriage and family after a long-term relationship, which she thought would lead to marriage ended abruptly. After approximately six months she has resumed dating seriously and with a purpose that was previously less definite. She has allowed herself room for casual dating, but for her, any intimate relationship will have marriage as an explicit end. Gina is proceeding with caution with a new love interest, Jarrett, as both are recovering from previously negative relationship experiences. She and Jarrett share similar socio-economic backgrounds and worldviews.

Gina would like to be married and start a family in the next five years. She would like to marry for love, but seriously considers compromise and marrying a stable, financially secure older man. Retrospectively, Gina feels that the power and control in her past

relationships was unevenly skewed in her favor. As her earning power far exceeded those of her previous partners, she was able to control aspects of the relationships through gift-giving. Her future plan is to seek partners with economic equity. She is also willing to adopt children in the future whether or not she is married.

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participants' Age Thirty Transition experience would be a function of the presence or absence of social support. The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOTHESIS II: Analysis

At first glance it may not appear as if Gina's Age Thirty Transition experience would be classified as a ROUGH Transition. She has many achievements to her credit; however, her idealized picture of herself in the world and her potential--her Dream--and the events

in her life structure, while not asynchronous, were certainly not well matched at the time of the interviews. Both the individualistic and relational aspects of her Dream have so far fallen short of her expectation. While Gina's parents were financially supportive by funding her education before the Age Thirty Transition, she feels that emotional support from them has not been adequate.

SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

The most striking characteristic of Gina's support system is the lack of her family members' presence. She has very little identification with her family and utilizes friends as her source of support. Gina feels that the financial support provided by her father was reluctantly given--causing unnecessary difficulties with college registration at times. Her achievements throughout her life have garnered little emotional support or praise from her immediate family.

She is in contact with and confides in girlfriends from junior high school; but her closest friendships are those she made while in college. As her job has required her to be frequently moving, Gina maintains

contact with her four closest girlfriends by phone on a weekly basis. As most of her closest friends are married and/or have children, Gina does most of the travelling to visit them. She credits her friends with helping her to regain her composure after her break-up with Tracy; and they have been willing to provide financial support if needed. Gina's friends have served as a surrogate family, and while she would like support from her family of origin, her current support system meets her needs. Gina provides emotional support for her friends as well, and views the relationships as reciprocal.

TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Social Support for the Dream

The facilitator of Gina's Dream has been primarily herself-- though her negative relationship with her parents contributed to her determination, zeal and drive to be successful. During the Age Thirty Transition, Gina is facilitating a new Dream for herself--developing a creative potential space for the new Dream to emerge. Allowing herself the psychological space to modify her Dream has

necessitated redefining her concept of self. Her definitions of success, perseverance, and her perception of her ability to control events, have undergone modification. Prior to the Age Thirty Transition an unconscious motivation and drive may have been her desire to prove to herself, and especially her parents, her ability to be successful in very quantifiable ways. That Gina received personal gratification from her career success is unquestionable, but her continued success and achievement would come at a price that she was not willing to pay. Gina is no less driven to succeed at creating a new Dream, but the internal measure of her success seems very different.

Gina's best friend Laura has been instrumental as a facilitator of Gina's newly emerging Dream. As Gina's developing occupational direction will entail attending graduate school, Gina will need financial assistance (shelter, food, etc.) which Laura has graciously offered to partially provide.

HYPOTHESIS III

Hypothesis III states that major individualistic and relational components of the Dream would be actualized before a shift in priorities or an attempt at a balance between work and love would be evident in the participant's life structure. Hypothesis III was not applicable for Gina at the time of the interviews.

HYPOTHESIS IV: Analysis

An examination of Gina's life structure reveals no shifting of priorities or an attempt at a balance between work and love. Both work and establishing an intimate relationship have been the foci of Gina's efforts during her mid-twenties and through the Age Thirty Transition. She is actively pursuing the individualistic and relational co-central components of her Dream. Unlike some of the other participants of the study who voice a desire to be involved in an intimate relationship, Gina is not avoidant or sublimating her desire for intimacy through over-work. She was dating, and actively seeking a suitable partner at the time of the interviews.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES**Dependence versus Independence**

Resolution of the issues that the Age Thirty Transition have precipitated does not seem imminent for Gina, but she appears to be making considerable headway towards that end. She is negotiating all the tasks of transitional periods—Termination, Individuation and Initiation. She is putting closure on her career aspirations in sales as well as healing from the loss of an intimate relationship. Issues of dependency may surface as she must rely on the assistance of her friend while in graduate school. Finally, as Gina embarks on a new career direction and enters graduate school, her life structure will dramatically change. There appear to be no obstacles or conflicts that would impede her progress. Her current life structure is flexible enough and organized in such a way as to support the anticipated changes she wishes to make.

Issues around the polarity of Engagement/Separateness emerge and seek resolution in Gina's life like many of the other participants of this study. It is with longing, sadness and bitterness that she speaks of her estrangement from her family of

origin, especially her parents. Distance from her parents as a compromise has been marginally effective. She has demonstrated through her resilience in the workplace that she has the ability to be flexible in difficult situations.

From early on, Gina seems to have adopted an almost counter-dependency towards her parents perhaps as a defense against intense feelings of constant rejection. Though she has internalized their work ethic and some of their cultural values, she has deliberately attempted to distance herself from other aspects of their characters. She finds her mother competent and capable yet needlessly acquiescent to her father--a characteristic which she does not emulate. Her need for independence has been manifest in her choice of college, her associates, and her decision to embrace a segment of the Black cultural experience which she had not been exposed to at home.

During the Age Thirty Transition, Gina is re-evaluating the nature of the relationship or lack thereof with her parents and her role in maintaining the status quo. She is reconciled that an idealized relationship may not be possible, but a better

relationship and communication with them is a possibility. She has decided to work first on the relationship with her mother as it is the least strained of the two of her parents.

GINA'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Gina admits to experiencing a situational depression that lasted for several months after the break-up with her former boyfriend Tracy. She was able to work and attend to daily responsibilities with some difficulty. With the aid of friends after several months, she regained her sense of equilibrium.

At the time of the interview six months had passed since her break-up with Tracy, and Gina appeared confident and empowered to implement a course of action for changing those aspects of her life structure that were no longer viable. Her descriptions of herself seem almost pejorative, (sarcastic, pessimistic, humorous, domineering) but her actions connote a belief in her own abilities, and an optimism that she will actualize her Dream. Her plans for the future are methodical and realistic, as she does not appear to be

one who leaves her fate to chance. Her thoughts about this period in her life are as follows:

I feel fine. Everyone says I don't look 30 so that's good. There's a whole lot of things I need to improve on. I don't think I'll hit my prime until 40. Then I really think I'll have it all together. I have a lot of things to do yet. I feel great about it. ... I feel fine... The only trepidation I have...one little..my stomach curled a little bit. I have a girlfriend who is getting married for the second time. She got engaged, got married, lived, got divorced. And now is engaged again. And all this time I don't have anybody. That's the only thing. It's funny the only thing that gave me a little fear is a relationship , not the career or anything else. That was the only thing. And that just lasted a nano-second. And then I was like huh. There's nothing I can do about it. Whatever. I feel great. I don't feel any different than I did at 25. As much time as I felt like I had when I was 20, I have now at 30. I really don't think about it that much.

HARRIETTE

Harriette is a 27 year old executive secretary who currently lives and works in New York City. She was born and raised in Westchester and has fond memories of growing up. She has 3 siblings (her father's two children from another marriage) who are 20+ years older than herself, and 1 younger sister. She lived with both parents until age three when her mother and father, who were never married, decided to separate. Harriette was raised by her mother and maternal grandmother, who always lived close by. Her contact with her father was intermittent, as the difficulty of the parents' relationship impacted on her relationship with her father.

Harriette describes herself as an above average student, and she initially attended a private school then switched to public school around third grade. Though she was in advanced classes in elementary school, she was a 'social butterfly' who did not fully apply herself. She was encouraged to apply to a science magnet high school, was accepted and felt a sense of accomplishment. As several of her friends were also accepted to the magnet school, Harriette felt

an unspoken peer pressure to achieve and academically prove herself. The rigors and demands of the technical high school proved very stressful for Harriette who felt obligated to complete her education there. Her grades plummeted, as did her interest in school; and with her mother's support and encouragement Harriette transferred to another school after having to repeat a semester in her senior year. Though her self-esteem was bruised, she adjusted to the transfer, was more relaxed and graduated. There was an unspoken expectation from her mother that she would continue her education preferably at a traditional Black college; but Harriette's plans for herself were less definite.

EARLY ADULT TRANSITION (ages 17 - 22)

Feeling somewhat pressured by her mother to make a decision about college and plans for her future, Harriette left New York and moved to Maryland to live with a maternal aunt to escape the pressure. After several months, Harriette decided to work and attend a state university part-time. With no financial aid to supplement her income, and few marketable skills,

Harriette decided to first acquire job skills that would afford her a salary that would adequately support her. She attended business school for about one year and after acquiring secretarial and administrative skills, she left the program. She worked in several entry-level temporary clerical positions and later secured administrative and executive secretarial positions.

ENTRY LIFE STRUCTURE FOR EARLY ADULTHOOD

(ages 22 - Present)

Work became the focus for Harriette, and though she applied and was accepted at the state university, she never attended. Initially, Harriette states that her reason for not pursuing her education was lack of money; but in retrospect she feels that attending college was not her priority. For the next six years Harriette continued to work temporary assignments at large corporations. Harriette felt well compensated for her work financially, but bored. She was making slow and steady advancements, but without credentials she knew her progress would be limited.

Harriette returned to New York at age 25 with the goal of obtaining a bachelors degree in business administration. Her plan was to live with her mother, work and gradually attend school full-time.

HARRIETTE: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition

Harriette's Age Thirty Transition had precursors in the major changes she made to her life structure during the Age 25 Shift. At 25, Harriette moved back to New York to pursue a deferred college education. The onset of the Age Thirty Transition at age 27 was marked by her entrance into the business college she long desired. She began to execute the plan that would assist her in securing the financial future she imagined.

I. THE DREAM

Individualistic Components

The articulation of the individualistic component of the Dream lacked specificity until the emergence of the Age Thirty Transition. Her picture of herself and

her options was guided in part by the opinions and visions of others. Her mother and teachers made suggestions about college and possible career directions, but Harriette's Dream coalesced at her own pace. Harriette's entrance into the corporate working world was a result of planning to secure skills that would finance a college education.

Another individualistic component of Harriette's Dream that has become more defined during the Age Thirty Transition is that of acquiring a college education. Though she was able to finance her education in part during her mid-twenties, her commitment to do so was not total until the onset of the Age Thirty Transition.

Harriette's newly articulated goal of becoming a manager in the corporate world is contingent on acquiring more credentials and experience. She is finally enrolled in college part-time with business administration and management as her major.

Reappraisal

Of the eight participants in this study, Harriette's entrance into the Age Thirty Transition

period was the most recent. Her Dream has become more articulated and fuelled by her interests rather than financial security. It is likely that more reappraisals will be forthcoming as she continues to progress through this developmental period.

Relational Components

The relational aspects of Harriette's Dream have been more clearly defined. She has always imagined since her young adult years that she would be married with children. Prior to the Age Thirty Transition, Harriette's decision about the profile of a boyfriend and potential husband was greatly influenced by her mother's ideal for her. Harriette's mother encouraged her to date and preferably marry a white-collar professional man who could support her if the need arose.

Reappraisal

During the Age Thirty Transition, Harriette has decided to trust her internal guidance to determine the type of man she might be most happy dating and/or marrying. She has also decided to view her intimate relationships with more gravity and seriousness.

II. OCCUPATION

Harriette's business career path was initially chosen for financial reasons; however, she feels that she has found her niche. The direction of her career has been linear with the concentration of her positions in business administration. All of her positions previous to the present (which she has held for 2 years) have been temporary assignments. Harriette enjoyed the diversity that temporary work afforded her primarily because her work usually became monotonous after several months. She is bored with her current position though she has been given increased responsibility. After reappraisal, Harriette feels that her talents and interests would be best utilized and maximized in management. She currently is asked to make management-level decisions but is not afforded the recognition or salary commensurate with those demands. The demands of her position are stressful as her talents are exploited--leaving her little time in the day to attend to the official duties of her job description. She would consider staying with the present employer if her salary and responsibilities reflected her actual duties. It is unlikely that much

will change for her without additional credentials. Harriette's past two positions have been in corporate health care; and she plans to seek work after college in this area.

III. MENTORS

There have been no mentors to encourage and support Harriette's career advancement. The exposure to mentors and the opportunity to utilize such a relationship has been rare as most of her job venues have been in temporary settings. Harriette's mother has served as the primary facilitator of the Dream.

IV. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Though Harriette's Dream included marriage by age 25 or 26, her intimate relationships have by her own admission, reflected an attitude of avoidance of sustained intimacy. Her first serious relationship, which began in her late teens, ended after 3 years. Subsequent relationships have lasted 1.5 years at most. Several of Harriette's boyfriends expressed an interest in marriage; but Harriette was always suspicious of their intentions.

Harriette recalls one serious proposal two years ago by Jacques, a young and ambitious professional, that could have led to marriage. Her insecurity about her own level of professional achievement coupled with her concern that perhaps a more compatible mate could be found caused her to reject the proposal. Though she retrospectively has some regrets about not marrying Jacques, she is optimistic that she will again find a suitable mate.

HYPOTHESIS I

Hypothesis I stated that the character and quality of the participant's Age Thirty Transition experience would be a function of the presence or absence of social support. The results of the study did not support Hypothesis I as all of the participants of the study utilized a system of social support.

HYPOTHESIS II: Analysis

Harriette's Age Thirty Transition seems to be best characterized as a SMOOTH Transition. The individualistic aspects of her Dream of entering college have become more articulated during this adult

developmental phase. The decision to attend college does not represent a change in her Dream as she has wanted her degree since adolescence. At the time of the interviews, her Dream and life structure were synchronous. The support she receives from her mother will assist her in attaining her goals.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Harriette's social support system, which is comprised of immediate family members and several girlfriends more than adequately provides the emotional and financial assistance she requires. Closest to her is her sister whom she talks to several times everyday. She is able to discuss all aspects of her life with her sister; and they share a reciprocal relationship. She is more reticent to share all the details of her life and challenges (especially those that concern men) with her mother and grandmother who are religiously conservative. Harriette's mother provides tangible financial support in allowing her to live nearly rent-free while she completes her education. Both Harriette's mother and grandmother are supportive of her goals and offer continual encouragement. Harriette

lives in close proximity to her grandmother and sees or talks to her at least once per week. She shares a reciprocal relationship with two girlfriends who primarily solicit advice about relationships with men. Harriette is generous about loaning her friends and family members money, rarely requiring a loan herself; and she can borrow from them if the need arises.

TRANSITIONAL PHENOMENA DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Social Support for the Dream

Though Harriette's use of the Dream as transitional phenomena is still evolving—the scope and range of exploration has been narrow before the Age Thirty Transition. The provisional quality of her Dream heretofore may be in part due to her mother's influence. Harriette's mother has been supportive of the Dream before and during the Age Thirty Transition. It is interesting that Harriette's mother has been supportive of a Dream that is largely not of Harriette's making. One might conclude from the dynamic between Harriette and her mother that the latter's influence (on Dream development) bordered on

intrusive. Another interpretation might be that the mother attempted to help Harriette gain some focus as her confidence and direction faltered after a long and negative high school experience. Harriette adopted a Dream of her mother's making, which she internalized and re-shaped into a syntonetic Dream which is still unfolding. During the Age Thirty Transition, Harriette is becoming the primary shaper of her Dream. Her mother's role has changed from that of Dream shaper to one of facilitator. Harriette's mother will be a major facilitator of the Dream as she financially assists Harriette with her college degree.

HYPOTHESIS III: Analysis

As with some other participants in the study, Harriette has attempted to actualize both individualistic and relational components of her Dream concurrently before entering the Age Thirty Transition. At the time of the interviews, Harriette was actualizing individualistic components of the Dream. While her life structure does not reflect a shift in priorities, there has been an attitudinal shift in her approach to the relational components of the Dream.

During the Age Thirty Transition, she has decided to become more serious about the quality of her investment in intimate relationships. She, like Flora, acknowledges a need for balance between work and love, and a desire for a shift in priorities. Her attitudinal shift places her in a sub-group between those participants who have shifted priorities (Hypothesis III) and those participants who have not shifted priorities or attempted to balance work and love (Hypothesis IV).

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES

Dependence versus Independence

Issues of Termination and Individuation surfaced throughout Harriette's interviews about the Age Thirty Transition. As Harriette attempts to segue from the working world into the college arena, Levinson's polarity of Destruction/Creation seems an apt descriptor of the process in which she is engaged.

At the Age Thirty Transition, Harriette's determination and drive are more self-generated. Harriette's primary identification through her Early Adult years has been with her mother. Her mother, an

energetic single mom, raised Harriette and her sister to be self-reliant, proud, and independent. Fundamentalist spiritual values of her childhood are still a part of Harriette's life, though she is not religious. Harriette's mother had a Dream for Harriette with individualistic and relational components which Harriette attempted to internalize in her adolescence and Early Adult years. She feels more comfortable in releasing her mother's expectations that are not synchronous with her vision of her future.

Returning home has allowed Harriette to develop a different relationship with her parents. She and her mother pool financial resources in order to pursue individual goals that would be more difficult for each to achieve alone. They have always enjoyed a close and supportive relationship. Harriette now encourages her mother to begin graduate studies, and provides her mother with much needed emotional support as she negotiates changes and challenges in her middle years. Harriette's relationship with her father is improved, but they are still not close. He has extended himself to be more available, but Harriette feels that is too

little, too late, and is resigned to accept a cordial but distant relationship with him.

Harriette's work on issues of Engagement/ Separation center around her attempts at developing an adult capacity for intimate relationships. Harriette's pattern of relating has been to be marginally engaged in the relationship, not expressing the depth of her level of caring or affection. After a year or so, Harriette loses interest and seeks out a new boyfriend without officially ending the previous relationship. Her explanation for this behavior is that she has always had difficulty setting boundaries and being assertive after a break-up. It is possible that this avoidant behavior as a defense against intimacy has served to shield her from fear of abandonment. Harriette admittedly also has a mistrust of men which contributes to her reticence to be fully engaged in a relationship. During the Age Thirty Transition, Harriette appears to be questioning the appropriateness and efficacy of her avoidant behavior. She is intellectually aware that such behavior is unlikely to be of service in obtaining her goal of marriage and family.

HARRIETTE'S PERCEPTION OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Though Harriette's impressions of her current life structure are mixed, she feels she has the ability to make needed changes.

How do I feel about being 27?
It means near 30...I'm getting old. My life is not where it should be... For the most part I feel comfortable... I want everything to be together... I'd like to have a career, travelling, graduated from college... I think I've improved... Now I'm more mature and focused and honest... My prospects for the future are bright and vast...

Although Harriette thinks much more about marriage and family at this time in her life, she does not view her single status pejoratively. The adjectives she uses to describe her life structure currently are "care-free" and "energized". Her current goals seem realistic and she has plotted a course of action and taken concrete steps to implement her plans. She is confident that the individualistic and relational aspects of her Dream are within her immediate reach.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The Discussion and Findings Section will examine general trends for the eight participants in this study. Trends for the two sub-groups—those women experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition and those experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition will follow separately.

Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood

During the Entry Life Structures of all eight participants of this study, the central component of the Dream and life structure was career (college, graduate school, and/or professional training). All the women desired to make marriage and family a co-central component of the life structure. By design this study examined women who were single, never-married and childless during the Age Thirty Transition.

By contrast, all of the homemakers and most of the career women of Levinson's sample were or had

been married with children during the Age Thirty Transition. For most of Levinson's participants balancing co-central components of work and family was a major task of the Age Thirty Transition.

Tasks of the Age Thirty Transition

According to Levinson, the major task of any transition period is to terminate the preceding life structure (the Entry Life Structure for the Age Thirty Transition) and to make reappraisals and changes (Levinson, 1978, 1996). All of the women in this study exhibited the characteristic reappraisal and adjustment to the life structure ranging from minor to major. As such they were all on task for the developmental period.

Both the career women and homemakers in Levinson's study experienced major changes in the life structure during the Age Thirty Transition. For the majority of the women who were married by the Age Thirty Transition, the period was used to reassess their levels of commitment to Traditional Marriage Enterprises; others divorced; and many

made alterations in career directions and/or level of involvement with work outside the home.

Phases of the Age Thirty Transition

Levinson (1996) identifies three phases of transitional periods which can proceed sequentially or otherwise. The phases are:

- 1) Termination - ending or transformation of the preceding life structure
- 2) Individuation - differentiation of the self in relationship to the internal and external world; resolution of polarities:
 - a) Young/Old
 - b) Destruction/Creation
 - c) Masculine/Feminine
 - d) Engagement/Separateness
- 3) Initiation - creating a new life structure and moving into another developmental era

The eight women of this study were in different phases of the Age Thirty Transition. The

phase that a woman was experiencing at the time of the interviews was not indicative or predictive of whether the Age Thirty Transition was characterized as Smooth or Rough. For example both Betty and Eleanor were negotiating the Termination and Individuation phases of the Age Thirty Transition. Both women were considering career adjustments (Betty - imminent major changes; Eleanor - future minor to major changes), and both women were attempting to resolve conflictual feelings around financial dependency on the parents. The qualitative characterization of the Age Thirty Transition for Betty was Rough and Smooth for Eleanor.

Levinson does not discuss separately the dimensions of the aforementioned polarities in relation to the developmental process for any of his subjects. He discusses the aspects of the masculine/feminine polarity during the Age Thirty Transition under the rubric of the internal representations of the Traditional Homemaker Figure versus the Anti-Traditional Figure. Integration of the two representations was an important task for

his subjects that impacted on how each woman resolved conflict around commitments to family and/or work.

GENDER SPLITTING

Masculine/Feminine Polarity vis-à-vis Traditional Homemaker Figure versus Anti-Traditional Figure

Levinson recognized the importance of gender, societal and personal attitudes regarding sex role, and the impact of gender issues on female development. To Levinson, the choice of a Traditional Marriage Enterprise or Neo-Traditional Marriage Enterprise; the choice of career and the centrality of work in the life structure; and the range of possibilities a woman affords herself in Dream development are all shaped by how conflicted or integrated the representations of the Traditional Homemaker Figure (the repository of sex role stereotypes for women as primarily domestic, etc.) and the Anti-Traditional Figure are.

The split between the two internalized figures seemed

less bothersome for the eight women in this study. Several factors may contribute to this phenomenon. Firstly, seven of the eight women have mothers whose life structures combine work and family as co- central components. They experienced their mothers as women who could effectively balance occupation and family in syntonetic ways. Dana, Eleanor, Flora and Harriette describe positive identification with their mothers as professional/working women who were financially independent. Ann did not internalize her mother's role of homemaker as one that she wanted as the central component of her own life structure. From the participants' description, one could surmise that the married parents may have engaged in Neo-Traditional Marriage Enterprises with a more even distribution of responsibility for domestic work.

Secondly, findings (Brookins, 1985; McAdoo, 1981) support evidence that sex role perceptions of African American children is impacted by the employment status of the mother. Harrison (1989) notes..."examination of data from several studies suggested that the feminine behavior model presented by Black mothers shaped the sex-role perceptions of Black children towards a more androgynous attitude and less stereotypic view of sex roles (Harrison, 1981)."

One of the key issues for the career women of Levinson's sample was finding a workable balance between the internalized Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure. Finding a balance between the two internalized figures and expressing that sense of equilibrium in the life structure was a central task for many of the women during the Age Thirty Transition (Levinson, 1996).

The mothers of the career women were frequently well educated professionals themselves, who willingly or unwillingly chose their role of homemaker as the central component of their life structure. For most of these mothers, the Traditional Marriage Enterprise in which they were engaged, represented a dual reality. On the one hand the mother enjoyed a degree of affluence and comfort; but she was frequently bored and suffering from chronic depression. The conflicting message from the mothers to the daughters was 'be like me and be a good homemaker'; and the other message was 'escape from this hell and be independent and able to provide for yourself'. Consequently many of the career women in Levinson's sample experienced turbulent relationships with their mothers.

Cohort Effect

The eight women of this study and the forty-five women in Levinson's 1996 study represent two different cohorts of women with two somewhat different socio-cultural landscapes.

The women of this study were all born between 1966-1972. Unlike Levinson's sample, the eight participants of the current study did not experience first hand the vast changes precipitated by the Civil Rights movement or the women's movement of the 1960's and 70's. Though seven of the eight women chose careers that are considered female-dominated occupational arenas (i.e. social work, elementary education, office administration, counseling), none of these seven women voiced feeling about sexual discrimination or bias in the employment area in relation to their own careers. There was also little discussion regarding racial bias or the impact of racism on their current career path or professional aspiration. It is

probably noteworthy that all of the participants except one worked in settings where their supervisors or directors were women of color—usually African American women.

The forty-five members of Levinson's 1996 sample were all born between 1935 and 1947. The interviews were conducted between 1980 -1982, and the range of ages of the sample was 35 - 45 years old. The fifteen career women represented pioneers who rose through the ranks of the financial/corporate world—a sector previously dominated by men. All of the women in the sample were old enough to be cognizant of the women's movement, and able to internalize the shifts regarding gender and sex role stereotype that accompanied the movement. This may account for the dramatic changes most women of Levinson's sample experienced around the Age Thirty Transition.

HYPOTHESIS I

The Age Thirty Transition Experience

As previously stated, all eight participants were found to have and utilize a network of supportive others. The

presence or absence of a support system was not the differential factor for predicting the qualitative aspect of the Age Thirty Transition as hypothesized. The frequency of use and constellation of the support system varied among participants, but a similarity of patterns emerged regarding the participants' support systems and one's qualitative experience during the Age Thirty Transition experience. The differential and salient features were:

- 1) the composition of the support system
- 2) the facilitation of the Dream as transitional object phenomena by members of the support system
- 3) the participant's use of the Dream as transitional phenomena

Five participants were characterized as experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition. An examination of the characteristics of the five participants follows.

TERMINATION, INDIVIDUATION AND INITIATION DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

The five participants experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition were at various phases of the process.

Negotiating the tasks of termination, individuation and initiation during the Age Thirty Transition is a developmental requisite if one is to proceed relatively unfettered to the next stable structure building phase. Unresolved issues (i.e. insufficient termination, individuation, or initiation) return at later periods to be managed (Levinson, 1978).

Levinson observed that while transition periods can be chaotic and unsettling, there is an underlying ordered sequelae of transition periods. The termination phase which heralds the upcoming transitional period marks a change or turning point of a structure building period preceding the transition. The first task is to put closure on the Entry Life Structure and to reappraise and evaluate the components of the life structure. One's relationship to others and to work are frequently key themes for re-evaluation. The termination phase may mark the ending of some relationships or more often than not a change in one's relationship to and with others.

TERMINATION

At the time of the interviews, all five participants in the Smooth Age Thirty Transition Group had approached aspects of the termination phase of the Age Thirty Transition. Each had made or were contemplating changes in her relationship to work or to others in her life. There were changes in the life structure but the direction or path was not dramatically altered. Ann, Dana and Eleanor made changes in their work venues prior to and during the onset of the Age Thirty Transition. Flora and Hariette sought to make occupational changes without switching jobs. All five women experienced the termination of an intimate relationship with varying degrees of personal commitment to those relationships immediately preceding or during the Age Thirty Transition.

INDIVIDUATION

The task of individuation during the Age Thirty Transition, as during other transition periods involves reconciling, or attempting to reconcile four sets of

polarities identified by Levinson (1996). The polarities of young/old, destruction/creation, masculine/feminine and engagement/separateness are never fully resolved; but it is our attempt at resolution which gives depth and breadth to our existence.

The resolution of the polarity of engagement/separateness seems to encapsulate much of the developmental work in which these five women engaged during the Age Thirty Transition. The family of origin remained a focal point and powerful influence in these women's lives before and during the Age Thirty Transition. In carving out their own adult identities, these five participants have internalized aspects of parental values that are compatible with their core selves (education, work ethics, marriage) while rejecting parental values that are not in keeping with their own. This internalization process seems to have been fraught with less ambivalence for members of the Smooth Age Thirty Transition Group than for the participants in the other group.

The Age Thirty Transition, which is often a time of instability, can highlight parent/child relationship and conflicts which need re-evaluation and resolution. In addition, the Age Thirty Transition as a period of

reappraisal and assessment highlights indirectly (and sometimes directly) how well one has negotiated the emotional and physical separation from the parental home during Early Adulthood.

All five participants were able to separate from the parental home by moving away to attend college/professional school. Ann, Dana and Eleanor were subsidized by their parents after college, but each has managed to become financially independent during the Age Thirty Transition. Flora has been financially independent since graduation from high school. Harriette has become more financially dependent on her mother during the Age Thirty Transition in pursuit of her goal of attending college full time. By the Age Thirty Transition, Ann, Dana and Harriette rejected parental values that would impede actualization of their Dreams or fundamentalist religious ideas at variance with their own spiritual beliefs.

Individuation in the adult developmental context necessarily encompasses separating emotionally and physically from the parents and family of origin. For Levinson's career sample, emotionally distancing themselves from the family of origin from the Entry Life Structure

through the Age Thirty Transition underscored the conflict between the women and members of their family.

The five participants of the Smooth Age Thirty Transition Group were able to balance their needs for autonomy/separation with needs for dependence on their parents during the Entry Life Structure and into the Age Thirty Transition.

None of the five participants in the Smooth Age Thirty Transition Group have yet to confront issues of aging parents needing care or attempting to reciprocate financial assistance. One issue that surfaces for Flora and Harriette during the Age Thirty Transition is that of negotiating intimacy issues with one or both parents. Both women desire closer relationships with their fathers, and both have taken action towards that end.

INITIATION

Of the five participants in the SMOOTH GROUP, only Ann and Dana were approaching the initiation phase of the transition. It was likely that the event marking the culminating life structure of the Age Thirty Transition would be marriage. Neither woman was in the chronological

age range that Levinson specifies for the culminating life structure, but both women had attained a level of satisfaction and resolution that was not as yet evident in the other participants.

QUALITATIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE SMOOTH AGE THIRTY TRANSITION GROUP

By definition the members of the SMOOTH GROUP experienced the Age Thirty Transition in a less problematic fashion than their counterparts in the ROUGH Age Thirty Transition GROUP. Their reappraisals of the life structure and their adjustments and resolutions to developmental dilemmas arising during the Age Thirty Transition were resolved within the context of the existing Dream.

The characteristics that these women share as members of the SMOOTH Age Thirty Transition Group are:

- 1) the synchronous nature of the Dream and the life structure at the Age Thirty Transition
- 2) lack of major changes in the life structure or the Dream during the Age Thirty Transition

- 3) the sense of optimism about choices and progress towards the attainment of the Dream
- 4) the characterization of their life structure during the Age Thirty Transition as satisfactory
- 5) having a support system that helped facilitate the Dream and its attainment

The five participants of the SMOOTH GROUP experienced the onset of the Age Thirty Transition from ages 27 - 32. All the women experienced characteristic reappraisals of intimate relationships and work during this period. One of the overall central characteristics of this group of five participants was the lack of major changes in the Dream components during the Age Thirty Transition highlighting the synchronicity of the life structure and the Dream.

QUALITATIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

SMOOTH Age Thirty Transition Group

Dana
Ann
Eleanor
Flora
Harriette

Of the five participants, Ann and Dana were approaching the initiation phase of the Age Thirty Transition which is the ending of that phase of development; and both were able to make changes in the life structure that were in keeping with their Dream. Both women were also in committed intimate relationships that they felt would soon lead to marriage. Eleanor and Flora were in the individuation phase of the Age Thirty Transition at the time of the interviews. Both were contemplating changes in work and/or intimate relationships that were in keeping with their Dreams. Harriette was experiencing the individuation/initiation phase of the Age Thirty Transition, making adjustments in the area of occupation. A more challenging task for Harriette was changing her attitude and approach to intimate relationships. Though all five participants made adjustments in the areas of occupation and relationships (expectations, attitudes towards love, etc.) the two major components of the Dream and the woman's progress towards those goals remained stable.

HYPOTHESIS II**THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT****Presence of a Support System**

The five members of the SMOOTH GROUP have support systems that they find adequately meets their needs. The importance of family, extended family, friends and others who provide social support serves a critical function especially for single never-married childless African American women who may utilize the support in lieu of social support generated from the marriage bond (i.e. shared financial responsibility, leisure activities, etc., King, 1999). The data did not confirm Hypothesis I regarding the qualitative experience of the Age Thirty Transition and the presence or absence of social support. What emerged from the data was that those *participants experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition had parental or surrogate support of the Dream (of at least one parent) before and during* the Age Thirty Transition. Additionally, four of the five women identify their mothers as key characters in their support system (the importance of the mother's role on development is discussed in the section on Traditional Homemaker Figure

versus Anti-Traditional Figure). The composition of the support systems of the five participants is listed below.

Composition of the Support System (Emotional and Financial)

The constellation of supportive others for members of the Smooth Age Thirty Transition Group are:

PARTICIPANTS' SUPPORTIVE OTHERS

Ann:	Mother; sister; older peers; boyfriend; Father
Dana:	Cousin; same age peers; boyfriend; parents
Eleanor:	Parents; sister; same age peers; female mentor
Flora:	Uncle; same age peers; female facilitator
Harriette:	Mother; grandmother; sister; older peers

Importance of Parental/Surrogate Support

A distinguishing characteristic for the Smooth Age Thirty Transition Group was the importance of the parents or surrogates in the development and support of the Dream (even through the period of the Age Thirty Transition). Parental involvement, availability, and emotional and financial investment seemed to play an important role in the lives of

these five women before and during the Age Thirty Transition.

When examining the support system of these five participants, the role of the parents/surrogates in facilitating the Dream was recurrent. Most fundamental was having the participants' financial needs met as dependent college students and fledgling professionals. The women in this group received financial support for their college and graduate education from their parents/surrogates as well as emotional support for the attainment of their Dreams. Three of the women were assisted financially by their parents beyond completion of their education.

All the women in this group describe a positive emotional relationship to at least one parent or surrogate. Ann, Dana, Eleanor and Harriette describe positive relationships with their mothers; and all except Dana include their mothers as confidants in their support network. Flora alone describes a longstanding conflictual relationship with her mother, but she was attached to her grandmother instead.

The Role of the Father/Surrogate

Ann, Dana and Eleanor grew up with their fathers who were active participants in their upbringing and care. These three women internalized an idealized image of their father as father, husband, and provider. The fathers of these women encouraged and expected their daughters to pursue professions and attain occupational success. These fathers did not pressure their daughters to get married, nor did they expect their daughters to make homemaking the single central component of their life structures.

Unlike the career women in Levinson's study, these women were not sent mixed messages from the fathers about sex-role expectations. Most of the fathers (and mothers) of Levinson's career women encouraged the women to obtain a college degree in the service of becoming better traditional homemakers in Traditional Marriage Enterprises. The goal, as envisioned by the fathers of the career women, was for the daughters to make family the central component of the life structure. The daughters' defense was to emotionally distance themselves from their parents in adolescence and adulthood (Levinson, 1996).

Ann, Dana and Eleanor's fathers indirectly and directly by example (sharing household and child care responsibilities) encouraged their daughters to pursue Neo-Traditional Marriage Enterprises—which allowed the women to integrate the Traditional Homemaker Figure and Anti-Traditional Figure in syntonetic ways.

Flora and Harriette did not describe current positive relationships with their fathers nor do they include their fathers as part of their support network during the Age Thirty Transition. Flora's maternal uncle however, served as surrogate father and encouraged and supported her Dream primarily in emotional ways with limited financial support when he could afford to do so. Both Flora and Harriette are attempting to build better relationships with their fathers during the Age Thirty Transition. The conflictual relationships that both Flora and Harriette have with their fathers has not impacted their ability to integrate the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure as reflected in their Dreams.

The Role of Peers/Siblings

Peer support was also important to the participants in this group. Ann, Eleanor and Harriette included their sisters as confidants while Dana and Flora do not include siblings for support. All five women utilize other women close in age or older for emotional support. The peers are used as confidants and "sounding boards" for discussion of ideas that may be deemed too radical or inappropriate for discussion with parents or siblings. All the women receive positive support and feedback from their friends regarding major issues and decisions including occupation and relationships.

The role and theme of friendship were central issues for Levinson's career women at the Age Thirty Transition. Half of the thirty women in the career sample reported friendships of import with other women. The women who did not have intimate friendships expressed a feeling of deprivation at the lack (Levinson, 1996). Levinson found a surprising statistic for all the women in his sample regarding relationships with siblings. "*Relationships with siblings* [emphasis Levinson] were rarely brought up as a major concern. The life stories, however, provided an

unexpected finding; some 75 percent of the career women-like the homemakers-mentioned that their relationships with siblings were negative or very limited from childhood through adulthood." "Few had formed a good enough relationship with a sibling to want to continue the relationship into adulthood" (Levinson, 1996).

The Role of Mentors

The role of the mentor is important in the adult development process, according to Levinson, as the mentor is the sponsor and supporter of the Dream (Levinson, 1978). Levinson's conceptualization of the mentor role is in the context of occupational advancement.

Eleanor was the only participant of this group involved in a traditional mentorial relationship. Her mentor, an older woman in the organization where she worked, assisted with Eleanor's negotiation of the politics of the office as well as helping to sponsor advancement for Eleanor within the organization. Ann, Dana and Flora received occupational advice from older women who served as role models for their developing careers. Hariette did not identify any mentors formal or informal. The role of facilitating her Dream has

been fulfilled to an extent by members of her support system—her mother, sister, and grandmother. Each of the participants felt that the mentor or facilitator played critical roles in her professional development.

The impact and influence of the informal mentors/facilitators has been substantial and long lasting. For Ann, Dana, and Flora continuing relationships/friendships exist with all the women named as facilitators. Unlike the three to seven year duration Levinson (1978) identifies as the typical length of the mentor relationship, these women's relationship are longer standing.

One third of the career women in Levinson's study identified formal mentorship as part of their adult developmental process. Those women who had mentors had only male mentors. Levinson describes the relationships as rather limited in scope. The mentors were supportive of the women's occupational strivings, but not really aware of the women's Dreams. As such, the mentors were not prepared to serve as facilitators of the career women's Dreams. As his study did not address the process of informal mentoring and Dream development, it is

difficult to know if the women of this study and the career women in Levinson's study shared parallel experiences around informal mentoring.

The Role of the Special Man

The Special Man, the analogue to the Special Woman, is a man (other than immediate family) who unconditionally supports and provides inspiration for the woman's Dream and its attainment. Ann and Dana's Special Men were their boyfriends whom they each hoped would eventually become their husbands. None of the other participants in this group identified a Special Man. Levinson does not relegate a role of Special Man in his study of women's lives.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND THE DREAM

The Use of the Dream as Transitional Phenomena

The Dream, with its individualistic and relational components of work and love, serve as the framework for shaping the life structure. Ogilvy (1983) has stated that while not everyone will necessarily form an articulated and

well defined Dream, patterns emerge that shape the direction of the life course. The ability to imagine possible futures or directions; choosing to pursue paths of interest and having a caring other support those decisions are all characteristic of the nature of the transitional phenomena/function of the Dream. Levinson (1978) alludes to the importance of affording one's self time in exploration for shaping the Dream and its direction lest one chooses too hastily or makes unsuitable choices whose ramifications manifest later in the developmental cycle.

Aspects of the transitional phenomena of Dream development-- and its analogy to Winnicott's notion of the transitional objects-- have been proposed by Levinson (1978) and Ogilvy (1983). As an analogue, like the transitional object, the Dream and its development can serve as a segue into the formation and consolidation of the adult identity. Having a 'good enough' environment for the Dream to develop can be created by the self and/or by a network of supportive others. Having a psychological 'creative space' to explore a range of possibilities from which the Dream can take shape is the essence of the use of the Dream as transitional phenomena. For this study, the use of the concept of

transitional phenomena as related to Dream development encompasses two dimensions:

- 1) having a 'good enough' environment provided by a 'good enough' other for the Dream to emerge
- 2) utilizing the 'good enough' environment to explore a range of possibilities within the Dream

**Use of the Dream as Transitional Phenomena by the Smooth Age
Thirty Transition Group**

One defining characteristic of the SMOOTH group was the relatively synchronous nature of the Dream and the life structure. All of the five participants had either a clear shape or direction for the individualistic strivings of the Dream before entering the Age Thirty Transition. By the onset of the Age Thirty Transition, four of the five women (Ann, Dana, Eleanor and Flora) had made occupational choices that reflected their individualistic Dreams and visions of themselves as professionals. At the time of the interviews, Eleanor and Harriette were making revisions to their Dreams, but the direction in which they were headed remained steady.

The ease with which the Dreams of these women emerged, and the ease with which they achieved their goals was a continuum from relatively easy to rather difficult.

Seemingly, the more narrow the latitude that a woman allowed herself to explore various possibilities for her life, the easier the task of achieving the Dream and giving it a place in the life structure. Dana, for example, decided in her early twenties to pursue a career in mental health/social services, and has continued along this path. Her parents' emotional and financial support of her choice represented a 'good enough environment' for her Dream to emerge and to become actualized without emotional conflict.

The other extreme along the continuum is represented by Ann, who in her early twenties, attempted to adopt a false Dream of her father's making. The false Dream like a false self, was emotionally taxing and vacuous. Through exploration and utilization of her Dream as transitional phenomena, Ann was able to fashion a creative space for herself to uncover her true Dream and reject the false one. Ann's father was oppositional, but did not thwart her; while her mother provided the unconditional emotional support she needed. Ann, like Dana was afforded a 'good enough

environment' for the Dream to emerge, though in a different way.

Eleanor and Flora represent mid points on the continuum of use of the Dream as transitional phenomena. Eleanor's individualistic components of her Dream took shape in her mid-twenties; and she has more clearly begun to define those components during the Age Thirty Transition. She has explored several aspects of a mental health career as a clinician and administrator. Eleanor is reappraising her career options, which have not, but could possibly diverge from the current course. Her parents have provided an emotional environment, which nurtured her Dream; and they encourage her to seek a career that is personally gratifying no matter the direction it takes. Flora provided the creative space for herself and utilized her Dream to explore the possibility of several different career directions in medical technology and social services before deciding on a teaching career. The good enough others who provided support for her Dream were her uncle and an older female facilitator after whom she modeled her career.

Harriette is still refining the individualistic goals of her Dream during the Age Thirty Transition. Even though her career goal is still taking shape, she is moving in a

direction of improving her skills and becoming more upwardly mobile in her career area. While Harriette's mother has been supportive, she attempted to shape a Dream for Harriette, whose self generated Dream did not emerge until her mid-twenties. The transitional phenomena of Harriette's Dream development is illustrated in her ability to allow herself the time and creative space for her Dream to take shape without succumbing to external pressure. All of the participants in the SMOOTH GROUP were able to internalize positive aspects of their 'good enough others' and utilize the support offered by those people to assist themselves in the actualization of their Dream.

QUALITATIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

ROUGH Age Thirty Transition Group

Betty
Gina
Clarissa

The Age Thirty Transition Experience

The most remarkable observation of the three participants in the Rough Age Thirty Transition Group (Betty, Gina & Clarissa) was not the lack of a support system, but that reappraisals of their life structures at the Age Thirty Transition yielded similar results-- their life structures did not reflect their newly emerging Dreams. The developmental task of forming a Dream and shaping the life structure around the Dream was much more problematic for this group. The common characteristics the women in this group share regarding the Age Thirty Transition experience are:

- 1) Asynchronicity of the Dream and the life structure
- 2) Conflict around Dream development/actualization
- 3) desire for major changes in the Dream and/or life structure

- 4) lack of desired parental emotional involvement in Dream development/actualization

Asynchronicity of the Dream and Life Structure during the Age Thirty Transition

During the Age Thirty Transition after reappraisal, all three women were unsatisfied with the career aspect of the life structure. For Betty and Clarissa, the suppressed artist aspirations were resurfacing during the Age Thirty Transition. Both women were attempting to make life structure and Dream adjustments to accommodate their artist strivings. Gina was suffering disappointment and burnout in her career as an executive sales representative career and seeking a more meaningful and satisfying career path.

Conflict Around Dream Development/Actualization

Prior to the Age Thirty Transition, two of the three women in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group had artistic aspirations. Betty and Clarissa wanted careers as a dancer and musician respectively. To their credit, both women found avenues for venting their talents in peripheral ways. Betty danced part-time in an ethnic dance troupe, filmed several videos

and auditioned regularly. Clarissa became involved with a music ministry at her church. During Early Adulthood before the Age Thirty Transition, both women were conflicted about their Dreams of living and working as artists. Before the Age Thirty Transition, the compromise was to sublimate and suppress the Dream of an artistic career. During the Age Thirty Transition the true Dreams of Betty and Clarissa resurfaced seeking actualization.

Desire for Major Changes in the Dream/Life Structure

All the women in this group were poised to make major changes to the Dream or life structure during the Age Thirty Transition. For Betty and Clarissa the first major step was reclaiming their true Dreams of being artists. Of the two, Betty seemed most ready to take concrete steps to integrate her career aspirations into the life structure in a more central way. She was taking classes, auditioning and exploring the avenues available to her to support herself as a full-time artist.

Clarissa was contemplating another career shift, perhaps as another comprise to pursuing a full-time music career. It was not clear if she would attempt to augment the role of music in her current life structure. Her plans at the time of the interview remained vague regarding her career direction. She was clear that something had to change for her. She was contemplating a return to graduate study for a doctorate.

Gina was clear that though her career so far had been financially rewarding, the cost of continuing in that direction was greater than she wanted to pay. She was planning to move to another state to pursue graduate study in the field of psychology. She was gathering application materials and preparing to take the Graduate Record Examination. For all of the women, the changes that they were contemplating and/or executing would alter the current life structure in dramatic ways.

Onset of the Age Thirty Transition occurred for Betty at age 32, and for Clarissa and Gina at age 29. All the women completed the termination phase and were moving towards individuation, each with accompanying

difficulties. None of the women were involved in a committed intimate relationship when interviewed, though Gina had ended a relationship several months earlier which she had hoped would lead to marriage. Major adjustments were on the horizon during the Age Thirty Transition for all of these participants.

TERMINATION, INDIVIDUATION AND INITIATION DURING THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION

Rough Age Thirty Transition Group

Termination

The termination phase, which is often marked by endings or changes in relationships, found Betty and Clarissa attempting to gain some sense of closeness with their fathers. Gina experienced the break-up of a serious intimate relationship. While the women experienced major changes in the relationships previously mentioned, dramatic changes also occurred in each woman's relationship to her work. By the end of the termination phase of the Age Thirty Transition, each woman had decided to end some aspect of her career that was not gratifying and seek personal satisfaction in her career.

Individuation

The individuation phase was complex and emotionally charged for the women in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group. Parallel processes were at work around the polarity of engagement/separateness (Levinson 1996) which made individuation more difficult for these women than their counterparts. Firstly, none of these women had living arrangements that they felt were optimal. Betty and Clarissa were both living at home with their mothers partly for economic reasons. The other main factor for both women living at home was because of feelings of obligation/guilt that their mothers needed assistance. Both Betty and Clarissa were ambivalent about moving out on their own because the living arrangements could be instrumental in assisting them with attaining their Dreams. Gina desired to live at home to save money, but her father's insistence that she make financial contributions that she thought were excessive, made that plan unfeasible. The negotiation of physical closeness/distance was an issue for all of these women during the Age Thirty Transition.

Unlike the five members of the Smooth Age Thirty Transition group, Betty, Clarissa and Gina had conflictual relationships with one or both parents. Their strivings for individuation, separateness and change during the Age Thirty Transition were in some ways contingent on returning to the parental home and/or receiving parental support. In other words, to achieve the individualistic component of the Dream, further training was needed. The women needed the assistance of their parents to actualize the Dream. The individuation process was made more stressful for the three women in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group because of the relationship with the parents.

The second dynamic of the process of individuation for this group of women was that of separating themselves from their mothers' influence on their Dream development. As previously mentioned, the individualistic aspects of Betty and Clarissa's Dreams were heavily influenced by their single mothers who wanted them to pursue practical rather than artistic careers. Both women were able to internalize positive aspects of their mothers' worldviews about career and marriage while allowing their own views to surface and

take shape. Gina was most affected by her mother's perception and expectation for marriage which seemed to Gina to be very self-effacing. Her task of forming her own perceptions and expectations for marriage was less complicated as her identifications with her parents were primarily negative and she seemed emotionally less attached to them.

Initiation

Neither Betty, Clarissa nor Gina have completed the initiation phase of the Age Thirty Transition, and they do not seem poised to enter the Culminating Life Structure for Early Adulthood. For these women there are too many critical issues to be resolved that will impact on the shape and direction of the life structure. Since an extended novitiate seems likely—all the women are contemplating graduate school/extended training—the women will have to negotiate practical issues involving living arrangements, financial support, etc.

Gina is closest to entering the initiation phase; she has identified how she would like her life to be different and is taking steps to make it so. Betty and

Clarissa were clear that they wanted major changes in their lives, but both were less clear about how to implement the changes.

HYPOTHESIS II

THE AGE THIRTY TRANSITION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

Presence of a Support System

The three members of this group utilize support systems in which they have reciprocal relationships much like the five participants in the Smooth Age Thirty Transition group. All state that the support they receive meets their needs. Betty, Clarissa and Gina make contact with some member of their support system on a daily or weekly basis. Informal social support from peers played an important role in the lives of these three single never-married women. Hypothesis I was not confirmed regarding the presence or absence of social support and the qualitative nature of the Age Thirty Transition experience. The salient feature regarding social support and the Rough Age Thirty Transition group was the absence or lack of

financial/emotional support from **the parents** for the women's Dreams before and during the Age Thirty Transition. At some point before and/or during the Age Thirty Transition, each participant felt that her **true Dream** was not supported by at least one parent.

Composition of the Support System

The constellation of supportive others for members of the ROUGH GROUP are:

Betty: Mother; younger brother; peers; male mentors

Clarissa: Female peers; male and female mentor

Gina: Female peers; female facilitator

Importance of Parental/Surrogate Support

One of the main differences in the two groups in this study was the character of the support received from the family of origin. The type of support received was similar (tuition for college, etc.), but the context of the support and the effects on the participants in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group

were varied from those of their counterparts in the other group. Parental support for these three young women's Dreams seemed mixed and uneven. Financial support for education was apparent, but the emotional support was conspicuously absent from one or both parents. These women were expected by their parents to excel; but the emotional foundation and skills necessary for such achievement had to be garnered from resources other than the parents.

The support for the Dreams of the three women in this group by their parents was not as forthcoming or direct as the five participants in the other group. Betty, Gina and Clarissa received indirect support for the individualistic aspects of their Dreams in the form of tuition support. That the women did not receive direct support for their Dreams was due to various reasons.

It would not be fair or accurate to suggest that the parents were simply remiss or withholding in providing emotional support for their daughters' Dreams. All three women have newly emerging (or previously suppressed) aspects of their Dreams, which have surfaced during the Age Thirty Transition.

Betty's desire to live and work as an artist has surfaced during the Age Thirty Transition. Her parents were staunchly against her pursuit of an artistic career, and they refused to support any endeavor to that end. Only recently, during the Age Thirty Transition has her mother become supportive of Betty's true Dream.

Clarissa's mother encouraged her to sublimate her artistic strivings for a more predictable career as a teacher. The sublimation was not satisfactory and after one major career change, Clarissa is at the crossroads of another potential change of career direction.

Finally, Gina describes her parents' support as strictly financial. Her relationship with them is adversarial. According to Gina, her parents have never fully supported any goal of hers; she is, however, dissatisfied with her current career path, and making plans to change her career direction.

The Role of the Father/Surrogate

Betty, Gina and Clarissa report problematic relationships with one or both parents, and only Betty identified one parent (mother) as central in her current support system as a confidant. None of the three participants reported a close relationship with the father during the Age Thirty Transition. Betty and Clarissa state that the relationships with their fathers were closer in childhood, but both fathers were in absentia for most of the women's lives. Gina's relationship with her father has always been difficult, and she has always experienced him as punitive and emotionally withholding. These three participants do not relay a sense that their fathers truly valued their Dreams (or even knew of the Dreams) in any emotionally significant way.

The role and participation of the father in the lives of the women in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group is most similar to those of Levinson's career sample than of the Smooth Age Thirty Transition group. Levinson's (1996) career sample reported distant and emotionally detached relationships with the family of

origin, including the fathers. Betty, Clarissa and Gina do not report receiving mixed messages regarding career and family from their fathers—most probably due to the tenuous or infrequent contact between father and daughter. Unlike the three women in the Smooth Age Thirty Transition group who received encouragement for the Dream from their fathers/surrogate, the three women in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group report feeling emotionally abandoned by their fathers.

Developmentally, though Betty, Clarissa and Gina did not receive from their fathers, by example, a model of engaging in a Neo-Traditional Marriage Enterprise (like three of their counterparts in the Smooth Age Thirty Transition group), they did not appear conflicted about integrating the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure.

Internalization of the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure

Balancing the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure was seemingly not as difficult a task as for the career women in Levinson's sample. Their image of themselves vis-à-vis their Dreams

reflect aspects and integration of both the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure. Unlike the women in cohorts past, Betty, Clarissa and Gina did not feel internal or societal pressure on the scope of their Dreams regarding career and family. Like the women in the SMOOTH GROUP, these three participants have mothers who are professional women balancing work and family. In retrospect Betty and Clarissa understand the difficulty and sacrifices their mothers made as single or de facto single parents balancing a professional and home life. Gina's mother's attempt at balancing professional and home life was slightly different than the other two participants in this group. Her mother was able to be an at-home-mom until Gina and her sister were in school and afterwards pursue her career. Both Betty and Clarissa were ambivalent about their mothers' status as a professional single mother. All three women reported feeling deprived because of the mothers' lack of availability due to competing professional responsibilities. Despite the difficulties and sacrifices, and unlike Levinson's career women, the participants were not given conflicting messages about

work and family; all were expected to marry and be economically self-sufficient via a career.

The Role of Peers/Siblings

Peer support was critical for the three participants in this group. All of them have relied on peer relationships to provide the much-needed emotional support for the old and/or newly emerging Dream. Betty and Clarissa have peers who are older, and all three women receive an element of maternal nurturance from their female peers. Only Betty includes a sibling as a central member of her support system.

As single African American women may utilize informal social support from a network of sources in lieu of spousal support (King, 1999), family, friends and others who provide social support can be important. For the members in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group, peer/sibling support served as an emotional (and financial) proxy for the missing emotional parental support. For example, Betty's younger brother Jonathan, a successful musician, continually encouraged

her to actualize her Dream of being an artist- before and during the Age Thirty Transition. Jonathan was a source of inspiration regarding living and working as an artist. He also provided financial support when he was able. For Gina peer support is critical in her plans to return to graduate school. As living with her parents is not feasible, she plans to live with a friend who will allow her to share expenses at a reduced rate.

As all three women have had conflictual relationships with one or both parents around Dream development and/or actualization, the peers/sibling have served as supporters and facilitators of the women's true Dreams.

The Role of Special Men

None of the women in this group had a Special Man in her life at the time of the interview. Levinson does not designate or discuss at length the role of the Special Man in his study of women's adult development (1996). A possible conclusion that one may draw is that the importance of the role of facilitator vis-à-vis the Special Man for women's Dream development

is not analogous to the importance of the Special Woman role for men's Dream development. Of the three women, only Betty was involved in a relationship. The relationship was not a long standing one, and she seemed very likely to end it in the near future due to lack of compatibility, interest and time. Clarissa and Gina were actively seeking mates.

The Role of Mentors

Two participants in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group have formal mentors. Maurice, a dancer/choreographer, sparked Betty's interest in dance and served as a mentor providing training and work for several years. Clarissa's male and female mentors sponsored her entree into the helping professions after her brief stint as a public school teacher. Gina has a relationship with a female facilitator who counsels her about corporate politics and career planning, but does not serve as a sponsor for career advancement. The relationship that these participants have with the mentors/facilitators ranges from very good to poor.

There is a consensus among the participants that the mentor/facilitators have been pivotal in their past and future career plans.

SOCIAL SUPPORT AND THE DREAM

The Use of the Dream as Transitional Phenomena

Whether or not the parents of the participants in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group provided a good enough emotional environment for the young women's Dreams to emerge is debatable. That the parents provided a basic framework of financial support and examples of career expectation and achievement served these women in some measure (perhaps in ways they did not like or expect) to attain self-sufficiency. If however, one uses as the measure, the parents' emotional support of the woman's ability to attain and live out her truest aspirations, then the parents' ability to provide a good enough emotional environment was lacking. Through coercion, suppression or neglect, the parents of these women did not support the daughter's image of whom she wanted to be. For example, Clarissa's mother dissuaded her from becoming a

musician, and encouraged her daughter to teach music instead.

The role of transitional objects/transitional phenomena is to bring the self into relief in contrast to other(s). The analogous process in adult development would be the forging of the adult identity inclusive of occupations and social roles. The character of the transitional phenomena for members of the Rough Age Thirty Transition group was different from that of the other five participants in the study. Firstly, Betty, Clarissa and Gina were more proactive in developing a good enough environment and creative space for themselves for their Dreams to develop. Secondly, allowing themselves to envision and explore several occupational possibilities occurred for these three women during the Age Thirty Transition, as opposed to earlier in the life cycle.

The primary task for the Rough Age Thirty Transition group during the Age Thirty Transition was not only reappraisal but to reclaim/discover the TRUE DREAM. They faced greater challenges than their counterparts in the Smooth Age Thirty Transition group due to the scope of the changes they were attempting to

make in their life structures. For Betty and Gina, pursuing the Dream could mean a delayed novitiate and possible delayed entry into full-time work. As Betty is a dancer and performer, an extended novitiate could have negative consequences. Also, the women in the Rough Age Thirty Transition group may have to negotiate closeness/separation issues with parents, as two of them are returning home in the service of pursuing the Dream.

Though Betty, Clarissa and Gina lacked direct emotional support from their parents for their emerging Dreams before and during the Age Thirty Transition, the support provided by other members of their support systems, and their internal resources, created a potential creative space and good enough environment for their Dreams to emerge. The ability to envision themselves in other occupations was characteristic of this group especially during the Age Thirty Transition. Central to the use of the Dream as transitional phenomena was the woman's ability to reappraise the Dream, admit to herself and others that her TRUE DREAM had not yet emerged, and take steps (even plenary ones) towards giving the Dream a place in the life structure.

There was anxiety and uncertainty concerning future career plans, but also a sense of excitement about the desire and potential for change.

The Age Thirty Transition was a period that marked a crossroad in the lives of Betty, Clarissa and Gina. All three women had at least some tentative plan to accomplish major changes in their life structures. Betty was attempting to incorporate more artistic endeavors into her leisure time while planning ways she could support herself full-time as an artist. Clarissa, who had made one career change before the Age Thirty Transition, was still unsure of her career direction. Gina, who had a very successful career as an executive sales representative, planned to apply for graduate training in psychology. Her intentions, plans and career direction was the most developed of the three women.

HYPOTHESIS III**Shifting/Reversal of Priorities
Balance Between Work and Love**

Hypothesis III stated that actualization of the individualistic (work) or relational (love) components of the Dream would precede any attempts at balancing work and love or shifting/reversal of priorities.

The Dream

All eight participants had relational and individualistic components of the Dream. All the women desired to have career and marriage/family as co-central components. Six of the eight wanted children and the remaining two were ambivalent. Each woman expressed hope and optimism about finding a suitable marriage partner. Two of the participants stated that alternative family constellations might be possible for them (i.e. adopting children as a single parent), but all voiced a preference for marriage. Two participants stated that they would only consider dating/marrying African American men while the remaining six stated no preference or limitation in that regard. The data for the participant's attempts

at shifting priorities or balance between work and love was categorized into three groups:

- 1) Major components of the Dream actualized with shift/balance between work and love
- 2) Partial components of the Dream actualized with desire for shift/balance between work and love
- 3) Partial components of the Dream actualized with no shift/balance between work and love

I. Major components of the Dream actualized with shift/balance between work and love

Ann & Dana

Ann and Dana exhibited a shift in priorities and/or attempted to balance work and love. Both women had Special Men in their lives whom they hoped would become their husbands. Both women wanted career and marriage/family as co-central components, and neither woman felt that the co-central components would be mutually exclusive. Of the two women, Ann more than Dana, exhibited the shifting in priorities. Ann seemed most secure that her boyfriend would propose marriage within the year. As a result, she turned

down a long-awaited appointment abroad as she felt time and distance apart would be deleterious to the relationship.

Dana did not make any career sacrifices, and continued to explore options for growth and advancement. Her attempt at balancing work and love manifest as her increased level of commitment to nurturing the relationship with her Special Man. Before the Age Thirty Transition Dana was less serious about intimate relationships. Dana was more conscious of allotting her leisure time in a manner that allowed the maximum amount of time together with her boyfriend.

Ann and Dana were closest of the eight participants in combining the co-central components of work and love into the life structure.

II. Partial components of the Dream actualized with desire for shift/balance between work and love

Flora and Harriette

Flora and Harriette like the other participants voiced a desire to have career and marriage/family as co-central components of the life structure. Flora was in a long term but unstable relationship. She is

clearly ambivalent about her relationship with Jack, though she loves him. She is aware that marriage to a man she describes as extremely narcissistic would be difficult. She desires a relationship with a Special Man, and did not feel pressured, at the time of the interview to be married. She is aware of the 'biological clock' but stated she was not anxious about it.

Harriette had the most laissez-faire attitude about relationships of all the participants. She has had several marriage proposals from different men, before the onset of the Age Thirty Transition, which she refused. Before the Age Thirty Transition, she was not interested in having a serious committed relationship. By her own admission, she had not considered marriage seriously until the Age Thirty Transition. Most of her long term relationships average one year after which she terminates them for 'lack of interest'. Harriette states that during the Age Thirty Transition her attitude about marriage, commitment and intimacy is changing.

Both Flora and Harriette are experiencing shifts in their attitudes about the component of

marriage/family and its potential place in the life structure. Both women were reappraising their lack of commitment to intimate relationships. Neither woman was anxious or pressured about finding the Special Man; and each knows that a change in attitude is necessary if they are seriously considering marriage in the future. Neither woman had plans to curtail her career/professional development in order to focus more on relationship issues. Their shift in priorities is internal rather than reflected in the life structure.

HYPOTHESIS IV

Hypothesis IV states that participants who experience a Rough Age Thirty Transition would not have life structures that reflect a readiness to attempt balancing work and love or to shift/reverse priorities during the Age Thirty Transition.

Participants in this group were contemplating, attempting, or making changes in the Dream, which could potentially alter their life structures dramatically. All these women were prepared to

continue to work on the newly emerging
individualistic aspects of the Dream.

**Partial components of the Dream actualized with no
shift/balance between work and love**

Betty
Clarissa
Eleanor
Gina

The remaining four women's life structures and attitudes did not reflect any shifts or attempts at balancing work and love. All of the women voiced a desire to combine marriage/family as a co-central component of the life structure. Betty, Eleanor, and Gina ended serious relationships prior to or during the Age Thirty Transition. For each woman, the loss of the relationship was seriously disappointing. In each case the woman was hopeful with a degree of certainty that marriage would result. Betty ended her relationship with Marvin, a bachelor with two small children, prior to the Age Thirty Transition. Eleanor has always placed career goals and attainment as a priority before marriage. After an on-again off-again relationship with Joseph ended two years prior to the onset of her Age Thirty Transition, Eleanor remains immersed in her work and extra-curricular activities.

Gina's long term relationship with Tracey ended at the onset of her Age Thirty Transition. She felt devastated and betrayed as his commitment and fidelity wavered after three years. She like the other women in this sub-group desires marriage, but is currently pursuing a change in career direction.

Clarissa has had several marriage proposals, but was not forthcoming with details (duration of relationship, level of commitment, etc.). She states that none of the men were suitable marriage partners. At the Age Thirty Transition, she is attempting to define a career path. She allots herself limited leisure time.

The four women in this sub-group share a desire for a Special Man/marriage, but three of the four have designed life structures which preclude meeting new potential partners. Gina is the only member of this group who is actively seeking to meet new partners and allotted time to do so. The other three appear to structure their time in such a way as to defend against developing intimate relationships.

Unlike Levinson's sample of homemakers and career women, these eight participants did not have to

negotiate marriages, growing families and employment/careers during the Age Thirty Transition. For Levinson's homemakers, three patterns emerged to describe the women's management of the co-central components of work and family during the Age Thirty Transition.

- Pattern A. Married women who made family and occupation co-central components
- Pattern B. Married women who kept homemaking central but reduced their involvement in family
- Pattern C. Women who got legally or psychologically divorced

Six of Levinson's career women were childless, single never-married at the Age Thirty Transition. Two of the six women wanted marriage and family even if it meant making sacrifices to career. The remaining four gave first priority to career.

The differences and options around career and marriage for this sample of eight and Levinson's sample are noteworthy. For Levinson's homemaker and career sample, the Traditional Marriage Enterprise and family were externally encouraged and expected (by parents and society) and internalized as a priority by the women themselves. The women in the career sample

and the homemakers with outside occupations had to overcome insecurities and obstacle to incorporate occupation into the life structure (Levinson, 1996).

For the sample in this study, marriage, family and career were seen as options that could co-exist. Career, marriage and family were not viewed as sequential, hierarchical, or linear events. These eight women paralleled Adams' 1983 sample of African American lawyers who aspired to marriage and career concurrently, without a sense of conflict.

For Levinson's female sample, a key question during Early Adulthood was 'When will I marry?' not 'Will I ever marry?'. The implications are that marriage was central and that marriage partners were available. Only six of forty-five of Levinson's sample were single never married at the Age Thirty Transition. The high sex-ratio imbalance among African Americans (King, 1999) coupled with the decline in the rate of marriages for African Americans (Pinderhughes, 2002) make the certainty of marriage for women in this sample perhaps less so than for Levinson's.

Of the two single, childless, never-married women negotiating the Age Thirty Transition Levinson

writes, "...family became an increasingly central unfilled component of the life structure, and its absence cast a growing shadow on their lives in the Age Thirty Transition." "Both went through a major crisis in which the key issue was: How will I live if I don't have a marriage and family? Is it possible to have a satisfying life as a permanently single childless working woman?" "...love/marriage/family remained a central unfilled or partially filled component and the women maintained a cautious hopefulness that it was not too late, that marriage and family might yet happen." (Levinson, 1996 p.326)

The optimism spoken of in the Levinson quote above most accurately characterized the eight participants' attitudes regarding their possibilities for marriage and family. Even for the women who seemed to be defending against developing/pursuing intimate relationships, the outward appearance and presentation was that of optimism.

Immersion in work and other activities served an adaptive function for some of the women in this sample during the Age Thirty Transition. Should these women remain single, childless and/or un-partnered; and when

and if the adaptation/defense is no longer adequate, issues of intimacy are likely to resurface during the Culminating Life Structure for Early Adulthood from ages 33 - 40 years.

CHAPTER VII

CLOSING SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will review the major findings of this study of eight single, never-married, childless, professional African American women and their negotiation of the Age Thirty Transition. The limitations of the study as well as the possible application of the findings will also be discussed.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The design and method are both the study's strength and limitation. The biographical interview provides rich, contextual material that could not be garnered except in the manner that the interviewer/participant dyad affords. Open ended questioning and a comfortable rapport between interviewer and participant often stimulates long forgotten memories, events, etc. that impact and shape the life structure. As Levinson (1996) states, the biographical interview relies heavily upon memory and

reconstruction—a process that has inherent flaws. In attempting to examine, compare and contrast individual life structures, other methods such as surveys may not yield the depth and nuance that the biographical interview elicits. There is also the question of whether the recounting of the events by the participants is accurate. It can be argued that a participant's perception of an event, or experience may be as important as the veracity of the recollection—especially as that perception influences emotions and attitudes.

Setting up two distinct groups of women from the inception of the study may have yielded more contrast in life structures between women who receive social support during the Age Thirty Transition and women who do not. For example women could have been pre-screened to identify women who perceive themselves as having little or no social support from those women who perceive their support as adequate.

The method of data collection and analysis necessitates a small sample, and can pose problems for generalization and application to different and larger populations. This method however, has proved suitable

for hypothesis and theory generation especially as related to the area of adult development.

OBSERVATIONS

The eight participants of this study were found to be negotiating the Age Thirty Transition—a developmental phase described by Daniel Levinson as occurring from ages 27-33. All the women exhibited the reappraisal, re-evaluation and questioning of their life structures that characterizes this period of development. Two women were approaching the termination phase of the Age Thirty Transition, but most of the women were in the two beginning phases of initiation and individuation.

All of the women were developmentally on task for the Early Adulthood tasks of forming a Dream and Occupation. Only two of the women had formal Mentors, and the remaining six utilized facilitators who assisted in some way with Dream formation and/or actualization. The absence of a formal mentor was not developmentally significant. Only two women were in

stable relationships that might possibly lead to marriage. One woman was considering ending a long term relationship with an unsuitable partner. The remaining five women were searching for a Special Man in their lives.

The Dreams of the eight participants reflected the components of career/work and marriage/family as did the Dreams of Levinson's female career sample. The eight women's desire to have successful careers and marriages did not reflect the ambivalence, guilt and difficulty that women of previous cohorts (including Levinson's sample) may have experienced when attempting to combine career and family in the life structure.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

The hypothesis regarding social support and qualitative experience of the Age Thirty Transition was not confirmed by the data. Another finding regarding social support emerged. Women characterized as experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition had the financial/emotional support for the Dream, of at

least one parent or surrogate before and during the Age Thirty Transition. These women had made or were attempting to make minor adjustments to the life structure. Women characterized as experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition did not experience financial/emotional support for the Dream from at least one parent or surrogate before and during the Age Thirty Transition. The parent(s) did not support the True Dream of the woman, or the True Dream was only emerging during the Age Thirty Transition. These women were contemplating major changes to the life structure, and uncovering suppressed or unknown aspects of the Dream.

For the women characterized as experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition, there is no guarantee that the life structure that they have or will set for themselves will continue to proceed as smoothly as the Age Thirty Transition. Some of the women may have made conscious or unconscious compromises that will later in the developmental process prove to be unfeasible or unacceptable.

Though the three women who were characterized as experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition have

difficult choices and challenging issues needing resolution, the possible gains and consequent satisfaction with the life structure are potentially enormous. These women were not sitting idly wishing and hoping for a different life structure. They were asking tough questions and actively seeking to implement changes.

Family of Origin

The family of origin was an important source of support for most of the women experiencing a Smooth Age Thirty Transition, and potentially important for the women experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition. Seven out of the eight women by choice or necessity had frequent and close involvement with one or both parents. "It is generally not feasible or desirable for adult offspring to make the relationship with parents a central component of their lives; at best it is a highly valued and satisfying peripheral component" (p.266, Levinson, 1996). Generally speaking, the women in this study were more attached to their parents in ways that were syntonic (and not

developmentally inappropriate) than were the women in Levinson's 1996 sample.

The impact of parental attitudes and values was powerful among this group of women who internalized many of their parents' values regarding educational achievement and financial upward mobility. All of the women had at least one parent who was a professional and served as a role model. None of the parents expected that their daughters would engage in a Traditional Marriage Enterprise or abandon their careers after marriage.

**SHIFTING/REVERSAL OF PRIORITIES,
BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND LOVE**

Only two women in this sample evidenced a shifting of priorities or a balance between work and love. Two other participants experienced a change or shift in attitude regarding the importance of love in their life structures; and the remaining four women did not show evidence of a shift in priorities or attempt at balancing work and love. A shifting in priorities or attempt at achieving a balance between work and love appeared to be a function of whether or

not the woman was involved in a serious, stable relationship.

AGE THIRTY CRISIS

None of the women in this sample could be characterized, at the time of the interviews, as experiencing a crisis in Levinson's theoretical sense of developmental crisis. Levinson distinguishes between an adaptive crisis—an individual's unsuccessful and maladaptive attempt to manage some stressor—from that of a developmental crisis. The latter occurs when an individual is unable to meet the developmental tasks an era (e.g. failure to form an occupation or occupational direction by Middle Adulthood).

IMPACT OF RACE/RACISM ON DEVELOPMENT

This study was not specifically designed to measure the participants' perception of racism's impact in their lives or their level of ethnic

identification. The comparisons and contrasts between this sample and Levinson's female sample reflect differences that may be attributable to factors other than race. This study's results lend themselves to multiple interpretations inclusive of racial differences.

Three of the participants spoke spontaneously about the impact of race and racism on their lives, education, or self-esteem. Only one woman of the three, mentioned racism as negatively impacting on her career advancement. Her particular area of executive sales was dominated by Caucasian males. She was deliberately excluded from formal and informal networks that would have assisted her career ascent. All three women were able to utilize coping strategies and gather support for themselves to buffer and build self-esteem. Seven of the eight women were in institutions where African Americans and women occupied key leadership positions. Whether consciously or unconsciously, seven of the eight women chose employment settings where the factor of race was potentially advantageous.

Several findings of this study highlight differences that may be attributable to racial, cultural and cohort differences. As previously noted in the findings, the centrality of and involvement with the family of origin was a primary difference for this sample of African American women. Members of the family of origin provided pivotal support for seven of the eight women during the Age Thirty Transition. Since these women were without a marriage partner to serve as the most important relationship vis-à-vis social support, (Taylor et. al., 2000), they utilized family as the next closest kin in lieu of a spouse, as stated by Gary & Brown (1985). What may appear as prolonged dependency by the women of this sample may actually be the adaptive use of family as next closest kin in lieu of a spouse. The members of Levinson's sample of women were not nearly as involved with members of the family of origin; and most were married by the end of the Age Thirty Transition.

The importance of parental involvement of this African American sample was reflected in the occupational choices--perhaps through sex role socialization (Hill, 1971; Turner, 1972; Epstein,

1973) as was true for Ruffin's 1985 sample. Seven of eight mothers in this sample were professionals with six of the seven working in fields traditionally over-represented by African American women. The one participant who worked in non-traditional field also had a mother who worked in a non-traditional field. While the women of this study were able to integrate occupational role as part of their self-image, one can question whether their Dreams or visions of themselves have been narrowly confined for reasons that have nothing to do with their inherent potential. Did the parents (especially the mothers) shape or influence the Dream (consciously or unconsciously) in ways that served to protect the participants from the competition and possible racism that entry into non-traditional employment sectors can bring? Levinson's career sample represented women who at the time of the interviews were engaged in non-traditional careers, and whose parents had not encouraged their careers. One can argue that sexism was the solitary hurdle that Levinson's career sample faced in pursuit of the Dream.

Most of the women in Levinson's sample were white and either married or married with children at and through the Age Thirty Transition. Like the women in Ruffin's (1985) and Adams' (1983) samples, a major developmental task of the Age Thirty Transition was initiating and sustaining an intimate relationship or sustaining the relational component of the Dream. Statistics, demographics and the male/female ratio imbalance among African American men and women make settling into long-term relationships and marriage with African American men a formidable task for African American women in the 27 - 33 age group.

The impact of race/racism was most evident in the discussion with the participants regarding intimate relationships and potential partners. While the five women without partners were optimistic about finding a partner, they voiced an acute awareness about the dearth of suitable African American males from which to select a partner. These women were savvy enough to recognize the high sex ratio imbalance among African American men and women, yet they remained undeterred in forming Dreams that included marriage. Only two of the participants were adamant that their partners must

be African American; others were more open to dating men from other ethnic groups.

IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATION OF FINDINGS

Developmental Issues

One key task to emerge, especially for women experiencing a Rough Age Thirty Transition was uncovering or discovering the True Dream. The other major developmental issue that surfaced for the majority of women in the sample was that of developing and sustaining intimate relationships that reflected the relational component of the Dream. It is not surprising that these developmental issues surfaced during the Age Thirty Transition as this stage of development is marked by assessment and adjustment to the Dream.

For the women whose True Dream was resurfacing during the Age Thirty Transition, the defenses and coping styles included suppression, sublimation and compromise. The defenses that the women not involved in intimate relationships utilized regarding intimacy

issues included sublimation through over-work, suppression, and emotional distancing. Focusing on the individualistic components of the Dream was adaptive (at the time of the interviews) and served to ward off feelings of hopelessness and pessimism about finding a Special Man or partner.

Therapeutic Implications

Utilizing the adult developmental psycho-social model and a psychodynamic model can be useful in conceptualizing the issues that arise during the Age Thirty Transition and in conceptualizing therapeutic interventions. The anxiety, angst and turmoil that a woman may feel during the Age Thirty Transition can be viewed as an individual's psychological response to stressors, as well as a normative consequence of a destabilizing developmental period. For both therapist and client, understanding and anticipating the possible disruptive effects of a transitional developmental period such as the Age Thirty Transition, can be therapeutic. For example, a psychodynamic interpretation of Betty's parents'

decision to support her younger brother's Dream of becoming an artist and not hers might be useful to Betty. The therapist might interpret that the family dynamic supports and repeats a highly rigid sex-role stereotype that states that men are allowed to seek occupational gratification (like her father, far away from home); and women are restricted to more practical hearth-bound choices. In addition, a developmental interpretation would be useful in helping her to understand that her True Dream's resurfacing at the Age Thirty Transition was not coincidental; and that further suppression may result in the True Dream's re-emergence at the Mid-life Transition. A developmental interpretation might center on how Betty's suppression of strong artistic urges have been marginally effective. Her attempts at occupational compromise are an expected area of reappraisal especially during transitional periods throughout the life span. The psychodynamic and developmental models might provide the therapist and client with a perspective that illustrates how choices at key developmental periods impact on intrapsychic and

interpersonal functioning as well as satisfaction with life structure over time.

Another example of the usefulness of both developmental and psychodynamic models in therapeutic intervention would be in analyzing Gina's emotional distance from her parents. Analysis of her perception of always being different from her sisters and singled out in a negative way by her parents could assist with releasing some of the anger she has felt towards her parents. Additionally, understanding how the individuation process of the Age Thirty Transition highlights issues around the polarity of Engagement/Separation, might explain why Gina's anger seems greater during the Age Thirty Transition than before.

The Biographical Interview as a Clinical Tool

Other adult developmental researchers (Ruffin, 1985; Ogilvy, 1983; Adams, 1983) report that the biographical interview is a unique research tool which fosters a dynamic and interactive process between participant and interviewer than can be therapeutic

for the participant. Most of the women of this study reported that simply thinking about questions in areas of their lives that may have been unconscious or unexamined, encouraged them to examine patterns that may have been unacknowledged. Some of the participants experienced and exhibited more range and depth of emotion as they recounted the unfolding of their stories—their lives; but all eight women reported that the interview process had been interesting—and for most of them—useful.

In all eight cases, the biographical interview was burgeoning with information that would be useful in a clinical/therapeutic setting. The interpersonal dynamics and intrapsychic issues were in relief and woven throughout each woman's telling of her story. The information culled from the hours of interviews could potentially take weeks or months to emerge in a traditional psychoanalytic setting. Some version of the biographical interview could be a valuable clinical and interpretive tool in the proper therapeutic milieu.

The homogeneity of this sample presented an opportunity to compare and contrast portions of the

psychosocial developmental process of these women and those of Levinson's female sample at the Age Thirty Transition. Similarities and differences emerged regarding the attachment to and utilization of the family of origin as a source of social support during the Age Thirty Transition. It is likely that a combination of cohort and race affected the observed differences—the degree to which can not be determined by present results. The study prompts further questions and investigation regarding the impact of gender and sex roles on female adult development. Would cross cultural studies of different groups of women yield more differences or similarities to Levinson's women at the Age Thirty Transition? Do the Dreams of later cohorts of African American women still reflect the individualistic and relational components of earlier cohorts to the same degree? As sex roles, issues of gender and gender splitting continue to shift in the American culture will the adult female developmental process reflect the changes vis-à-vis the Dream or the Marriage Enterprise?

APPENDIX A - INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

This study will utilize an interview approach similar to that of Levinson(1978), Stewart (1977) and Ruffin (1985). The format is loosely structured with many open ended questions that allow for and encourage self disclosure and elaboration on topics pertinent to the Age Thirty Transition. As such, the interviewer's role was that of facilitator or active listener (Levinson, 1996) to each woman recounting her life story. The sequence in which a participant's story unfolded varied from participant to participant. The content areas to be covered and the purpose of the interview was consistent across participants—to solicit the life story and construct and analyze the life structure utilizing the Levinsonian developmental model. Below are the categories and general topic areas to be covered.

DREAM-- What is the participant's Dream? How well articulated is it? Are it's major components relational, individualistic or split? Has the

participant been able to actualize part or all of her Dream? Does her Dream include plans for marriage and family?

Does she feel that her Dream is attainable in the near future, distant future or never? Is the participant's current life structure syntonic or dystonic with her Dream? Have there been any shifts or changes in her Dream?

MENTOR RELATIONSHIPS--Does the participant have or has she ever had a mentor? How important were these relationships to her current career choice? What is the Quality of her relationship with her mentor(s) ? Has that relationship been enduring? Has her mentor influenced her in areas other than her professional life?

OCCUPATIONAL--What is the participant's career and how did she arrive at this career choice? Is she content with her current career? If not, what plans is she making for changes? How long has she worked in this area? Does she see herself in this career several years from now? Is her career choice consonant with

her Dream? Are there occupational goals she has yet to achieve?

LOVE RELATIONSHIP/MARRIAGE/FAMILY--Obtain a description of the participant's social network. What relationships are most important to her? How does she characterize the quality of the relationships? What are her thoughts about marriage and family? Is marriage and family a component of her Dream? Have her ideas about marriage and family changed? Does the participant experience internal/external pressure to be married? Is she currently involved in a long term relationship? What are her parents' views about marriage and family? Does she have any feelings about a biological clock or limitation regarding having children? What are her thoughts about singlehood?

SELF ESTEEM/SELF REPORT--How does the participant describe herself? What is the general character of her description? Does she express a sense of satisfaction with her life, career, relationships, life structure? What adjective does she use to describe the Transition period? Does she express any desire for change in her

life? Is she making progress toward expressed changes?

Does she report feeling successful? What is her perception of how others see her? How would she describe her most prevalent mood? Does she have any regrets in her life? Does the participant feel her life is well rounded and balanced?

SOCIAL SUPPORT--Determine the key persons in the participant's life. Determine the frequency and nature of contact with those persons. If the participant had a problem, who would she be most likely to call? What is the participant's perception of the support she receives? Have members in her support system been influential in shaping her Dream? Have those members been helpful or a hindrance in achieving her goals?

APPENDIX B - CONSENT FORM

I agree to be a participant in the research study of Audrey L. Owens about single African American professional women. I understand that the interviews will be audio-taped and used as material for her dissertation. All identifying information will be changed to insure anonymity. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Participant

Date

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