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THE RELATIONSHIP OF LIFE EVENTS, GENDER AND AGE: A
COMMUNITY STUDY OF ADULTHOOD

City University of New York

PH.D.

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1979

THE RELATIONSHIP OF LIFE EVENTS,
GENDER AND AGE:
A COMMUNITY STUDY OF ADULTHOOD

by

M. ANNE MULVEY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the
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1979

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 RELATIONSHIP OF STRESSFUL LIFE
EVENTS, GENDER AND AGE: A COMMUNITY
STUDY OF ADULTHOOD

by

M. Anne Mulvey

Advisor: Professor Barbara S. Dohrenwend

This study investigates the relationship of stressful life events, gender and age. Life events are occurrences which, for better or worse, disrupt a person's usual activities or day-to-day routine. Predictions about how life event patterns would vary as a function of gender and age status were generated for several life event characteristics on the basis of role literature and everyday assumptions about various gender age groups.

A probability sample of 169 New York City residents between the ages of 23 and 64 were studied. They were asked which of 102 life events they, or someone close to them, had experienced in the last year. After each event was reported, probes were asked about the extent to which the respondent had anticipated, and the extent to which she or he had had control over the occurrence of the event.

Hypotheses derived from the role literature were tested

comparing the life event patterns of six gender age groups in terms of event number, desirability, content, magnitude, perceived anticipation and perceived control. For these comparisons, respondents were divided into three groups on the basis of age: young adulthood, ages 23-39; early middle-age, ages 40-54; and late middle-age, aged 55-64. Separate analyses were conducted for life events in which the respondent was central figure and events reported in which someone important to the respondent was central figure.

There were no main effects for gender for events in which the respondent was the central figure. There were effects for age, however, including difference in magnitude, frequency and desirability, and proportion of health events. In each case the late middle age group is different from the young group; the early middle-age group sometimes resembles the older group and other times the younger one. Also, there was an interaction effect such that young men reported greater control than other gender by age groups. Among the five other groups, the two older male groups were the lowest.

In contrast with events in which the respondent was central figure, there were main effects for gender but not for age or for the interaction of gender and age. Women reported more events than men which happened to important others and these events involved less disruption than the other events of men.

These results are interpreted in terms of gender and age stratification.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Gender and age are powerful social status variables which influence the options and the experience of individuals over the life cycle. Individuals are simultaneously subject to expectations and demands based on their position in the age structure and the gender structure. Though the position an individual occupies in this dual structure has concrete expression in day to day life, the composite of these structural influences are usually discussed in general terms often separating the joint influences of the two as, for example, in the concept of the social roles of age and of gender. Such roles are abstract concepts rather than specific or tangible phenomena and may include a number of kinds of experience and multiple levels of influence. Social roles serve, then, as a summary term or convenient abbreviation for these diverse influences which are associated with particular age and gender groups.

Certain adult roles have been discussed and investigated at length while other roles have been given little consideration. For example, the analysis of age roles is very spotty with much attention paid to childhood and quite a bit to old age while the middle years have been for the most part ignored. This perpetuates the assumption that the

bulk of adulthood is static and relatively unproblematical while the very early and late years are dynamic times involving problems which require investigation and concern. Recent attention to lifespan development has corrected this to some extent yet even this literature addresses some roles and ignores others. For example, the mothering role has received much attention while the fathering role has not even though the two are functionally related and would be better understood in relation to one another. The choice of roles which receive attention and the nature of that investigation is not arbitrary or random. Rather, it is related to value assumptions which pervade the culture. Polatnick (1973) explored this issue and stated:

Reflecting the societal estimation of who's going to be doing the job, "parenting" information aimed at males is remarkably scarce compared to the literature of advice, instruction and edification for women. (p. 58)

Polatnick cited a study of fatherhood by Benson (1968) in which he said: "Fatherhood is a pasttime that does not call for training, discipline, or high priority effort. Pressures upon men to take stock of themselves as fathers are fitful and unorganized at best." Literature abounds, however, on the responsibilities and naturalness of motherhood. Recently this literature has been criticized by many social scientists who point out that it is based on the assumption that the mothering role is essential to the healthy adult development of all women. It has been presented as a natural and positive role even though there is

evidence suggesting that it is not a constructive alternative for some women and that the current nuclear family structure is in fact associated with unnecessary and unhealthy isolation and alienation which results in a higher proportion of anxiety, depression and phobic reactions among married women than married men (Bernard, 1973; Chesler, 1972; Gove and Tudor, 1972; Rich, 1977; Rossi, 1968).

Research on work, in contrast to the parenting literature, deals almost exclusively with male employment patterns and occupations while the patterns and jobs of women are often excluded. Again, the two are not independent and trends and changes in male work patterns affect the employment options and patterns of women. This is the prevalent pattern in most social science literature and research (Kimmel, 1974; Sommers, 1974). The aging literature generally focuses more on male roles than on female roles and is based on male norms often inappropriate for women. Tish Sommers (1974) has noted that patterns for aging are different for women and men. She described the compounding impact of age and gender concluding that ". . . aging must be redefined in a way that is more functionally accurate for women and is not based upon male chronology." (p.6)

The reverse pattern occurs in the gender role literature though the implications are quite different. Sex roles are synonymous with the female role. A recent book which is an exception to this generalization, The 49% Majority: The Male Sex Role (David and Brannon, 1976) noted in the

introduction that this topic is indeed neglected. There are numerous social science books on many obscure issues "... but there are not books on the male sex role, not entries of: 'Sex role--male' in the index of any textbook I pull from the shelves."¹ Implicit here is the message that the male role is the norm, that it is assumed to be natural and that, therefore, it does not need to be studied in order to be understood. Women are of interest in their divergence from that general norm. Brannon (David and Brannon, 1976) remarked:

. . .The male sex role has been able to elude scientific study--or even notice--because, rather than in spite of, its enormous and pervasive influence on the knowledge, thoughts, attitudes and assumptions of every person who has grown up under its influence. Our culture has been dominated by males for as long as records exist, and every man and woman alive today has grown to maturity and developed styles of thought and stores of knowledge while as deeply immersed in the values, concerns and emphases of the male sex role as fish in the depths of the ocean. The role's values permeate and affect... what we know about the world, what we think is "human nature", the questions we think to ask. Our recorded history is almost literally his-Story, full of male accomplishments, formal offices held, wars fought.
(p. 40)

In reviewing current sociology of gender research, Millman (1971) concluded that one of its weaknesses lies in the

¹As these authors point out and as their book illustrates, this tendency is beginning to change due largely to the influence of the Women's Movement and its questioning of the naturalness and validity of not only the female but also the male role.

tendency to focus "heavily on women" implying that it has to do only with women. Bart (1971) noted:

In fact, the term sex role almost always refers to women in the same way that 'urban problems' or 'inner city problems' is a euphemism for 'what are we going to do about blacks.' (p. 738)

This differential treatment of the male and female gender roles, then, is not arbitrary and does contain insidious implications. Following DeBeauvoir's (1949) analysis in The Second Sex it may be seen as a manifestation of the pervasive assumption that man is "subject" while woman is "object" or "other". It appears that the choice of the roles studied, the interpretation of what is appropriate or natural in the enactment of social roles, and the value attached to them, is generally a reflection of current social norms and institutional arrangements which serve to maintain the status quo even when other arrangements or roles might be feasible and preferable as far as individual well-being is concerned.

In addition to this uneven investigation of age and gender roles, the role concept itself is amorphous. The summary descriptive nature of the term 'social role' limits its utility. The role concept has been criticized for its vagueness and for the often unspecified relationships contained within it. Levinson (1959) noted that: "The concept of role remains one of the most overworked and underdeveloped in the social sciences." Angrist (1969) discussed the "ambivalent love affair" of social scientists with role

theory: "As a way of describing patterned behavior, they find role concepts relevant, useful and handy--but also inadequate, muddled and overly simple." And McIntosh (1971) stated:

The term social role is, of course, a form of shorthand. It refers to a cultural conception or set of ideas but also to a complex of institutional arrangements which depend on and reinforce these ideas. (p. 238)

McIntosh's definition of social role recognizes the multiple levels involved in the role concept and stresses the functional relationship of roles to the larger society.

While the role concept is amorphous and its use uneven, it is important to understand the specific content of social roles at different times and within sub-groups and to recognize that these roles are dynamic rather than static. Crucial to this awareness is an understanding that these age and gender roles are not solely or even primarily a reflection of nature or a consequence of long formed and static socialization but also, and perhaps more importantly, a representation of the ongoing and changing relationship between aggregates of individuals and the larger society of which they are a part. Life cycle sociologists (Brim, 1969; Riley, 1976; Riley and Waring, 1976) investigating adulthood stress the importance of the sequence of social roles and the concrete demands and happenings involved with them over the life cycle as essential to understanding the aging process. Riley and Waring (1976) have argued that age and aging should be studied "...as fundamental aspects of social structure

and social dynamics" and not merely "... as characteristics of individuals." (p. 189) They point out that even occurrences which are primarily biological such as the onset of menstruation or the length of an average lifespan are to a large extent socially regulated. Riley (1976) stated:

We can now understand that aging means that people, over their life course, do not simply experience biological and psychological development and change; they also move through socially structured sequences of roles from birth to death. . . learning to adapt to new roles and relinquish old ones, accumulating knowledge and attitudes and social experiences. (p.14)

Similarly, Brim (1969) maintains that the substantive content of socialization differs at various stages of the life cycle and in major social institutions. In discussing the institution of marriage, Bernard (1973) presented evidence showing that this is true not only in terms of life stages but also for men and women of the same age and within the same institution. Research has shown the different content of the marriage role for men and women primarily involves the substantive content of the housewife role versus the husband role and that these roles carry with them different consequences in terms of depression, passivity, anxiety and other symptoms of psychological distress (Bernard, 1973; Chesler, 1972; Gove and Tudor, 1972; Radloff, 1975; Rossi, 1968).

Life cycle literature, personality theories and a growing body of research focusing on the different social roles of men and women tell us what is expected of women and men and what is considered to be normative or healthy for them at different ages. However, it is difficult to move from these

general notions of expectations and roles to a picture of the actual day to day patterns of experiences related to them. Gender and age roles are abstractions for a whole host of demands, reinforcements, strains and activities stemming in some way from a social system based on age and gender stratification.² There is a need, then, to move from this abstract level of discussing age and gender roles to a concrete analysis of how these roles reflect the larger institutional arrangements and affect the day to day situations of the individuals experiencing them.

The importance of the role of life conditions and situations has been acknowledged and constitutes, in fact, a long-standing problem in psychology. Lewin (1935) criticized the field of psychology years ago for utilizing the Aristotelian mode of thought which abstracts common characteristics or frequent occurrences of a group and subsequently uses these abstractions as the essential and unvarying nature of the group in question. Lewin pointed out the faulty logic of such a circular or teleological explanation which obscures the dynamic character of the object under investigation. He specifically criticized the use of age as a basis for characterizing groups of people. Lewin argued instead for a

²This is complicated by other structural variables such as class and race which are not addressed here though a powerful reality which should be recognized as occurring simultaneously. I will not discuss the class dimension and there will no doubt be a tendency to stress a middle class reality. While recognizing this, I also think that the age and sex structures do operate across the range of socio-economic levels though different norms and realities affect the basic pattern at each level.

perspective based on the Galileian mode of thought which stresses the mutual relations of the object to its environment. He (1935) said: "The dependence of the essential features of the event upon the essential properties of the situation becomes the conceptual and methodological center of importance." (p. 29) Lewin encouraged researchers to study human development by investigating persons in relation to specific situations and concrete events which might reveal the dynamic relationship between individuals and the particular concrete situations of which they are a part.

Life Events Offer Heuristic Alternative

Life events offer a heuristic alternative to conceptualizing age and gender aggregates in terms of global social roles by providing a concrete way to look at the day to day experiences of these groups. Life events are occurrences which disrupt the normal routine or day to day pattern of an individual as, for example, changing jobs, getting married, moving, or experiencing an illness. These events may be positive or negative in content; they may be anticipated or unanticipated; and they may or may not be under the person's control. An individual may be the central figure in a given life event or may be affected by an event which concerns a second person who is important to him or her as, for example, a spouse, child or close friend.

An analysis of the life events that women and men of different ages experience offers an empirical way to assess the effects of the operation of the theoretical concepts of roles and of the structural dimensions involved with them in daily life. Life events might provide a measure for assessing the simultaneous impact of the social expectations and social structural constraints associated with age and gender. For example, retirement is a socially regulated occurrence which affects many people, particularly men, at approximately age 65. The recent legislation extending the mandatory retirement age to 70 and removing an age limit for all federal workers clearly illustrates the social nature of retirement and of the way it times the aging process. Retirement brings with it a decrease in activity, lower status in our productivity-oriented culture and a sharp drop in income. Men are no longer expected to work though the expectation of steady paid employment outside the home is powerful for them in earlier years. Indeed, society is structured so that old people are not allowed to work. It is often not a choice but a legal or economic necessity forced upon them. As a consequence, we would expect life events after age 65, for example, to be fewer than before and to be characterized by losses rather than gains.

Life events may also provide a measure of people's experience which falls outside of the systematic influence

of the social status variables of age and gender. The occurrence of a flood, fire or other natural disaster, for example, or the taking of trips probably are not regulated by age and gender as status variables. Thus, we would expect the occurrence of these events to be independent of age and gender. Other events, such as the onset of menopause or the occurrence of heart disease, while influenced by social phenomena to some extent, are related to gender and age as physiological or genetic characteristics. As such, they would not occur randomly across age and sex groups. It should be noted that relatively few life events are of this sort. By far the greater number are primarily social occurrences even though they come to be associated with particular gender age aggregates through habit and norms.

Life events may also be conceptualized as variables which intervene between the influence of the expectations and demands associated with an individual's age and gender status and the subsequent personal consequences of these status-related expectations and demands. For example, several researchers (Cumming and Henry, 1961; Hochschild, 1975; Jung, 1972; Neugarten, 1968) have observed what appears to be a gender role convergence or reversal in late middle age or old age. As men grow older, they have a tendency to take on characteristics traditionally associated with the female role such as greater emotionality and passivity. Older women seem to show a shift in the direction of greater

activity, increased competence and greater assertion -- traditionally considered to be "masculine" traits. Cumming and Henry (1961) attribute this reversal primarily to internal developmental processes of aging. Neugarten (1968) and Jung (1971) see intrapsychic change and personality as the central dimensions which define these different patterns of male and female aging.

Hochschild (1975), on the other hand, has offered an explanation consistent with conceptualizing life events as an intervening variable in this process. She stresses the importance of the role of social structure and the differential reinforcement people receive in our society on the basis of age and gender. There may be systematic changes in the kinds of events women and men experience or are rewarded for in late middle age and old age which would help explain the gender role convergence or reversal previously noted. And these events might be related to the way social institutions regulate our lives rather than to primarily intrapsychic or individual variables. As Hochschild points out, for example, women are not reinforced for dependence and passivity after a certain age. In middle age the loss of attractiveness associated with youth which is so valued in our culture and the loss of children to care for diminish the traditional means of reinforcement women are encouraged to rely on in earlier years. The conditions of women's lives necessitate the development of new areas of activity

and reinforcement including quite probably a greater reliance on self and instrumental rather than socio-emotional activities. Husbands and children no longer supply the definition of self-worth and meaning they previously did. The experience of widowhood is the prime example of this. Many women are faced for the first time in their lives with the responsibility of caring for themselves and only themselves.

In late middle age, men, on the other hand, are returning to the family and are separating, willingly or not, from major involvement in the instrumental sphere of work. The changing conditions of men's lives encourage a shift toward styles stereotypically associated with the female. Men are looking to other people and social relations to replace their earlier involvement in work. The experience of life events such as these in late mid-life which are related to gender and age stratification in the work and family spheres probably encourage gender role convergence or reversal.

Chapter II

ROLES ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER AND AGE

In the following chapter, theory and research relevant to the roles that are associated with gender and with age are discussed followed by discussion of roles that are associated with particular gender age groups. Gender roles are ascribed on the basis of a unitary and unchanging characteristic while the age roles of individuals shift over time. This suggests that there might be times of convergence and divergence of the demands and ascribed characteristics of the two which would be reflected in patterns of life events. For example, the female role is probably more similar than the male role to roles associated with old age since both are identified with the private rather than the public sphere and both are low status or out groups relative to the dominant groups of men and of youth in our culture. Though the interaction of the influence of age and gender is a major point of interest, the literature which investigates the impact of gender and age status often addresses each one separately exploring only one dimension without acknowledging the simultaneous affect of the other. Therefore, the influence of age and gender is considered separately and in combination.

Discussion of gender and age roles is often conducted in terms of traits and persistent characteristics or personality attributes associated with a particular aggregate. This is particularly prevalent in relation to gender roles as evidenced in the following traditional and still all too familiar assumptions: "men are strong; women are weak; men are active, women passive; men are instrumental, women nurturant and expressive." It is interesting to note that this trend occurs less in relation to age roles than gender roles and even less frequently in relation to more specific age-sex groups. A generalization could be made that the more specific or narrowly defined the target group the more the emphasis shifts from a personal or internal trait orientation to a recognition of particular situational contingencies and institutional arrangements surrounding and affecting that group. For example, discussion of young women usually focuses on the importance of marriage and the increased responsibilities and stress the birth of children entails while literature on young men almost always emphasizes the importance of the kind of work pursued as well as the increased freedom, independence and financial responsibilities which come at this time. This occurs, however, even though both women and men are working and both are having children at this time. Thus, this literature is not only reflecting the specific institutional arrangements and related roles of the gender age groups within

them. It may also serve to encourage or maintain a particular set of social arrangements by communicating expectations and ideals stratified by gender and age.

Since trait and personality characteristics are ascribed to age and gender groups in a general and cross-situational manner, they are at most indirectly related to particular life events which are situational and specific in time and place. It is not possible, then, to generate specific hypotheses about the direct relationship of life event patterns to various gender age groups from the global personality traits ascribed to them. Therefore, discussion of traits assigned to various groups will not be included here. For our purposes, literature which focuses on institutional or situational differences and the normative evaluation associated with them will be discussed in order to generate hypotheses regarding life event patterns of gender age groups. Research suggesting how gender roles might affect life events will be discussed first followed by an investigation of the content of age roles and finally a discussion of the joint affect of the two status variables. Discussion of this literature will be organized around the institutional arrangements, particularly the work and family spheres, which facilitate or encourage the enactment of these roles and the positive or negative evaluations attached to them. Hypotheses regarding the relationship between the status variables of age and gender and life events will be presented.

Gender Roles

Institutional Arrangements

Gender roles are part of the cultural context involving the larger social institutions. Two major social institutions, the family system and the economic system, are stratified along gender lines. In fact, each gender role is composed of a constellation of characteristics associated with one institution rather than the other. The female role consists of attributes suited to the private sphere of the family and to the socio-emotional and nurturant tasks considered central to the raising of children and to the fulfilling interpersonal relations usually associated with the family. The male role, in contrast, is defined in terms appropriate for successfully competing in the public sphere of work, which requires material productivity, and a task or instrumental orientation. These gender roles reflect the normative roles of women and men in the institutions of family and of work. Discussion of these roles will focus on modal characteristics and normative arrangements. Therefore, gender roles will be treated in the context of nuclear family arrangements rather than single, divorced or other minority lifestyles.

Women have long been primarily responsible for the home and family. Motherhood and the mothering role are still often seen as basic or even synonymous with being a

woman (Bardwick, 1972; Bernard, 1973; Laws, 1971; Rich, 1977; Rossi, 1968). This role requires caring for children rather than for self and involves interpersonal sensitivity and a focus on people and feelings rather than on products or things. The wife role, too, often involves subordination of personal interests and preferences to those of the husband. It is not considered unusual for wives to live "for and through their husbands" though the reverse would be considered quite odd. It is common for a wife to leave relatives and friends to follow her husband as his job shifts; to serve as hostess to his friends or business associates, and to defer to the husband's position not only in relation to public and financial affairs but also in household matters. Wives make more accommodations to their husbands than husbands do to their wives (Bernard, 1972; Laws, 1971; Tharp, 1963).

Most women are married (Bureau of the Census, 1976). And most, if not all, married women are not only wives and mothers but also housewives (Bem and Bem, 1969; Bernard, 1972). And it is this housewife role that has been characterized as isolating, alienating, structureless, repetitious, boring and, indeed, as literally responsible for making women sick (Bernard, 1972; Gove and Tudor, 1972; Laws, 1971). In addition, housework involves unpaid labor and is not rewarded or acknowledged in material terms. This adds to its low status and vagueness relative to other

jobs. There is no clear schedule of reinforcement. The housewife cannot be promoted and the fringe benefits remain the same regardless of how much or how little time and energy she invests in the role.

While the wife is responsible for raising the children and caring for the home, it is the husband who maintains ultimate decision-making power and authority in the home (Bernard, 1972; David and Brannon, 1978; Gronseth, 1972; Laws, 1971; Polatnick, 1973). The husband and father roles are basically quite similar. As husband and as father, a person is economic provider, "bread-winner", and primary authority in the home, particularly in matters pertaining to finances and task-oriented issues. The husband and father is expected to support and to protect wife and children, necessitating ongoing participation in the economic sphere. While women are expected to be wives and mothers regardless of participation in paid employment outside the home, men, regardless of family status, are expected to work. Careers and work patterns are considered central aspects of male adult development. Marriage, although normative, does not hold a place of importance in the expectations and developmental sequence of men. Life span theorists have pointed out that the man's life line is usually synonymous with his career line or work life while the life line of women is primarily composed of family events such as marriage, birth of children and subsequent happenings in their lives (Kenniston, 1968; Kimmel, 1974;

Laws, 1971; Lopata, 1968). This partially reflects the actual life situations in which women and men find themselves but it also reflects the personal investment of men and women in these roles as well as the cultural expectation presented to us. Men are more involved with work and identify with the worker role; women, including those engaged in paid employment outside the home, are encouraged to identify themselves more strongly with their family than their work roles.

Work patterns reflect gender stratification just as family roles do. Bird (1975) discussed sex-typed work patterns in a chapter of her book Born Female, aptly titled, "Sex map of the work world." Sex stratification in the work world occurs not only in terms of wages but also on a variety of other dimensions: pension plans, the social security system, group life insurance policies, union benefits, unemployment compensation, and educational and job training programs. In all of these areas, men have an advantage over women. Women hold low status jobs relative to men. Women are paid less for the same work than men. And in many occupations which are considered appropriate for women and are occupied mostly by women, men hold the higher level and supervisory positions in numbers far greater than their proportions in the lower ranks (Bird, 1975; Ehrlich, Sokoloff, Pincus and Ehrlich, 1975; U.S. Department of Commerce, 1976). Further, Bird noted that

the nature of jobs men and women hold are related to their general stereotypes. Men's jobs usually involve "instrumental-adaptive" roles while women predominate in "expressive-integrative" roles. Men hold outside jobs -- jobs requiring travel, negotiations outside the office, company or country. Women hold inside jobs -- inter-office communications, human service jobs, domestic work and "domestic relations" work. Men hold jobs involving decision-making and independent responsibilities while women engage in personal service jobs and jobs of limited responsibility. Bird (1975) concluded that three basic principles define the sex boundaries of the work world:

One is the idea that women should work inside and men outside. Another earmarks service work for women and profit-making for men. Other roles reserve work with machinery, work carrying prestige and the top job to men. (p. 72)

Gronseth (1971) integrated the themes discussed here by elucidating the connection between gender roles and the institutions of family and work:

Women generally find themselves in a basically subordinate position in the family, as a result of the economic discrimination and the economic dependence inherent in HEPR (the Husband Economic Provider Role)... Contrary to the interpretation of several American family sociologists, and also to a widespread egalitarian ideology, it seems that equality between the sexes exists neither in America, nor in any other industrial society; neither in childhood nor in adult life; neither inside nor outside the family. (p. 15)

The different roles of the sexes within the family are related to a large degree to the economic system which discriminates against women. And the position of authority of the male

in the family depends upon his economic power and the provider role he is able to maintain as a consequence of it.

Central figure in event. In order to clarify the hypotheses about life events which follow, a digression is necessary to introduce and define the concept of central figure in event. Individuals may be directly involved in life events, or they may indirectly experience life events which happen to others who are important to them. For example, a person might be laid off from a job, or a person's spouse might be laid off. In the first case, the experience and the impact of the lay off is direct while in the latter instance it is indirect. Similarly, one person may have been graduated from college while another person may have a child who was graduated. The term "central figure" refers to the person who actually experienced the particular life event, that is, to the person who was directly rather than indirectly involved.

In this study, respondents reported life events in which they were the central figure and life events in which others important or close to them were the central figure. Information about these two different kinds of events are considered separately. Throughout this paper, the summary term "self events" is used to denote life events in which the respondent is the central figure in the events. The summary term "other events" is used to denote life events in which someone other than the respondent is the central

figure. Hypotheses about life event patterns refer only to those events in which the respondent is central figure, that is, to "self events", unless otherwise specified.

Related hypotheses. The themes described earlier suggest ways in which the life events of women and men might differ from one another. First, in the area of contents, this literature suggests that women will report more life events centering on the family and family-related activities. Men, on the other hand, will report more events than women centering on work and work-related activities. Second, it is expected that there will be differences in terms of who the central figure is in the events of men and of women. The sensitivity to other people and the caring for them involved with the wife and mother roles, and even their usual work roles, as Bird (1975) pointed out, suggests that women will experience and report more life events than men in which another person, husband, child, or friend, for example, is the central figure rather than the individual herself. The roles which men play do not require such a degree of interpersonal sensitivity or involvement in the lives of others. It is expected that men, on the other hand, will report more events than women do in which they are the central figure. This is anticipated as a consequence of their greater participation in instrumental and task-oriented roles as well as their greater involvement in decision-making and positions of authority and power both at home and at work.

The nature of women's family roles, particularly the housewife role, suggests that women will experience less anticipation and control of life events than will men. This hypothesis is also based on the nature of men's and women's work outside the home. The greater responsibility and status in the jobs which men hold as well as the greater monetary compensation they receive for the same work as women might well mean that men as a group have more opportunities for control over events. In addition, men as a group may experience a greater perception of control over their lives than women regardless of actual control possible or exerted in a given situation. Attribution studies have shown, for example, that women underestimate success in achievement situations while men in the same situations overestimate their performance suggesting that men perceive more control even when it is not in fact appropriate due perhaps to their different reinforcement histories (Crandall, 1969; Deaux and Emswiller, 1974; Frieze, 1974; Jones, Kanouse, Kelly, Nisbitt, Valins and Weiner, 1972). Hypotheses about gender differences in control are the same, therefore, whether actual or perceived control is being predicted.

Another hypothesis suggested by the position of the sexes in the home and work spheres concerns the magnitude of events or the amount of change or disruption they entail. It is expected that the life events of men will involve more change or be of greater magnitude than those of women. This

is due to the more varied and responsible nature of men's jobs involving decisions and higher risks as well as the boring and repetitious nature of housework in which many women are involved.

Value Attached to the Roles: Evaluation Bias

There is evidence that a difference in value is associated with the two genders. The characteristics composing the female role are generally less favored than those constituting the male role (Bart, 1971; David and Brannon, 1976; Gronseth, 1971; Laws, 1971; Polatnick, 1973). Traits associated with women are ascribed less value or evaluated lower than male traits (Bird, 1975; Gronseth, 1971). Touhey (1974) conducted a study manipulating job changes in terms of sex ratio using official U.S. Department of Labor Job Descriptions. He found that both men and women devalued jobs where an influx of women into men's jobs was predicted and gave higher status to female jobs in which an influx of men was expected. This reverse pattern held not only for status but also for the economic picture. However, Suchner (1979) recently conducted three replications of Touhey's study and found no main effect for gender. Suchner concluded that the generalizability of Touhey's finding and its relationship to actual gender related job discrimination are open to question. Etzkowitz (1965) documents the actual occurrence of a similar pattern, though, in relation to the influx of male nurses after World War II. People first attributed

the status of doctor to them and, when this was ruled out, assumed them to be orderlies. The role of nurse was not consistent with their male role and the more common assumption was, of course, that they held a higher, not lower, status than women. The reverse occurs for women. It is a commonplace occurrence that women are presumed to be secretaries, for example, rather than higher level professionals. Both women and men share these assumptions about sex-typed institutional positions and status.

There is also evidence that behavior attributed to women is evaluated lower than behavior attributed to men and that men and women share this evaluation bias. Several studies have documented this pattern (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosencrantz and Vogel, 1968; Clifford and Walster, 1972; Deaux and Taynor, 1973; Fidell, 1970; Goldberg, 1968; Pheterson, Kiesler and Goldberg, 1971; Taynor and Deaux, 1973).

Experimental research illustrating this evaluation bias against women and in favor of men is supported by research which indicates a similar phenomena at the sociological level. Sociologists have noted that women hold a low status vis-à-vis men and that the female gender role includes a number of characteristics similar to those associated with other minority groups. Analogies have been made between women and blacks and between women and old people as well as low status groups in general. Hacker

(1951) compared women and blacks in terms of characteristics attributed to them and accommodating attitudes and behaviors evidenced by them. She showed that blacks and women share similarities associated with minority groups on both dimensions. Allport (1954) saw antifeminism as containing "the two basic ingredients of prejudice -- denigration and gross overgeneralization " (p. 32). He also interpreted several personality traits of the female as responses to victimization. Bart (1971) noted:

And guess who is described in the sociological literature as expressive, besides women--Blacks, especially when they riot or rebel; students, especially when they demonstrate; non-whites in general, and old people. (p. 738)

Hochschild (1973) made the same analogy. She noted, however, that women and old people are an unusual type of low status group in that they, unlike other minority groups, are intimate with their oppressors -- women with men and old people with the young. This kind of emotional involvement and psychic dependence obscures the inequitable power relationship between these groups.

Related hypotheses. The fact that women are a low status or minority group often dependent upon men for their sense of power and worth adds support to the hypothesis stated above that women will experience less anticipation and control of life events than men. The evaluation bias against women and their low status also suggests other hypotheses. It is expected that the life events of men will

be more desirable than those of women for two reasons. First, the evaluation bias against women means that life events and experiences associated primarily with women will be less valued in our culture due to this association while events typically associated with men will be accorded more value. Second, the high status position of men will serve to give men an advantage or favored access to opportunities and preferred situations which would tend to be associated with desirable events.

Overview of Stages of Adulthood

Age while an index of chronological time is also a powerful social indicator similar in its operation to the ascribed social status of gender. Neugarten and Moore (1968) define the age status system as the system in which... "duties, rights and rewards are differentially distributed to different age groups which have been socially defined." (p. 5) They pointed out that modern complex societies such as ours are composed of "plural systems of age status differentiated in relation to particular social institutions" which vary in terms of explicitness and formality. As with gender stratification, the two major institutions probably most influential in this process in adulthood are the family and work systems. Van Dusen and Sheldon (1976) described the influence of these plural systems on the individual in terms of the "life course":

The life course (or life cycle) is a way of conceptualizing the aging process: a sequence of statuses and roles, expectations and relationships, constituting, in the broadest sense, an individual's "career". While the life cycle is universal, it is also infinitely varied. It is shaped by a variety of roles and opportunities available to an individual as well as the resources that an individual can marshal at various stages of his or her "career". An individual's life is patterned by a variety of role sequences, probably the most important of which is the family cycle, but also including sequences of student, career and community roles. The combination and juxtaposition of various role sequences provide texture to an individual's life cycle. (p. 106)

The occurrence of retirement as an event, as a status and as a process provides an illustration of the impact of the social institution of work on the life course. Retirement marks the beginning of old age and the roles associated with it in clear and explicit terms. Marriage is a parallel process in the family status system marking the beginning of adulthood while leaving the home of one's parents also represents the initiation of adulthood though in less formal terms and often occurring in a less explicit form as, for example, going away to college as an initial step in a gradual and prolonged process. While these events differentiate one time from another quite clearly, there are probably many less obvious but similarly different occurrences associated with one time versus another. At every age individuals are simultaneously engaged in positions and roles within the various status systems of work and family and from these overlapping age stratified systems come the definitions of age appropriate roles and activities.

Parsons (1942) discussed the similarity between the age and gender status systems pointing out that they are both fixed and non-voluntary. They are parallel systems deeply rooted in the social structure. The age status system differs from the gender system, though, in that it is composed of a series of statuses rather than one which persists over a lifetime as is the case with gender ascription. While it is quite difficult and extremely rare to move from the sex or gender assigned at birth,³ the age status system is by its very essence a sequence of statuses through which individuals move as they age. Related to this central characteristic of the age status system is its relative vagueness as compared with the sex status system. For example, individuals often look, act or feel younger or older than they are and therefore may be subject to norms which diverge from those associated with their actual chronological age.⁴ It is

³There are cases of gender transition, however, as in sex change operations facilitating congruence between social gender role and physical gender characteristics; transvestites who adopt a form of social sex role in opposition to the role associated with their physical gender constitute another example of individuals separating themselves from their initial social gender assignment.

⁴This is not to imply that gender roles are terribly narrow or that they prescribe specific or exclusive behaviors but that they are easier to define globally and to assign or to attach to specific individuals. Also, individuals experience only one gender role, not a series as in age roles so it's much easier to use one's sex role or aspects of it as basic to self-definition. For these reasons, gender roles may tend to feel more "natural" and are thought to be so by many individuals.

more difficult as a result to define a particular age status and to pinpoint the position of individuals within it once defined. Nonetheless, there are generalizations about norms and roles associated with age groups which stem from the age status system.

The number of age groups into which adulthood has been divided and the particular chronological age associated with one group versus another varies from one researcher to another or according to the particular purpose of an investigation. Buhler (1968), one of the earliest life cycle researchers, divided adulthood into four age periods: 15-25; 25-45; 45-65; and over 65; and characterized the various periods primarily in terms of the changing nature of goal orientation which she paralleled to the biological processes of growth, stability and decline. Bromley (1966) defined phases much more narrowly using a schema of seven stages beginning with early adulthood (21-25) and ending with senescence which is characterized not in age terms but as involving terminal illness and death. Jung (1930), on the other hand, divided the adult portion of the life cycle into very broad periods encompassing early adolescence to death in only three categories: youth (12-40); maturity (40-65); and old age (65-death). Other researchers do not employ chronological age per se as the criterion but rather use other chronologically ordered variables to define adult phases. Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga et. al. (1974),

cutoff between young adulthood and middle-age represents the mid-point of the ten year range typically associated with the passage from young adulthood to middle-age.

Cultural assumptions and literature about middle-age involve some themes which are similar to those associated with old age. Therefore, the middle-age respondents are broken down into two middle-age groups on the assumption that it is the life event patterns of the late middle-age respondents which will more often reflect characteristics shared by people over 65, that is, by old people. Further, if the life events of this late middle-age group is in fact different from the young and early middle-age groups in ways we associate with old age, these differences may provide indirect information about differences occurring in old age, too. In contrast, the early middle-age group is assumed to experience life events which are related to themes not found in the old age literature.

Institutional Arrangements of Age Groups

A theme which appears repeatedly in the aging literature is the association of young adulthood with expansion, early middle-age with a plateau or stability, and late middle-age with contraction or decline. These characteristics reflect the life situations which are typical of each of these groups.

Young adulthood. Individuals in their early twenties are moving away from their families of origin via newly

for example, in their book, Four Stages of Life, divided adults into four groups on the basis of the normative role transition they had recently experienced: (1) recent high school graduates; (2) newlyweds; (3) children leaving home; and (4) pre-retirement.

Age Periods in This Study

The three most common adult age periods in lifespan literature and in the culture at large are young adulthood, middle-age, and old age. Young adulthood is usually defined as starting in the very late teens or early twenties; the onset of middle-age is defined more broadly, generally ranging from ages thirty-five through forty-five; and the most common marker for the beginning of old age is still sixty-five reflecting the traditional retirement age. Distinct themes, social roles and stereotypes are associated with each group and time of life.

Since our hypotheses about the relationship of age and life events are based on lifespan literature and cultural assumptions, the above age groups would be the preferred ones. However, the respondents in our sample range in age from 23 to 64; this range set the upper and lower age boundaries in our study and precluded a direct investigation of old age as a period. Three periods constituting the sample range were chosen: young adulthood, ages 23 through 39; early middle-age, ages 40 through 54; and late middle-age, ages 55 through 64. The choice of 39 and 40 as the

formed friendships, intimate relationships and independent living arrangements. The end of schooling or job training and the beginning of work "in the real, not sheltered or protected, world" adds another dimension to this theme providing financial independence and new experiences. The time perspective associated with this period is also one of openness and expansive opportunity: Young adults have "their whole lives ahead of them," "broad horizons," and the "freedom to move in any direction they choose." Though this is, of course, an idealized exaggeration, there is a kernel of truth in that individuals of this age are often not yet enmeshed in caring for others and are more independent of others, particularly parents, than they have been in the past. They do have many years ahead of them in which to pursue various goals. And even the most routine or dull job is fairly interesting -- challenging even -- until you get the knack of it.

This period is associated, too, with other situations which, while broadening and constituting gains, also involve increased responsibilities and pressures. Marriage and the birth of children are normative for this period; both involve demands and pressures as well as gains and expanded life space. Economic pressures and constraints on work options are necessitated by raising a family, and income level is not as high as it will be in middle-age (Riley and Waring, 1976). The transition to parenthood,

as many researchers have documented, is a difficult and sudden one for which almost no training is available (Bernard, 1973; Laws, 1971; Riley and Waring, 1976; Rollins, 1971; Rossi, 1968). Romanticized myths of the experience further complicate the already difficult transition (Lazarre, 1977; Rich, 1977; Rollins, 1971; Rossi, 1968). So, while expansion and gain is the keynote of this period, there is also much change, disruption and novelty. While new opportunities and horizons exist and are being explored, so too do increased responsibilities and demands for which there has been little if any preparation.

Related hypotheses. This suggests that young adults will experience more life events than the older groups due to the expansion of their activity in both the home and work spheres and their openness to change and new options. It is also expected that young adults will experience less anticipation and control over their life events than the older groups since they are involved in many novel situations and have less life experience in general than do older people.

Early middle-age. Early middle-age, in contrast to young adulthood, is characterized as a time of stability, power and control. Individuals have been immersed for a number of years in both the work and the family cycles. Experience in both of these areas is extensive resulting

in the ability, the opportunity and the confidence to handle complex environmental tasks. Riley and Waring (1976) noted:

Middle-aged people are not only the most favored age stratum in terms of claims to occupational roles, but are also most favored in terms of income for the roles they do perform. (pp. 367-368)

And in terms of marriage roles, a similar situation exists for the early middle-aged:

The middle-aged also have the greatest access to marital roles which, despite the accompanying responsibilities and frequent disillusionment, constitute a major source of happiness and satisfaction. (p. 369)

At the same time, pressures are either stable or lessening as in the case of children requiring less care and attention. Often parents are experiencing the beginning of the post-parental family. Earning power and experience are at a peak while new expenses and demands are unlikely and may be on the decrease. Neugarten (1968) remarked:

Middle-aged men and women, while they by no means regard themselves as being in command of all they survey, nevertheless recognize that they constitute a powerful age group vis-a-vis other age groups; that they are the norm-makers and the decision-makers; and they live in a society which, while it may be oriented towards youth, is controlled by the middle-aged. (p. 93)

This sense of power and control stems not just from experience with family and work, but also from the position within the age structure which the middle-aged occupy. Neugarten (1968) noted that "the middle-ager sees himself as the bridge between the generations, both within the family and

within the wider context of work and community " (p. 94). This perspective and position brings with it a different time perspective from the young so that now time-left-to-live becomes the framework replacing time-since-birth (Brim, 1976; LeShan, 1974; Neugarten, 1968; Neugarten and Datan, 1974). With this new time perspective and the lessening of demands comes a tendency to assess oneself from a position of strength and knowledge. Neugarten (1968) concluded:

We have been impressed with the central importance of what might be called the executive processes in middle-age; self-awareness, selectivity, manipulation and control of the environment, mastery, competence, the wide array of cognitive strategies.

We are impressed, too, with reflection as a striking characteristic of the mental life of middle-aged persons: the stock-taking, the heightened introspection, and, above all, the structuring and restructuring of experience. (p. 98)

While there are normative crises in early middle-age which will be discussed later in the section on gender age roles, much of the literature on this period suggests that it is indeed "the prime of life".

Related hypotheses. Since early middle-age is a time of power and of relative stability, it is expected that early middle-aged people will have more anticipation of and greater control over life events than younger people. This increased anticipation and control may also be due to greater life experience in general which comes with age. A second hypothesis is that the life events of the early middle-aged will

be more desirable than those of young adults reflecting their favored position in the social structure. Third, it is expected that the magnitude of life events or the amount of change they involve will be greater in the early middle-aged than in young adults due to the greater responsibility and authority early middle-aged people have in both the public and private spheres. And, since the early middle-aged are generally quite established in both their family and work roles and this is a stable period, it is expected that they will report fewer life events than younger people. Finally, it is expected that this group will report a higher percentage of health events than the younger group since it is assumed that physical problems will increase with age.

Late middle-age. Late middle-age, while having some similarities with early middle-age, is generally a time of contraction and decline. Children are moving or have moved out of the home. Many long-standing responsibilities, both economic and emotional, go with them. Younger people are moving up in the work world and the changes of promotion or positive job change for the older person are slim. Often it is impossible to find a new job and unemployment turns into early retirement. Riley and Waring (1976) have documented that "...people 50 and over have incomes sharply lower than people in their middle years." (p. 368) Even for those in secure work situations, the pre-retirement phase is

beginning. The recommendation of an extensive U.S. Department of Labor study was that pre-retirement planning should begin by the age of 50. And research has indicated that psychological disengagement from full involvement in work activities often begins long before actual retirement (Brim, 1976; Cumming and Henry, 1961; Hochschild, 1975).

Occurring simultaneously with this decrease of activities and responsibilities in the home and family spheres is a growing concern with physical decline. Chronic health problems increase during this period, often for the first time in a person's life. Even if they do not, friends and relatives of a similar age may experience health problems serving as a reminder of one's own vulnerability. And, of course, gray hair, wrinkles, balding and lessening of sexual interest or partners are often tangible indicators of impending loss of health and vigor (Brim, 1976; Kimmel, 1974; Neugarten and Datan, 1974).

Related hypotheses. It is expected that later middle-aged people will report fewer life events than the two younger groups reflecting the contraction that is occurring in the work and family realms. This age group is also expected to report the most health events since it is assumed that health problems will increase with age. The accumulation of experience which comes with age suggests that late middle-aged people will report more anticipation of and greater control over their life events than the two younger groups.

However, a countervailing force of fateful life events such as illness, increased health problems and sudden losses such as death of spouse or friends late in life is also expected suggesting less control than earlier although such events might be anticipated more in the later years than earlier.

The magnitude of the life events of this group relative to the other groups is not clear. Since this group has less power and authority than the middle-aged, it seems reasonable to expect life events of less magnitude. On the other hand, late middle-age is often associated with major disruption in both the family and the work spheres suggesting the possibility that life events might involve greater disruption and change. Also, it has been shown that there is a positive correlation between the magnitude of life events and negative desirability of events (Dohrenwend, B.S., Krasnoff, L., Askenasy, A.R. and Dohrenwend, B.P., 1978).

Evaluation Bias Associated With Age Groups

Ours is a youth-oriented culture. Attractiveness, potency and opportunity are often considered synonymous with youth. A frequent compliment to an adult of any age is that he or she "thinks, acts, or looks young". Early adulthood is the age period which benefits from this positive evaluation bias which pervades our culture. Parsons (1942) explored the historical development of this youth orientation. He related it to the increase in industrialization and

technology, upgrading of educational and occupational systems, and to changes in the kinship system, particularly the isolated nuclear family unit, which have undermined the position of wisdom and authority formerly attached to the elderly. With these structural changes have come an emphasis on decisiveness, energy, mobility and novelty. Parsons (1942) wrote:

Modern industrial society (places an) ... accent on processes of dynamic change, innovation, the valuation of things new ... This is reinforced in our society by a very important element of our values. The combination of instrumentalism and activism which characterizes them stresses promoting control of the environment, anti-traditionalism, refusing to value things just because they have been traditionally done ... (p. 7)

Young adults are ascribed characteristics consistent with this cultural value system and are also independent of older age groups for the first time via economic and familial independence. In this sense, they constitute the favored group in terms of society's norms.

The early middle-aged group, while not as favored in terms of the value placed on youth, do hold a relatively positive position nonetheless. They are identified with power, experience and authority which the younger group cannot claim. People of this age often hold "peak" positions in the social structure relative to other times. That is, even individuals who will never have much power and authority -- and that includes the majority of individuals in our society -- are often in the highest position they will ever reach in early middle-age. In this sense middle age involves instrumentality and control which are often paralleled with youth.

but are actually more representative of early middle-age. Neugarten and Datan (1974) found that upper middle class middle-aged respondents considered middle-age to be "the period of greatest productivity and major rewards, the prime of life." (p. 593) For blue collar middle-aged, however, the experience was somewhat bleaker: "Not only does middle-age come early, but it is described in terms of decline -- slowing down, physical weakening, becoming a has-been" (Neugarten and Datan, 1974, p. 593). As is generally the case, it is the middle and upper class experience which pervades the culture and sets the parameters for stereotypes and normative assumptions. In reviewing the literature of this period, Neugarten and Datan (1974) commented:

Other studies have shown that the perception of middle-age as the peak period of life is shared by young, middle-aged and older respondents. In one such study there was consensus that the middle-aged are not only the wealthiest, but also the most powerful; not only the most knowledgeable, but the most skillful. (p. 601)

Whatever the early middle-aged may be lacking in terms of the physical vitality and attractiveness ascribed to the young, they are perceived as making up for it in terms of power and control -- assets highly regarded in our competitive culture.

The way society perceives people of late middle-age or old age is quite different from the way it views the two younger groups. Old age presents the most striking contrast, though late middle-age constitutes a prelude and transition period to the negative status of old age. It is therefore assumed here to share some of these negative associations,

though muted to some extent by closeness to the early middle-age reality.

Old people possess physical characteristics which are the basis of negative stereotypes and derogatory cliches. Myths about the aged include ascriptions of senility, tranquility, physical weakness and resistance to change (Butler, 1970, 1975; DeBeauvoir, 1970). As adults approach retirement age they are faced with entering a minority or out group in our culture possessing few of the favored cultural characteristics and, more importantly, holding a position of relative powerlessness economically and socially.

As a consequence of the negative evaluation and reality of old age in our society, the label "old" is generally avoided by old people and by those addressing them. It is considered acceptable, however, for old people to refer to each other with respect to age, as old, but bitterly resented when young people do the same (Hochschild, 1973). There is a parallel to this among other minority groups. For example, one black person might call another "nigger" and this may be acceptable; it is a very different and unacceptable thing for a white person to do the same. Barron (as quoted in Hochschild, 1973) stated: "Old people react to the stigma of age with self-consciousness, self-hatred, and defensiveness which characterize other minority ethnic groups." (p. 136) Hochschild (1973) pointed out that although old is a minority which most people eventually join, few identify with it:

The way old people look for luck differences among themselves reflects the pattern found at the bottom of other social, racial and gender categories. To find oneself lucky within an ill-fated category is to gain the semblance of high status when society withholds it from others in the category. The way in which old people feel above and condescended to other old people may be linked to the fact that the young feel above and condescended to them. (p. 63)

Research has indicated that younger age groups share this negative stereotype of old age. In fact, older respondents tend to rate this period more favorably than do those in the younger age groups at the same time that these older people simultaneously maintain a positive value on youth.

Related hypotheses. The negative evaluation bias ascribed to old age as well as the anticipated health problems and losses mentioned earlier suggest that the life events of the oldest group will be less desirable than those of the younger groups. The evaluation bias attached to the different age groups as well as their positions in the social structure also suggest that the life events of the early middle-aged will be the most desirable. However, the positive value attached to youth may mute this to some extent resulting in comparable desirability for the events of the young and the early middle-aged. This evaluation bias would also encourage a lessened sense of control over events in the oldest group regardless of the specific situation and a greater sense of control over events in the early middle-aged and possibly the youngest group. While it is expected that the oldest group may experience less control over events, they

may nonetheless anticipate their occurrence due to greater experience as well as the possible expectation that upsetting or unforeseen events like illness may occur due to their advanced age.

Gender Role--Age Role Interactions

Young Adulthood

Research and theory which examine age gender groups are highly related to the position of these groups in the institutions of family and of work. Early adulthood is the time for starting a family of one's own and for the deepening of interpersonal relationships, especially with the opposite sex. It is also the time for beginning full-time work via a job or career and for economic independence and self-support. While these are the two general themes of young adulthood, each is discussed largely in terms of one gender rather than both due to the pervasive gender stratification of our institutions and of the activities associated with them.

It is women who are defined primarily in terms of the family roles of spouse or wife, and parent or mother. Traditionally, women have been seen as nurturant, maternal, dependent and highly involved with family and related social and socio-emotional activities. The young woman, particularly as wife and mother of young children, is probably the clearest example of this stereotype. The physical component of this image of woman is of one who is attractive, soft and seductive. Again, the young woman comes closest to fulfilling, or having

the potential to fulfill, this ideal. The young woman, then, is more representative of the patterns associated with women in general presented earlier in the section on gender roles than is the older woman. It is the young woman who is most involved with housework and childcare and who lives her life for and through others. At least she is embedded in a life situation which allows and perhaps encourages that. She is most dependent at this time on her husband for economic support, since she is seen as primarily or solely responsible for the day-to-day care of their children. She is also dependent upon her husband as primary adult companion for diversion from the company and demands of little children who do not provide adequate stimulation for her. Though many women do work during these years, particularly before the birth of children, women of this age group are more involved with housework and with childrearing as major occupations than any other age group.

Even when also engaged in paid employment outside the home, women of this age hold predominantly low level or "dead end" jobs and often see their paid work as a peripheral role necessitated by financial need. It should be noted here that most work is necessitated by financial need but in the case of women's work this motive is associated with a sense of irrelevance or even a negative value while with men's work financial need as the primary motive is ascribed a higher and positive value in our culture. Frequently women

of this age think that they are working to provide temporary financial support for themselves or their families until their husband is fully able to take over this responsibility. Often this is a myth rather than a reality since many families depend on the woman's income as an ongoing necessity rather than a temporary necessity or luxury.

While the primary focus of women during adulthood is on the family, men of this age are primarily involved with and identified with their occupational roles. This is a time of expansion and independence -- a movement away from the family of origin and into the public world of work and the establishment of a family of one's own. The young man takes on the roles of independent worker, economic provider and authority in his own family. In both these respects, normative institutional arrangements facilitate the expression of the male norms of instrumentality, activity, and independence. In this sense, the young man presents an opposite and complementary picture in relation to the young women. Young men may be seen as more representation than older men of the themes associated with the male gender role and supportive institutional arrangements presented earlier. In early adulthood, then, men and women are encouraged to play more complementary and stereotypical gender-typed roles than at any other time. However, research suggests that at this time men and women are more similar in terms of attitudes and goals than in later years (Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga, et. al., 1975; Sheehey, 1977).

Related hypotheses. The gender roles and surrounding institutional arrangements of young adulthood suggest some modifications of previously generated hypotheses. Since, as mentioned earlier, male rather than female patterns are the basis for most aging investigations and norms, greater differences are expected in the patterns of women. It is expected that young women will report more events in which other people are the central figure than will older women and than men of any age due to their high involvement in the private domestic sphere and in the rearing of children. It is also expected that young women's sense of anticipation of and control over life events will be less than any other gender age group due to their peak involvement in housework and childcare.

Early Middle-age Women and Men

Early middle-age presents some diversions from the general patterns ascribed to the sexes. For women, menopause and the "empty-nest syndrome" are normative occurrences. Menopause represents the loss of reproductive capacity which is central to the female ideal and which serves as a symbol of the loss of physical attractiveness and sexual desirability. An opposing theme associated with menopause is the freedom it provides from concern about future pregnancies and additional childrearing responsibilities. The fact of children leaving the home also presents opposing themes for women at this time. The traditional and negative interpretation of

this transition is that it necessitates the tearing away and disappearance of the necessary conditions for fulfilling a central aspect of the female role.

The dissolution of the nuclear family means that others no longer need the woman and the woman no longer has the structure through which to care for others or to live for and through them. The needs and behavior of the children are at odds with the needs of the mother. It is hard to live for others if there is no one around and hard to nurture if there is no one to nurture. Some research has supported this interpretation by showing that early middle-aged women feel depressed, report low life-satisfaction, and perceive middle-age as one of the worst periods in terms of feelings about self and relationship with their husbands (Bart, 1971a; Bernard, 1973; Clay, 1977).

An opposing theme which has surfaced recently in the aging literature is that early middle-age offers many women new and welcome freedom rather than losses (Barnett and Baruch, 1976; Dibner, 1976; LeShan, 1974; Riley, Foner, Hess and Toby, 1969). The burden and isolation of domestic work and childcare responsibilities are lifted and the woman is "free" for the first time in years to devote more time and energy to herself and to instrumental activities. While instrumental activities are in conflict with the female stereotype, they are nonetheless highly valued in our culture and may be more stimulating and satisfying than former

activities. Particularly if a woman has resources and options outside the home, this period is positively experienced. Many women return to work at this time after not working for a number of years, and those women who have worked often become more involved with their careers (Barnett and Baruch, 1976; Clay, 1977; Neugarten and Datan, 1974; Riley and Waring, 1976).

Early middle-age for men quite often constitutes the peak of their careers and earning power. While youth offers broad horizons and opportunities, early middle-age is the time when men have the greatest authority, decision-making power and position in the work world (Kimmel, 1974; Neugarten, 1968a, 1968b; Neugarten and Datan, 1974). They are competitive with assets of more skill, experience and higher level positions than in the past to assure success. In this sense, the institutional arrangements of early middle-age can be seen as facilitating the expression of the male role: authority, dominance and instrumentality. Middle-age men are often in a better position to get what they want whether possession, travel or sexual relationships, than at any other time. Though this is most representative of men in the middle and upper classes, working class men often maintain a favored position via seniority, experience and skills as well as the benefits that come with them.

Many men experience this peak time, however, not just in terms of the assets they have achieved but also in relation to the future (Brim, 1976; Cumming and Henry, 1961;

Neugarten, 1968a, 1968b; Neugarten and Datan, 1974). While early middle-age represents a height of power and control in terms of experience, position and income, it also symbolizes the reality that one can no longer look forward to increased competence, power and achievement in the future. Concern about anticipated decline and a questioning of the meaning and worth of accomplishments thus far may constitute a crisis for men referred to as the "male mid-life crisis" (Brim, 1976; Neugarten and Datan, 1974; Sheehey, 1977). This is characterized by the sense that "time is running out" and that the individual will not accomplish all he might have liked. There is an awareness of the structural reality of fewer opportunities for job changes and promotion. The male mid-life crisis is also associated with an awareness of physical decline, fears regarding sexual attractiveness and potency, and an unfavorable comparison of the middle-aged state of health and capacity relative to the physical prowess associated with youth.

Related hypotheses. While it is expected that women will report more family events across ages than men, the changes in women's lives associated with early middle-age suggest that family events may decrease from young adulthood to early middle-age. It is also expected that women will report fewer events than earlier in which another person is the central figure. Men, in contrast, are expected to report approximately the same number or more life events

in which someone other than the self is the central figure. The possible increase predicted is due to the occurrence in some men of a mid-life crisis which frequently precipitates increased concern about and involvement in the lives of important others, especially children. Finally, it is expected that women may experience an increase in anticipation of and control over life events due to their increased freedom from housework and childrearing duties. This may be muted by a countervailing force, however, of a sense of loss sometimes occasioned by menopause and the departure of children from the home.

Late Middle-age Men and Women

Late middle-age finds women more involved than previously in work activities which is related, of course, to the lessened commitment necessary to carry out the post-parental family roles. Women, due to time out for family roles, are often experiencing the crest of their involvement and status at this time either in paid employment or in social and community activities. At the same time, they may be experiencing the grandparent role and renewed interaction with grown children now that they are independently established. There is evidence that there is a loosening of the role constraints of femininity at this time which allows women to be more independent, active and in control of various areas of their lives. Many women are widowed during this period which, while constituting a major disruption and severe

social loss, may contribute to this new sense of independence.

Men, on the other hand, are less involved than previously with work activities. Many have retired or are looking ahead to it. A contraction of instrumental activities and fewer promotions are characteristic of this time (Brim, 1976; Cumming and Henry, 1961; Kimmel, 1974). As a consequence of these changes in the work sphere, men often become more involved with their family roles than previously. While women are evidencing more traits associated with the male role, men are taking on more "feminine" traits: shift of focus from the world of work, or public area, to the home and community, or private spheres; less activity and instrumentality and more emphasis on socio-emotional relationships; and physical decline resulting in less strength and virility. This period, particularly the experience of retirement, involves a number of losses for men: loss of work associates, of income, of status, and of activity. There is also evidence that men often lose their position of authority and decision-making in their homes and that women, conversely, are gradually taking over these traditional masculine responsibilities.

Related hypotheses. These themes suggest several possible gender age interactions. First, the family events of women may decrease with age such that the oldest group of women will report the smallest number of family events. In contrast, it is expected that the work events of men will decrease such

that the oldest group of men will report fewer events than the other two groups due to lessened work involvement and the approach or experience of retirement.

Second, a similar pattern is predicted for events in which an important other is the central figure. The oldest group of women are expected to report fewer events in which others are the central figure than younger female groups while the oldest group of men are expected to report more events in which others are the central figure than younger male groups.

Later middle-aged men and women are both expected to report more anticipation of their life events than younger groups due to increased experience. In terms of control over events, however, a difference is expected between men and women in the oldest group. It is expected that late middle-aged women will experience greater control over events than younger women, despite increased health problems. In contrast, men in this group are expected to experience less control over their events than younger men due to their approaching retirement in combination with a predicted increase in health concerns. For similar reasons, it is expected that the desirability of men's life events in this period will decrease more than the desirability of women's events which are expected to remain the same or possibly to increase.

Gender Age Evaluation Bias

A complex pattern of evaluation bias emerges when we look at gender age and in combination. While women as a group experience a negative bias relative to men, young women may experience favorable bias relative to other ages of women since this is the time when they are able to play out or express most fully the general notion of what is considered positive and healthy for women in our culture. It is the young woman who most nearly embodies the positive images of wife, nurturant mother and of physical attractiveness. The active mothering years and female beauty are associated with youth rather than middle or old age.

While society generally does not value early middle-aged women as a group, there is a growing awareness of a positive experience some women have in early middle-age as a consequence of "losing" their culturally defined and valued femininity. Some women are relieved that they are no longer perceived as or treated as sex objects and, the cultural value of motherhood notwithstanding, that they no longer have to worry about birth control or unwanted pregnancy. There is also greater opportunity in early middle-age for some women to engage in and be accepted in male roles and styles, since these do not clash as much with the image of the middle-aged woman as with the younger woman.

Men, in contrast, may experience a positive bias in both youth and early middle-age. While youth in men is valued in terms of the traditional masculine traits of

strength, virility, adventurousness and independence, early middle-age in men is equated with physical desirability or attractiveness, actual power, financial success and other valued resources which require time to accumulate. One illustration of the differential age bias which favors men for more years than women are the standards of physical attractiveness and sexual desirability. These attributes are thought to peak later in men than in women even though recent research indicates that women in fact reach their fullest sexual potential later than men and maintain it longer (Sherfey, 1966; Katchadourian and Lunde, 1972). Nonetheless, the image of the mature middle-aged man in our culture is different from and more positive than that of the mature middle-aged woman. And, statistically speaking, older men have an advantage over older women in terms of marriage options and access to heterosexual relationships (Kimmel, 1974; Riley and Waring, 1976).

Late middle-age, as mentioned earlier, involves a negative evaluation for both genders. This period may be more devastating for men, however, since it contrasts more strongly with the stereotypic male role than with the female role. Also, late middle-aged women may continue experiencing the advantages of early middle-age which men do not benefit from since men are not subject at any age to the possibility of unwanted pregnancies or to being treated as sex object by a dominant group.

Related hypotheses. These patterns generally support the hypotheses generated from the discussion of the institutional arrangements of the various gender age aggregates with one exception. The institutional arrangements of young women seem to allow little opportunity for anticipation of and control over life events and to be associated with less desirability and opportunity for self-expression than those of older women. But the cultural evaluation bias regarding young women is positive. While the bias usually parallels the cultural experience, it may be that in this case the positive bias serves to facilitate the enactment of fairly negative roles. The positive value placed on the normative roles of wife and mother for the young woman may serve to obscure the negative reality of the content of these roles by hiding, for example, the boring and debilitating nature of some aspects of housework and childcare under the guise of nature or of love.

This contrast between the content and the value attached to the young woman's gender age roles leaves it unclear as to how women of this age will report their sense of anticipation and control, and how they will experience these roles. It will be interesting to see whether these women attach a sense of control to events which seems unusually high considering the content and qualitative aspects of the events themselves. It may depend on how strongly women accept the positive cultural value attached to their family roles.

Summary of Hypotheses

The hypotheses suggested by this discussion of the gender and age role literature are summarized below. The summary is organized in terms of various aspects of life events discussed above and follows the same order for each aspect:

(1) differences expected in life event patterns as a function of gender; (2) differences expected in life event patterns as a function of age; (3) differences expected in life event patterns as a function of the interaction of gender and age. As mentioned earlier, these hypotheses refer only to those events in which the respondent is central figure except in hypotheses related to central figure in event where predictions are made about self events first followed by predictions about other events.

Frequency of Events as a Function of Central Figure

Gender. Men will report more events than women in which they are the central figure in the event.

Women will report more events than men in which another person, spouse, child, or friend, for example, is the central figure in the event.

Interactions. Two interactions of age and gender in the reporting of events in which another person is the central figure are expected.

Women will report fewer events in which someone else is the central figure as age increases.

Early middle-age men will report the same number, or possibly a greater number, of events in which another person is the central figure as the youngest group; and both of these groups will report fewer events in which another is the central figure than the oldest group.

Frequency of Events as a Function of Content

Gender. Women will report more home and family events than men at all ages.

Men will report more work events than women at all ages.

Age. Life events concerning changes in physical health will increase with age such that the youngest group will report fewer such events than the middle-aged who will report fewer than the oldest group.

Interactions. It is expected that women's home and family events will decrease with age such that the youngest women will report more home and family events than the early middle-aged who will report more than the oldest group.

It is expected that men in the oldest age group will report fewer work events than either of the other two groups.

Desirability of Events

Gender. The life events of men will be more desirable than those of women.

Age. The desirability of life events will be greater

in early middle-age than in early adulthood and greater in these two groups than in the late middle-age group.

Interactions. The life events of late middle-aged men are expected to be less desirable than those of late middle-aged women.

The desirability of the life events of late middle-aged women may not differ from the desirability of the events of early middle-aged women.

Magnitude or Amount of Change of Events

Gender. The magnitude of the life events of men will be greater than that of women.

Age. The magnitude of life events will be greater in early middle-age and late middle-age than in young adulthood.

Perceived Anticipation of Events

These predictions refer to all events which could reasonably be anticipated.

Gender. Men experience a greater sense of anticipation of their life events at all ages than do women.

Age. Age will be positively correlated with the anticipation of life events.

Perceived Control of Events

These predictions refer to all events which could reasonably be controlled.

Gender. Men will report more control over their life events than women report.

Age. Early middle-aged people will experience more control over their life events than younger people and both of these groups will experience more control over their life events than the oldest group.

Interactions. Late middle-aged women's sense of control is expected to remain the same as in early middle-age.

Chapter III

METHOD

The study is based on interviews with a probability sample of New York residents between the ages of 21 and 64. An interview was conducted in which data on life events were collected as part of a more extensive methodological study of measurement of psychological disorders in heterogeneous community populations. This larger study was conducted in New York City in 1973 and 1974 to develop methods for psychiatric epidemiological research in community populations. The Psychiatric Epidemiological Research Interview (PERI) Life Events List used here was developed as part of the earlier study. For further explanation of the original research see B.S. Dohrenwend, 1970-71; and B.P. Dohrenwend, 1974.

Respondents

The sample of respondents is a stratified subsample of a representative sample of the population. The larger sample had been interviewed approximately four years earlier. The stratified subsample includes males and females, married and single, ranging in age from early 20's to middle 60's. The subsample as drawn was 30% Black, 30% Puerto Rican, and 40% non-Puerto Rican white. Social class was controlled

within each of these three ethnic groupings by sampling similar proportions at each of four levels of formal education of the head of the household: 0 to 7 years, 8 to 11 years, 12 to 15 years, and 16 or more years.

Interviews investigating life events were administered to the respondents. These interviews were conducted by psychiatrists and experienced interviewers and took place in the respondents' homes.

Interviews were completed with 169 respondents, 52 per cent of the available sample. This large sample loss resulted primarily from the general increase in the proportion of urban respondents who refuse to be interviewed, and from the fact that the interview was administered in two sittings, one week apart, with questions concerning life events administered in the second sitting. Twenty-one per cent of the sample loss was due to refusal to participate in this part of the interview. Characteristics of respondents who completed the interview are shown in Table 1.

Although they were systematically drawn from a representative sample, clearly the 169 respondents do not constitute a sample from which generalizations could be made, after appropriate weighting of strata, to the population of New York City. Our main purpose in using this sample is, however, not to generalize to a particular geographically defined population but to guard against sociocultural parochialism. For this purpose we believe that this sample is useful.

Table 1

Characteristics of Respondents
Who Completed the Life Events Interview (N = 169)

GENDER

Female	61.5%	(104)
Male	38.5%	(65)

AGE

Young Adults (23-39 yrs.)	36.7%	(62)
Early Middle-age (40-54 yrs.)	39.6%	(67)
Late Middle-age (55-64 yrs.)	23.7%	(40)

ETHNICITY

Black	28.4%	(48)
Puerto Rican	29.6%	(50)
Other White	42.0%	(71)

HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD EDUCATION

Less than High School Graduate	46.2%	(78)
High School Graduate	33.7%	(57)
College Graduate	20.1%	(34)

Instrument

Life event questions. As mentioned above, the instrument employed here is the PERI Life Events List. This list consists of a series of 102 life events including events from previous life event lists as well as events drawn from the experience of the local population in two earlier methodological studies carried out in the Washington Heights section of New York City. This procedure was used in order to compile a representative pool of the potential life events of the particular subsample to be studied. The PERI life event list taps a number of areas of daily living including family, work, legal and community activities. The events involve various degrees of importance ranging, for example, from getting "married," "changing jobs for one that was no better and no worse than the last one," to "change in the frequency of family get togethers." Different kinds of experiences are sampled as, for example, "graduated from school or training program," and "pet died." For a detailed description of the sampling procedures, the rationale used in the construction of the PERI Life Event List, and the list itself, see B.S. Dohrenwend, 1970-71; and B.P. Dohrenwend, 1974.

Desirability. The PERI life events were rated in terms of their desirability. The desirability of an event refers to the consensually judged value of an event rather than

the value a particular individual places on it. Thus, for example, divorce is considered to be a negative event even though some individuals might experience it as positive.

All events were classified independently by four judges as desirable, undesirable, or ambiguous, in terms of the judges' assessments of the social consensus (Dohrenwend, Krasnoff, Askenasy, and Dohrenwend, 1978). Events were judged ambiguous either because there appeared not to be a social consensus, for example, about the desirability of the birth of a later child, or because the description of the event was inherently ambiguous, for example, "changed school or training program." Disagreements among the four judges as to classification of an event were resolved by discussion. Events classified as undesirable were scored 0, ambiguous events 1, and desirable events 2.

Magnitude. The life events were also scaled in terms of their magnitude. The magnitude of an event refers to the amount of change or disruption associated with its occurrence. Again, as with desirability, this refers to the normative or average amount of change involved with the event in general rather than to the specific amount of change involved with a particular occurrence of that event. The magnitude scale was obtained by assigning an arbitrary weight of 500 to the event of marriage. A sample of judges, representative of the community population in general and related to the respondents themselves, was then asked to use

marriage as the standard in assigning weights to the other events. See B.S. Dohrenwend, L. Krasnoff, A.R. Askenasy and B.P. Dohrenwend (1978) for a complete description of the scaling process and the weights assigned to the life events.

Procedure of the interview. Life events information was obtained by asking respondents what the last life event was that, for better or worse, disrupted their usual routine. The question, "What was the last major event that, for better or worse, interrupted your usual activities?" was followed by probes concerning the particulars of the event and its date. After these questions, respondents were told, "Now I'll ask you about a number of other experiences that people have. Some of these things happen to most people at one time or another, while some of these things happen to only a few people." Following this question, respondents were presented with ten lists of events in various areas of activity, such as family and home life, work, school and community affairs. For each list, respondents were asked, "During the last twelve months, did any of these things happen to you, or to a member of your family or to another person who is important to you?"

Anticipation and control probes. After each event was reported, probes were asked to determine the extent to which the respondent had anticipated the occurrence of the event, the extent to which she or he had had control over its occurrence, and the date of the event. It should be emphasized

that the probes concerning control were focused on the occurrence of the event rather than the equally important but separate issue of control of sequelae of the event. The questions concerning anticipation and control were designed to measure these variables on a five point scale, with one representing complete absence of anticipation or of control and five representing complete certainty or total control. Three on the control scale represented a balance or sharing whereby the individual was neither subordinated to outside circumstances or other persons nor dominant over circumstances or other persons (Dohrenwend, 1977).

In order to respond with some sensitivity to the meaning of the life events reported by respondents it was necessary in some instances to omit probes about anticipation or control of the occurrence of events, or both. This omission occurred either when the question seemed too threatening or the answer too obvious. In all, anticipation probes were excluded for nine of the 102 life events, and control probes were excluded for 21 of the events. See Dohrenwend (1975) for a list of these events.

First, there were a few events where inquiry about anticipation or control would have inhibited rapport. For example, it seemed inappropriate to ask a person who had just reported being fired how much control s/he had over the occurrence of that event. Probes were omitted for such events.

Second, there were events where questions about anticipation

or control were omitted because the answer seemed too obvious. These events constitute a small subset of the life events investigated. There are three kinds of events in terms of potential anticipation and control. A few events are inherently uncontrollable, or unpredictable, or both. In cases such as these, probes were omitted. For example, when respondents reported a death we inquired about their anticipation but not about their control over the occurrence of the event; if a person reported being robbed, we asked about neither. In contrast, a small number of events are either inherently controllable, or predictable, or both. For example, a person anticipates taking out a mortgage and has control over the occurrence of their own marriage. For events such as these, anticipation and control probes were also omitted. Further, in the case of events which were not probed and where the control level or the anticipation level was obvious, an assumed or common sense value was assigned. Assumed values of anticipation were assigned to 3 events; assumed values of control were assigned to 12 events. See Dohrenwend (1975) for a list of these events and the assumed values associated with them.

Most events fall, however, in the area between the extremes of total controllability or predictability, and total absence of them. For these events, the majority of the 102 life events, probes about anticipation and control were administered. See Dohrenwend (1975) for a detailed

description of the probe procedures and the rationale for exclusion of probes for certain events.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Correlations Between Dependent Variables

Predictions about how life event patterns will vary as a function of gender and age were generated independently for the various characteristics of life events on the basis of literature relevant to each particular dimension. Although the process used to develop these hypotheses suggests that the life event characteristics are independent, it is probable that some of these dimensions are related and are, therefore, confounded with each other. Such overlapping of characteristics may have implications for interpreting the meaning of any life event differences found among the gender age groups. To investigate the possibility of overlap and to reduce the likelihood of drawing inappropriate conclusions from the data, Pearson product moment correlations were done to provide zero order correlations between each pair of dependent variables. Table 2 presents a correlation matrix of the dependent factors investigated in this study: magnitude of self and other events, desirability of self and other events, respondents' ratings of anticipation and of control of their own and important other's events, frequency of self and other events and frequency of self events in various content categories. Correlations were

run separately for self events and other events paralleling the main analyses which are to be conducted separately for these qualitatively different events.

Magnitude and desirability. There is overlap between magnitude and desirability which is inversely correlated. Approximately one quarter of their variance can be jointly explained for both self and other events. This inverse relationship is reflected in the relationship of desirability and magnitude with other life event characteristics. Home events and health events are both negatively related to desirability and positively related to magnitude, while work events are positively related to desirability and negatively related to magnitude.

Perceived anticipation and perceived control. There is a positive relationship between the perception of anticipation and of control for both self and other events. This association is somewhat stronger for self events than for other events: A little more than one fifth of the variance of anticipation and control of self events is jointly explained as compared with slightly more than one quarter of the variance of other events. The relationship of anticipation and control to other events is consistently in the same direction. They are both positively related to event desirability and inversely related to event magnitude and to the occurrence of health events and home events. These relationships are stronger for self than for other events

Pearson Correlation Coefficients
Between Pairs of Dependent Variables for Self and Other Events

Variable	Variable						
	Anticipation	Control	Work %	Home %	Health %	Desirability	Magnitude
	<u>r</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>r</u>
Self Events							
Event: Number	.04 (145)	.13 (145)	.22** (153)	-.03 (153)	-.20 (153)	.04 (153)	-.19* (153)
Anticipation		.36**** (142)	.15 (145)	-.33**** (145)	-.21** (145)	.48**** (145)	-.32**** (145)
Control			.15 (145)	-.26**** (145)	-.46**** (145)	.61**** (145)	-.58**** (145)
Work %				-.14 (153)	-.20* (153)	.14 (153)	-.13 (153)
Home %					-.24**** (153)	-.19* (153)	.36**** (153)
Health %						-.48**** (153)	.68**** (153)
Desirability							-.51**** (153)
Other Events							
Event Number	-.05 (114)	-.11 (112)	-.01 (118)	.05 (118)	-.17 (118)	-.02 (118)	-.16 (118)
Anticipation		.29*** (108)	-.12 (114)	-.06 (114)	-.28*** (114)	.46**** (114)	-.28*** (114)
Control			-.14 (112)	-.20* (112)	-.15 (112)	.26*** (112)	-.38**** (112)
Work %				-.29*** (118)	-.24** (118)	.36**** (118)	-.17 (118)
Home %					-.26*** (118)	-.02 (118)	.24** (118)
Health %						-.51**** (118)	.67**** (118)
Desirability							-.52**** (118)
Magnitude							

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of pairs in the comparison.

**** p. < .001
 *** p. < .005
 ** p. < .01
 * p. < .05

Table 2

with one exception -- the anticipation of health events reported for important others.

Frequency of events. Event number, or overall frequency of events, is positively associated with occurrence of work events for self events but not for other events. Event number is negatively associated with health events and event magnitude for both self and other events. Health events are highly correlated with a number of dimensions: They are positively associated with event magnitude, and negatively correlated with anticipation, control, and desirability as previously mentioned, as well as both home and work events. These relationships hold for both self and other events. Finally, the occurrence of home events shows a similar pattern in relation to anticipation, control, desirability and magnitude though the degree of relationship is not as strong as with health events and tends to be stronger for self than for other events.

Conclusion. Although many of the correlations between the dependent measures are significantly greater than zero, most of them are not so large as to indicate that a substantial portion of the variance is shared. Therefore, separate hypotheses can be tested. There are two pairs of variables, however, where substantial correlations ($r > .6$) exist: Strong positive relationships exist for self events between proportion of health events and

event magnitude ($r^2=.46$) and between perception of control and event desirability ($r^2=.36$). Caution will be necessary in interpreting the meaning of any differences found among our gender age groups which may involve these relationships.

Self Events

Frequency

The first question asked is whether the number of stressful life events the respondents experienced in the previous year differed as a function of gender or of age. This analysis includes only those events in which the respondent was the central figure. To test mean differences in number of self events among the gender age groups, an analysis of variance was conducted using multiple regression. As Table 3 shows, no significant differences are found as a function of gender. The expectation that men would report more life events than women in which they were the central figure is not confirmed. Nor is there a difference among age groups when young, aged 23 to 39, early middle-age, aged 40 to 54, and later middle-age, aged 55 through 64 years of age, are compared, as Table 3 shows. Again, as with gender, the prediction that the frequency of self events would decrease significantly with age is not confirmed. Nor are there any gender by age interactions, as shown in Table 3.

Although our predictions were not confirmed, the obtained means are in the expected direction as Table 4 illustrates. The frequency of self events across gender age

Table 3

Source of Variance in Frequency of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.11	.89
Age (A)	2	14.46	.08 ⁺
G x A	2	.08	.99
Error _w	146	5.77	

⁺p. < .10

Table 4

Mean Frequency of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	4.10	40	3.37	40	2.93	14	3.62	94
Men	4.21	19	3.64	22	3.12	17	3.64	59
Total	4.14	59	3.47	62	3.03	31	3.64	153

groups does resemble the expected pattern. What we see here is that in each of the three age categories men report slightly more life events on the average than women. Further, the mean number of life events experienced does decrease as predicted, though not significantly, from young adulthood to early middle-age and again from early middle-age to later middle-age. This trend suggests that there may be age or gender related differences in numbers of life events which might be obtained using a larger sample.

Content of self events

The next analysis examines the frequency of self events as a function of the particular content of the event. Life events were classified into ten categories representing the general sphere in which the event occurs or the particular issue it concerns. The categories are: work events, home and family events, physical health events, reproductive events, financial events, residential and neighborhood events, crime and legal events, social-recreational, school and miscellaneous events. Table 5 gives a descriptive summary of the content of the life events of the gender age groups.

Of these ten content categories, three are of particular interest to this study: work events, home and family events, and events concerning physical health. To test mean differences in the occurrence of events in these categories, analyses of variance were done using multiple regression to compare the occurrence of events in each of the three areas

TABLE 5

Mean Number and Percentage of Self Events
in Content Categories
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young Adult (59)		Early middle-age (62)		Late middle-age (31)		Total (152)	
	\bar{X}	%	\bar{X}	%	\bar{X}	%	\bar{X}	%
Work events								
Women (94)	.75	12.4	.42	10.6	.29	11.8	.54	11.7
Men (59)	1.11	22.1	.64	14.1	.29	12.2	.68	18.9
Total (153)	.86	15.8	.50	11.8	.29	12.0	.59	14.5
Home and family events								
Women	.95	27.8	.65	20.6	.57	17.8	.77	23.3
Men	.81	16.1	.55	17.1	.35	6.8	.58	13.5
Total	.92	24.2	.61	19.4	.45	11.7	.70	19.5
Physical health events								
Women	.18	4.0	.27	8.3	.50	23.7	.27	8.8
Men	.05	1.3	.45	16.5	.53	29.5	.36	15.9
Total	.14	3.2	.34	11.2	.52	26.9	.30	11.5
Reproductive events								
Women	.02	.8	.05	.6	-	-	.03	.6
Men	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	.02	.6	.03	.4	-	-	.02	.4
Financial events								
Women	.38	8.6	.17	5.3	.14	5.0	.26	6.6
Men	.47	11.4	.41	7.4	.24	3.5	.37	7.4
Total	.41	9.5	.26	6.0	.19	4.2	.30	6.9
Residential and neighborhood events								
Women	.22	7.1	.17	5.7	.07	.9	.18	5.6
Men	.10	6.3	.18	3.9	.18	4.9	.15	4.9
Total	.19	6.8	.18	5.1	.13	3.1	.17	5.3
Crime and legal events								
Women	.17	3.1	.15	3.7	-	-	.14	2.9
Men	.37	4.2	.23	4.5	.12	1.8	.24	3.6
Total	.24	3.5	.18	4.0	.06	1.0	.18	3.2
Social - recreational events								
Women	1.15	29.3	1.0	32.4	1.2	36.2	1.12	31.6
Men	1.05	29.2	1.1	35.7	1.2	34.8	1.12	36.6
Total	1.12	29.2	1.1	33.6	1.2	35.5	1.12	33.5
School events								
Women	.23	5.6	.20	3.9	.07	3.6	.19	4.6
Men	.16	3.9	-	-	.06	.8	.07	1.5
Total	.20	5.0	.13	2.5	.06	2.1	.14	3.3
Miscellaneous events								
Women	.05	.7	.22	8.5	.07	.9	.13	4.1
Men	.05	5.2	.05	.8	.18	5.7	.08	3.6
Total	.05	2.2	.16	5.8	.13	3.6	.11	3.9

of interest as a function of gender and age. In order to control for variation in number of events in the specific content categories due to variation within the gender age groups in total or overall number of events, the frequency of events in each content category was converted into a proportion representing the ratio of events in that particular content category to total events. Because of the strong positive skewness in this distribution, arc sine transformations were applied to the proportions. Table 6 presents the transformed means which were used as the dependent measure in these analyses. As Table 7 shows, there are no significant differences associated with gender in work events, in home and family events, or in physical health events.

There is, however, a main effect for age as predicted in the proportion of physical health events reported such that health events increase significantly with age. A Scheffe' post hoc test was performed to identify which cell or cells account for this difference: Physical health events increase significantly from young adulthood to early middle-age ($p. < .05$) and again from early middle-age to late middle-age ($p. < .05$). There are no significant differences in work events or in home and family events across age groups. None were expected. Nor were there any gender by age interactions in any of the three content areas as Table 7 illustrates.

Although predictions regarding the distribution of home and family events and of work events were not supported,

Table 6
Arc Sine Transformed Proportions
of Self Events in Three Content Categories
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	\bar{X}	n	\bar{X}	n	\bar{X}	n	\bar{X}	n
Work events								
Women	1.08	40	1.06	40	1.25	14	1.10	94
Men	1.22	19	1.22	22	1.24	17	1.22	59
Total	1.13	59	1.12	62	1.24	31	1.15	153
Home and family events								
Women	1.24	40	1.24	40	1.31	74	1.25	94
Men	1.11	19	1.25	22	1.17	17	1.18	59
Total	1.20	59	1.25	62	1.23	31	1.22	153
Physical health events								
Women	.91	40	1.01	40	1.42	14	1.03	94
Men	.87	19	1.25	22	1.49	17	1.20	59
Total	.90	59	1.10	62	1.46	31	1.10	153

Table 7

Source of Variance in Arc Sine Transformed Proportions
of Self Events in Three Content Categories
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Work events			
Gender (G)	1	.3030	3.04 ⁺
Age (A)	2	.1159	.58
G x A	2	.0823	.41
Error _w	146	.1995	
Home and family events			
Gender (G)	1	.0893	.59
Age (A)	2	.0473	.16
G x A	2	.0860	.29
Error _w	146	.3009	
Physical health events			
Gender (G)	1	.4748	3.17
Age (A)	2	2.8388	9.47*
G x A	2	.2613	.87
Error _w	146	.2997	

⁺p. < .10

*p. < .0001

there is a trend in the expected direction associated with gender for events focused on work such that men do report more work events than women (see Tables 5 and 7). Also, women do have a greater number and a higher percentage of home and family events than men do (see Table 5). Perhaps a larger sample would capture these differences statistically.

Desirability of Self Events

The next issue considered, then, is whether there are differences in desirability as a function of gender or age. As mentioned earlier, desirability scores are based on a three point scaling system in which clearly undesirable events are rated as 0, mixed or ambiguous events are scored 1, and desirable events are given a score of 2. The index of desirability used here is the average or mean of the desirability scores for each respondent of those events in which s/he is the central figure. An analysis of variance was conducted using multiple regression to compare the mean desirability scores of self events of the gender age groups.

As Table 8 illustrates, although it was expected that men's life events would generally be more desirable than women's, no overall gender difference was found. The mean desirability for men's events is 1.16 while the mean desirability score for women is 1.18 as shown in Table 9. The average desirability of the self events of both women and men is just to the positive side of the mid-point on the

Table 8
 Source of Variance in Person Mean Desirability Scores
 of Self Events
 Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.0098	.02
Age (A)	2	.7180	1.72
G x A	2	.2320	.56
Error _w	146	.4172	

TABLE 9
 Person Mean Desirability Scores of Self Events
 Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	1.19	40	1.22	40	1.05	14	1.18	94
Men	1.36	19	1.17	22	.94	17	1.16	59
Total	1.24	59	1.20	62	.99	31	1.17	153

three-point scale. The desirability of the life events of women and men, then, do not differ significantly from one another and are fairly evenly mixed between desirable and undesirable events though tending slightly in a positive direction.

Similarly, there was no main effect for age when young, early middle-aged and later middle-aged groups are compared, although here, too, a main effect was expected. See Table 8 for these results. The prediction was that the desirability of life events would be greater in early middle-age than in young adulthood and greater in both of these groups than in the oldest group. What was found, however, is that the young and early middle-aged groups were quite close in desirability of events, 1.24 and 1.20 respectively, and that their average desirability scores were noticeably greater than those of the later middle-age group who have a mean desirability score of 0.99 (see Table 9). Although the desirability score of the late middle-age group is not significantly lower than the two younger groups, it is the only one that falls to the negative side of the midpoint of the scale. This indicates an average score which is at best mixed in terms of desirability and reflects more negative events than positive.

Looking at gender by age interactions, again no significant differences were found in any of the six cells although some were expected (see Table 8). First, the life

events of late middle-aged men were expected to be less desirable than those of late middle-aged women. Though the mean score of the late middle-aged men was lower than that of the late middle-aged women, 0.94 versus 1.05, the difference does not reach significance. The late middle-age men are, however, the only group of the six gender age aggregates whose mean desirability score, 0.94, falls below the midpoint of the scale, and it is this cell which accounts for the low score of the oldest age group.

Second, a tentative prediction was made that the desirability of the life events of late middle-age women might not differ from the desirability of the life events of early middle-aged women. Although these two groups of middle-age women did not differ significantly from each other, there was a drop in desirability from early to late middle-age for women, 1.22 versus 1.05, and for men, 1.17 versus 0.94, which may in fact represent a trend reflecting the main effect for age which was expected (see Table 9).

Frequency and Desirability Combined

The age trends outlined above for both overall frequency of self events and desirability of self events suggested that the expected phenomenon of decline with age might be occurring although we were not capturing it. Therefore, a new measure was created which combines the effect of both the frequency and the desirability of life events to increase or

sum the power of the two original indicators. In this way changes occurring simultaneously in number and desirability of events are collapsed into one number--the sum of the desirability ratings of each respondent's self events. Since this is a new measure generated as a result of the earlier trends discussed above, no predictions had been formulated. However, the expectation is that there will be a main effect for age such that the older age group or groups will have a smaller combined score than the younger age group or groups.

To test mean differences in the sum of the desirability scores by gender and age, an analysis of variance using multiple regression was conducted. As Table 10 shows, there is a main effect for age as expected such that the older groups had increasingly lower scores indicating a simultaneous decline in number and in desirability of life events in which they were the central figure. Table 11 presents the means of the sum of the desirability scores for the gender age groups.

Although the earlier predictions that men would have a greater number of life events in which they are the central figure and that these events would be more desirable than those of women suggest that a main effect for gender should be expected here, our earlier results concerning the frequency and desirability of the life events of women as compared

Table 10
Source of Variance of Sum of Desirability Scores
of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.71	.12
Age (A)	2	44.86	3.62*
G x A	2	2.88	.23
Error _w	146	12.38	

*p. < .05

Table 11
Mean of Sum of Desirability Scores
of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	4.92	40	3.92	40	3.36	14	4.27	94
Men	5.68	19	4.50	22	3.06	17	4.42	59
Total	5.17	59	4.13	62	3.19	31	4.33	153

with men suggest that this is not so. And as Table 10 shows, there is no main effect for gender in this summary measure either. Nor is there an interaction effect when age and gender are combined.

Note, however, that there does appear to be a trend toward convergence in late middle-age (see Table 11). Late middle-age men have a lower sum of desirability scores than late middle-age women while the two younger groups of men have noticeably higher sum desirability scores than do the younger groups of women. While the sum desirability scores of both men and women are declining with age, the drop in men's scores is larger both from the young group to the early middle-aged and from the early middle-age to the late middle-age group than is the drop for women. In the oldest group there is at least a convergence and possibly a reversal for men and women. This phenomenon might be confirmed statistically using a larger sample.

Magnitude or Amount of Change

The next analysis concerns whether there are differences in the magnitude or amount of change of life events as a function of gender or age. As mentioned earlier, this measure was generated by assigning an arbitrary weight of 500 to the life event of marriage and having a parallel community sample subsequently rate the rest of the life events in relation to marriage. The index of magnitude used in this analysis is the average or mean of the change scores for each

respondent of those events in which s/he is the central figure.

An analysis of variance was performed using multiple regression to compare the mean magnitude of the gender age groups. As Table 12 indicates, there was no main effect for gender. The prediction that men's life events would be of greater magnitude than women's was not confirmed. On the contrary, as Table 13 illustrates, the amount of change or disruption is quite similar across gender groups with women's events involving slightly more change, on the average, than men's events.

However, there was main effect for age ($F = 3.75$, $df = 2,140$, $p. < .05$) as predicted. Table 12 presents these results. The young group had an average change score of 362 as compared with 364 for the early middle-aged and 408 for the late middle-aged group (see Table 13). As suggested by these scores, post hoc analysis of the age means using the Scheffe' test revealed a significant difference between the late middle-aged mean change score and the scores of the younger two groups who do not differ significantly from each other.

While we predicted that there would be a main effect for age in the general direction obtained, it was expected that both the early middle-aged and the late middle-aged groups would experience events of significantly greater magnitude than the youngest group. What we find, however, is that only the events of the late middle-aged group are

Table 12

Source of Variance in Person Mean Magnitude
of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.91.46	.03
Age (A)	2	25,832.89	3.75*
G x A	2	14,864.50	2.16
Error _w	146	6,886.11	

*p. < .05

Table 13

Person Mean Magnitude of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	376	40	356	40	402	14	371	94
Men	333	19	377	22	413	17	375	59
Total	362	59	364	62	408	31	373	153

significantly larger than the youngest group and that the young and the early middle-aged are very similar in terms of event magnitude. It appears, therefore, that the events of the late middle-age group entail considerably more disruption or change than the two younger groups.

Finally, as Table 12 indicates, there are no gender by age interaction effects. None were predicted.

Perceived Anticipation

The next aspect of life events investigated concerns whether there are differences in the extent to which respondents are able to anticipate life events in which they are the central figure as a function of gender and age. As mentioned earlier, anticipation probes were not administered for unpredictable events such as fire and accidents, or for events where inquiry about anticipation would disrupt rapport. See Dohrenwend (1975) for the events for which no probes were administered. In this analysis, only those events which could be anticipated or to which an assumed or common sense score could be assigned are included. See Dohrenwend (1975) for events to which assumed anticipation values were assigned and their values.

The anticipation measure is the respondent's rating on a five-point scale of the extent to which s/he had anticipated the onset of the event before it occurred except in the case of three events where assumed or common sense scores were substituted. The low end of the scale represents little

or no anticipation and the high end represents much or total anticipation. The mean of each respondent's anticipation scores, or the person mean anticipation score, is used as their anticipation score.

An analysis was done comparing the person mean anticipation scores of respondents who reported one or more life events in which they were the central figure that could be anticipated. Table 14 shows the results of the analysis of variance which indicates that there is no difference in the mean levels of anticipation men and women experience in relation to their respective life events. The prediction that men would experience a greater sense of anticipation over their life events than women was not confirmed. As Table 15 illustrates, women and men report similar levels of anticipation.

Although it was also expected that anticipation would be positively correlated with age as a consequence of experience, no difference was obtained as Table 14 shows. Anticipation of events was quite similar across ages as presented in Table 15 with the late middle-age group reporting the highest mean anticipation score, 3.1, followed closely by the young group with an average of 3.0, and, finally, the early middle-age group who had an average anticipation score of 2.8.

No gender age interaction effects were expected. And, as Table 14 illustrates, none were obtained. The means of

Table 14
 Source of Variance in Person Mean Anticipation Ratings
 of Self Events
 Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	1.88	1.00
Age (A)	2	.68	.36
G x A	2	1.06	.57
Error _w	138	1.87	

Table 15
 Person Mean Anticipation Ratings
 of the Occurrence of Self Events
 Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	2.83	38	2.80	38	2.74	12	2.80	88
Men	3.17	19	2.74	22	3.12	17	3.07	57
Total	4.14	59	2.78	60	3.06	27	2.89	145

the six gender age cells do not differ much from one another (see Table 15).

Perceived Control

A similar analysis was carried out to compare the amount of control women and men experience over the occurrence of their stressful life events. For this analysis, only those events that could reasonably be controlled or that had a common sense control rating were included. Of the 102 life events, nine were excluded from this analysis. See Dowrenwend (1975) for the events for which no control probes were administered. Probes regarding control were not given for uncontrollable events like deaths and natural disasters, or for events where asking about control might interfere with rapport. The control measure is based on the respondents' ratings on a five-point scale of the extent to which they felt they had controlled the occurrence of each life event reported except in the case of the 12 events where an assumed value was used. As in the anticipation ratings, one refers to no control and five represents absolute control. The mean of each respondent's control ratings, or the person mean control score, is used as the measure of control in this analysis.

An analysis of variance was performed using multiple regression to compare the mean control ratings of self events broken down by gender and age. Only those persons who reported one or more life events which could be controlled or to which

an assumed value was assigned are included in this analysis. Table 16 shows the results of this analysis.

As with the anticipation analysis reported above, it was expected that men would report greater control over their life events at all ages than women. However, as with anticipation, we did not find a significant main effect for gender. Rather, as Table 17 indicates, the mean control score of women is quite similar to that of men, 2.7 versus 2.8 respectively.

We did find a significant main effect for age ($F = 5.89$, $df = 1, 138$ $p. < .005$) as Table 17 illustrates. While a main effect for age was expected, the findings only partially confirmed the prediction. It was predicted that early middle-age people would report significantly more control over their life events than younger people and that both of these groups would report higher control than the late middle-age group. Post hoc analysis of the age means using the Scheffe' test revealed, however, that the young group is reporting significantly more control over their life events than the other two age groups who do not differ significantly from each other. At the same time, though, the late middle-age group does have the lowest mean score as predicted but it does not differ significantly from the early middle-age group. The late middle-age group is also the smallest in number suggesting that further analysis with a larger sample might lead to differences between the early and the late

Table 16

Source of Variance in Person Mean Control Ratings
of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.86	.75
Age (A)	2	6.76	5.89*
G x A	2	7.63	6.65*
Error _w	138	1.15	

*p. < .005.

Table 17

Person Mean Control Ratings
of the Occurrence of Self Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>X̄</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	2.71	36	2.75	38	2.48	13	2.70	87
Men	3.84	19	2.46	21	2.24	17	2.84	58
Total	3.10	55	2.65	59	2.34	30	2.76	145

middle-age groups as predicted. And there is, as described above, a decline in the perception of control over life events with age which is occurring earlier than expected.

In addition to the main effect for age, there is also a significant gender by age interaction ($F = 6.5$, $df = 2$, 138 , $p. < .005$) as Table 16 shows. Post hoc analysis of the gender by age means (see Table 17) using the Scheffe' test revealed one significant difference among the six cells. The mean life event control level reported by young men, 3.8, is significantly higher than the mean control level of the five other groups. Note, in addition, among these five groups the two older male groups have lower levels of control than any of the groups of women. The level of control experienced by women over their life events does not differ significantly across age categories.

This interaction effect supports the prediction that women's sense of control would remain the same across age groups despite the prediction of a main effect for age described above. However, the particular pattern of this interaction differed from the one expected. While we expected early middle-age to be associated with a higher sense of control than the other age periods and late middle-age to be lower than both of the other age groups, we find that the young group is the only one reporting significantly higher control. Further, looking at the group means, it is really only the men accounting for the obtained age difference since, in fact, the young women have a slightly lower mean

score than do the early middle-age women. Also, while the early middle-age women report greater control than late middle-age women on the average, the two groups are not significantly different from each other.

These results can be interpreted in absolute as well as relative terms. Recall that the mid-point on the control scale represents the perception of balance or sharing of control over the occurrence of life events. The mean scores shown in Table 17 indicate, therefore, that only young men perceive themselves, on the average, as dominant over circumstances and other persons in their lives. The average scores of older men and of women of all ages are below the mid-point in the range, indicating that these groups perceive that circumstances or other persons hold the balance of control over their life events.

Other Events

Frequency

The next analysis conducted was an investigation of whether the number of life events reported in the previous year in which a person other than the respondent is the central figure differed as a function of gender and age. An analysis of variance using multiple regression was performed with gender and age as the independent variables and frequency of other events as the dependent measure. As Table 18 shows, there is a significant main effect for gender

Table 18

Source of Variance in Frequency of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	80.02	9.74*
Age (A)	2	5.22	.64
G x A	2	3.34	.41
Error _w	110	8.22	

*p. < .005

Table 19

Mean Frequency of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	2.4	34	2.8	32	2.0	10	2.6	76
Men	1.5	9	1.6	17	1.8	14	1.7	42
Total	2.3	43	2.4	49	2.1	24	2.3	118

($F = 9.74$, $df = 1$, 110 , $p. < .005$). Women reported significantly more events in which someone other than the respondent is the central figure than men, with an average of 2.6 events for women and 1.7 events for men (see Table 19). This significant difference in the number of other events women report as compared with men confirms the prediction stated earlier which stemmed from the general assumption that women are more involved with both family and the interpersonal realm than are men.

There are no differences in the number of other events reported across age groups. Similarly, there was no gender by age interaction effect (see Table 19).

It was predicted that women would report fewer events in which someone else was the central figure as age increased and that men, in contrast, would report the same number, or possibly more, other events in early middle-age than in young adulthood. Further, it is expected that late middle-age men would report more other events than either of the younger groups. Though patterns shifting in opposite directions with age for women and men were predicted, both men and women had fairly consistent numbers of life events which happened to important others across age groups. What we find, as Table 19 illustrates, is that in each gender age group women report more other events than men. At the same time, however, late middle-age women and men report the most similar number of events. This is due to late middle-age women reporting slightly fewer other events than younger

women and late middle-age men reporting slightly more other events than younger men.

The difference as a function of gender in the number of life events reported by respondents which happened to important others suggested investigation of the qualitative aspects of these events. Although predictions were generated only for secondary characteristics of life events in which the respondent is the central figure, investigation of the desirability, magnitude, anticipation and control associated with events which happened to others important to the respondent may help to understand the difference in absolute number of these events. Further, comparison of the qualitative patterns of life events in which the respondent is the central figure with those in which someone else is central figure may provide additional understanding of the relationship between gender and age on the one hand and the occurrence and subjective experience of stressful life events on the other.

Desirability

The first question considered is whether there are differences in the desirability of life events in which someone other than the respondent is the central figure as a function of gender and age. Desirability scores for this analysis are based on the same three point scaling system used in the analysis of the desirability of self events described earlier. Similarly, the index of desirability used

here is the average or mean of the desirability scores for each respondent of those events in which someone other than the respondent is central figure whether spouse, child, other relative or friend.

An analysis of variance was conducted using multiple regression to compare the mean desirability scores of the other events reported by the gender age groups. As Table 20 illustrates, there is no main effect for gender. Similarly, when young, early middle-age and later middle-age respondents are compared, there is no difference among the age groups. Nor is there any difference as a function of gender and age, in combination (see Table 20).

Note, however, that there is a trend for the interaction of gender and age ($p. < .10$) as Table 20 indicates. The means for the gender age groups which are presented in Table 21 suggest that young men are reporting less desirable events for others important to them than are the other five gender age groups. Also, women and men show opposite patterns with age: The desirability of the other events men report decrease with age while the desirability of the other events women report decreases across age groups.

Magnitude or Amount of Change

The next issue considered is whether there is a difference in the magnitude or amount of change of other events as a function of gender and age. This investigation may help answer a question which is raised by the difference in number

Table 20

Source of Variance in Person Mean Desirability Scores
of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.00	.00
Age (A)	2	.13	.31
G x A	2	1.02	2.47
Error _w	110	.43	

Table 21

Person Mean Desirability Scores
of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	1.24	34	1.21	32	1.07	10	1.21	76
Men	.79	9	1.31	17	1.35	14	1.18	42
Total	1.15	43	1.25	49	1.23	24	1.20	118

of other events reported by women as compared with men. Are women reporting more events including smaller or less significant events than men report for others important to them; or, are women reporting events of the same size that men report but for more people?

An analysis of variance was conducted using multiple regression to compare the mean magnitude of other events reported by the gender age groups. There is a strong trend almost reaching significance ($p. < .054$) for gender as Table 22 shows. The other events reported by women had lower average magnitude than did the other events reported by men as Table 23 shows. This difference suggests that the greater number of events women are reporting is a function of their reporting more life events including events of lesser magnitude than men report; it does not suggest that women are reporting events for a greater number of people than men.

As Table 22 shows, there is no difference in average magnitude of other events as a function of age. None was expected. Nor was there an interaction effect when gender and age were combined (see Table 22). On the contrary, the gender age cells reflect the same pattern as expected from the overall gender effect (see Table 23). In each cell across age, women have a lower mean magnitude score than do men. This would also be expected from the similar pattern which occurred with number of other events in which women of each age group reported more other events than men. The

Table 22

Source of Variance in Person Mean Magnitude
of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	13,957.53	3.78 ⁺
Age (A)	2	9,752.07	1.32
G x A	2	16,773.18	2.27
Error _w	110	7,381.10	

⁺p < .10

Table 23

Person Mean Magnitude
of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	389	34	385	32	396	10	388	76
Men	476	9	384	17	430	14	420	42
Total	407	43	384	49	416	24	400	118

consistency of this pattern in all three age groups suggests that the primary explanation for the gender effect is not that younger women are at home with their children and are therefore reporting more family and children events during this time.

Perceived Anticipation

The next question asked is whether there are differences in respondents' ratings of the anticipation of life events which happen to others who are important to them as a function of gender or age. It is expected that women might have a higher level of anticipation of the life events of others than men due to a greater involvement in the lives of these important others or greater sensitivity to interpersonal concerns. Further, this expectation is enhanced by the finding reported earlier that women do report significantly more life events which happen to important others.

To test mean differences in levels of anticipation of the occurrence of other events as a function of gender and age, an analysis of variance was carried out using multiple regression. As Table 24 shows, there is no difference as a function of gender. Women and men report similar levels of anticipation (see Table 25).

No predictions were made for age or for the interaction of gender and age. No main effect for age was found as Table 24 indicates. There are small mean differences among

Table 24

Source of Variance in Person Mean Ratings of Anticipation
of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.49	.30
Age (A)	2	2.10	1.30
G x A	2	1.91	1.18
Error _w	106	1.62	

Table 25

Person Mean Anticipation Ratings
of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	2.94	33	2.98	32	2.85	10	2.95	75
Men	2.46	7	3.33	16	2.37	14	2.74	39
Total	3.72	40	3.10	48	2.57	24	2.87	114

the age groups as shown in Table 25 with the early middle-age group reporting the highest mean anticipation over other events, followed by the young group and the later middle-age group with the lowest mean anticipation level.

Finally, there was no interaction effect for gender and age as Table 24 illustrates. All six gender age cells are quite similar (see Table 25). Differences among the six groups are too small to suggest any pattern.

Perceived Control

The next analysis concerns whether there are differences in perceived control of life events in which someone other than the respondent is central figure as a function of gender and age. As with anticipation of other events and for the same reasons, it is expected that women will report greater control over the life events of important others than will men.

An analysis of variance was performed using multiple regression to compare mean levels of perceived control over the occurrence of the life events of others as a function of gender and age. As Table 26 shows, there is no main effect for gender although one was predicted.

Similarly, there were no differences in perception of control over the occurrence of life events in which someone other than the respondent was central figure for age or for the interaction of gender and age (see Table 26). This lack of differences is consistent with what was expected since

Table 26

Source of Variance in Person Mean Control Ratings
of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>
Gender (G)	1	.21	.30
Age (A)	2	1.05	1.56
G x A	2	.65	.97
Error _w	105	.67	

Table 27

Person Mean Control Ratings
of the Occurrence of Other Events
Broken Down by Gender and Age

Gender	Age							
	Young adult		Early middle-age		Late middle-age		Total	
	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>\bar{X}</u>	<u>n</u>
Women	1.52	33	1.67	31	1.46	10	1.58	74
Men	1.06	8	1.78	16	1.38	13	1.47	38
Total	1.43	41	1.70	47	1.42	23	1.54	112

none were predicted. However, there is a noticeable difference in perceived control of other events in the young group, though it does not reach significance. Young women do report greater control on the average than young men (see Table 27).

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Much research investigating gender and age focuses primarily, if not exclusively, on global sex roles or discrete age periods. The assumption of a dichotomous reality associated with gender and of harmonious, discretely occurring life stages across adulthood which underlies such research has not been supported by our results. At the same time, stressful life event research has not systematically looked at the relationship between life events and particular status groups like the gender age aggregates. The gender age patterns found here point to complex connections between these areas.

Gender

Self event patterns. While this investigation was conducted to describe the ways in which life event patterns differ along gender lines, what has been highlighted is that the life events of women and men as discrete groups do not differ in any clear or consistent manner. Men and women reported very similar numbers of life events and these events were of comparable desirability and magnitude. Paralleling this, there was no difference in the amount of anticipation or control the men and women themselves perceived having over the occurrence of their life events. When the various dimensions of

the self events of women and men in our sample were analyzed, then, no significant differences were found either in the consensually judged aspects of magnitude and desirability representing the social value of the events, or in the respondents' own ratings of anticipation and control representing their subjective experience of the events.

The only dimension along which the women and men showed any noticeable difference is in the content of the events. There was a trend for work events. As expected, men reported more work events than women. Although women did report somewhat more home events than men, this difference did not reach significance.

Other event patterns. While their own life events are very similar, there are differences between the life events men and women report for important others. The only prediction made regarding other events was that women would report more life events than men in which someone else was the central figure. This was confirmed. In fact, women reported almost twice as many other events as men on the average. Further, the difference in the average magnitude of these events almost reached significance with the magnitude of the events men reported being larger on the average than the events women reported. This difference suggests that the greater number of other events women are reporting is due to their including less important or relatively minor events. Perhaps women as a group are more attuned to the minor changes

in the lives of others close to them. This interpretation is congruent with the traditional feminine stereotype and roles described earlier. There could be other reasons, however. Women may think that these smaller events are important enough to mention in the interview while men, though they do know what is happening in the lives of those close to them, do not include less substantial events. If the latter explanation is correct, this could reflect different attitudes toward the interview itself or simply that men think some events are too trivial to include while women do not.

The similarity of the number and the magnitude of self events across gender appears to contradict the latter interpretation of gender differences in other events. However, there is more room for the exercise of personal style and subjective interpretation in responding to life event probes in relation to other events than to self events. For example, most people if directly asked whether they "went on vacation", "changed jobs", or "had trouble with in-laws", in the past year, will know whether they did these things and will respond accordingly.⁵ However, when asked about the occurrence

⁵This example also illustrates, however, that there is some room for subjective interpretation in reference to self events, though less so than with other events. In addition, some life events are more open to interpretation than others. For example, "changing jobs" is specific in time occurrence and is a public or formal happening relative to "having trouble with in-laws" which may involve a series of minor and informal happenings and is therefore harder to consensually define.

of similar events that happened to important others, the potential response field may be considerably broadened, reduced, or both. For example, the definition of "important other", or "someone important to you", may vary from person to person. Or, the same definition may result in a different number of persons for different individuals. For example, the number of others will vary depending on size of immediate family or household, marital status, or size of friendship network. In either case, the result is a potentially broad response field in contrast to responding about oneself which is more narrowly and more clearly defined. At the same time, the information about the events that happened to the important other or others is probably not as extensive as knowledge about things that happened directly to oneself. In this sense, the response field is reduced.

Although there were gender differences in the number and the magnitude of other events, some characteristics were similar: perceived anticipation, perceived control, and desirability. On both of the self-rated aspects of other events as well as on the desirability scale which reflects social value, the patterns of women's and men's other events do not differ.

In sum, then, there is support for the hypothesis that women would report more other events than men derived from the gender role literature which has as a pervasive theme the high involvement of women in the lives of others. Further, the difference in magnitude suggests this is related to

women reporting relatively minor events of others rather than their being personally involved with more people. Finally, similarity exists in terms of men's and women's perceptions of involvement in the events of others as evidenced in the anticipation and the control ratings.

Age

Self event pattern. In contrast with the gender self events, age differences in self events occur on both the social dimensions of magnitude and desirability and respondents' perceptions of control. The pattern of differences distinguishes the three age groups from one another. First, the life event characteristics of the young and the late middle-aged present a sharp contrast: the life event characteristics of the young group are more desirable and less disruptive than those of the late middle-aged group. Second, while it was expected that the life events of the early middle-aged would have the most positive characteristics of the three groups, they appear, instead, to fall somewhere between the more positive experience of the young group and the negative decline associated with late middle-age.

The differences among our age groups in event desirability and in perceived control are in the same direction as the strong positive correlation between desirability and control. Thus, these age differences appear to be reflecting this overall positive association and provide support

for a situational as against personal explanation of group differences in control. Also recall that another strong positive relationship exists between proportion of health events and event magnitude, and that there was a simultaneous increase in health events and event magnitude across age groups. The increase in event magnitude in late middle-age is quite possibly a consequence of this increase in health problems.

The patterns of the late middle-age and of the young groups are as expected, while the pattern of the early middle-age group is not. It was expected that the early middle-aged and the late middle-aged would report events of greater magnitude or change than the young group. Recall that the prediction of greater magnitude for the early middle-aged was based on the position of power and responsibility occupied by them, while the prediction of greater magnitude for the late middle-aged stemmed from the expectation of greater social losses and health decline late in life. The age differences in these life event indicators as well as the strong positive correlation obtained between proportion of health events and event magnitude supports the theme of loss and physical decline late in life.

The prediction was made that the events of early middle-age would involve more change than those of young adulthood due to greater responsibility and power in middle-age. Implicit in this prediction is an equation between personal disruption or change and social status. In fact, however, there is

a difference between personal change and public power. Early middle-age may be a time of greater responsibility than other times, but the parallel drawn earlier between subjective magnitude or amount of change in self events and objective social position is probably not valid.

There is also an age difference in the perception of control over the occurrence of life events such that young people experience greater control over events than do the two older groups. Recall, however, that this age difference is actually due solely to the high control level of young men. Here, as with event magnitude, the late middle-aged and the young -- or more appropriately young men -- conform to the predicted pattern while the early middle-aged do not. It was expected that this middle-aged group, aged 39 to 54, would experience the greatest control due to their relatively stable and strong position in the work and the family spheres. The direction of the differences suggests that early middle-age shares some of the negative characteristics of late middle-age and old age rather than experiencing the apex of stability, power and control as some recent life span literature suggests.

There were also two trends which both support and modify this picture. The first is a trend reflecting a linear decrease in frequency of events with age as expected. Number of events decrease from young adulthood to early middle-age and again from early middle-age to late middle-age. The

second trend suggests that the life events associated with late middle-age are less desirable than the events of early middle-age and of young adulthood which do not differ from each other. Further, the combined measure of the sum of the desirability scores does significantly differentiate the three age groups representing a simultaneous decline in number and in desirability of events as age increases. These results support the earlier findings that young adulthood is a positive time and that late middle-age is a relatively negative one. They also suggest that young adulthood is characterized by activity and change while late middle-age is not. The modification in the picture occurs in relation to early middle-age. In contrast with the earlier findings, these results suggest that early middle-age is not as negative a time as late middle-age and, in the case of desirability, that it is as positive as the younger age period.

In sum, the life event patterns of the self events of the three age groups indicate that there is a gradual decline with age in the occurrence and in the quality of life events. In general, the oldest group appears to be experiencing the most negative and disruptive events and the young group the most positive and least stressful events. The life events of the early middle-aged present a more complicated and mixed picture sometimes sharing positive characteristics with the young, more often sharing negative characteristics with the old, and sometimes situated between the two.

Other event patterns. While there are clear differences in the self event patterns of the age groups, there are no differences at all when we look at life events reported for important others. Average scores of the age groups are very close for all of the characteristics investigated. The average numbers of other events for the three groups were well within half an event of each other; and the desirability and the magnitude of the events are almost alike, too. The respondents' self-ratings of their anticipation of and control over events reported as happening to important others also reflect this similarity.

Contrast Between Gender and Age Patterns

The clear differences in the patterns of self events across age groups in combination with the consistent similarity of the life event characteristics of others present a sharp contrast with the patterns associated with gender described earlier. Recall that an opposite self/other configuration was obtained although not as strikingly: that is, the life events reported in which they were the central figure differed very little for women and men while the patterns of events they reported for others were noticeably different.

These opposing patterns lend support to the position taken at the start that age and gender are status variables rather than personal attributes or natural phenomena. There is almost complete overlap across subgroups for one type of

event -- self events for gender and other events for age -- as well as distinctive differences for another sort of event -- other events for gender and self events for age. The similarities found here suggest that men as compared with women and the age groups compared with each other do not experience the world differently in any basic or global way. The groups are reporting similar events and similar experiencing of them in terms of anticipation and control for one type of event. Perhaps, then, the different kinds of events -- self versus other -- are contributing to distinctive gender and age patterns. This raises the question as to what systematic gender and age related influences are accounting for these opposite patterns. Perhaps gender stratification is being reflected in other events but not self events, while age stratification is being evidenced in self events but not other events.

The institutional arrangements and social roles associated with gender and age provide one explanation for this. Women's roles and the institutions surrounding them encourage or even demand a focus on other people and require nurturance, personal service and emotional involvement. The most striking characteristic of woman which distinguishes her from man, and the general norms based on the male role, is the assumption and valuing of involvement and investment in the lives of others. The roles of wife and mother and the expectations and interpersonal work which compose them are basic aspects of her life which are not shared by men. Though

rooted in the private sphere, these role and value differences are carried over into the public domain in the parallel gender stratification of work roles. Woman's particular oppression is based on the assumption of her availability to others and her "nature" of care and life-giver. It is not surprising, then, that differences between the life events of women and men surface not in relation to themselves and their own life events but in relation to the events of important others.

Age stratification is associated with different roles and institutions. Status division by age is located primarily in the public rather than the private sphere with economic institutions being perhaps the most important area of stratification. Economic differences and discrimination in terms of hiring, promotion and opportunity for continued employment are central to age stratification. Opportunity for advancement in many job areas peaks before age forty and if one has not made it by then, it is too late.

The effects of these economic and public obstacles are felt in social institutions and the private sphere as well. Opportunities for travel, engagement in cultural and community affairs, or pursuit of educational activities are reduced. The possibility of varied social activities, geographic and local mobility as well as opportunity for productive or remunerative work are gradually reduced or even eliminated with age. Availability of social partners is also reduced in mid-life, especially for women.

These things happen directly to the individual rather than in relation to important others. Interpersonal relationships are not the particular focus of the stratification. Family and friends are often still individually available to the person. In fact, supportive families and friendship networks, or even one close friend, may offset the impact of the losses experienced in the public domain. It is understandable, therefore, that stratification along age lines would be evidenced in respondents' own life events rather than in relation to the events of important others.

Interactions

Self event patterns. While the gender age literature suggested a number of possible differences among our gender age groups, only one was obtained -- a difference in the perception of control over the occurrence of self events. However, this is probably the single most interesting finding in the study: Young men report significantly greater control over their life events than do the other five gender age groups who do not differ from each other.

The finding that control over the occurrence of life events varies with gender and age is based on responses that are open to two interpretations. People's reports of their levels of control over their life events may primarily express feelings about their life experiences reflecting their underlying self concept or, alternatively, may primarily be realistic responses reflecting the objective

qualities of these experiences. Several considerations favor the latter interpretation. First, a previous analysis specifically designed to deal with this issue indicated, on balance, more evidence of realistic appraisal than of projection of personal feelings in responses concerning control of occurrence of events (Dohrenwend & Martin, 1979). Second, the expressive interpretation of these responses could imply that they were determined by a personality characteristic deeply embedded in the personality. Such a deeply embedded personality characteristic would presumably arise from early socialization and be likely to persist in adulthood, especially if defended from the impact of reality. This interpretation would fit gender differences observed consistently through adulthood. It is, however, not a parsimonious interpretation of the reports of control of occurrence of life events, since we found them to differ between younger and older men. A personality interpretation would therefore have to explain this change from young to old men. Thus, evidence previously developed (Dohrenwend & Martin, 1979) together with parsimonious interpretation of the results here argue that reported level of control over the occurrence of life events are better interpreted as primarily indicating actual experience than as primarily revealing a characteristic of the respondents' self concepts.

Of interest, then, is what these results tell us about the concrete experiences of gender age groups. Young men

stand out from the other five groups with significantly higher levels of control. They appear to be dominant or in control of their lives relative to women and older men.

The groups that we had expected to be in control of their daily lives in our patriarchal and sexist society reported that they are not. Middle-aged and late middle-aged men reported least control on the average over the occurrence of their life events. Note, however, that this finding does not contradict the idea that the world is run by a small elite of late middle-aged and older men since we are talking about ordinary events in the lives of ordinary people, not management of the affairs of state or of the world economy.

On the other hand, the greater perceived control of the young men may represent a naive and unrealistic sense of personal power and opportunity which has been replaced in middle-age with a more realistic understanding of the systematic external constraints on personal control and freedom. Various cultural messages encourage an unrealistic sense of personal control. Children are taught that they can be anything they want to be, that hard work and persistence will deliver any dream, that they will be loved for themselves regardless of what they do or do not do, and that the whole world is theirs for the asking. Few individuals of any age occupy positions which allow such expectations to be realized. The experiences of most people which

accumulate with aging may bring with them a clearer understanding of the deep social contradictions and structural barriers within our institutions which belie these myths.

Nonetheless, the pattern for men is quite different from what we would expect from stereotypic assumptions about gender roles. Two of the three groups of men reported lower control than any of the groups of women. This contradicts the expectation that men would have greater control over events than women due to the more positive opportunities open to men in the work and public spheres and to their higher social status. The negative status of age appears to interact with the positive gender status men enjoy resulting in unexpectedly low levels of perceived control for older men. We suspect that a relative deprivation phenomenon may be occurring with the older men. Perhaps they exaggerate their lack of control, upset by some change from their earlier position or expectation of dominance. In contrast, women of all ages experience concrete obstacles and pervasive, though often ambiguous, effects of a social position associated with minority status. For women, then, the negative status of aging may not be as obviously problematical as it is for men who experience a more drastic and unilateral reduction of status and opportunity.

This pattern relates to another theme raised in our introduction and discussed in the life span and gender role literature concerning the advantages and disadvantages

associated with women's social roles. Recall that it is young women who have the most valued and acknowledged social roles and social image. This occurs despite the content of the roles and image which contradict that value. Our results do not lend support to the idea that the earlier years are more positive than later ones for women. Also, although society does not value middle-aged or older women, there is a growing awareness of a positive experience some women have in middle-age as a consequence of "losing" their culturally defined and ambivalently valued "femininity." We do not see the decline for women in our data that we see for men, nor do our results indicate that young adulthood is qualitatively better for women than the later years. Our results lend support to the idea that some women are probably relieved that they are no longer perceived of or treated as sex objects and, the cultural value of motherhood notwithstanding, that they no longer have to worry about birth control, unwanted pregnancy, or full-time parenting. It appears that men, on the other hand, have little to gain and much to lose as they move into middle-age since freedom from the male role which comes with age offers fewer secondary benefits.

What we are suggesting, then, is that the stable or consistent levels of control reported by women may be due to a relatively even shifting or trading of both obstacles to and opportunities for control from one age to another. In contrast, the status and opportunity shift for men is in only one direction -- a negative one. The gender by age

control pattern, then, does not present a picture of simple convergence or direct reversal as expected. Rather, the interaction is due solely to the high control of young men.

No significant gender by age interactions were obtained for the remaining aspects of life events in which respondents are the central figure. However, the gender age means for desirability and for magnitude suggest a possible convergence of women and men across age as predicted. The magnitude and the desirability scores of women and men are most divergent in young adulthood and converge by late middle-age. This is probably associated with men's higher proportion of health events in later years. In both cases, however, convergence appears to be due to the extreme scores of the young men and the large change in the scores of late middle-age men rather than to a parallel reversal of women's and men's scores.

Again, these patterns suggest that the actual experience of women's and men's lives as reflected in their life events may be qualitatively similar at various ages and when dissimilar, may reflect environmental factors. It argues against a theme in the aging literature that suggests that men and women "spend" their respective "natural" masculinity and femininity leaving only the submerged opposite which surfaces at the end of life. No doubt men's life event patterns would be stable, too, as women's appear to be, given a particular constellation of social-situational factors. Certainly one of the conclusions generated from a community

investigation such as this one is that we are talking about complicated interactive factors hard to capture or reduce to any one causative element in isolation from the larger context.

Other event patterns. The hypothesis that the number of other events women report would decrease with age and that men would report more other events in late middle-age was not confirmed. Nor were there any significant gender age interactions for the various characteristics of life events reported for important others.

It is interesting to note, however, that young men reported significantly greater control over life events in which they were the central figure than did the other five gender age groups. In contrast, young men report the lowest control of the six gender age groups in relation to life events where they are not the central figure. What may be happening in young adulthood, therefore, is that young men are highly self-involved and consequently not attuned to others around them while young women and early and later middle-aged persons of both sexes are experiencing a more even balance between involvement with self and with others.

Comparison of Self and Other Anticipation and Control Ratings

Also recall for a moment the earlier analysis of the mean levels of anticipation and of control of self events. A contrast is evident between these and the anticipation and

control patterns of other events just described. First, perceived control over self events is much greater in all cells than perceived control of other events while the anticipation of self and of other events is quite similar. In all gender age cells except middle-aged men, there is a difference of at least one point out of the person mean range of less than three points between control of self versus control of other events. Perceived control over self events is noticeably higher in all six gender age groups. In the anticipation of self versus other events, however, the ratings all fall within a much smaller range and a number of cells in the anticipation of other events are higher than of self events.

This contrast between the anticipation and the control for self and other events is interesting in light of the learned helplessness and other stress literature which assumes a strong connection between the two. In fact, anticipation is often described in terms almost synonymous with control. Our findings point to the very real distinction between the two and again support situational rather than dispositional determinants in relation to them. For example, some stress literature assumes that individuals have fairly consistent patterns or cognitive sets such that they either do or do not perceive situations and things that happened to them as being in their control. The basis of the different styles, types or sets is placed primarily in the individual. Attention

is not focused on the particular individual's separate capacities to anticipate and to control the onset of an event. Rather, anticipation and control are linked together and related together to a person's perception of them. Or, the anticipation of events is assumed to enhance control over them or the perception of it. What our data suggests is that they are separate and qualitatively different dimensions. All of our respondents evidence similar levels of anticipation both of self and of other events. However, control shows much more variation both within self and other event dimensions and between them. Further, the fluctuation in control levels appears to be related to characteristics of events rather than person characteristics as evidenced by consistently low levels of control over events which happen to others in contrast with self events.

It appears that everyone -- even women and old people who are often thought not to -- knows what to expect and is able to anticipate what's going to happen to themselves and to others close to them. At the same time, the resources necessary to control what happens do not appear to be equally distributed. The perception of control seems also to be related to the events themselves as well as the resources of the various groups as evidenced, for example, in the large negative correlation between occurrence of health events and control.

Directions for Future Research

The investigation of overlap and similarity among groups and of variety within groups is as relevant and appropriate to social science research as the traditional strategy which isolates only differences, thereby fostering global generalizations and unnecessary divisions based on a limited, possibly misleading piece of the picture. Looking at gender and age in combination and in relation to life events is richer than viewing either in isolation.

However, a study such as this one also points to even more complexity and the need for a broader, interdisciplinary framework. Attention should be focused on other co-occurring status variables lest we attribute to gender or age what might actually be due to other factors. For example, the negative trends associated with aging documented here may be related in some way to economic obstacles encountered with increased age; the health decline may be related to cohort factors which has placed older adults at a disadvantage physically. Ethnic differences may also shape gender role and age role experience though the particular form this takes may be hard to define. We know, for example, that life expectancy varies across ethnic groups as do the stereotypical gender roles. Some cultures are noted for their "macho man" or their "super mothers". To investigate these sorts of relationships it is necessary to go beyond the psychological level and to incorporate the influence of social structural factors and macro variables within their historical context.

Marital status, or perhaps living arrangements, is another variable of particular relevance to gender and age patterns. For example, there has been a sharp increase in adults who choose to remain single in the past decade as well as increasing numbers of people whose intimate relationships exist outside the legal institutions of marriage or are publicly homosexual. Such cohort changes, sometimes reflective of broad social trends like the Women's Movement, may impact on gender age roles as well as on the particular types of life events people experience at a given time. No doubt there are other more immediate factors such as social and economic crises, like the impending recession or increased public awareness of the reality of nuclear threat, which come on the scene rapidly and interact with gender and age in complex ways to inform life event experience.

The task of developing such an interdisciplinary and historical framework is a difficult one, but the appropriateness of such a conceptual perspective warrants the effort. Gender and age are not static or homogeneous variables and research should be encouraged which has the potential to document the variety and heterogeneity of experience associated with them as well as the possibly minimal role they play in relation to other powerful influences such as race or class.

Conclusion

This study began with the assumption that gender and

age are status variables intimately connected with social institutions and values rather than natural, static characteristics of individuals. Our investigation has provided support for this position. Life events have been used as concrete indicators of the ongoing relationship between these simultaneously occurring status carriers and the social expectations and demands associated with them. Literature concerning gender and age which suggested how life event patterns might differ across gender age groups was reviewed in order to generate hypotheses about these groups.

The life event patterns found here suggest a number of generalizations about gender age groups, some of which are at odds with hypotheses based on traditional stereotypes: Women and men are not very different in the kind of events they experience themselves or in their subjective perception of them. Aging, especially for men, appears to be a fairly negative process associated with an increase in health concerns, a decrease in number of life events, and less desirable events generally. Young men stand apart from the other five gender age groups and this difference seems to be associated with greater control and activity. The life event patterns of women are more stable across age categories than the patterns of men. There is a lack of symmetry in the life event patterns of men and women in the three age groups. As stated above, women's patterns are quite stable with the consensually judged and the subjective aspects

of the life events being similar in all three groups. In contrast to this, there is clear difference and sharp decline between the young and the late middle-age men with the early middle-age men falling somewhere between the two.

While these generalizations best summarize the life event patterns of the gender age groups, let us not simply modify or replace the old generalizations, or stereotypes if you will, with new ones. A basic assumption of this sort of analysis is the inappropriateness of locating gender and age differences in the individual. The new generalizations are reflective of the experiences and life situations of the gender age groups and point to areas of systematic stratification. Gender stratification is evident in life events involving important others while age stratification appears in the quality of events in which the individual is directly involved. What these generalizations also point to is a great variety of life event patterns within groups and the great overlap between them. This variety and overlap in the patterns of individuals is occurring even as we search for differences in what are usually thought to be discrete groups.

A recent article by Bernice Neugarten (1979) supports the perspective and the conclusions of this study. Neugarten argued against a stage theory of aging and calls for a recognition of the "fluid life cycle" characterized by individuality, diversity, complexity and change. At the same time she acknowledged the social and dynamic nature of

age norms, age expectations and age appropriate events, pointing out that generalizations about adulthood stimulated by recent interest and research in this area are based on few studies involving mostly male middle-class samples. The actual experience of individuals is made up of a great variety of both role related events and activities and non-role related occurrences. Together these form the particular experience of individuals and their valuation of that experience.

The concept of age periods is, then, an oversimplification of the experience of all people. At this point our study takes a somewhat different position, however, by acknowledging the content and the implications of gender and age stratification as a social rather than a primarily personal reality. Also, these systems operate together and are simultaneously occurring. Thus, the inappropriateness of the concept of "age periods" is paralleled by the inappropriateness of the concept of "gender types". And these concepts and their enactment are not only theoretically inappropriate but also have a powerful impact on the lives of individuals stratified on these bases.

The implications of this stratification for women and for old people is different from -- and more negative than -- the implications for younger men. For women and old people of both sexes these concepts not only oversimplify, but also denigrate their life experience. The particular experience

which distinguishes these groups from the male norm is neither acknowledged nor valued. This lack of acknowledgment and valuing is not only personal but institutional -- hence, political. Recognizing the parallels between gender and age stratification, the specific content of each, and the experience shared by individuals of all these groups offers the possibility of change.

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