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WOMEN'S CONFLICTS ABOUT ACHIEVEMENT:
DILEMMAS IN THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP AND IN
THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMININITY

A Dissertation Presented

By

LINDA KANEFIELD

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 1985

Psychology

Linda Kanefield

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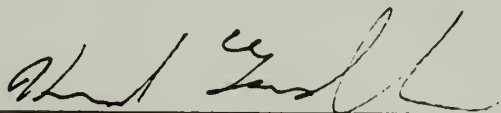
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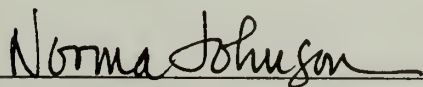
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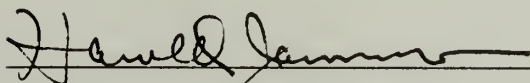
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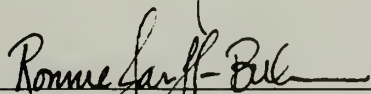
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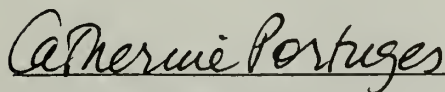
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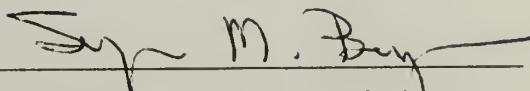
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Seymour M. Berger, Ph.D., Chairperson
Psychology

To my mother

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I am grateful to my dissertation committee for giving me both the freedom and the encouragement to do the study I wanted to do: Howard Gadlin, who came through for me, not only by chairing this dissertation, but through his availability and support when I needed it most; Hal Jarmon whose clinical and theoretical supervision gave me the sound and critical basis for much of my work; Norma Johnson for her clinical, intellectual, and personal contribution to, and regard for, my work; and for their helpful perspectives and thoughtful reading, Ronnie Janoff-Bulman and Catherine Portuges. My gratitude goes especially to the women who participated in this research: Their willingness to tell me their stories and share their inner worlds made this project possible.

I would also like to thank Alexandra Kaplan, who introduced me to the possibilities of reconciling feminist and psychoanalytic theories; Sheila Statlender with whom I shared learning and thinking about the conceptual groundwork to pursue this work; Amy Hirsch and Rob Muller, my dearest cohorts in training; Mary Haake for her sustained and sustaining interest in this project; and my husband, Norman Schneider, for his unfaltering faith in me.

June 11, 1984

PROLOGUE

POWER

Living in the earth-deposits of our history

Today a backhoe divulged out of a crumbling flank of earth
one bottle amber perfect a hundred-year-old
cure for fever or melancholy a tonic
for living on this earth in the winter of this climate

Today I was reading about Marie Curie:
she must have known she suffered from radiation sickness
her body bombarded for years by the element
she had purified
It seems she denied to the end
the source of the cataracts on her eyes
the cracked and suppurating skin of her finger-ends
till she could no longer hold a test-tube or a pencil

She died a famous woman denying
her wounds
denying
her wounds came from the same source as her power

(Adrienne Rich, 1974)

ABSTRACT

Women's Conflicts About Achievement: Dilemmas in the Mother-Daughter Relationship and in the Development of Femininity

September 1985

Linda Kanefield, B. A., University of Pennsylvania

M.S., Ph.D., University of Massachusetts

Directed by: Professor Howard Gadlin

This dissertation offers a theoretical and empirical exploration of adult women's conflicts about achievement. These conflicts are examined conceptually within a psychoanalytic developmental framework. The literature on the development of femininity is reviewed and reconsidered, focussing on achievement-related dilemmas as they are embedded in the mother-daughter relationship.

Twenty-four female doctoral students wrote stories in response to five scenarios. These stimuli were constructed to assess free-associative feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and conflicts about:

- 1) one's own achievement;
- 2) achievement and relationship with mother;
- 3) achievement and female body/femininity;
- 4) achievement and fantasy of a penis;
- 5) achievement, masturbation/autonomy, and relationship with mother.

Qualitative analysis of stories was used to assign women to one of three groups: women whose stories indicate a significant degree of achievement-related conflict, particularly as those conflicts are embedded in the mother-daughter bond; women whose stories reflect an

awareness of the complexity of issues surrounding achievement, but suggest a positive and healthy negotiation of these conflicts; and women whose stories are suggestive of achievement-related conflict, but are characterized by a denial or avoidance of this hypothetically unresolved conflict. One woman from each group was interviewed to further substantiate and illustrate data from the story-telling task.

Analysis of the stories generated by these high-achieving women revealed considerable support for the major speculations of this study: 1) There are both individual differences and commonalities in the nature of women's conflicts about their achievements, and in the ways in which they negotiate these conflicts. 2) To the degree that a woman has experienced her mother's ambivalence about her daughter's separation, autonomy, and accomplishments, the daughter is conflicted about her achievements, and these conflicts are embedded in the mother-daughter dyad. 3) To the extent that a woman received her mother's ambivalent communications about being female and about her developing sexuality and femininity, the woman is conflicted about her achievements, and these conflicts are intertwined with her conflicts surrounding her femininity and sexuality.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
PROLOGUE	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
Chapter	
I. A THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION: PSYCHOANALYTIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMALE DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S CONFLICTS ABOUT ACHIEVEMENT	1
Psychoanalysis and Female Development.	1
The "Fear of Success" Phenomenon	2
Psychoanalytic Contributions	5
A Framework of Difference in Male and Female Development	6
Changing Concepts of Femininity.	10
Early Psychoanalytic Views.	10
Later Psychoanalytic Views.	14
The Masochistic Defense and Women's Conflicts About Achievement	17
Penis Envy as a Defense and Women's Conflicts About Achievement	25
Summary: Directions for Inquiry	33
II. METHOD.	37
Introduction	37
Participants and Recruitment	40
Construction of Projective Stimuli	41
Nature and Organization of Data.	44
Demographic Data	48
Qualitative Analysis of Stories.	51
The Interview.	53
III. COMPLICATED NEGOTIATION OF ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED CONFLICTS	54
Introduction	54
Demographic Data	55
Charlotte.	58
Kate	66
Sarah.	72
Janet.	78

Carol	84
Beth	88
Susan	93
Joan	99
Doreen	103
The Interview: Kate	108
Summary	114
IV. POSITIVE NEGOTIATION OF ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED CONFLICTS	117
Introduction	117
Demographic Data	118
Judy	121
Martha	128
Miriam	134
Adrian	139
Leah	142
Betty Jo	146
The Interview: Judy	151
Summary	156
V. AVOIDED OR MINIMAL NEGOTIATION OF ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED CONFLICTS	160
Introduction	160
Demographic Data	160
Sally	163
Rachel	166
Esther	169
Alice	173
Nancy	176
The Interview: Esther	181
Summary	186
VI. DISCUSSION	188
REFERENCES	202
APPENDIX	
A	217
B	226

LIST OF TABLES

1.	Participant Characteristics - All Groups	49
2.	Participant Characteristics - Group 1.	56
3.	Participant Characteristics - Group 2.	119
4.	Participant Characteristics - Group 3.	161

C H A P T E R I

A THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION: PSYCHOANALYTIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF FEMALE DEVELOPMENT AND WOMEN'S CONFLICTS ABOUT ACHIEVEMENT

Psychoanalysis and Female Development

To many feminists, Freud's theories have served to vindicate and perpetuate the subordination of women. His early formulations about the development of femininity and female sexuality are a source of continuing controversy within both psychoanalytic and feminist communities (Mitchell, 1974; Miller, 1973; Strouse, 1974; Howell, 1981). Acknowledging this disharmonious debate, some recent theorists have begun to reconstruct and reinterpret developmental theories of female identity and sexuality (Blum, 1977; Mendell, 1982; Klebanow, 1981; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1970a). Many theorists now believe that Freudian thought, with modifications, can be pivotal to the ultimate aim of liberating people to change themselves and their world.

This study recognizes the richness that psychoanalytic theory offers to the understanding of women, and to the complex relationships in which women experience themselves. It rests on the position that internal representations of the self, and of the self in relation to others, extend to levels of fantasy and subjectivity as well as to realistic perception. Furthermore, these internal representations reflect, interact with, and propagate cultural relations between the sexes (Person, 1980; Chodorow, 1978). Such a perspective will be used to conceptualize and to descriptively illustrate the dynamics that

underly women's conflicts about their own autonomous achievements. The emphasis will be on both pre-oedipal and oedipal relational configurations and intrapsychic developmental processes that are interactively reinforced by society and heighten women's achievement-related conflicts.

In this dissertation, the terms penis envy and female masochism will be used guardedly. Because of their central importance in earlier formulations of the development of femininity, and in spite of the phallogentric bias that informed their initial conceptualization, reformulated versions of these ideas will be used to structure the theoretical introduction to this study. However, for the empirical study itself, these terms are abandoned in favor of less biased language about what it means to be female and grow up with a female body.

The "Fear of Success" Phenomenon

Freud was the first to notice those "bewildering" cases in which "people occasionally fall ill precisely when a deeply-rooted and long-cherished wish has come to fulfillment" (1916, p. 316). Years later, Horney (1937) and Lorand (1950) made similar observations that "the achievement of a wish, the attainment of success, can also be the cause of neurotic conflicts so acute that the person involved is unable to enjoy the very things for which he has striven" (Lorand, 1950, p. 245). While the evidence here was clinical, the phenomenon is the same as the social psychological evidence reported in the last decades "that most women have a motive to avoid success, that

is, a disposition to become anxious about achieving success because they expect negative consequences (such as social rejection and/or feelings of being unfeminine) as a result of succeeding" (Horner, 1972, p. 158).

Much of the research on fear of success in women has stemmed from Horner's (1968) work that revealed that women anticipate negative social consequences for their achievement in a competitive situation. Female undergraduates were asked to respond with a story to the ambiguous cue "After first-term finals, Ann finds herself at the top of her medical school class." Male undergraduates were presented with: "After first-term finals, John finds himself at the top of his medical school class." Horner found that 90% of the men wrote positive stories to this cue, while 65% of the women responded with negative stories that emphasized loss of relationship or femininity as a result of success. She concluded that women's characteristic fear of success adversely affected their strivings for achievement and their actual performance.

What are those dangers that women may anticipate as corollaries to their achievement? Not only have women been rewarded for their docility, passivity, and subservience to men (Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, and Vogel, 1970), but the social structure perpetuates women's inferior social role. Women's achievements have been devalued--whatever women do in any culture is seen as less valuable than men's work (Mead, 1967; Mednick, Tangri, and Hoffman, 1975). The real barriers to women's academic or professional achievement are great. Sexism in the forms of unequal pay, limited advancement

opportunities, and sexual harrassment are abundant (O'Leary, 1974). Even as opportunities for women increase, until recently there has been little support from inside the family (Kanefield, 1983) or from the society for women who want to advance themselves professionally. With minimal day care facilities, women who want to work outside the home find themselves expected or expecting to handle most of the responsibilities of child and home care, having to make complicated compromises somewhere, and experiencing emotional costs.

It is tempting to attribute women's conflicts about achievement primarily or solely to the reality of external factors that inhibit their accomplishments. However, serious problems are raised by the inconsistencies of the fear of success empirical findings (Tresemer, 1974, 1976; Robbins and Robbins, 1973; Caravan-Gumpert, Garner, and Gumpert, 1978). In addition, the qualitatively different definitions of success espoused by women and men (Sassen, 1980, 1981) tend to strengthen the views of those who question the validity of such a phenomenon. Nevertheless, both the research prodded by Horner's original findings (Horner, 1968, 1970, 1972; Horner and Walsh, 1972, 1974; Caravan-Gumpert, et al., 1978) and the pain of women in therapy who view themselves as incompetent and inferior, who disbelieve their own accomplishments, and who fear, withdraw from, and deny ambition, competition, and success provide compelling evidence for the salience of achievement-related conflicts in women (Schecter, 1981; Freud, 1916; Conrad, 1975; Chassequet-Smirgel, 1979; Torok, 1970; Dowling, 1981; Greenbaum, 1981).

Psychoanalytic Contributions

Original psychoanalytic writings on female experience, centering on the concepts of penis envy and female masochism (Freud, 1925, 1931, 1934; Deutsch, 1924; Bonaparte, 1934) are attempts to explain the inferior position of women in light of their psychosexual development. Although these early discussions reflect sexism and patriarchal thought (Mitchell, 1974; Janeway, 1974; Mead, 1974; Cavell, 1974; Bonaparte, 1934), they are, nevertheless, pioneering bedrocks of theory that ultimately offer some clarifying insights about women.

Later psychoanalysts (Horney, 1922, 1935; Thompson, 1941; Moulton, 1970) reconstruct women's envy of men in the broader context of envy for that which women are denied--economic independence, education, opportunity, and privilege that men often take for granted--and reinterpret female masochism by raising questions about the painful and powerful inequities women have experienced. These reformulations of penis envy and masochism, in light of previously neglected attention to actual cultural conditions, are indeed liberating. However, because conceptions of self do not form merely from an internalization of culture, but develop through complex self and object relations occurring in a social context, this work will examine both the intrapsychic ramifications of these social relations and the intrapsychic developmental tasks that are experienced metaphorically through the revised notions of penis envy and masochism. These will be related to their impact on

women's achievement-related conflicts.

Despite the fury aroused by Freud's position that differences between the sexes leave women inferior and lacking, it is indisputable that the real physical differences between women and men differentially affect their sense of themselves and their bodies (Erikson, 1968, 1973; May, 1980; Lewis, 1976). The intent here is not to sidestep controversy or to ignore current theory and research surrounding the use of psychoanalytic concepts such as female masochism and penis envy. Although these concepts were initially formulated within an instinctual psychoanalytic model, changes in their conceptualization have been concomitant with a greater emphasis on ego and object relations psychology. In reviewing both original and subsequent literature, this study will examine and apply these concepts literally as they illuminate the psychological implications of physicality, but primarily as powerful and rich metaphors to explicate dynamics that are central to the lives of women who experience inhibitions in their achievements.

A Framework of Difference in Male and Female Development

Chodorow (1978) and Dinnerstein (1976) developed the insight that early object relations and subsequent growth are influenced by the fact that little boys and little girls form their first significant attachment with a caretaker, who is, in most cultures, a woman. For women, then, the self grows to be defined "in relationship," since both the primary object choice and earliest identification are established in connection to the same sex person.

For men, the self develops its definition "in separation," since identification as a male rests on breaking connections to the primary love object and establishing himself as essentially "different from" her. In this way, women and men experience different vulnerabilities and strengths in the process of maturation.

To make such a statement on the basis of the fact that women have same sex mothering and men have opposite sex mothering is clearly to generalize. In fact, psychological research has emphasized the reliance of findings based on group differences even at the expense of masking individual differences. In the realm of sex differences, however, this type of research has the aim of developing more sophisticated criticisms of sex role stereotypes and of increasing the capacity for healthy relating in both sexes (Kaplan and Sedney, 1980; Statlender, 1981; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1976). The danger, unfortunately, is that the discovery of sex-related differences will appear to provide evidence of their intractability and/or will gloss over those individuals who have achieved personal and interpersonal qualities that transcend the sex determined generality.

The important questions that emerge, then, may relate more to different styles of nurturance and parenting and the impact of these differences on the developmental tasks of both sexes than to difference on the basis of sex alone (Baumrind, 1972; Caravan-Gumpert, et al., 1978). There is a range of issues that relate to women's conflicts about success, and it is likely that different sorts of parent-child relationships lead to the salience, pervasiveness, and chronicity of those concerns for any individual.

Certainly, too, it is not just women who experience conflicts about their achievement. In fact, much literature beginning with Freud (1916) fashions the dynamics of fear of success as it applies to men's oedipal and castration anxieties (Ovesey, 1962; Schuster, 1955; Szekely, 1960; May, 1978-79). Nevertheless, the focus of this study is on women's conflicts about achievement. When girls or women are spoken of as a group, it is done with the hope that such an examination will ultimately contribute to an understanding of the ways in which culture may detrimentally magnify differences between the sexes.

Despite its limitations, a formulation that articulates differences in the formation of the self on the basis of sex provides theoretical support for empirical findings that boys more easily disengage themselves from their mothers to partake in independent activities, while girls turn to their mothers for greater closeness when they anticipate separation (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1975; Cohen, 1973). Hoffman (1972, 1974) and Goldstein (1980) review studies that demonstrate that girls are motivated by affiliation where boys are motivated by mastery. Because the little girl has:

(a) less encouragement for independence, (b) more parental protectiveness, (c) less cognitive and social pressure for establishing an identity separate from the mother, and (d) less mother-child conflict which highlights separation; she engages in less independent exploration of her environment. (Hoffman, 1972, p. 147)

Satisfaction derived from mastery and achievement normally helps propel the child to separate and individuate from the mother (Kaplan, 1978). Thus, achievement is an independent accomplishment, and carries with it a weakening of connection and symbiotic relationship. For

boys, this independence can contribute to a more solid male identity that is distinct from the early intimacy and identification with the mother. Boys more saliently experience a wish to achieve, to compete and win, motivated in part by their need to break away from the mother, and to defend against their fear of engulfment and loss of identity aroused by a strong attachment to her. This wish for boys is double-edged however, since achievement, and the separation inherent in it, may be the pathway to intimacy, love, and approval from the mother (Slater, 1977). For girls, this struggle for autonomy is complicated by the mother's identification with her daughter and her consequent intense ambivalence in seeing her grow up (Flax, 1978). Such ambivalence on the mother's part can be felt to threaten the girl's female identity that was formed and enhanced in relation to her mother. Girls fear that if they can compete and achieve, that they will ultimately need to give up connectedness and relationships, a predicament that carries not only the threat of isolation, but the threat of loss of female identity. Thus, a framework evolves that begins to suggest unconscious motives for the ways in which women defend against competitiveness and achievement by maintaining self-defeating convictions of their lack of ability, in the service of protection from the dangers of successful achievement and fear of isolation and identity loss (Schechter, 1981; Freud, 1916; Chassequet-Smirgel, 1979; Torok, 1970; Dowling, 1981; Greenbaum, 1981).

Changing Concepts of Femininity

Early psychoanalytic views

Freud. Freud's seminal writings on the development of femininity (1925, 1931, 1933) emphasize a girl's constitutional inferiority in an effort to comprehend her supposed renunciation of her attachment to her mother and her choice of father for a love object. According to Freud, the girl's realization that she lacks a penis is a powerful narcissistic wound--felt at first to be the result of punishment by castration, and later understood to be the lot of all women. Her deep sense of deficiency colors her contempt for all women and for her mother in particular, who has deprived her of a penis. The girl can either deny her castration or develop the fruitless wish to be a man. Because she can, in fact, never become a man, she substitutes the wish for a child for the wish for a penis and, to that end, turns to her father.

Freud postulates masturbation as a masculine activity. Thus, the recognition of the differences between sexes necessitates that the girl relinquish masculine clitoral pleasure and aim for satisfying vaginal sensations in mature feminine sexuality. Although her femininity is a secondary formation (femininity emerges with the discovery of the vagina at puberty), this complicated process sets the stage for her eventual passivity, receptivity, and propensity for masochism.

Furthermore, because she is already castrated and need not, like her brother, fear castration consequential to oedipal longings, the

girl is not as pressed to sublimate her incestuous desires and incorporate parental morality; thus, her superego development is impaired.

Abraham. Abraham (1920) dismisses any cultural explanation of girl's envy of boys as "rationalization." Female genitals mark a girl's wound of castration, the pain of which is recalled with menstruation and "defloration," and healed with the birth of a child to "compensate the little girl for the missed penis." Abraham discusses two types of women: those who wish for a penis, but not the male role; and those who refuse to accept the female role and desire to revenge men.

Lampl de Groot. Coupled with the girl's narcissistic wound of physical inferiority, posits Lampl de Groot (1928, 1933, 1952), is the disappointment of her hope of fulfilling her libidinal wish for her mother. The girl believes her penis was castrated because of her forbidden desires for her mother, and again, her narcissism is healed by her capacity to bear children. Her libidinal withdrawal from her mother leaves her passively awaiting her father, and Lampl de Groot clearly equates passivity with femininity and activity with masculinity.

Deutsch. Deutsch (1924, 1930, 1944) agrees with Freud that a girl must give up her masculinity, and this she does in her discovery of the vagina through a "masochistic submission to the penis" in intercourse. Only through maternity and the masochistic pleasure of birth and parturition does a female become a woman and fully overcome earlier trauma: she relinquishes her claim that the clitoris is

similar to the penis, and the pain of her own weaning is assuaged. Perhaps more fervently than any other theorist, Deutsch argues that feminine masochism is instinctual, normal, and inherent to sexual pleasure and reproduction.

Bonaparte. Unlike Deutsch, for whom sexuality and reproduction are inextricably linked in pain, Bonaparte (1934, 1953) distinguishes the pain that women are "biologically doomed to suffer" in reproductive functions from the "erotic pleasure experienced during the act itself, (where) the women may be on equal footing with the man" (1934, p. 247). Bonaparte establishes that the child's sadistic perception of coitus stems from a projection of the child's aggression and not from the sado-masochism inherent in intercourse, as Deutsch has posited. It is necessary, asserts Bonaparte, that sadism be disentwined from penile activity, and masochism be separated from feminine vaginal passivity.

Horney. In her early work, Horney (1922) elaborated upon Freud's concepts of penis envy and masochism, but did not alter them radically. She emphasized reality-based consequences of possessing a penis that allow, for instance, the boy to develop omnipotent fantasies during urination, and for increased masturbatory freedom since he is permitted to touch and exhibit his visible and external genitals. Horney postulated that the girl's early identification with her mother instigates her desires for sexual contact with the father, and that the little girl fantasizes castration as consequential to sexual relations with him. Disappointed in her love, the girl identifies with her father, but retains vengeful feelings for her

disappointment and castration; guilt about revenge leads to masochistic behavior.

By 1926, Horney's radical and influential views were in print. She wrote:

Like all sciences and all valuation, the psychology of women has hitherto been considered only from the point of view of men ... the psychology of women hitherto actually represents a deposit of the desires and disappointments of men. (p. 56)

Horney highlighted the phallogentric bias inherent in Freud's ideas and argued against the notion that both sexes are aware of and influenced by the presence of male genitals. She articulated the position that men's sublimated envy of women's capacity to bear children is the compelling force behind men's overachievement and institution of cultural values. Horney believed that men are more apt to denigrate and deprecate women because their envy of women is greater than women's corresponding envy: women have a different, not lesser role in coitus than men, but women have a greater role in reproduction than men do. Horney denounced Freud's view that clitoral masturbation was masculine in nature. She asserted the primacy of female genital activity, stating:

...little girls have a specific feminine form of onanism...the clitoris legitimately belongs to and forms an integral part of the female genital apparatus. (p. 65)

Horney's contributions draw attention to cultural realities. She posited that connections between cultural and intrapsychic experiences are indispensable to an understanding of women. Of the equation between masochism and femininity, Horney (1933) writes

...these ideologies function not only to reconcile women to their subordinate role by presenting it as an unalterable one, but also to plant the belief that it represents a fulfillment they crave, or an ideal for which it is commendable and desirable to strive. (p. 231)

She acknowledges the specific cultural (i.e., reduced outlets for sexuality and self development, social estimation of inferiority of women, and socially encouraged dependency on men) and anatomical factors (i.e., women's size in comparison to men's; fantasies arising from the possibility of rape; painful reproductive processes) that may predispose women to masochism or make individual misinterpretation of masochistic fantasies more likely.

Later psychoanalytic views

Perhaps the most significant contribution to changing concepts of femininity was the burgeoning appreciation for the pre-oedipal mother-child relationship. While Freud (1933) supposed that a girl's infantile attachment to her mother had a profound impact on her oedipal experience, he failed to explore the vicissitudes of that intense and primary pre-oedipal relationship. Klein (1932) and other British object relations theorists, while they did not focus specifically on the development of femininity, did turn most of their attention to psychological and emotional development within the context of the early mother-child interaction. Thus, there was an alternative to Freud's premise that femininity emerged when castration anxieties and penis envy led to a renunciation of masculine strivings. That little girls emerge from pre-oedipal separation and individuation struggles with a core sense of femininity has been substantiated

theoretically (Mahler, 1974; Formanek, 1982) and empirically (Stoller, 1976). The reciprocal identification between mother and daughter (Flax, 1978; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1982; Bergmann, 1982) contributes to pre-oedipal femininity, and the "child's innate disposition, her body experience and image, parental influence, and social learning all contribute to the development of a feminine self-representation" (Blum, 1977, p. 173) between the ages of 18 months and three years (Stoller, 1968).

Advances in biological and social research also had a tremendous impact in repudiating Freud's tenets and contributing to a new psychoanalytic view of femininity. Stoller (1968, 1972, 1973) demonstrates that the development of a particular "core gender identity" occurs pre-oedipally and hinges more on parental assignment of sex and cultural and social childrearing attitudes than on biological and hormonal definitions of sex. It is evident, for instance, that because the anatomical structure of male and female genitals is different, the sensations and experiences of one's genitals, one's self, and one's self in relation to others are influenced by this. Observations of specific behaviors such as the handling of genitals during cleansing highlight the complexity of the partnership between the mother's unconscious fantasies aroused by the sex of her child and the child's conception of his/her sexuality (Lichenstein, 1961).

Galenson and Roiphe (1977) observe that early genital awareness (between 15 and 19 months of age), masturbatory activity, and castration anxieties are concomitant to capacities and anxieties involved in separation-individuation processes. While these authors

emphasize that the fantasy of castration, activated by awareness of sex differences, structures the girl's sense of sexual identity and profoundly influences her ego development and object relations, they also argue that the female castration anxiety reactivates and is intertwined with primitive fears about object loss--infantile fears that are parallel to fears of the dissolution of the ego and emerging sense of self.

The awareness of the vagina is not postponed until puberty, as Freud hypothesized, nor is clitoral activity put aside as a childish masculine activity in preference for mature passive vaginal pleasure. Although girls' genital exploration has been observed to gain intensity and vigor later than boys' (Kleeman, 1977; Galenson and Roiphe, 1977), girls are aware of their genitals in their first year. The greater ease of visibility and accessibility of the penis to manipulation and exploration, and its dual urinary and genital functions "result in less well-established mental representation of her genitalia at an age comparable to the boy" (Kleeman, 1977, p. 22). Nevertheless, the research of Masters and Johnson (1966) and Sherfey (1966) seriously challenge Freud's phallocentrism. Biological evidence indicates that the human fetus is morphologically female at conception and develops masculine features only with the activation of the male hormone, androgen (Sherfey, 1966).

It would be more accurate, from a strictly biological point of view, to say that the male (penis) is an androgenized female (clitoris), rather than that the female is a castrated male. (Statlender, 1981, p. 41)

Not only is it impossible to distinguish between clitoral and vaginal

orgasm and, by extension, between immature active and mature passive female sexuality, but research reveals that women have the capacity for multiple orgasms with active stimulation (Masters and Johnson, 1966; Sherfey, 1966). Such findings dispel Freud's assertion that female libido is weaker than male libido.

The Masochistic Defense and Women's Conflicts
About Achievement

Later psychoanalysts diverge dramatically from earlier theorists who associated the emergence of femininity with the awareness of defect, disappointment, envy, and inferiority--an association that laid groundwork for a supposition of inherent female masochism. More recent developmental models replace the equation of femininity and instinctual masochism with the proposition that masochism in women is not destined by nature, but instead serves a defensive function in the service of the ego (Horney, 1934, 1937; Bieber, 1953; Menaker, 1953; Schecter, 1981; Blum, 1977; Parker, 1980). Conceiving of masochism as a defense offers a framework for comprehending the role of masochism in women's achievement-related conflicts, and raises some important questions.

What are the more unconscious fears associated with women's achievement and how are fears of social rejection and unfemininity reconstructed intrapsychically? In what ways are masochistic dynamics central to women who undermine or disqualify their own accomplishments? Schecter (1981) provides a useful telescopic view of masochism for this study when she notes that masochistic defenses

in fear of success "may surface as the precondition for successful performance; they may function in the service of prohibiting the attainment of success, or they may appear as a necessary sequel of success" (p. 170).

In order to unravel these questions about women's conflicts about their own accomplishments, it is helpful to conceptualize women's "fear of success" as a conscious or unconscious masochistic undermining of oneself to ensure against a greater anxiety (Schecter, 1981). As Bieber wrote, masochistic defenses

are oriented to protecting the individual from greater and more painful injury, no matter how realistically injurious the act itself may be. It is the choice of a lesser evil. It is an unrealistic choice, since the masochist brings upon himself real injury to protect himself from a danger that is illusory. (1953, p. 436)

The illusory dangers from which the success fearer withdraws lie in the complex processes of experiencing oneself as a separate and whole person. The connections between masochistic defenses and efforts at separation-individuation are two-fold (even if not entirely distinct) based on both pre-oedipal and oedipal components. First, in the broadest sense, it is masochistic to sacrifice or compromise one's own autonomous functioning in order to maintain a symbiotic closeness with the mother. The anxiety against which the success fearer defends herself is, on the deepest level, linked to anxieties surrounding separation from the mother.

This task of separation is complicated for the little girl whose conception of herself and whose identity, formed in relation to her mother (Chodorow, 1978), predisposes her to especial sensitivity to

relationships, parental approval, and to loss (Statlender, 1981). Dependent on her mother for caretaking, she is afraid of jeopardizing her mother's love. Therefore, she recoils from competitive or independent behaviors which may frustrate the mother's ambivalent wish to keep her close and dependent. This inhibition will be acute for a daughter with whom the mother is closely identified (Flax, 1978; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1982). As Menaker points out,

...what is needed is the expression of love by the mother not only through the satisfying of the instinctual needs of the child (feeding and oral eroticism, for example), but through the affirmation of the growing ego functions. Failing this, the demands of the developing ego are associated with pain (unlust), become in themselves a source of deprivation rather than of fulfillment and gratification, and are ultimately hated. (1953, pp. 208-209)

Although it is natural that any intimate relationship contain healthy vicissitudes of envy, empathy, and narcissistic wishes and concerns, here the emphasis is on the circumstances in which these feelings inhibit the daughter's growth. When the mother is unaware of, or confused by, her ambivalence about her daughter's increasing independence, the daughter is likely to feel a threat to the integrity of her emerging sense of self.

In their impressive review of their own and other research, Caravan-Gumpert, et al. (1978) talk of the detrimental effect of the parent's ambivalent or negative responses to the child's self-assertion. Because the distinction between her parent's and her own anxiety is not entirely clear to the young girl, and because of her dependence on her caretaker, the child responds to the communication

of anxiety about her autonomy by associating independent strivings and normal growth with insecurity and anxiety, rather than pleasure. In extreme cases, and at the earliest developmental stages, when the distinction between self and others is just negligible, a defense against this anxiety is necessary as a protection against psychosis and the annihilation of the entire internal and external worlds (Menaker, 1953).

The child may strive toward mastery and independence, but his self-assertion and success are likely to become unconsciously confused with his aggressive and competitive impulses and thus to become associated with guilt and anxiety. Because he comes to expect or fear abandonment, loss of love, or fantasied retaliation for his successful accomplishments, which are equated with destruction, qualified success may have tranquilizing effects. (Caravan-Gumpert, et al., 1978, p. 12)

...The child learns that doing a task well on his own is dangerous. (Caravan-Gumpert, et al., 1978, p. 190)

To the extent that the mother has needed her daughter to fulfill her own needs and to maintain her own sense of adequacy (Applegarth, 1977; Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1982; Miller, 1981), the girl will be fearful of losing her self through abandonment, and will simultaneously experience intense guilt about betraying her mother. Unconsciously, the mother's loss as her daughter matures can be, in fact, quite intense. Bergmann (1982) speaks of this complicated loss of a girl child who has fulfilled for the mother

...the double wish to be a baby and have a baby, and through which the loss of the mother during separation-individuation can be temporarily undone. Her own symbiosis with mother may be re-experienced with her daughter, and thus the

loss at the girl's growing separation would be a double one--the loss of the baby and the loss of the mother. (Bergmann, 1982, p. 79)

Not only do the girl's autonomous strivings feel dangerous because she is fearful of threatening her mother and losing affiliative ties with her, but she has learned to gain a sense of her own worthiness through her own protective caretaking (Searles, 1975). In this way, the desire to be loyal to the mother emerges as a major motivation for girls to postpone or undermine their accomplishments and individuation. Schecter (1981) writes,

It is as though the woman is unconsciously living in a state of "twinship" with her mother. Every success of hers is equated with a failure for her mother. (p. 173)

Such competitive dimensions of a daughter's success take on greater meaning in the configurations of oedipal struggles. Freud observed, and others corroborated, that the girl's pre-oedipal stage is prolonged in comparison to the boy's, for he is heralded into rivalry with his father in his efforts to disidentify with his opposite sex mother (Greenson, 1968). For the girl, pre-oedipal conflicts around dependency, nurturance, intimacy, and autonomy are not discontinuous with her oedipal struggles around competition and sexuality precisely because her "Oedipal rival is also her pre-Oedipal protector" (Schecter, 1981, p. 179). Oedipal conflicts necessarily revive pre-oedipal vulnerabilities, and while it is productive for this discussion to distinguish between them, it must be stressed that such distinctions are far from absolute.

Although Freud (1924) viewed the masochistic fantasy as

characteristically female, he originally noted masochism in men (Blum, 1977). Freud was not alone in building an understanding of the dynamics among those men "wrecked by success" (Freud, 1916; Lorand, 1950; Schuster, 1955; Ovesey, 1962; Szekely, 1960; Engel, 1962). For both men and women--and women will continue to be the focus here--masochistic undermining of success can be a solution to oedipal guilt as a powerful defense against retaliation for aggression.

Under less than optimal conditions, it is both the inevitable disappointment with the mother's failure to be perfect and the need to reject her and assert one's independence in the midst of her omnipotence that propels individuation. Hence, the natural propensity to mature can be accompanied by a fear of retaliation for surpassing the idealized and omnipotent parent. Frustration and deprivation experienced in the hands of the all-powerful parent give rise to frightening aggressive impulses. The inhibition of this aggression and the inhibition of successful activities that have become associated with this aggression, result from a fear of retaliation from the much needed parent.

Achievement takes on the meaning of achieving something to which one is not entitled. In 1945, Klein observed

...the importance of triumph, closely bound up with contempt and omnipotence...We know the part rivalry plays in the child's burning desires to equal the achievements of the grown-up...In my experience, the desire to reverse the child-parent relation, to get power over the parents and to triumph over them, is always to some extent associated with desires directed to the attainment of success. A time will come, in the child's

phantasies, when he will be strong, tall and grown up, powerful, rich, and potent, and father and mother will have changed into helpless children, or again, in other phantasies, will be very old, weak, poor, and rejected. The triumph over the parents in such phantasies, through the guilt to which it gives rise, often cripples endeavors of all kinds. Some people are obliged to remain unsuccessful, because success implies to them the humiliation or even the damage of somebody else, in the first place the triumph over the parents, brothers and sisters. (pp. 351-352)

As Klein (1945) suggests, the wish to triumph over the parent extends beyond the wish to be like them; it is the desire to have what the parent has that is most frightening to the child. On one level, this yearning indicates the presence of incestuous feelings for the opposite sex parent, and rivalrous strivings toward the same sex parent. The daughter's guilt associated with robbing her mother of her possession is a mixture of loving and hateful feelings. The hostile aspect is so overwhelming that she fears talion retribution from the mother, and out of fear, represses her wishes, and suppresses her competitive activity.

Horney (1934, 1935, 1937) was among the first to broaden the view of female masochism. The dynamics she describes in women's "Overvaluation of Love" (1934) are remarkably similar to those that later analysts draw on in understanding women's achievement-related conflicts. In her discussion of conflicts involved in the successful formation of heterosexual relationships, Horney described the shameful self-reproaches she observed in her patients who seemed preoccupied with their inadequate attractiveness. This self-recrimination is defensively rooted in guilt about unconscious wishes to destroy her

female rivals. Once successfully relating to men, women veil the associated destructive, sadistic fantasies toward other women by depreciating their success, or by assuming a passive role in the development of the relationship. A woman's convictions about her inability to relate meaningfully to men protects and "insures... against the dangers of successful competition." (1934, p. 209)

The masochistic perception of self-worthlessness described by Horney in love relations, and by others in connection with intellectual or professional achievement, is a desperate effort to maintain a vital bond to the primary maternal object, and to ward off the possibility of separation and loss in the process (Menaker, 1953). Rather than risk the consequences of expressing aggression toward a depriving or simply frustrating parent, a relationship is perpetuated with the illusion of the mother as loving, good, and superior, and the self as inadequate. By renouncing her own success, the girl submits herself to her mother and preserves the original hierarchy of dependency and power. Thus, masochistic defenses are not solely in the service of maintaining the ego, but also in the service of preserving the ego ideal in the mother (Blum, 1977; Parkin, 1980; Fairbairn, 1943).

Whether or not the drive to surpass her mother is thwarted or achieved, women suffering from anxiety around their accomplishments often experience themselves as "imposters," as undeserving of the success they do achieve, and seem paradoxically, to be comforted by the painful view of themselves as incompetent (Conrad, 1975). In this way, if success is not avoided, it is at least devalued or

dissipated, protecting oneself from maternal retaliatory attack. Feelings of low self esteem perpetuate, at least nominally, the girl's dependent helplessness in relation to her mother, and sustain a dyadic bond with the mother. In fact, the need to preserve the mother's goodness and superiority can be so compelling that all frustration encountered in relation to the mother is masochistically experienced as evidence of one's worthlessness and inadequacy. Since "Success is unconsciously perceived as causing a breach in the primary dyadic bond with the preoedipal mother" (Schechter, 1981, p. 171), only a stance that diminishes a woman's active part in independent assertions protects her from the consequences of disloyalty to her mother. Thus, the oft-cited external attributions women make for their own accomplishments are comprehensible as a masochistic defense (Deaux and Emswiller, 1974; Frieze, 1975).

Penis Envy as a Defense and Women's Conflicts About Achievement

Even more so than female masochism, the value of a concept of penis envy in women's psychology has been subject to criticism and rejection. Undoubtedly, Freud's view of women as castrated men, reconciled to inferiority because of their biological lack, is misogynous. Although the presumption that women are lesser because they are different from men is deeply sexist and unfounded, the fact remains that patriarchal society has devalued women's bodies, minds, and contributions, and that women themselves have learned to disqualify their own experiences. Thompson (1953, p. 54) wrote

"There is not necessarily any evidence that the body situation is the cause of the thing it symbolizes." However, the notion of penis envy, while undeniably phallogentric in perspective, can offer a potentially powerful encapsulation of aspects of the psychology of women. Thus, because of its psychological and popular impact, the language of penis envy is not discarded here even though the view is held that such a notion, because it defines women's experience in terms of what they lack, be it a penis or a solid "separate" sense of self, is inherently devaluing (Surrey, 1983). Speaking not of penis envy, but of Klein's contribution, Wyatt (1970, p. vii) explained, and it is relevant here, that

Being reconstructions rather than propositions based on readily accessible observation, they are not verifiable in the strict sense of the word. They must be judged, above all, in terms of what they can do for us by enabling us to organize observation in a novel and productive way.

Contemporary reformulations of penis envy rest not on the physical index of primary inadequacy of women, but construe penis envy as serving a defensive role in women's lives and revise its pertinence to the formulation of female identity. Challenges to Freudian androcentrism (Thompson, 1943; Horney, 1926; Zilboorg, 1973; Cohen, 1973; Chodoff, 1973; Salzman, 1973; Siedenberg, 1973; Marmor, 1973), biological advances that invalidate original psychological suppositions of inferiority (Stoller, 1973, 1974; Sherfey, 1973; Masters and Johnson, 1966) and observational and theoretical evidence about the primacy of female identity (Stoller, 1973, 1974; Frankel and Sherick, 1979; Lerner, 1974; Parens, 1977; Schafer, 1974; Tauer,

1979) all contributed to changing ideas about penis envy in women.

Initial revisions of penis envy emphasized the real limitations placed on women by the culture that such a wish expressed. Thompson (1941, p. 56) wrote,

In a patriarchal culture the restricted opportunities afforded women, the limitations placed on her development and independence give a real basis for envy of the male quite apart from any neurotic trend.

Similarly, Applegarth (1977, p. 260), commenting on the intractability of penis envy, said, "...few neurotic convictions received as much outside support as this one."

Later, penis envy was explored as a developmental metaphor for the internal experience of deficiency. In light of developmental, cognitive, and biological research, Fast (1978) has convincingly argued that young children of both sexes initially make no differentiation on the basis of sex, and eventually must deal with a loss entailed when the presumption of bisexuality is shattered. Thus, it is not so much the wish to be the opposite sex, but the grandiose wish to be both sexes that individuals confront. Until recently, because women have been denigrated (Horney, 1926; Thompson, 1941, 1942, 1950) and because the psychology of men has constructed the psychology of women (Gilligan, 1977, 1979, 1982), women's envy of men has received the greatest attention.

In 1941, Thompson (1941, p. 54) noted that "Any threat to the personality may appear in a dream as castration," and Grossman and Stewart (1977) illustrate this convincingly. They conceptualize penis envy as a convenient explanation, but not a therapeutic one, if offered

to the client to explain narcissistic injury, dissatisfaction, envy, and feelings of inadequacy. Penis envy may function as an "unconscious shorthand" for childhood disappointments that have become associated with genital differences, but the underlying feelings need to be understood. These clinicians refer to a woman who defensively uses penis envy as "proof" of her worthlessness, as "confirmation of her worst fears that she was in fact hopeless and worthless" (p. 127), and warn against such reductionistic interpretation. The gravest loophole in a reductionistic interpretation of penis envy, of course, is that its very inaccessibility represents a barrier to ever believing the desire it represents can be achieved (Torok, 1970).

Illuminating both in terms of the psychological roots of Freud's original formulation, and in the context of patriarchal culture, is the position that penis envy represents a defensive devaluation of maternal power (Horney, 1932; Seidenberg, 1973). The original narcissistic injury is experienced as helplessness and humiliation at the breast by both sexes (Lerner, 1974) and remains particularly painful to the boy who cannot identify with his opposite sex mother. Chassequet-Smirgel (1970b, p. 115) writes of

Penis envy not as a "virility claim" to something one wants for its own sake, but as a revolt against the person who caused the narcissistic wound: the omnipotent mother.

The mother is viewed as castrated to liberate oneself from her activity, her omnipotence, and the fear of her evilness. According to Chassequet-Smirgel (1970b), the penis represents the possibility of healing a primary narcissistic wound--the ascription of superiority

to the penis is the only way the boy can appease himself that he has what his mother lacks. Therefore, he reverses the pattern and creates a culture where women are as dependent as he once was.

Pertinent to the conflicts women experience around their accomplishments is the idea that the wish for a penis masks strivings for autonomy. Veiled autonomous strivings represent the fantasied relationship between intellectual functioning and the penis, the wish to be separate from the mother, and the wish for validation of femininity. Variants of the theme that "successful intellectual activity is the unconscious equivalent of possessing a penis" (Chassequet-Smirgel, 1970b, p. 106) appear in the writings of numerous psychoanalytic theorists. Applegarth (1977) observes that

women who present with a general doubt as to their capacities, even to the point of conviction that some essential feature necessary for success is missing. The missing feature is most often localized in the brain, and these women have a conviction that men have something that they do not. (p. 256)

Such a link between phallic imagery and achievement takes on greater meaning in the context of early symbiotic mother-child interaction. Because of the same sex identification between mother and daughter, separation is potentially more arduous for the girl than it is for her brother. The girl unconsciously envies her brother's apparently greater ease in growing up. Chassequet-Smirgel writes,

Basically, penis envy is the symbolic expression of another desire. Women do not want to become men, but want to detach themselves from the mother and become complete, autonomous, women. (1970b, p. 118)

The little girl wishes to be involved in a world separate and

independent from her mother (Chodorow, 1978).

That the penis becomes symbolic of the ability to be autonomous is far more than coincidental. After all, as Wyatt (1970, p. vii) points out, the observable anatomical differences between people are "the stuff of which men and women make up their fantasies of each other..." Horney (1922) noted that a penis affords the little boy fantasies of omnipotence with his ability to urinate like a man. In addition, the fact that he can exhibit, and manipulate his genitals while urinating, gives him greater permission than the girl for masturbation. Horney believed, then, that girls are in fact at a disadvantage for certain forms of gratification, since they are "subject to restrictions as regards the possibility of gratifying certain instinct-components that are of the greatest importance in the pregenital period." (p. 42)

More recently, Lerner (1977) has extended this notion in a provocative manner. She claims that it is parental mislabeling of the complete female genitals that deprive the girl of permission to have external, pleasurable genitals. In what Lerner refers to as the "denial of the vulva," she brings to attention the fact that little girls are informed that they have a vagina, but not a clitoris. Furthermore, the clitoris is seen as a small, inadequate penis because it is not given its own legitimate label as a pleasurable organ. Lerner considers penis envy to be the envy of permission to acknowledge a pleasure-giving organ--a wish for validation. The girl grows up wondering how she can have external pleasure and still be a girl. As a patient of Lerner says, "To have a penis is to have

permission to have what you have" (1977, p. 274). Mislabeled of her genitals teaches the girl that she must deny sexual pleasure, and thus, she learns that ambitious, self-seeking strivings are masculine.

"Having valued aspects of one's self-experience labelled as gender inappropriate may lead not only to conflicts and inhibitions, but to cognitive and intellectual impairments as well."
(Lerner, 1977, p. 281).

The wish for a penis can be seen as an expression of loyalty to the mother, and in this nuance, penis envy has the greatest interface with the dynamics of masochism for women who are conflicted about achievement. The phallic wish can represent not only a wish to separate from the mother, but also a "desire to reunite, to complete oneself, to overcome otherness" (Tauer, 1979, p. 289). The penis offers the boy the possibility of regaining symbiotic closeness with his mother. Thus, it is understandable that early theorists equated having a penis with having a child, since in mothering her own child, the woman can hope to regain the intimacy she experienced as an infant (Chodorow, 1978). Similarly, penis envy can reflect deep dependency needs and a wish to give the mother something she desires and will accept (Klein, 1945; Chassequet-Smirgel, 1970b; Lampl de Groot, 1933, 1952).

Torok's (1970) reappraisal of penis envy emphasizes the defensive nature of the wish. She calls penis envy an "invention to camouflage a desire" (p. 138) that is so dangerous it must be concealed. Like the masochistic defense that deflects retaliation for concealed aggressiveness, the wish for a penis is protective because it is, in fact, a wish for an inaccessible penis, and so maintains the

impossibility of ever believing a desire can be achieved. It is safer to hate her mother for lacking a penis, a thing, than it is to despise her for less tangible, but nevertheless painful, deprivations that lie in her self.

Like the loyalty expressed to her mother when a woman masochistically undermines her accomplishments, penis envy is also an "oath of fidelity" (Torok, 1979, p. 141) to the mother. The indisputable fact that a girl can only vainly search for a penis guarantees that she, on some level, is renouncing her disapproved-of desires. Torok maintains that the penis is idealized precisely to highlight the magnitude of the daughter's sacrificial renunciation. Because the young girl needs her mother's love, she thwarts her wish for autonomy that the penis represents.

The daughter who expresses her autonomous strivings faces a dilemma when her mother has relied on her as an appendage to complete her own sense of adequacy. Pleasure for the daughter, symbolized by masturbatory autonomy, is perceived as dangerous to the mother because it can weaken the daughter's dependency. When the mother devalues and discourages her daughter's growth out of her sense of disappointment, incompleteness, and unfulfillment, the girl confronts a painful bind: she can either be the mother's narcissistic appendage or be autonomous; she can have pleasure through autonomous masturbation, but leave her mother empty.

In her effort not to leave her mother empty and facing her own losses and disappointments, a woman learns to minimize her accomplishments or sabotage them before they occur. Again, the

inherent masochism is an illusory effort to compensate for leaving her mother empty as she grows up. The woman who is conflicted about her achievements feels guilty for abandoning her mother in her individuation process.

The seeming impossibility of getting a woman to give up her belief in her inferiority and her wish for a penis that Freud (1937) first observed, and the more contemporary descriptions of women with work inhibitions or feelings of fraudulence in accomplishments, is now more meaningful. Terrified of arousing the envy of those around her, and of her mother in particular, and too loyal to metaphorically castrate her mother when she refuses to be her mother's appendage, the woman withdraws from competitive activities and dissociates herself from her accomplishments. Her autonomous achievements feel aggressive and sadistic, capable of destroying others, because she experiences them as destructive to her mother. Unfortunately, the woman who is deeply ambivalent about her accomplishments is often so frightened of her ability to destroy her mother's sense of adequacy and leave her empty that she renounces her own desires and remains her mother's appendage.

Summary: Directions for Inquiry

Central to the dynamics that underly women's conflicts about their own autonomous achievements are the reappraised psychoanalytic concepts of penis envy and masochism. These ideas need not be abandoned because of the phallocentric bias that is responsible for their initial formulation. When they are conceptualized as serving

defensive ego-maintaining functions for the woman, their richness in expressing aspects of women's psychological experiences becomes evident.

Both culturally ascribed meanings to physiological differences and the physical differences themselves have an impact on an individual's developing psychological sense of self, and of self in relation to others. Girls and boys have different anatomies which give rise to different bodily sensations, different definitions of what is acceptable and what is taboo, and arouse different feelings and reactions in caretakers on whom the child is dependent .

The girl's developmental task of separation and individuation is complicated in two major ways that are relevant to adult women's achievement-related conflicts. First, as a female child, she is both more closely identified with her mother and more closely identified with by her mother. Her sensitivity to relationship and loss, particularly of her bond to her mother, grows in part from the intensities of these reciprocal identifications and from the capacities for empathic, affective relating that cultural and maternal expectations impart to daughters. Because mothers are so identified with their same sex children, and because as women, they, themselves, have learned to sacrifice aspects of their autonomy for either nurturant or dependent functions, mothers communicate ambivalent wishes and expectations to their daughters. On the one hand, a daughter receives the injunction that she carry on for her mother by fulfilling her thwarted longings and by compensating, with her own achievements, for her mother's disappointments. On the other hand,

the daughter receives the simultaneous message that her accomplishments arouse her mother's envy and potential retaliation, and, most destructively, threaten to leave her empty without a dependent appendage through whom she can live and bolster her self-worth.

The second complicated aspect of the girl's task of separation and individuation that relates to her adult conflicts around achievement lies in the relationship between the cultural devaluation of whatever women have or do, and the kinds of fantasies and experiences to which the more hidden, internal and mysterious female genitals lend themselves. Interactively reinforced by the fact that women are taught that they don't have what it takes to achieve, by the real inequities, injustices, and resentment they face as they struggle for independence, is the fact that masturbation, an autonomous, independent, pleasurable activity that can symbolize other growth-directed strivings, is subject to different kinds of constraints for girls than it is for boys. Boys experience their potency when they are permitted to touch their genitals while urinating; little girls are taught of their vagina, but not their clitoris, and learn that they must depend on others for fulfillment and pleasure. They may wish for a penis to mask their strivings for autonomy, to express the need to have legitimate and validated independent, self-affirming activity. The cost is greatest, of course, when inhibited genital self-awareness not only restricts other autonomous activities, but, accompanied by the undeniable fact that a woman will never have a penis, is used to confirm that fantasy that

she is incapable of autonomy. Such a fantasy procures some security for the girl, since she can remain pathologically and dependently tied to her mother who, threatened by the loss of her daughter, is already intensely ambivalent about maturation and separation.

In response to these social and psychological dilemmas, a woman follows her only recourse: she sabotages her accomplishments, devalues or disowns her achievements, or views herself as inadequate in spite of her activities to the contrary. Thus, she assuages her guilt for abandoning her mother, extricates herself from responsibility for her mother's rage, envy, or emptiness, excuses her mother's inappropriate dependency, and perpetuates the masquerade that she lacks what is essential for independent achievements. She remains loyal to her mother, but sacrifices her self-esteem.

The ways in which individual women negotiate these conflicts will be the focus of this study on women's conflicts about achievement. Empirical data will be collected to explicate and descriptively illustrate these developmental dilemmas for high-achieving women.

CHAPTER I I

METHOD

Introduction

The process of separation and individuation unfolds naturally, characterized by wide-ranging pains and joys. Under optimal developmental conditions, the complexity of emotions involved in this growth is not inhibiting, but rather enhances and enriches maturity. For girls, development toward a balance of autonomy and healthy adult interdependence can be complicated by the mother's identification and closeness with her same sex daughter. To the extent that the mother, constrained by personal and cultural limitations, has not had the opportunity to achieve a comfortable autonomy herself, she may unwittingly communicate an inappropriate reliance on her daughter to fulfill her own longings and to compensate for her own disappointments. The ways in which a mother consciously and unconsciously passes on to her daughter a sense of femininity and of being a woman interact with the girl's own wishes to please, satisfy, and complete her mother. When the mother inordinately needs her daughter to act as a narcissistic appendage to herself, the girl finds herself in a painful bind: she can grow up, but leave her mother threatened, envious, and even empty; or she can sacrifice her own autonomy in her deep sense of loyalty to her mother.

It is this conflict that is central to adult women's conflicts about their achievements. When a woman is torn about her own accomplishments, she is often, on another level, torn between her

commitment to herself and her commitment to her mother. Thus, the development of female sexuality and identity, and the daughter's relationship with her mother, emerge of major importance in understanding a woman's ability to take pride in her autonomous accomplishments, or in her more troubling unconscious need to undermine, disqualify, or disown her achievements.

This study is designed to explore descriptively how achievement-oriented women negotiate this developmental conflict. The intention of this study is both to understand and illustrate the kinds of issues that are hypothesized to be active for high-achieving women, and simultaneously to use the data for further theory building. Analysis of data will concentrate on the commonalities that emerge among different women as they grapple with similar conflicts, as well as on the individual differences in particular conflicts and their resolution, which will inevitably be great in a small group.

The data will be interpreted qualitatively, and three major questions, and a number of subsidiary ones, will guide the structure of the analysis. In addition, three speculations are drawn to correspond to the three major questions. These a priori expectations are open to disconfirmation by the data.

1. How do achievement-oriented women experience and negotiate conflicts about their achievements? What are the more unconscious fears associated with achievement?
2. How are these conflicts and fears related to the mother-daughter dyad?
3. How are these conflicts and fears related to a sense of femininity, female identity, female body, and female sexuality?

And more specifically:

- a. What is the evidence that high-achieving women devalue success, deny ambition, or feel undeserving of their accomplishments?
- b. Do women sacrifice or compromise autonomous functioning to preserve closeness with the mother? to avoid retaliation? to avoid threatening mother with loss? Is success for daughter equated with failure for mother?
- c. How does mother's ambivalence (i.e., in seeing her daughter mature) threaten the woman's female identity and sense of self that was formed and enhanced in relation to mother?
- d. Is autonomous activity or achievement viewed as inconsistent or compatible with femininity? Is a woman's body seen as an impediment or advantage to autonomy and achievement?
- e. Is there evidence of a fantasied relationship between intellectual functioning and having a man's body or being a man? Does the penis represent a metaphor for either cultural limitations to women, or for an internal experience of deficiency? Is the penis a symbol of the ability or legitimate right to be autonomous, or to separate from mother?
- f. Is there evidence that feelings about autonomous activity as symbolized by feelings about masturbation, are related to women's achievement-related conflicts?

It is speculated that:

1. There are both individual differences and commonalities in the nature of women's conflicts about their achievements, and in the ways in which they negotiate these conflicts.
2. To the degree that a woman has perceived her mother's ambivalence about her daughter's separation, autonomy, and accomplishments, the daughter will be conflicted about her achievements, and these conflicts will be embedded in the mother-daughter dyad.

3. To the extent that a woman has received her mother's ambivalent communications about being female and about developing sexuality and femininity, the woman will be conflicted about her achievements, and these conflicts will be intertwined with her conflicts surrounding her femininity and sexuality.

Participants and Recruitment

It is clear that the meaning of achievement differs for different individuals, and varies within social and economic classes. For the purpose of this study, high-achieving women are defined as female doctoral students in various academic disciplines in the Social Sciences and Humanities within the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. To ensure some homogeneity, only women without children, and who are between the ages of 24 and 32 were included in the sample. An effort was made to balance women who are currently in a relationship and those who are not. In addition, there was an attempt to have equal numbers of women whose mothers had been employed outside the home during the daughter's childhood, as women whose mothers had been primarily homemakers. Evidence from the pilot data for this study, and from the literature (Tangri, 1972) suggest that high-achieving women are more likely to have mothers who are educated and employed outside the home, than to have mothers who are primarily homemakers.

Names of female doctoral students were attained from public records collected by the University of Massachusetts Office of the Graduate Registrar. Two hundred women were contacted through campus mail and asked to participate in this study (see Appendix A for recruitment letter and packet). The women were asked to use their

imaginations to make up stories in response to each of five verbal scenarios. Of those 200 women, 18 (9%) returned their questionnaires without completing them, and 24 (12%) returned their packets with completed stories and participated in the study. Of the 149 women who did not return their questionnaires, 42 were contacted by phone but were either leaving town, not interested, or too busy to participate. The remaining 108 women were not reached, often because their phone numbers were incorrect or changed, or because their packets were sent back marked "Return to Sender," indicating that the individual was not at her listed campus address. Of the 24 women who participated in the study, three women were asked to participate in a two hour interview in which issues related to their achievement-related conflicts were explored. These three women were chosen to more fully illustrate different aspects of women's conflicts about achievement, and the different ways in which women manage their developmental dilemmas that relate to achievement.

Construction of Projective Stimuli

In order to explore the ways in which women unconsciously experience themselves and negotiate their conflicts about achievement, a set of projective thematic apperception cues were constructed. These ambiguous stimuli were designed to be used as a projective instrument. A balance was sought between sufficient ambiguity to promote the free production of fantasy material, and definitive characteristics that would provide a conceptually-relevant contextual basis for drawing inferences. In particular, these

stimuli were developed to assess free-associative feelings, thoughts, fantasies, and conflicts about the following areas of conceptual and theoretical interest:

1. One's own achievement
2. Achievement and relationship with mother
3. Achievement and female body/femininity
4. Achievement and fantasy of a penis
5. Achievement, masturbation/autonomy and relationship with mother

Although five storytelling cues were ultimately used to evoke imaginative stories, twelve stimuli were initially constructed and used for pilot research. These covered three additional spheres of inquiry: motherhood; marriage/relationship; and males having a penis. Due to the limits in the scope of this project, these areas were eliminated from the study.

Because this open-ended technique is being used to generate qualitative, clinical data, and can be regarded as a clinical tool rather than as a psychometric instrument, its "value is proportional to the skill of the clinician and hence cannot be assessed independently of the individual clinician using them" (Anastasi, 1976, p. 586). Therefore, to assist in the careful design and ultimate choice of stimuli, and to obtain informal consensus validation, pilot research was conducted in the following manner:

First, eight doctoral students in clinical psychology responded to the request to read each of twelve scenarios and write down the kinds of issues, feelings, attitudes, thoughts, and fantasies the

stimulus was likely to arouse. Their responses were consonant with the realm of themes and issues the stimuli were designed to tap, lending support to the stimuli's face validity. Cues that were viewed, even subtly, as demanding either positive or negative responses were eliminated or altered in favor of more neutral, ambiguous cues.

Second, six female graduate students from various academic disciplines (of 40 students recruited) each wrote stories to six of the twelve original stimuli. The final five cues were chosen and modified on the basis of the breadth and richness of data elicited by these original scenarios.

Corresponding to the five areas of conceptual interest outlined earlier are the five stimuli that were used in this study:

1. Debra just published her first collection of poems and the reviewers praised her work highly.
2. When Ellen decided to go to medical school, her mother wrote her a letter.
3. Michelle, who was just promoted to law partner in a small firm, stepped out of the shower and looks at her naked body in the full-length mirror.
4. Marie, who was recently promoted to a high level administrative position at her office, was surprised one day to find herself thinking about having a penis.
5. Just as the phone rings with her mother calling, Jennifer, an advanced doctoral student, realizes her thoughts have wandered to masturbation.

Nature and Organization of Data

Like the data in an interview or in the course of psychotherapy, the data collected in this research are clinical in nature and amenable to qualitative, subjective analysis based on the researcher's interpretation. Because of the subjectivity inherent in this mode of research, many interpretations may be constructed with the material these participants have created. Therefore, my interpretations have remained close to the data itself, and excerpts from the women's stories are included whenever they are seen as necessary to support a statement, or as informative to expand it. Although the excerpts may be interrupted by interpretations, most of every story is reprinted in entirety in the text. The essence of every story is conveyed, and sections or words are omitted only when they are judged to be redundant. An effort is made to print all material that may be relevant to alternative interpretations of the stories.

There are some indications that women who contributed to this project were responding not simply to the verbal scenarios, but also to me as a researcher. Although there was no personal interaction between most of my subjects and myself, women reacted to me, to my request for their participation, and to the actual cues with a mixture of fantasy-based material and realistic responses elicited by the characteristics of the entire task.

For instance, it is predictable that a research participant might respond to a request for personal and sensitive material both defensively and with concern, as well as with a wish to comply.

However, some individuals' reactions were judged to be suggestive of conflict engendered by the specific nature of this task. For example, one woman who was ultimately unable to participate in the study, spontaneously remarked on her feelings about the research when I called her to see if she would be interested in completing the task. She told me that she "would be happy to talk about it, but couldn't handle the format..." of the research. "Nothing came to mind ... maybe it was too open-ended," she said, and went on to tell me that she couldn't imagine asking herself these questions, and that "it seemed a round-about way to get at ... what it is like to be a woman in a predominantly male field..." While a number of the women contacted expressed their regret that they could not comply with my request, this woman's response was notably exaggerated. She repeated a number of times that she would "hate to disappoint" me, but that she "didn't want to give pollyanish responses" and so "would like to be useful" to me by talking with me about my research. On one level, this woman, informed by her own training in the social sciences and her personal beliefs, was conveying her doubts and questions about the nature of my study. On another level, however, her contradictory message that she wanted to help me, but not on my terms, was suggestive of complex underlying feelings about my request. Since this particular woman never participated, it is difficult to speculate much beyond the general. However, other women who gave spontaneous reactions to the task itself did participate, and their responses will be discussed in the context of their cases.

At times, the content of the stories themselves were reflective

of awareness, conscious and unconscious, that the stories were being written to or for someone who was interested in psychological phenomena. For example, one response to a particular scenario was a single statement, "You've got to be kidding!" Other women anticipated my interpretation of their productions. Another individual wrote, "Although Freud would make a lot out of her daydreaming, Marie is amused and unconcerned..." about her fantasy of having a penis. Others intellectually dismissed the notion of "penis envy" within the telling of their stories, as if to set me on the right path, as well as protect themselves from my analysis.

Perhaps the extent of my participation in this data is most revealing in the organization of the data into groups. Initially I had wanted the data to unfold naturally and I had envisioned unavoidably obvious groupings of participants. As I read and re-read the stories, I was overwhelmed by the amount and quality of what I had gathered, and came to realize that I needed to actively provide a structure to the material. I became aware of a tension between wanting the women who participated to speak to me through their stories, and thereby create a natural organization, and needing to apply a framework in order to manage the volume and richness of material that these women contributed.

Thus, I was faced with the task of reducing an overwhelming whole into workable groups without compromising the qualitative nature of the data. Readings of the stories began to suggest possibilities for categories. The categories which I eventually chose represent one of a number of choices I could have made; it was not an arbitrary choice,

but a decision that seemed to most comfortably reconcile the balance between a natural organization and a conceptual structure. My efforts to take all five stories into account at this initial stage of analysis tended to obscure individual differences, and so I concentrated on the first two stories in conjunction with each other when I assigned women to particular categories. Some women seemed to fit smoothly into a group and seemed to share something, even subjectively and impressionistically, with other women in that group; for other women my decision was more difficult to make. At times, I handled a questionable case by reading all five stories again, and tried to take them as a whole and as representative of a whole person. Other times, I did not feel able to make a decision with confidence and therefore there are four women's stories which I put aside and did not include in the final analysis.

Three groups of women emerged at this stage of the analysis. The first group, which includes nine women, are those whose stories indicate a significant degree of achievement-related conflict, particularly as those conflicts are embedded in the mother-daughter relationship. The second group, which consists of six women, are those women whose stories reflect an awareness of the complexity of issues surrounding achievement, but suggest a positive and healthy negotiation of these conflicts. Finally, the third group is composed of five women whose stories are suggestive of achievement-related conflict, but are characterized by a denial or avoidance of this generally unresolved conflict. It must be emphasized that these three groups are convenient but not absolute constructions, and that all

women do not fit neatly into each category. There is variety within each group of women, as well as overlap and continuity between groups.

Demographic Data

The demographic characteristics of the participants in this study are presented in Table 1, so that comparisons can be made across the three groups of women. (Characteristics of each group are presented in more detail in the following chapters.)

There is little difference in age between the participants in each group, although the women in the second group are slightly older than the other women. Over half the women in group one are not currently involved in a primary relationship, while the women in group three, and group two to a greater extent, tend to be in relationships. It is only in the first group that any women have mothers who have academic degrees beyond a bachelor's; over half the mothers of the women in this group have at least an undergraduate education. All but one mother in the third group have a high school diploma as their most advanced degree. None of the mothers in this sample have Ph.D.s, M.D.s, or J.D.s. Mothers are employed in a variety of occupations across all three groups, but there are no mothers in the second group who are primarily homemakers.

The educational and occupational levels of the fathers in these groups are notably different. Two-thirds of the fathers in group one have advanced degrees of Ph.D., J.D., or M.D., while none of the fathers in the other two groups has more than a bachelor's degree. Occupations reflect these differences in educational level; high level

TABLE 1
Participant Characteristics--All Groups

	GROUP 1 CONFLICTED	GROUP 2 POSITIVE	GROUP 3 AVOIDED
<u>Number</u>	9	6	5
<u>Age</u>			
Range	24 - 32	26 - 32	24 - 32
Mean	28.3	29	28.5
<u>Current Relationship</u>			
In relationship: heterosexual	4	4	3
In relationship: homosexual	0	1	0
Not in relationship	5	1	2
<u>Mother's Education</u>			
High school or some college	4	5	3
Bachelor's degree	3	1	2
Master's degree	2	0	0
Ph.D., M.D., J.D.	0	0	0

TABLE 1 (continued)

	GROUP 1 CONFLICTED	GROUP 2 POSITIVE	GROUP 3 AVOIDED
<u>Mother's Occupation</u>			
Homemaker	2	0	2
Secretary, store clerk, etc.	3	4	3
Teacher, social worker, business	3	2	0
Unreported	1	---	---
<u>Father's Education</u>			
High school or some college	2	3	3
Bachelor's degree	0	3	1
Master's degree	1	0	0
Ph.D., J. D., M.D.	6	0	0
Unreported	---	---	1
<u>Father's Occupation</u>			
Skilled laborer, salesman, etc.	2	2	2 (2 deceased)
Businessman, technician	0	4 (1 deceased)	2 (1 retired)
Teacher	1 (1 deceased)	0	0
Doctor, lawyer, professor	6 (1 deceased; 3 retired)	0	0
Unreported	---	---	1 (1 deceased)

positions are clearly more represented in the first group.

Qualitative Analysis of Stories

Once the participants were assigned to one of the three groups, analysis centered on the actual stories. My intention was to understand the women: What are the similarities among them and the differences between them with regard to the speculations and questions raised about their achievement-related conflicts? Again, the thematic areas of interest derive from theoretical and conceptual work on women's conflicts about achievement, as well as from the stimulus demand attributes reported by clinical psychology graduate students, and from pilot research data. Guidelines in the literature, especially The Analysis of Fantasy by Henry (1956; also Schafer, 1954, 1967, 1982; Atkinson, 1958; Horner, 1970) were used to establish the formal rationale and specific dimensions of analysis for the data.

Stories were analyzed qualitatively using the following dimensions for guidance:

1. Thematic and story-line content

- a. Manifest and latent content: What is the definition of the problem in the story? How does she respond to it and what does that say about the writer?
- b. Emotional tone: What are the feelings, images, and assumptions of emotions?
- c. Conflict: Is there an awareness of conflict; is it expressed or implied?
- d. Symbols and Associations: What can be interpreted from the sequences and specific imagery of stories?

2. Introduction of others

- a. Reference group: To whom does the writer refer? What are their attitudes? For what does she look from whom?

- b. Interplay between characters: What is the response of particular characters? How does she deal with the responses of others?
- c. Resolution: Is there resolution of relational dilemmas? Is it positive or negative?

3. Form

- a. Quality of imagery: Vivid and rich or impoverished? Original or common?
- b. Quality of story-telling: Spontaneous and reactive or restrained and inhibited? Is the stimulus used constructively or for escape? Is there freedom and fluidity in the telling? Is the rhythm smooth or interrupted? Are there pauses, contradictions, changes of mind, side remarks? Is there evidence of self-consciousness or censorship?
- c. Involvement in task: Is the story told in first or third person? To whom is the story directed?
- d. Organizational quality: How much content is introduced? What kind of content? Does the story have a beginning, a middle, and an end? How does it treat past, present, and future? Is the organizational level imaginative or characterized by listing or description? What facts of the stimulus are taken into account or ignored?

4. Language Usage

- a. Activity vs. Passivity: Is motivation determined by internal or external forces? Are movement or action words used? How does the writer approach or solve dilemmas?
- b. Quality of language: Are words used to obscure or explicate and explore? What kinds of qualifying, descriptive words are used? How keen is the observation?

5. Inner Adjustment

- a. View of self: What is basic emotional attitude toward the self?
- b. Attitude toward inner conflicts: Is the writer actively working through inner conflicts or allowing concerns to be unexamined? Are problems solved actively or passively?
- c. Attitude toward impulses: Is there awareness, acceptance, or rejection of impulses and feelings?

No quantitative score was obtained using these guidelines of analysis and not every dimension was addressed explicitly for each story.

Rather, these qualities of the vignettes were used to generate and

women. When a group of women is discussed as a whole, there is an emphasis on the high frequency of a particular theme, or of any other qualitative dimension. Qualities of the stories which are unusual or striking are also noted.

The Interview

In order to more fully understand these women, and the particular ways in which they experience themselves and their conflicts about their achievements, an interview was conducted with one woman from each of the three groups. The interview schedule (see Appendix B for informed consent and interview schedule) was developed to examine those aspects of women's lives ascertained conceptually to be relevant to this study. Three pilot interviews were conducted and the data were used to modify specific questions and areas of inquiry. The interview covers four major spheres:

1. One's own achievement
2. Relationship with mother
3. Femininity/sexuality/autonomy
4. Marriage or relationship/career/motherhood

Data collected from the interview was used subjectively and illustratively to substantiate and elaborate other findings. All identifying information was altered to preserve confidentiality of the participants.

C H A P T E R I I I

COMPLICATED NEGOTIATION OF ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED CONFLICTS

Introduction

The nine women in this group experience the negotiation of achievement-related dilemmas as both conflictual in nature and embedded in conflictual relationships. For them, developmental tasks which can ordinarily enhance individuation and separation are sources of anxiety and inhibition of autonomy. Conflict around achievement tends to be alive and disturbing for these women; even those women who arrive at some internal resolution do so at the expense of their individuality, or at a cost to the mother-daughter connection.

These women tend to doubt, devalue, or withdraw from their accomplishments. For them, the mother-daughter relationship is of central contextual importance. Maternal feelings of fear, bitterness, and loss typically undermine the daughter's efforts toward autonomy, and leave her actively struggling to maintain both a primary bond and a differentiated self.

The complicated and conflictual nature of achievement is matched by the self-critical, negative, or dissatisfied images of femininity experienced by most of the women in this group. Femininity is generally viewed as incompatible with achievement--either because success mandates hiding one's true self or because it precludes self-nurturance, sexual gratification, or personal satisfaction. These women tend to be attuned to the power ascribed to men in a male-dominated society, and to the unfair treatment of women. They

are sensitive to differences in the way the sexes experience the world, and commonly feel isolated or different from others.

Demographic Data (see Table 2)

The nine women in this group range in age from 24 to 32, with a mean age of 28.3. Four of them are currently involved in heterosexual relationships, while the other five are not currently in relationships. The educational level of mothers of these women ranged from high school (four women) to undergraduate (3) to master's degree level (2). Four of the mothers have worked part or full time--often a combination of the two--approximately since the time their daughters had entered high school. Three mothers have worked full time since their daughters were ranging in age from infancy to five years old, and two of the mothers have been primarily homemakers.

All of the women in this group have fathers who attended some college: four have M.D.s or J.D.s, two have Ph.D.s, and one a master's degree. Their occupations range from farmer (1) to businessman (1) to the more common teacher, professor, lawyer, or doctor (7). Three of the fathers are currently retired and two of the fathers are now deceased.

All of the women have or had at least one brother (one is deceased) and one sister. Sisters' occupations range from homemaker to secretary to computer analyst to architect, and brothers' occupations range from plumber to store clerk to professor. In only one family are all siblings professionals of a fairly high social and economic status.

TABLE 2

Participant Characteristics - Group 1

Age	29	29	25	27
Current Relationship Status	No Relationship	In Relationship	In Relationship	In Relationship
<u>Mother's Education</u>	high school; some college	high school; some college	B.A.	B.A.
<u>Mother's Occupation; and time worked during daughter's youth</u>	bookkeeper for family business; age 11-18	homemaker; occasional, part-time unskilled jobs	store clerk part-time age 11-15	homemaker
<u>Father's Education</u>	J.D.	some college	M.D.	M.A.
<u>Father's Occupation</u>	lawyer-deceased	lab technician	physician	physician
<u>Sisters' Occupations</u>	1. part-time secretary part-time mother	1. homemaker	1. business woman	1. business woman
	2. musician	2. computer analyst	2. sociologist	2. student
	3. secretary			
<u>Brothers' Occupations</u>	1. died as child	1. store clerk	1. electrician	1. student
		2. businessman		2. student
				3. writer
				1. writer
				1. business woman
				1. teacher-deceased

TABLE 2 (continued)

<u>Age</u>	<u>Current Relationship Status</u>	<u>Mother's Education</u>	<u>Mother's Occupation; and time worked during daughter's youth</u>	<u>Father's Education</u>	<u>Father's Occupation</u>	<u>Sisters' Occupations</u>	<u>Brother's Occupations</u>
24	In Relationship	B.A.	secretary full-time ages 5-21	Ph.D.	professor-retired	1. teacher	
27	No Relationship	high school	----- full-time after high school	Ph.D.	professor-retired	1. homemaker 2. accountant 3. business woman	1. salesman 2. salesman
32	No Relationship	MSW	social worker part- and full-time since infancy	J.D.	lawyer-retired	1. architect	1. lawyer 2. professor
25	No Relationship	M.A.	teacher full-time after age 16	some college	farmer	1. writer	1. businessman

Charlotte

Charlotte is included in this first group because all her stories suggest that she is currently negotiating underlying conflicts about her achievement and femininity. She is strongly identified with her characters, and tends to write lengthy, thoughtfully elaborated stories that convey the intensity and involvement with which she approaches her life.

Achievement

Although Charlotte begins her first story with her character's ego-syntonic response to positive reviews, she is not able to sustain this attitude for long, and immediately moves away from it, writing

...Things had not always come easy for Debra and yet she was not yet comfortable in making her self-assuredness public...

The fear, for Charlotte, appears to arise from a distasteful, but inescapable equation of self-confidence and limitless grandiosity, which is not only disgusting to her, but pushes others away. For Charlotte, the associations between self-assuredness and an omnipotent attitude is so threatening that she not only places it outside of herself, but in men, whom she draws as quite different from herself.

...Ultimate confidence in oneself is a trait that many women find revolting in most men, and as a result feminists, such as Debra, unconsciously mask their own confidence.

Despite her reserve, Charlotte's protagonist reaches out to a "good friend," sending her copies of the reviews, and calling her to talk, and simultaneously, Charlotte becomes more actively engaged in

her story-telling, developing a lively dialogue between the two women. The character's excitement is difficult to contain when she talks to her friend, and for this, the writer is embarrassed and subtly critical of the protagonist with whom she identifies, describing her as having "...bluttered out anxiously." The friend's response is not as explicitly enthusaistic as must have been secretly wished, and Charlotte's character becomes more reserved and restrained in her confidence. Charlotte writes,

...[Debra] added "can you believe it?"--as if to admit falsely of her own incredulity.

Charlotte is the only participant who introduces the protagonist's father, but not her mother in this first story. Considering the angry, frustrated tone of her story to the second stimulus which directly addresses the mother-daughter relationship, this emphasis may reflect a desire to neglect the more disturbing nature of that relationship's relevance to struggles for achievement. Charlotte's mother, in actuality a housewife with a college education who never worked outside the home, may not have had as significant a positive impact on Charlotte's academic pursuits as her professional father did, and so, in her repeated, but not entirely successful efforts to emphasize the positive aspects of achievement, it is understandable that Charlotte would bring in the father.

...It is only to her father that Debra can admit to her own confidence in her abilities. For it was he who instilled such confidence in the first place.

In the last section of this story, Charlotte's attempt to maintain an easy, accepting attitude toward the dilemma posed by the

stimulus is, for a third time, eroded by troublesome, and unresolved feelings that seep through. Debra puts off calling her father to tell him of her accomplishments. She is

...petrified that he would find it lacking in some significant way. Praise from the New York Times means far less to Debra than paternal approval.

This terror that her accomplishments, that she, may be found deficient by valued paternal judgement is unsettling, and Charlotte ends her story in that unfinished mode, leaving the reader with the same uncertainty that she experiences.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Participants generally vary in the form of their responses to the second stimulus. While the cue was intended to refer to a letter written by mother to daughter, women construe the situation quite differently from one another. Charlotte writes a letter to her mother, evidently in response to a conversation or previous letter, and the tone is intense, passionate, and imploring. It has an unusual quality of reality, rather than storytelling; there is little distance between the writer's feelings and the letter she creates. This is Charlotte's most compelling story.

If only I could convince and make you understand what it is I hope to do! If only you could be proud of me. I have chosen a path that is very different than your own. It is not a rebellion against you but it is a course I have known for a long time I must take. There are costs for a woman who chooses to make herself a professional. I appreciate it when you remind me of these.

Whatever cost Charlotte is consciously mentioning, it is clear that she is also talking about the painful and entangling dilemma women bear

in relationship with mother. She sees mother as not only unable to appreciate her decisions, but, threatened by her daughter's autonomous moves that are so different from her own, attempting desperately to draw her closer through discouragement and defensiveness.

Charlotte powerfully and abruptly writes,

I have chosen to shut men out of my life--at least for the meantime, as all my concentration must go into my studies and my work. I cannot afford distractions; the competition is just too stiff. The men who have wives will be at the top of my class, the women with husbands will be draggers to the bottom.

Relationships with men are impediments to success. In addition, this sequence suggests that Charlotte is still working over her fear that differentiation entails severing or ignoring a problematic relationship with mother. Indeed, it is consistent with this view when Charlotte continues,

It's not meaningful relationships I avoid but only marriages that constrain and impinge on women's lives and dreams in unfair ways. Won't you ever admit that some of this operated in your marriage to Dad? Can't you use your bitterness in constructive ways now?

Quite poignantly, Charlotte's letter responds to the mother's evidently prior communication of her own deep ambivalence about the constraints and choices in her own relationships and life. Mother cannot support her daughter's growth.

Although unable to adequately work this through with the mother, the writer struggles to reconcile the distance between them by experiencing her achievements reparatively, and offering them to mother as a gift.

...I do this for your mother who opted out of marriage and whose career was unattainable nonetheless because of the times, for a father who encouraged me to strive for my wildest dreams, but more than for them, I will become a doctor for you and I.

In this story, marriage is viewed as inhibiting "women's lives and dreams in unfair ways." More deeply, however, it appears to be mother's own conflict which impacts on the mother-daughter dyad that is inhibiting. Although the father "encourages me to strive for my wildest dreams," as he did in Charlotte's first story, it is clearer now that the focus on him in the earlier story left out the more deeply felt and disturbing conflicts for Charlotte.

For Charlotte, although it is not necessary to completely compromise autonomous functioning to preserve closeness with the mother, there is considerable evidence that such activity is threatening to the mother, and to the mother-daughter bond. It is as if the daughter's success defines the mother's life as a failure. The manifest intention to give up relationships with men implies not only a cutting off of relationship with mother, but the need to deny --perhaps out of punishment for her success--a crucial aspect of healthy adult sexuality in order to achieve. The daughter's reaction to her mother's underlying and complex injunctions leaves her feeling she must choose between being a sexually active adult woman and pursuing a professional career.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Some of the connections between sexuality, autonomy, and femininity are elaborated by Charlotte's later stories. Charlotte

responds to the third stimulus with a generally positive, pleasurable experience of her body, noting both her own "firm ... voluptuous[ness]" and the look of "intellectual concentration" on her face. One gets the sense that Charlotte is trying to relax with her story, but her intellect interrupts her fantasy. She writes,

As a feminist, she rarely admitted to herself the pleasure that she had gained from her body.

The pleasure Charlotte goes on to describe is not sensual or intimate, but rather pleasure the ways her body

has served as an asset in the past, a tool, sometimes yielding power. It could be used to challenge the sexual mores that often repressed women. A smart woman with a little experience may get men in positions they would otherwise not find themselves in, vulnerable ones, if they desire a woman enough ... she enjoys using her body to get close to those in power.

Charlotte would like to see femininity as consistent with achievement, but the underlying themes of her story are tinged with retaliation and exploitation, even when her body is seen as an asset. The fear that she uses her body as a tool is troublesome, and Charlotte undoes what she has said, emphasizing

... that her achievements had little to do with such exploits. Nothing at all, in fact.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

The fourth stimulus elicited a particularly controlled, intellectualized response from Charlotte. She begins her story with an effort to reject the fantasy, writing,

It had never happened before: now it seemed unusual that the image was so explicit ...

Within Charlotte's story, the protagonist consciously dismisses "Freudian theory ... as illegitimate ...," explains that women desire "what it [a penis] represented--social power...," and explicates her conflict between trying to "administrate in traditionally male terms..." and striving to find "morally" acceptable "feminist and ethical solutions."

For this woman, who is consciously trying to demonstrate that "Women can do things differently in male roles," the fantasy of having a penis represents the fear of being like a man. This is rejected on socio-political grounds and the only suggestion that there is an intolerable wish accompanying the fear is Charlotte's last sentence.

No, she didn't want a penis and promises herself not to let such a desire surface again.

The need to split off this fantasy and the refusal to entertain it again are reminiscient of Charlotte's first story in which she fearfully awaited her father's judgement that she, or her work, lack something significant and essential. While in and of itself not defensive, Charlotte's references to three of her protagonists' feminism, the degree to which the father is viewed as supportive of achievement and the mother as complicating it, and the ways in which female sexual activity is seen as incompatible with achievement, suggest that Charlotte may be repressing a latent wish to have something she perceives men to have.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

In her last story, Charlotte gives more evidence of the incompatibility of sexuality and achievement. She attributes her

achievements "...in part to a conscious exercise in sexual sublimation," refraining from sexual activity with a man, and going "...six months without a sexual thought..." She states explicitly that "Desire could get in the way." The story's protagonist moralistically contrasts the sexuality of women and men, viewing her own ability to "sublimate" as "repressed, perhaps," but a

female (even biological) characteristic which put women at an advantage, and gave them more integrity than men.

She goes on to describe men who give into desires and sleep with women "they don't respect," calls "such behavior revolting," and adds, "And men masturbate more than women." It is after this removed, but adamantly stated degradation of sexual activity that a phone call comes from Jennifer's mother. The call is a welcome distraction from bothersome fantasy since Charlotte ends her story, apparently relieved that

The thought of masturbating did not come up again until 2 weeks later ..."

For Charlotte, the relationship between autonomous activity, as symbolized by feelings about masturbation, is intertwined with her achievement-related conflicts. While male sexuality is consciously repulsive and inferior to women's, women's sexuality must be entirely repressed, or otherwise exploited, so that it does not interfere with intellectual or academic accomplishment, or so that it can be acceptable.

Additional impressions

Evidently, feelings aroused by the task leave Charlotte feeling ambivalent toward the researcher and toward the task itself. She includes a note when she returns her stories. She self-consciously apologizes for the delay in completing the stories (she took no longer than the average participant) and explains that her stories are "more analytic and less personal" than she would have liked. Her self-criticism develops into a more competitive, controlling, and devaluing stance toward the researcher when she wishes me luck with the analysis of "what can only be 'slippery data'," writes that she looks forward to reading the dissertation--"especially the methods section," and informs me that she will be willing to participate in a follow-up interview only if participants are "sampled at random."

Kate

Kate is placed without question in this group of women. Her first story is among the most indicative of the intense relational context of achievement-related conflicts. Kate approaches this task with deep feeling and thoughtfulness, and her characters and tales are alive, full, and convincing.

Achievement

In Kate's first story, any positive feelings about her self or her work are immediately supplanted by the expectations, reactions, and feelings of her family. Kate begins her story with a qualification:

However, her literary success was met with restrained praise by her family members.

The protagonist's own attitude and inner experience is crowded out and superceded by her family's overwhelmingly harsh, endless criticism. She tries to dismiss them, but their devaluation, envy, and anger is repetitively bombarding and annihilating. This story is among the longest written by any participant, and it suggests that Kate can barely distinguish her own wishes from the expectations of those around her, and that she finds it nearly impossible to listen to her inner voice.

Within the story, parents recognize their daughter's accomplishments only when

her passion since childhood--poetry--translated into, in their terms, a money-making venture ... Their comfort rested in the belief that Debra would discover, over time, that poetry wouldn't pay the bills and that their resourceful albeit fanciful daughter would find a "real" job; failing that, Debra was attractive and could easily find a husband who would not only support her in a seemingly lifestyle but quite possibly would also temper Debra's quixotic drive and stubborn insistence at her introverted hobby ...

Parental unacceptance is rivaled only by the elaborate devaluation and envy displayed by the protagonist's sisters.

Debra's two older sisters displayed no more enthusiasm for her success ... One sister ... silently considered her sister to be a product of too much coddling on their parents' part; Mother and Father had always spoiled Debra, giving the youngest everything money could buy, including a long education in the best schools in the country. Debra never had to work, and now she had the privilege to publish poetry, something anyone could do given enough idle time and comfort. Debra would never amount to anything, this sister thought. She would be a burden to her parents and then to a husband--once she was forced by necessity to get one.

The other sister ... [thought] Books were getting published every day; writing was no work, and in this unfair world, was highly compensated. Debra, in this sister's estimation, was an egghead. It's no wonder Debra isn't married yet. She's not able to relate to other normal human beings. She'll be a spinster, writing poetry for other lonely spinsters to read and review.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Again, in Kate's second story, the protagonist's feelings are displaced by the mother's demands, doubts, and warnings. One gets the impression that Kate's inner world has been dominated and stifled by parental injunctions for so long that she is oblivious to her squelched self-hood. Kate begins,

Medical school, in her mother's eyes, was far too frightening a prospect. Why did Ellen insist on being so competitive all of the time? ... Was it really worth it? ... There would be no time for a social life. And those will be, biologically speaking, the best years of your life. This is the time when you should be seeking a suitable husband and planning a family. Otherwise, by the time you become a doctor you will have missed the boat, and there is nothing you will regret more.

The mother's most blatant objection is that her daughter will miss the opportunity to raise a family, suggesting that her deeper and more disturbing concerns are tinged with her own regrets and disappointments, and her fears that she will be left behind, and alone, as her own family changes and grows.

Kate's character never responds to her mother's unrelentless discouragement and her ultimate "suggestion" that she choose another career. The story is without resolution, and glaringly lacking in any working over of mother's reactions. There is an explosion of

maternal demands in the guise of advice and helpfulness, and Kate displays no inner resources with which to metabolize or manage this quality of relationship.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Kate's third story, more so than any other participant's, is filled with distress, self-criticism, and drained of self-acceptance. It begins,

She felt that shudder of recrimination, that panicky feeling of uncontrollable guilt ... Long hours, first at school and later in the office, had over the years made convenience foods an attractive alternative to the time consuming tasks of a regular diet, and physical exercise ... Instead of possessing that svelte figure Michelle imagined she had, Michelle became increasingly aware of the actual dumpiness of her spreading thighs and unavoidable hips.

Not only is Kate as dissatisfied with her body and femininity as she imagines her family to be of her choices, but the image she draws of her spreading, invasive body is reminiscent of her inner state of being invaded by others in previous stories. Kate can only conceive of changes as emerging from a regimen of extreme and "monumental" deprivation.

Despair set in, and Michelle panicked at the awesome prospect of what obviously lay before her: weeks, probably months, or unthinkably, more than a year of constant dieting. There was not other option.

Kate conveys a dramatically unacceptable view of her body. Its imperfections are not tolerable, and she is replete with impatient contempt for herself. Kate's construal pits her accomplishments against her potentially flourishing femininity.

Achievement and fantasy of penis

Kate produces an overridingly free-flowing and lengthy fourth story, beginning self-consciously, but transcending most of her inhibitions.

Marie was chagrined at the thought; her face reddened at the recollection of the nuns who had taught her at St. Anthony's--thirteen years of a Catholic education, and now she found herself contemplating male genitalia! Marie felt ashamed of her thought patterns, but was unable to resist exploring the prospects.

She describes in detail her character's success, her promotion to a "heretofore all-male domain."

She had become aware of the tension this had placed upon her erstwhile excellent rapport with the women division supervisors--distance suddenly separated her from her prior colleagues. Marie also felt isolated from her new colleagues, the men ...

Like many of the participants, Kate arrives at a convincing equation of having a penis and fitting in with a male dominated world, and the pain of interrupted relationships, emotional distance, and isolation. Although this seems to be a safe and automatic response from most of the women, Kate arrives at it in a particularly well-developed and detailed evolution.

Marie felt this exclusivity and subconsciously began to ponder what it would take to regain the equilibrium ... Finally, her conscious mind recognized what her subconscious mind considered to be the answer: the penis.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Kate's last story is sharply defined, deeply felt, and she is clearly engaged with it, conversing compassionately with herself.

More than any other participant, Kate directs her attention to, and consciously makes links between the mother's intrusive phone calls and her unwelcome and intrusive attitude toward her daughter's sexuality.

When Jennifer picks up the receiver and discovers it is her mother's voice intruding upon her precious moments, she is terribly annoyed. "It always seems that Mother is trying to repress my sexuality"; this thought fleets through J.'s mind, to be cogitated later.

Mother has always interfered. When I was a child, she would interrupt my play with Jon and Mary and send the boys home. She never wanted to encourage my tomboy-ishness.

When I was in junior high school ..."

Kate's elaborate tale corroborates the notion that there are similarities, and even parallels, between different forms of autonomous behavior. Feelings about sexuality may be tied, and seem to be so for Kate, to feelings about more intellectual accomplishments. This fifth story is dramatically reminiscent of Kate's first two stories in which maternal attitudes pervade. Here, however, Kate's anger about this is more accessible. In the realm of sexuality (or perhaps after having written four stories), Kate can more actively process her mother's thwarting interactions. Kate's resolution of this tension includes "self-pitying reflection," a release of "anger and frustration" through masturbation, and, unfortunately, only an ineffectually entertained thought of altering the mother-daughter relationship.

Nothing could be done to rectify the past, she concludes, and it's futile to blame one's mother for being human.

Sarah

Sarah serves as a reminder that individuals are placed within particular groups in order to organize their material; her final three stories can be interpreted as reflective of deeply positive feelings about femininity, sexuality, and autonomy. She is, however, judged to be more like the women in this group than any other because she does exhibit troublesome, albeit occasionally latent, ambivalence about her accomplishments. In fact, the disturbing imagery in her second story, although dipped into and backed away from, is indicative of more primitive conflict than is typically revealed in these stories. Like most of the women in this group, she writes elaborate, detailed stories that indicate an identification with what she writes.

Achievement

The most obvious manifest theme in Sarah's first story is pride

that she listened to her heart and continued with her writing in spite of the lack of support she felt around her from all except her closest friends ... [in spite of] the frustration of what she felt were undeserved rejections, with doubts of her true abilities with poetry, and with messages from family and friends full of concerns that this literary path would lead to failure at worst and financial insecurity at best--perhaps she would be a secretary or work for the local newspapers, they said,--just as something to "fall back on."

Sarah's protagonist persists in working hard even when she is neither understood nor supported by important others. On one level, success is met with "relief and excitement" and the belief that

now others will treat her work more seriously and let her be to continue.

On another level, Sarah's anger toward others who have impeded her development, and her deeper fears are visible.

She also still carries with her some fears of where, if at all, this creative path will take her, but is at piece [sic] with the messages from her soul.

Sarah feels the consequences of accomplishments. Earlier in her story, she writes of Debra's "fears of her true abilities," crosses it out, and changes it to "doubts of her true abilities." Sarah would prefer to see her fears about the impact of her achievements on her relationships as her doubts about her own abilities. Similarly, she would prefer to see herself at "peace," rather than at "piece" with her soul. Sarah is torn by mixed feelings within and mixed expectations from self and others. There is an undesired discrepancy between being at peace with herself and her disturbing fears that her accomplishments will leave her without support, security, or connections.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Sarah's second story is perhaps the most chilling story of all the participants. The tale begins with background information: The protagonist's parents had initially doubted her decision to attend medical school. In a "discussion" about her decision

They had both pressed her with "Are you sure you want to do this?" and "It's awfully demanding, do you remember the Sheridan's daughter? She attempted suicide in medical school" as well as other less-than-supportive questions. Ellen had to close the subject and make it clear her decision was firm to end the barrage of questions. The rest of her visit was strained and uncomfortable, with conversation limited to weather, local events, and uncontroversial news topics.

Sarah evidently recognizes that her growth may be met by a lack of support and subsequent distance between mother and daughter. However, the introduction of a suicide in connection to professional pursuit is an extraordinary and haunting image. It indicates the excruciating depth of distress that Sarah associates with her achievement-related strivings. The extremity of the image of suicide to this stimulus points to Sarah's fear that autonomous moves threaten mother with total annihilation, destruction, and emptiness. Although it is the daughter who actually suicides within the story, the image itself is construed as arising from mother's conflicts. In this way, the destructiveness inherent in the action can be seen as relevant to Sarah's conception of both mother's and daughter's experience. The daughter's anger toward mother's inability to let go, like the underlying and unarticulated anger in the first story, is expressed through self-destruction.

Sarah's story continues,

Ellen opened the note to find an apology from her mother for not displaying support of this decision during her last visit. Her mother explained that she was full of fears with the announcement--fear that Ellen would move far away, and fear that the work would be difficult and stressful. Her mother was also regretful that she hadn't pursued her interests more fully at Ellen's age. Her mother closed with acknowledgement that Gretta Sheridan's death had not been due to medical school, but to the loss of her child, and wished Ellen the best with her impressive decision. Ellen was warmed by the letter and better understood her mother's initial reaction. She called her mother right away to thank her for sharing her personal struggle and offering support after all.

That the mother in her story can eventually apologize for her remarks, and more honestly acknowledge her fears, in no way diminishes the impact of Sarah's conflicts. Indeed, it illustrates them more fully. Sarah conceives that independent moves will be threatening because of emotional distance, and unconsciously perceives that the threat arises partially from the mother's unfulfilled wishes to pursue her own desires. Unfortunately, mother's own thwarted wishes are converted into a destructive, foreboding envy. It is fascinating that the suicide was purportedly due to "the loss of her child," highlighting convincingly again that for Sarah, autonomy is equated with maternal loss of a child. The threat is of life and death proportion. Striking also is Sarah's sensitivity to maternal internal experience. Not only is she responsible for monitoring how it intrudes on her, but she is moved when she can understand her mother's pain.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Following her first two stories, Sarah's third is conspicuously unambivalent and lacking in any emotional turmoil. Unlike most of the women in this group, Sarah presents a naive view of the stimulus; she is the only woman who does not explicitly recognize realistic disadvantages of being a woman in a primarily male-dominated profession. She fantasizes, instead, what is likely to be a wishful, idealized version of her world.

Michelle felt the health of her body matched the fullness of her life ... and was pleased to have been a part of developing a work environment where men and women alike were treated with respect for

their professional skills and knowledge rather than for abiding with socially expected sexual roles. She knew her knowledge of labor laws would enrich the firm and help it grow. This professional move was part of a larger effort of self-care and development, and her body reflected this. She was strong and healthy through good food, rest, exercise, sexual fulfillment, and attention to her spiritual self.

The tone of this story is remarkably nurturant. The imagery is highly suggestive of female capacities to conceive, bear, and nourish children. References to health, fullness, enriching others, and promoting growth are abundant; perhaps it is more than coincidence that the character's legal specialty is "labor" law. It is certainly possible that femininity represents an oasis of calm and fulfillment in Sarah's world. However, given the unusual intensity of these images, and Sarah's stories as a whole, this seems less likely. Following the more tumultuous portrayal of maternal care in her earlier stories, Sarah seems here to be looking to her career for the nourishment she did not receive from primary relationships, and simultaneously avoiding her own disappointment and sorrow by idealistically and unrealistically inflating the situation. Her pain is submerged, but her story sounds like a fairytale.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

In her fourth story, Sarah does not fend off the complexity of responses elicited by the stimulus.

Marie was continually frustrated at being the last of the executives to learn of information, meet new contacts, and obtain interesting assignments ... Besides being treated as a possible lay, or mother, or advisee in romance, she was left out of the important communications that happen in the Executive

Men's Room ... Things would be much simpler if she were male.

For Sarah, a penis symbolizes getting some of what is desirable in the external work world. It is a way of belonging and being privy to a world that is outside her grasp. Nevertheless, Sarah presents a satisfied view of herself, suggesting that the total idealization in her third story would not take the form it did were there not a dimension of reality to it.

She liked being a woman and was proud of the kind of sharing and nurturing that women are taught to display. In spite of the social power that is given to those who are penis-endowed at birth by this country, she would rather maintain the positive enriching aspects of womanhood, and learn to exercise different, more synergistic forms of power.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Sarah's final story, while brief, has a calm, pleasant sensual undertone.

Jennifer puts her thoughts of masturbation in the background, and has a pleasant conversation with her mother. Once the call is over ... she masturbates to orgasm. She rests afterwards, warm and relaxed all over.

Except for some indecision in her writing (there were three cross-outs), there was no overt evidence of conflict in Sarah's story. This is somewhat surprising given the intimate nature of the stimulus, and considering the responses of most other participants. One can speculate that had Sarah chosen to write further, more obvious conflict might have appeared. Noticeably absent from her story are references to major characteristics of the stimulus: there is no mention of Jennifer's academic position, and no mixed feelings about her mother's

phone interruption. In fact, Sarah is quick to open her story by putting "thoughts of masturbation in the background."

Janet

Janet is included in this group because there is considerable evidence that she is still actively negotiating conflicts addressed in her stories. However, she is considerably less constrained by her dilemmas than many of the other women in this group, and in that way highlights the notion that there may be a continuum, rather than any absolutes, in the ways women manage these developmental tasks.

Janet's characters often engage in internal dialogue, suggesting both that Janet is capable of introspection and that she allows herself to enter into her stories.

Achievement

Janet's first story is characterized by an alive and ongoing internal struggle between self-confidence and self-doubt. At first, this struggle takes place between Debra, who knows

deep down ... that they were good, she was good ..., and the reviewers whom she "anxiously" anticipated would label her poems as

women's poems ... meaning "lesser than", subjective", of "special interest."

Although she would not have been surprised by good reviews, Debra is "caught off guard" by great reviews, and the struggle becomes overtly internal, active, and dynamic.

A part of her questioned the reviewers' ratings. Perhaps they were giving her a break because she was the new kid on the block, perhaps they'd been used to poor quality poetry so hers shown [sic] by comparison, maybe she was just "lucky". A little voice, one she knew all too well, said "Debra, you're an imposter!" But then a stronger voice emerged; the one that said no! I am a capable, competent, creative, talented poet who earned herself the praise of the reviewers. She is a woman who can reckon with her own learned self-doubt.

Although Janet is able to end her story with the competent feelings overriding the devaluation of her work, her attribution of luck to her success, and her deep sense of deception and falsity, she does so by cognitively interrupting these feelings and thoughts. One gets the sense that while Janet is not lost in a morass of pain, neither has she resolved her underlying feelings about her achievements as completely as she would have liked. She is still intensely ambivalent about her accomplishments, and can only partially dismiss these feelings.

Janet introduces no new characters into this story other than the critics, of whose positive evaluation she is suspicious. Her inner voices speak to each other, and she grapples more directly than many of the other participants with the dilemma this stimulus portrays. Janet seems, in general, to be more aware of and better able to manage her conflicts than the other women in this group. In addition, Janet is one of the few women in this group who does not spontaneously refer to family members in this story; for her, the entire conflict is not so debilitatingly embedded in parental relationships as it is for others.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Janet's second story takes the form of a letter from mother to daughter in which Debra's parents are, in fact, "surprised and pleased" with Debra's news. While Debra's mother expected her to be a teacher and suggests pediatrics since Debra has "always been so good with children," she writes with excitement,

... I'd accept a world renown brain surgeon too!

Unlike the other women in this group, Janet can conceive of a mother who has the capacity to benefit from a daughter's growth away from her family. Mother parenthetically jokes,

(think of all the money we'll save on medical bills--yuk, yuk!)

Not only can this mother good-naturedly acknowledge and allow herself to derive pleasure from her daughter's achievements, but she can more honestly than others convey her fears.

Just don't go learning so many big words that you can't communicate with your old mom anymore. Your father will probably understand it all, he went to college at least. I guess if I'm worried at all it's that you being a big shot doctor will somehow set you apart from the rest of us. I don't know, I can't explain it really. You know your mother--I just worry too much I guess.

Janet seems both cognizant and generally accepting of the distance autonomy can establish between mother and daughter, and of the loss this gap entails. Janet's story includes a closing statement that "Dad and I love you," fitting convincingly in a story written by a woman who appreciates the loss her growth brings to her mother, but who can discuss this loss, and is not inhibited by it. Janet does not fear that her mother will be annihilated by her moving on.

That maternal loss is the most salient and difficult aspect of individuation for Janet is demonstrated pointedly when she adds to the end of her letter, her story,

P.S. I gave your green jacket to the Salvation Army. Presumably, this is a valued, precious, long-worn and appreciated possession that Debra's mother decides to give away. By imagining this sequence, Janet beautifully encapsulates and expresses the feelings mother has when she ambivalently sees her daughter growing away from her. Mother indirectly articulates her own pain by creating remarkably similar feelings in her daughter. In effect, she acknowledges that she has known, loved, and been given to by her endeared child, and that in spite of the loss she feels in relinquishing some degree of connectedness with her, she knows it is a helpful and healthful change toward maturity.

Achievement and female body/femininity

In her third story, Janet's character is again freely, comfortably conversing with herself. With pride and good humor, she congratulates herself,

... honey, you look pretty goddamn good for an old woman (all of 33). I feel so much more in control of my life since I quit smoking and began exercising ... not bad, not bad.

For Janet, there has been an association between muscularity and masculinity, and on another level, between muscular strength, intellectual strength, and masculinity. This association is no longer problematic for her, however, as she has reconciled it by accepting her own strengths and drive.

And to think--I used to buy that shit about muscles being masculine. (She flexes) ...

Michelle runs a 46:06 10K on Sunday with the city's running club. She feels good about setting goals and meeting them. It's interesting--she never felt particularly competitive in softball games, more intimidated than anything. But racing--just you to count on to compete against. Much to Michelle's surprise--she likes to pass people. Maybe it's because she knows winning like this is never at someone else's expense. A refreshing change from the dog eat dog mentality of the boys in law school.

In some contexts, exercising her strengths can be at someone else's expense. This predicament does not lead Janet to dead-end or undermine her character, however,--she succeeds in law--but she does find circumstances in which she can pursue her strivings unrestrained, and without hurting others. For Janet, it seems that achievement is compatible with femininity, but had first to pass through stages of being associated with masculinity, and then being feminized, in a sense, by a transformation that takes into account her sensitivity to others.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Janet's fourth story conveys a natural, nondefensive link between the wish for a penis and a wish for the advantages that men have. Janet carefully sets the stage for the penis fantasy. The protagonist's inner thoughts revolve around her new position, in which she is finding it difficult to do a job she knows she can capably handle. She continues,

As the only woman in her division, though, she was beginning to feel more and more isolated. And while she had always been a team player she couldn't help but wonder if the director wasn't blocking

some of her decisions intentionally--it was well known that he didn't take women seriously. The most confusing part was--here she was promoted to a position of greater visibility and power and yet wielding power was becoming more difficult.

Unlike some of the other women in this group, Janet allows herself to enter into this story. Thus, when she considers the meaning of her fantasy, one is convinced of the realistic injustices she faces, and that her association is not primarily defensive for her.

Other than its usefulness for roadside stops to relieve oneself, however, Marie quickly realized it was not a penis she desired but rather the power, the privilege, and the automatic credibility granted to those around her who had one.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Janet's last story is her shortest story. Although she processes the stimulus and responds to it, one senses that she finds the cue as intrusive as the phone call mentioned in it.

"Shit, that must be my mother, what a sense of timing," grumbled Jennifer as she rose to answer the phone. After a hasty conversation Jennifer returns to her masterbation [sic] fantasy--this time unplugging the phone.

The theme of the story and her telling of it are consistent with what is already known about Janet. She does not entirely reject her mother, or the stimulus. She is not impaired by the intrusion, but is openly annoyed. When faced with a dilemma between her own mastery (note that masturbation is misspelled "masterbation") and integrity, and cutting off a connection, Janet chooses to preserve her autonomy.

Carol

Carol's first story lands her without question in this first group of women. Even her manifest associations reveal troubling, active conflicts about achievement. Her stories tend to be alive and intense, and Carol allows her inner world to be reflected in her story-telling.

Achievement

Carol's disturbingly conflicted feelings about achievement are among the most striking in the sample. Her first story is intense, powerful, and alive. It is written fluidly and even with a sense of urgency.

Carol associates an accomplishment with feeling like a fraud; she devalues her efforts; she devalues those who judge her work positively; and she feels so embarrassed that she withdraws from others. Her story speaks for itself:

...Maybe it is just a fluke that her work "got thru". She awaits nervously to be "found out" for the bad writer that she is really. After all, as far as she is concerned, many "more skilled" writers in her peer group were not receiving similar acclaim. She feels embarrassed and doesn't share the news with her friends/colleagues. She loses respect for the critics that view her work so highly.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Carol's second story takes the form of a letter from mother to daughter, and it too has a sense of immediacy and potent feeling. The letter itself is laced with mother's disturbing double messages: On one level, there is a statement of support, and on another level,

there is aggressive discouragement.

Be aware how competitive that field is, Ellen. Many very talented and qualified people get rejected due to the sheer under-supply of slots for students. We don't want you to feel "rejected" in terms of your intelligence capacity. Then, of course there's a problem of gender that you'll contend with. Even though the process is hard on males as well, women are double-damned.

Mother's warnings about competitiveness, the likelihood of rejection, and the difficulties of being a woman make it virtually impossible to trust her "support and blessing." Carol conceives of a mother who passes on her own sharply negative views of femininity and competition in the guise of protecting her daughter. Like many of the other mothers created by women in this group, this mother's own fears intrude, and are expressed as warnings to her daughter.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Carol's third story, also intensely engaging and quick-moving, is plagued with frustrating, uneasy feelings. Carol concentrates on her character's feelings of inadequacy.

Why is it that no matter how successful she may be,
her physical "imperfections" can always get her down?
She gets a hand mirror to see "her worst side," the
back side ...

Why can't she feel good just being a good lawyer?
She feels pressured to be some ideal career woman--
beautiful, thin, intelligent, married.

Carol draws a dissatisfying picture of a woman wishing for perfection, but burdened with imperfections. Pressures come from external and internal demands, and as evident in her earlier story, from contradictory maternal injunctions, and Carol cannot measure up.

As in her first story, a theme of deception emerges here. Carol's character is unaccepting of her self, but grateful she can cover up with clothes.

...she does look good in clothing, thank God. She wonders whether her clothes are good enough for her new promotion.

Still, deep inside, Carol doubts whether her facade is adequate. Her question seems to highlight her sense of being a fraud, and she wonders whether she can continue to deceive others.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Again writing fluidly and with vitality, Carol approaches this stimulus with an effort to explain it.

"Probably," she thought, "related to the complete male dominance of her surroundings."

Unlike other women who build their entire stories as if to account for the cue itself, Carol accounts for it in her first sentence and goes on to associate more freely. She continues by questioning herself.

Did she get this job because she could "act like a man"? She laughed at Freud's penis-envy theory. She did not envy these men--threatened, over-zealous, wary of this woman in the office, promoted over men who had been up for the job.

Carol describes her protagonist's frustration in relating to "'fellow' workers as colleagues." She finds herself

...forced to pull away to fend off the sexual advances or angered by the lack of being taken seriously.

Even if some men treat her fairly,

...dealing with their wives, partners, was another fiasco. To them, she was a castrating bitch or high-class prostitute.

Carol presents a rather unaffirming, even ugly view of being a woman in a man's world. Her sense of failure, or being misunderstood and misperceived for who she is represents the flip side of her own devaluation. More surprising, however, is Carol's end to this story. Previously, Carol's tales end in painful conflict; there is a definite sense of struggle without resolution. Here Carol is more bold, taking chances, and presenting a possibility of female power, that, while not notably self-enhancing, is helpful to other women.

Was the job worth it? Unfortunately, yes. She was doing what she enjoyed; someone had to begin to open up the field to women. Why not her?

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Carol has no difficulty responding openly and freely to this last stimulus; she brings the reader quickly into the character's inner world and includes an alive dialogue between mother and daughter. Carol associates masturbation with "immediate pleasure, gratification" and quells her "guilt", reassuring herself that she "was not totally wallowing in hedonism." She overtly contrasts this activity with her work, which by implication, is "definitely not of that [hedonistic] nature."

Carol's story moves to focus on mother and daughter, and clearly indicates that there are associations, if not parallels, between feelings about masturbatory autonomy and achievement-related autonomy,

as they arise out of mother-daughter connections.

She laughed as she realized that it was her mother. Doubtful that her mom ever masturbates, Jennifer thanks the Goddess that her mom made her life easier, freer, more relaxed sexually. She wonders if her mom "knows" how sexually active her life is. Probably; it just isn't discussed. It's hard enough to explain the dissertation life to her. She keeps asking her when she is going to graduate.

There is a gulf between mother and daughter regarding both sexuality and academic work. Although they are on different generational tracks, Carol seems better able to integrate that in this story.

"I'll visit this weekend mom."

"Great, I've totally redone the guest room, your room."

Mother is construed as unable to understand her daughter's growth and separation, and this may be painful, but she is, in the context of closeness initiated by daughter, portrayed as capable of letting her daughter go and acknowledging that she is no longer as connected to mother.

Beth

Beth might have been placed in the third group of women because of the restrained, careful, distanced approach she brings to her stories. She does not enter completely into the world of her characters as other women in this group do, and she writes emotionally flat stories, often in the third person. In spite of this, there is considerable evidence of deeply ambivalent feelings about achievement, and so Beth is put in this group of women.

Achievement

In the first story, Beth's protagonist has put considerable effort into her poems, but because they are "never exactly quite perfect," she is "surprised at the rave reviews." Immediately, a connection emerges between an impossible quest for perfection, and a subsequent and subtle, but nonetheless present devaluation of her work. The devaluation is immediately associated with "plenty of confusion" about "exposing" private feelings and work to the judgement of others. For Beth, work is viewed primarily as a reflection of herself; in fact, there seems to be little distinction between the "outsiders" who judge her work and the outsiders who must therefore be judging her. She experiences

confusion about the validity of success--the possibility of success

in part because she is confused about her identity.

Beth writes with trepidation, as if she is as afraid of being judged and making a commitment in the story she writes as her protagonist is of being judged.

Debra could be plenty scared. Having others praise her work is a reflection on her/about her which she'll reckon with. Her vision of herself and her spot within her network of relationships will change. Frightening prospect and one sought out as well. People around her may see her differently--may see that she sees herself differently.

The stimulus arouses considerable anxiety for Beth. Her story is filled with fear--words such as surprise, scare and frightening set the tone. She is aware that her accomplishment will have an impact on her relationship with others, and conveys, albeit vaguely, that

those changes may be disturbing. Beth's final sentences, even if complete, have a somewhat fragmented quality to them, and her thoughts almost seem to dissipate. Her story ends ambiguously and ephemerally, but with a distinct undertone that leaves the reader almost relieved to find an undeveloped outcome, since were it developed it could surely be worthy of fear.

Achievement and relationship with mother

In Beth's most vivid, engaged response to a stimulus, she chooses to write two actual letters in response to the second cue. A letter from mother to daughter is followed by daughter's response. Mother is "quite taken aback" by daughter's decision, and while superficially supportive, her questions indicate that she does not trust that her daughter understands the complexity of what she is taking on. The mother in Beth's story disapproves of and devalues education, admonishing that friends will

finish college and find work and get on with their
lives while you'll be stuck in school.

It is as if Beth is not able to have the mother character articulate her own feelings of being left behind, but implies them indirectly when mother emphasizes that aspect of her daughter's experience.

Repeatedly embedded in the story is the pattern of mother's ambivalence expressed through a warning to her daughter. For instance, mother seems to be presuming her own situation when she asks, referring to a career and family,

Are you willing to give up one for the other?

Essentially, the mother in Beth's story is only ambivalently available

to support her autonomous moves. She says she is "always ... here" but tries to dissuade daughter. She dichotomizes family and career and threatens daughter with the loss of family, friends, and approval.

Beth is cognizant of mother's ambivalence, and of the differences between them. She writes,

Dear Mom
 Go jump in a lake.
 Love,
 Ellen.

Beth can manage maternal prohibitions only by rejecting her entirely. She resolves her conflict, but does so with a tremendously angry and counterdependent stance.

Achievement and female body/autonomy

Beth's third story takes on a more reverie-like quality than her other stories. She once again refers to an unattained ideal of perfection when she describes her body as "not great, not the best."

Although Beth's character

looks good ... feels good ... is in somewhat good
 shape ... had good luck with her health ...,

this perspective is not trusted or reliable, and her story is replete with questions of how others see her.

The thematic emphasis of Beth's story is on clothing, and how she has to cover up her femininity for work.

How odd it is that to be recognized as credible, she has to hide her body behind clothes that help to deny the sexual aspect of her--that hide the fact that women are built differently than men.

Beth perceives that the differences between men and women must be minimized, even denied to be "professional". It can be hypothesized,

too, that she more globally feels that she must hide her inner self with an outer cover. However, for Beth, a promotion, the acquisition of power and prestige as she sees it, allows her, at least intellectually, to be less dependent on external evaluation and more comfortable with herself.

She decides that, with her new position, she can relax her style a bit and wear clothes she finds more comfortable and attractive.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Beth's quiet, thoughtful, and reserved responses to the cues continue in her fourth story. She begins,

This made her uncomfortable enough that she decided to investigate her feelings.

Beth's stories typically suggest some initial surprise at the stimulus, a sense that they pose a dilemma which she has not consciously considered before. To this, she reacts by engaging the problem, but doing so rather cognitively, and with some restraint.

Here she questions what such a thought might mean.

Why would she want a penis? Did thinking about having one mean she felt she should have one? Did this have implications for her sexuality. Whew!

Beth's questions almost always sound like questions to the researcher; as if the whole time she writes, she wonders why participation in this task is requested of her, and wonders how she will be seen.

Beth's character observes the comfort among men at work, and writes of "successful people (men)" thus connecting success with being a man even more than the stimulus does implicitly. For Beth, male privilege is linked with undesirable and even somewhat illicit privilege.

She thought of the license to take time out during the day: how she felt obligated to not follow the men's example ... She saw many of the ways in which she needed to act more in concert with the established patterns than with her own feelings.

Beth is less rejecting of this unattractive image than other women in this group. Once she states that with a penis

she'd be much more comfortable at work and in her job...

the protagonist is able to return, with resolution, to work. Beth challenges herself by facing her discomfort with the stimulus. She deals with the anxiety aroused by it by explaining it, even compartmentalizing it, and consequently is able to feel relieved.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Beth's last story is the briefest, least developed, and least revealing of her inner world of her five stories. Her protagonist converses with herself, beginning with her regret at the interrupting phone call.

Too bad that Mom had to call she writes, but quickly decides it is "just as well" since a release of sexual tension would lead her to sleep and keep her from her work. For Beth, masturbation is associated with a release of tension and, as such, is viewed as a deterrant to work.

Susan

The conflict that Susan conveys in her first story is not as troublesome or blatant as the achievement-related dilemmas other women in this group portray, but it is present nevertheless, and

significant enough to make her more like these women than those in the other groups. Susan is involved in her story-telling, and repeatedly proceeds through a sequence that results in increased exposure of underlying conflict.

Achievement

In convincing, naturally told detail, Susan writes initially, and at length, of her character's unreserved positive feelings.

Debra is feeling elated about the publication of her first collection of poems. She has spent months working on them, and knew deep inside they were good, creative selections. After the publication, she felt high and confident and enjoyed sharing her happiness with friends...

Then Susan takes a step back and is closer to her ambivalence, just as her character literally puts distance between herself and her accomplishment.

The news about the positive reviews came to her second hand, from professors, friends, and her parents. She had been avoiding the reviews herself...

While Susan can manage feeling personally satisfied with her work, she exhibits more difficulty when others are involved and external judgement is made. She writes,

She had been scared about the reviews, almost hoping to be criticized instead of praised. The initial positive feelings about success of publishing now began to turn into feelings of pressure. Just as in the past the first A's had seemed fun and ok, but as the expectations about her work increased from within and outside, the pleasure changed to pressure and at times it immobilized her with fear. Could she accept this success, and not fear it so... It was hard for people to understand that being bright was not easy to accept.

For Susan, success is laden with fear, and is even paralyzing because she worries that she cannot continue to do well. It is as if, after all, Susan does not trust the stability of her inner worthiness, and feels intensely pressured to keep up her precarious image. She senses the discrepancy between her inner experience and her wished-for experience, and she is feeling unsettled, not understood, and alone.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Susan's second story joins her character as she hurries to a class, picks up her mail, and reads a letter from her mother. There is no overt indication of tension between mother and daughter in this story; evidently, mother is pleased with her daughter's growth, and communicates that effectively.

...the best part was always her ending them [the letters] with I love you always, Mom. Again, she mentioned how proud she was of Ellen going onto medical school, in the footsteps of her father, grandfather, and brother. Ellen felt a sense of family pride...

At this point in the story, however, Susan makes a shift, and her character is

...jolted into the reality of her class with the voice of her professor. Her one wish was that her fellow students might be more easy-going, and less competitive. She missed her best friend from college and felt lonely in this new city.

The letter from mother stirs up feelings of loss and loneliness, and it is with this that Susan ends her story. It can be speculated that this sense of distance and sadness is also operating in connection to mother.

Susan adds a parenthetical postscript to her story, directed to

the researcher, and indicating her sensitivity to the fact that her stories were written to someone.

(I found this one hard to write.)

It is not clear what Susan found difficult, nor what she meant by this, although her feelings of loss may have felt threatening to her. There is little evidence to build any specific hypothesis of Susan's defensiveness in this story, but perhaps she is jolted from her thoughts about family pride when more distressing feelings begin to emerge for her.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Susan's third story, like her others, reflects her involvement and identification with what she writes. As in her two previous responses, Susan begins with an optimistic view and proceeds into more complicated underlying feelings. In this story, Susan's protagonist is thinking to herself. She is, at first, pleased with her body which is "not bad ... firm, but not too fat," and satisfied with her resolution to exercise which has "paid off". Then Susan's doubts emerge, and her initial security appears to be more tenuous. She writes,

The only part of her body that was hard to look at and made her feel depressed, unhappy about being a woman was her face, just not pretty--and no hair style--too short but she seemed never to be able to let it grow or to get a perm.

Susan is the only woman in this sample who expresses dissatisfaction with her face, that part of her which is perhaps most revealing of her inner life, and certainly the part that is always exposed. That

which Susan points out could be changed--a hair style--is not, and one can wonder if a sense of worthiness or a fear of looking attractive inhibits her.

She hadn't had a steady relationship with a man in 3 years, and longed for one, lots of friends, but no relationship, just not sexy enough--but she resented the image of the beautiful blond sex symbol. She was a warm, caring, humorous person, her figure ok, wasn't that enough?

Susan makes the connections between feeling unattractive, not having a relationship, and rejected societal standards, but then leaves her character only passively objecting. Susan does not invest her character with the motivation to change; she seems almost surprisingly complacent and unable to mobilize. Discontent neither challenges her, nor affords her the means by which to feel less impoverished.

Achievement and fantasy of penis

Susan's last two stories are considerably briefer and less developed than her earlier productions. In her fourth story, her character observes her boss, who is about to lunch with a co-worker, an "aggressive and competitive all-American male" who obviously makes the connections he wants.

Marie hated this type of man, but part of her was also competitive and hoping to move up in the company. Could she do this without a penis/being a man?

Here Susan recognizes a desire to advance professionally, even an aggressive, competitive streak, but she finishes her story with doubts as to whether she has what it takes to advance. On the heels of her story in which her femininity is not good enough to get her what she

desires, the tone of this story is somewhat exasperated and angry. . Unfortunately, the brevity and relatively undeveloped storyline make it difficult to speculate more specifically about the anxiety Susan may be experiencing in response to the stimuli.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Just as almost every story she writes has a transition from unambivalent to more complicated feelings, Susan makes a noticeable progression from her first story, which begins with feelings of "elation" to her last, which although quite short, is tinged with impatience and conveys a more regressed approach.

Her mother wants her to come home for the weekend for a visit. She enjoys her mother's company but it is not deeply pleasurable like her relationship with David, she wishes David was here right now and not at the library--he is always studying lately and she feels sexually aroused, wanting him not her mother's demands.

Susan does not directly address the masturbation aspect of the cue, but tells her story around sexual autonomy nonetheless. Maternal demands for closeness intrude on daughter's pleasure, and Susan's character seems to be caught between a too-often unavailable partner and an available, but engulfing mother. Susan creates the unsatisfying options of frustration through not enough and frustration through too much of the wrong thing. She is unable to arrange a world where these poles can be reconciled and adult sexual needs are met.

Joan

Joan, too, does not fit perfectly into the category constructed by this group of women. In her first two stories, it is her reticence to reveal her own inner world through the inner worlds of her characters that is indicative of a troublesome resolution to achievement-related dilemmas. Her final stories, however, suggest a more positive view of femininity and sexuality that gives her much in common with women in the second group.

Achievement

Joan's first story is even-paced and somewhat dull in tone, even when imaginative in content. It conveys a feeling that the writer is holding back some stronger emotion, and in fact, external, but not internal events comprise the plot.

Joan's protagonist has worked hard on her poems, and has persisted in spite of previous rejections. Joan tells little about herself or her character on an affective level, but immediately introduces powerful parental views. The story is primarily concerned with parental attitudes, which intrude and obscure more personal feelings. By Joan's second sentence, she is writing,

Her parents warned her that poets did not make any money, and that she should stop being unrealistic and go out and get a real job or get married.

When the character's work is accepted by "a quite respectable publisher"--as if the reader should doubt it!--parents are again the focus. This time, however,

Debra's parents are suddenly pleased and very proud of her (her mother gave a copy of the book to all of her relatives for Christmas).

Mother, if not both parents, regard daughter's achievement as a narcissistic reflection of her or themselves. As long as Debra is unsuccessful, she is unsupported; when she publishes, mother is capable of being pleased, proud, and even shows off by making a gift of the poems to relatives.

In her reserved manner, Joan subtly devalues her work.

Debra is simply grateful to the publisher for giving an unknown writer a chance, glad that she had enough faith in herself to persevere. She is also looking forward to working on her next project in her new apartment.

There is a sense of convincing herself and the reader of the legitimacy of her efforts, and little indication that the acclaim is deserved. It is as if discouragement has left Joan able to persevere, and even move on, but unable to actively or excitingly engage in her work. It is not clear that she even takes her work seriously since "her next project" sounds less like a professional or academic pursuit in keeping with writing poetry, and more like a way to occupy her time.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Joan's second story focusses entirely on maternal feeling. Although the stimulus may elicit that, Joan is the only woman who writes a story, not a letter from mother to daughter, that does not address daughter's feelings or reactions. The daughter's world is noticeably absent, and sensitivity to maternal experience seems to

leave no room for Joan's own.

Although Joan draws a mother who is initially and ultimately "encouraging", she is also overtly ambivalent.

The thought of her daughter going to med. school brought out mixed feelings, however. At once the mother was proud and frightened for Ellen. Proud because Ellen had succeeded in reaching one of the goals she wanted most and for that her mother was glad. But she could not help but worry about what Ellen was doing to her chances for a fulfilling personal life--doctors had so little time for anything else.

This mother, like those in other women's stories, dichotomizes career and family, and it is likely that it is her own fear of losing her daughter and her own sense of having had to give up one for the other, that fuels this warning.

Achievement and female body/femininity

In Joan's last three stories, although all relatively brief and not well developed, she more dynamically presents the inner experiences of her characters. She begins her third response by correcting, or at least changing the grammar of the stimulus itself. She replaces "looks" with "looked", perhaps feeling critical, or at least uncomfortable, with what has been asked of her thus far. Her story unfolds,

"Not bad," she thought to herself, but she would have to get back to a regular exercise routine now that she did not have to hustle so much.

While Joan's character is not completely satisfied with her body, she is neither self-effacing nor overly critical. She attributes her concern about her weight to the "business lunches and cocktail parties"

which helped her to advance in her work. In this story, Joan conveys the message that hard work, and even a self-indulgence are worthwhile because they can lead to more relaxation and a "fuller life".

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Joan is able to entertain this fantasy, and by the end of her story, does so quite literally. She does not make clear what she associates with being a man or having a penis although she alludes to having some specific ideas, and rejects the notion that there may be anything desirable about it. She is initially startled and amused by the stimulus, but adjusts quickly enough to allow herself to consider it seriously.

The thought made her laugh. She had everything she'd ever wanted--an exciting job, a rich relationship, friends, a lovely home. And she enjoyed it all without locking herself into the uniform male-like behavior that some women felt they had to adapt.

She did not want to be a man. This way she could have it all and wear silk dresses too. Besides, she didn't think a penis would look good on her.

Unlike most of the women in the group, Joan constructs a positive fantasy in relation to this stimulus. There is little to indicate the arousal of conflict, and Joan seems to be pleasantly accepting herself.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

In this last story, Joan first seems to address her own questions about the nature of the stimulus, trying to explain its possible relevance. She begins,

She wondered what the connection might be and decided that it was probably that both made her feel warm, contented and reminded her that the world was still full of pleasure, warmth, and affection.

Joan finds a way to reconcile aspects of the cue which must seem at first to be at odds and surprising to her. She accomplishes this by associating both with positive, satisfying feelings.

The dilemma for Joan then emerges.

She smiled to herself, but decided not to tell her mother--she might not understand but, again, she might. Mothers grow up too, she thought and the two women were two adult friends now. She decided to tell her mother.

There is some confusion about the nature of closeness between mother and daughter, and how that changes over the years. Mother's capacity to understand daughter's sexuality is questioned, but Joan's character, unlike those of any other women in this sample, decides to share her intimate thought with mother. It is possible to wonder if for Joan, whose earlier stories were characterized by the intrusion of parental attitudes, closeness with mother can, at times, be at the expense of secure personal boundaries and inner experience.

Doreen

Doreen is included in this group because her stories indicate that achievement evokes considerable conflict for her. Unlike any of the other women in this group, Doreen's second story does have a poignantly positive resolution. While this gives her something in common with the women in the second group, taken as a whole, she is judged to be more like these women than those in any other group.

Achievement

Doreen's first vignette suggests that interpersonal relationships provide a context for her experience of her achievements, and that this context is intense, volatile, and conflict-laden for her. Her story begins with her protagonist "having a beer with friends to celebrate" her accomplishment, for which she has worked hard and long.

...Everyone is happy for her but it doesn't seem to Debra that they are as excited as she thought they would be (or should be) ... She feels that her friends don't fully appreciate her hard work.

Debra's best friend, Cathy, is slowly sipping her beer trying to think of nice things to say to Debra even though she is fed up with Debra's so called "success". She is tired of hearing about how hard she works and how good she is. Cathy has written some stuff of her own she thinks is pretty good but Debra has never even asked to look at it.

Both women have things they'd like to get off their chests but they go on drinking and pretending to have fun.

Doreen's identification alternates between one character who feels her success goes inadequately appreciated, and another character whose envy and hurt curtail her happiness for her friend. The closeness between the women is distorted by their angry pain. Each feels alone in her achievements, and without the support of the other. Accomplishment for one seems to leave no room for the other. Achievement separates even good friends. Although these difficult interpersonal dilemmas do not lead to a sacrifice of achievement-related strivings, they do leave Doreen's characters feeling isolated, unable to breach the gulf between them, and compromising the integrity of genuine honest communication.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Doreen's second story is dramatically different from her first. Here, she illustrates the extent to which maternal attitude is experienced as affecting a daughter's feelings about herself. She composes a long, detailed, and interesting story which ultimately focusses on that aspect of the mother-daughter relationship. Doreen begins,

Ellen had always played Hospital (not doctor!) with her brothers when she was growing up. Her parents bought them costumes and toy medical supplies. Her brothers were always the doctors and she was "Nurse Nancy". She had a blue cape and a black bag and she was very happy being the nurse and performing the tasks her brother asked.

As the tale unfolds, Doreen's protagonist does well in classes that might lead her to medicine, but, without considering her options, decides to become a nurse. Meanwhile, mother comes across and ponders old photographs of her children's hospital games.

When Ellen wrote to say she had changed her mind about nursing and decided to go to medical school, her mother wrote her a letter back and told her that she had been hoping that Ellen would become a doctor because she had realized that it was wrong to sex-stereotype her as a nurse at such a young age. She wrote that she had gone through many changes in her 45 years and now realized that Ellen had the potential to be anything she desired to be.

When Ellen received the letter she felt, finally, so close to her mother that she wept.

Doreen creates a mother who is ultimately able to overcome her own assumptions, reach out to her daughter, support her in pursuits that were previously not considered, and to recognize and share her regrets. The whole vignette has a story-book quality, and the resolution is ideal, with rapport and closeness deepened considerably.

Doreen's first two stories are complementary; they seem to represent different aspects of the same conflict. In one, competitive feelings go unexpressed and a close bond is disrupted. In the second, there is a recognition of what one woman does that may keep another from fulfilling her potential, and a bond is strengthened.

Achievement and female body/femininity

In her third story, Doreen presents her character as complacently depressed about her body. She observes the changes over the past five years: "20 pounds and her skin has lost some of its elasticity."

She was so ambitious and on fire to save the world then. But now, 5 years later, when she is finally a full partner with the firm, she just feels tired... She vows to go on a diet and join the spa ... but she knows inside she will never do it ... She heads for the kitchen.

Doreen associates a high-powered job with being sapped both emotionally and physically. She conceives of a character who sees no way out, and it is as if she is lost in the rat race. She loses out when she succeeds. The only viable option imagined is that of compounding the problem.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Although she maintains a fairly intellectualized stance, Doreen associates freely to the stimulus. She is reminded initially of penis envy, and one can speculate that she is trying to anticipate the researcher's purpose.

"Penis envy," she thought. What did Freud have to say about that? She remembered that little girls are supposed to have it at some point. But she couldn't remember her developmental psych class well

enough to know when or why.

Doreen is unable to find a satisfying cognitive understanding of the fantasy, so she allows her mind to wander. She asks,

Why was she thinking about having a penis now?

Doreen's character recalls her "envy" in high school

that boys could just pull off the side of the road and whip it out to take a whiz. She always had to make a big production of finding a restroom or peeing on her new penny loafers.

She decides her concern now is not so much with the "nature's call" as the differences between herself and her male co-workers. She questions how they might be different,

...better prepared, perhaps even superior by "nature" to perform their jobs?

Doreen has allowed herself to consider these thoughts, and although she provides no answers, no speculations, and no rationalizations, she casts them aside and "clears her thoughts". She reasserts her own capabilities, and convincingly accepts her own body.

She knew she was just as good as the men at her level. And she didn't mind squatting.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

In Doreen's last story, there is little focus on mother and daughter. Mother, however, is immediately sensitive to daughter's "preoccupation" when she answers the phone, and inquires into it. Doreen does not develop the phone conversation, but moves on to her character's thoughts about masturbation. Masturbatory activity is attributed to a lack of social and sexual contact while in graduate school. Like some of the other participants Doreen creates a vignette

in which sexual fulfillment and academic achievement are at odds with each other, and even mutually exclusive. Masturbation is viewed as a tolerable and practical activity.

She has no problem with masturbation--it does relieve tension--but she wishes she had the real thing now and then. She sighs, and heads for the bedroom for a little privacy.

The Interview: Kate

Kate was chosen for an interview because she seemed particularly representative of the women in group one. The interview with her confirmed this idea, and highlighted aspects of her experience and development that expand some of the connections between femininity and achievement-related conflicts.

Kate was generally soft spoken and thoughtful in the interview. Although her style was not immediately engaging in an outward way, she seemed interested in the questions asked of her, and was eager to comply. She allowed herself to respond freely to the interview, as she did to the story-telling task, and as a result, felt surprised by some of what she said. Near the end of the interview, she was given the opportunity to reflect on the interview itself.

L: What was this experience like for you?

K: It was O.K. I was surprised to hear how negatively I was assessing my own abilities, and my own production of work. I don't know if that's really the way I measure myself, but I was surprised to find that out because I do think there are ways I value what I do. I'm not completely unhappy with what I do. I was surprised to talk so much about my deficiencies, that my work was incomplete, and that I wish it

were more developed. Because I do write; it doesn't interrupt my writing too much.

L: Do you feel my questions led you to emphasize that?

K: Maybe. It's the whole nature of what I thought you were interested in. Defined in the sense of being a woman, I guess I do feel kind of negatively about my whole experience.

A similar thing happened in a women's spirituality class. I talked about how I felt as a girl and a woman growing up. All my answers were negative and I left with a depressed sense of not having a good image of myself. It didn't help me get beyond the sense of having a bad self image, but it gives me things to think about.

L: So talking with me today stirred up some uncomfortable feelings about yourself.

Kate was then given the opportunity to talk more positively about her work. Although she was able to do this, she soon reverted back to some of her more ambivalent reflections on the interview itself.

L: I wonder if you could tell me more about how it is for you when you're doing well and feeling good about your work.

K: ...I like the feeling when I put together broad ideas for the first time ... It's like a breakthrough, a discovery, and I understand it! ...

I'm not sure if I'm giving the answer. I'm talking a lot, especially when talking about personal things--that's not a comfortable area. Maybe I talk more, but I give you less of an answer. Especially in relation to questions about my mother. I wasn't sure I was able to tell you exactly what I think ... Maybe the feelings I'm having that haven't really surfaced.

In fact, Kate did focus on her more negative feelings about her self and her relationships. To questions regarding her feelings

about her work and her style of working, Kate described, in different ways, her sense of "low self-esteem" and feelings of deficiencies in her work.

K: ...a sense of being reluctant to put my ideas down on paper, because that's such a static form and once I've written it down, it doesn't sound like a well-formed argument. And you're putting yourself on the line when you write something down. So ... I have incompletes in a couple of courses because I don't have the confidence to sit down and put my ideas down.

...I don't like to look back at what I've written in the past. It doesn't sound right; it seems the ideas are emotionally turbulent. To me, it shows the ignorance I had at that time because of what it leaves out or the answers I put down. So when I write something down, I always feel like it's incomplete, that it hasn't reached a very developed stage yet.

When Kate looks back on her accomplishments, they are diminished in value. Even when she feels proud of her work, she feels it is a risk to let people know that, and eventually distorts her initial sense of accomplishment. About a recent presentation, she says,

K: Looking back on it, I feel now it probably wasn't as polished or developed as I would've liked it to be. I can see some of the flaws in the analysis I gave. I don't reflect on it too often because I feel bad about the deficiencies that were in the presentation.

Kate's stories indicated that unconsciously, parental expectations and demands are of central importance to Kate. In the interview, Kate responded in a manner that supported this. When asked how she came to be a graduate student in this particular field, she was alone of the women interviewed, to speak of her parents. She spoke of her family's interests in related intellectual areas, her parents'

political activities, and the "dinner table conversation" that influenced her greatly growing up. More interestingly, however, was Kate's introduction of her parents when asked how she made sense of her difficulty tolerating her stages of intellectual development and her feeling that she had not accomplished enough.

K: In part, it's parental expectations or looking at people around me who are my age or younger who are able to put ideas together that sound inspirational to me.

Later, in the context of discussing her relationship with her mother, Kate spoke of the difficulty she has experienced feeling her intellectual ideas are respected by her parents. She described an incident in which she "condescendingly" criticized her mother's "hard to defend" position, and later was "upset and felt very badly."

K: But I felt very personally that it was the role my parents took of putting down my ideas because I'm young and don't know what I'm talking about. After that, when we talked in depth about a subject, she gave me more credibility and was able to see I was becoming independent of my parents. I was treated much more as an adult. She put me down less.

Kate is the only woman interviewed who called her relationship with her mother "distant". She told of the ways she needed to move to a foreign country, in part to establish herself as separate from her mother and adults in relation to her, and of the times she needed to assert herself strongly, almost aggressively to have distance from her mother and be recognized as an adult. Conversations between Kate and her mother about her work always involve mother's screening the content to determine whether Kate expects to be living close by geographically, or in another country.

Kate regrets the condescension she has occasionally experienced toward her mother, and is torn in her allegiance to her.

K: As I spend more time with my academic friends, the more out of touch I become in being able to communicate with her. So much of my personal life revolves around intellectual ideas and conversations, and with my mother I don't do that. I owe a lot to my mother, and she's not a stupid woman. Like that conversation when I got upset with her--condescending. She didn't deserve that. I do it to defend myself: my ideas were dismissed, not given credibility. I was frustrated because I couldn't express myself, and if I did, it was brushed off.

Kate attributes her harshness toward her mother to the ways in which she did not feel supported or respected for her intellectual capacity and integrity. In the context of discussing her mother's feelings about Kate's work, Kate offers a more compassionate view.

K: I often think of her as a woman born in the wrong time because she could be quite a feminist. She speaks as quite a feminist. When she was in college, women were not encouraged to study and she became a mother and a secretary. She often speaks about women's issues, but she didn't have the confidence and courage to take a nontraditional path at that time because there weren't many women doing it. And I think that now she's kind of envious a little bit that women can do it, can choose, and that she was quite capable of doing it.

Kate is sensitive to the strain this reciprocal identification between mother and daughter gives to their bond.

L: What do you think your mother finds most difficult about your being in graduate school?

K: Probably that I'm an adult and don't need that relationship in the same form, or that I do know more on certain subjects than she or my father. The sense that I feel I have to put distance between us--that was a big part of my coming to graduate school in this part of the country was

to be on my own. And the other time I left the country. That's hard for her.

Kate's ambivalence about her accomplishments and her struggles in her relationship with her mother are paralleled by her dissatisfied view of her femininity. Of the three women interviewed, Kate is the only one who expressed negative feelings when asked how she felt about having a woman's body, and was far less accepting of her femininity than the women in the other groups.

K: I feel at a definite disadvantage--the dangers of rape, being not quite as strong as a man. There's so much stress put on a woman's body--you're supposed to be a particular shape, and a good woman is an attractive woman ... I think of myself as being more vulnerable. Susceptible to rape, being attacked ... Being put in a position, if I can't do something physical on my own, or having to ask a man to help me do it. There are physical limitations and I feel like I have to compromise my self to deal with a reality of physical differences.

When asked, Kate recalled menstruating for the first time. Unlike the mothers of other women interviewed, Kate's mother had never explained menstruation to her. Although she had seen a film at school, and spoken with a friend, Kate did not know what to expect.

K: When it did happen, I was shocked. My mother was kind of concerned. She wasn't too happy.

L: She wasn't too happy?

K: No, she was kind of ... I think she was surprised that I started that young. She didn't really have any way to deal with it. She didn't have any Kotex or anything. I don't know whether she hadn't prepared me for it or whether I could deal with it.

L: Do you remember how you felt?

K: I remember feeling I was getting older and resented that. I didn't want to be older, to be menstruating. I knew my body would begin to change, and I wasn't looking forward to it.

The interview with Kate suggests that her mother communicated ambivalent views of both femininity and autonomy to her daughter. Kate's current experiences of herself, her accomplishments, and her femininity seem to be consistent with this ambivalence. Kate's descriptions suggest that she had to abruptly, dramatically, and even aggressively separate herself from her mother to preserve her own sense of individuality. There have been costs to her feelings of self-worth, her belief in her intellectual competence, her bond with her mother, and her sense of pride in her femininity.

Summary

For the nine women in this group, achievement tends to be both conflictual and embedded in conflictual relationships with others. In response to the first stimulus about achievement, each of these women give relatively direct evidence that they doubt, devalue, or withdraw from their success. Eight of these women introduce their families or close friends and colleagues into the stories--seven in starkly negative ways--suggesting the degree to which these women experience their achievement-related conflicts within relationships of primary importance.

Eight of these nine women draw unsettling and even disturbing pictures of the mother-daughter bond in response to the second stimulus. The conflict is generally blatant, characterized by maternal

ambivalence that is colored by feelings of fear, bitterness, and loss. These maternal feelings are typically construed as impacting on the daughter's own experience of herself and her accomplishments, and usually resulting in an impediment to her autonomous moves, and leading to increased distance between mother and daughter. There is considerable evidence that some of these women tend to be extremely sensitive to maternal inner experience, but lack the resources to metabolize that experience, and so are actively engaged in a struggle to preserve autonomy without jeopardizing a connection with mother.

Five of the women in this group respond to an image of femininity and accomplishment with self-critical, despondent, or negative views of the female body. Most of these women attribute unacceptable physical qualities to the incompatibility of taking care of oneself and achieving in this society. Even those women who do not draw such explicitly disturbing views of femininity in this context tend to contrast femininity with the work world either by suggesting that one must hide one's true self to succeed, or, in one case, use one's femininity as a means to achievement.

In response to a stimulus that elicits fantasies about a woman having a penis, seven of the nine women in this group associate to the advantages of men in a male-dominated culture, and to a link between a penis, being a man, and the greater ease with which men accrue social power. Men's advantages are not attributed to internal deficiencies in women, and about half the women in this group point to the unfair and illegitimate treatment of women. Four of the women write of the different ways in which women and men conceive of

and experience the world: to a slight degree there is an exhaltation of women, and a tendency among a few of the women in this group to paint a derogatory view of men. For four women, feelings of isolation from others, and particularly from other women, are evoked by this scenario. A common theme is of feeling different: from male colleagues who devalue, misunderstand, or are aggressively dominant; from the ideology of a male-dominated world; or from women who do not share her new level of authority.

More than any other scenario, the final one evokes considerable variability even within this group of women. The most consistent associations involve the notion that sexuality and personal gratification need to be sublimated or repressed in order to achieve (four women). Most of this subset of women, and four women altogether, describe masturbation primarily as a release of tension, often due to limited contact with men, or to the frustration of work. Four women elaborate on maternal intrusiveness, at times equating maternal demands with undermining autonomous sexuality. Two women write quite positive stories, construing masturbation as pleasurable and healthy, and associating positive affect with mother. Only one woman's story gives convincing evidence that there is a parallel association between the autonomy of sexuality and the autonomy of intellectual pursuits.

C H A P T E R I V

POSITIVE NEGOTIATION OF ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED CONFLICTS

Introduction

The six women in this group approach the developmental tasks associated with achievement-related conflicts with a capacity for positive resolution. These women are aware of and actively engage in painful and conflictual personal and relational dilemmas which arise in their process of differentiation, but they are not inhibited by complicated interactional or intrapsychic affective experiences. Achievement is not problematically embedded in relationships with others, and these women do not rely primarily on others for a sense of inner worthiness. They tolerate ambivalence in self and others, and accept their accomplishments, experiencing satisfaction and enhanced maturity.

While these women are as sensitive to maternal feelings of loss, rejection, and envy as are the women in the first group, they possess the capacity to contain and constructively internalize the tensions that exist between mother and daughter. Neither autonomy nor the mother-daughter bond are impeded or undermined in the resolution of these developmental conflicts.

The positive negotiation of achievement-related conflicts by these women is matched by their self-reflective, accepting, and satisfied images of femininity. While contrasts are experienced between femininity and a predominantly male work world, these women do not need to resort to self-criticism or undermining themselves in

order to preserve personal and professional integrity while managing the demands of the external world. These women tend to be honest in their self-examination, articulate in their emotional lives, and capable of imagining alternatives to the constraints of reality without minimizing the complexity of internal experience.

Demographic Data (see Table 3)

The six women in this group range in age from 26 to 32, with a mean age of 29. Four of them are currently in heterosexual relationships, one in a homosexual relationship, and one is not presently involved with any single person. Only one of the women in this group has a mother with a B.A.; the other five mothers all have high school degrees. All of these mothers have worked at least part time for most of their daughters' youth. Except for one mother who ran a business from her home, the other mothers worked outside the home as secretaries, clerks, teachers, or in business, beginning during the daughter's late childhood or early adolescence. None of these mothers were primarily homemakers for most of their daughter's youth.

One of the fathers in this group has only a high school degree, and two have attended some college. Four of the fathers have bachelor's degrees, and one has some graduate level work. Their occupations include salesman, business, computer programmer, lab technician, health inspector. One of the fathers is now deceased.

Four of the women have or had at least one sister (one is deceased), and five of them have at least one brother. Sisters' occupations range from secretary to dental assistant to social

TABLE 3

Participant Characteristics - Group 2

<u>Age</u>	27	29	31
<u>Current Relationship Status</u>	In Relationship	In Relationship	In Relationship
<u>Mother's Education</u>	B.A.	high school	high school
<u>Mother's Occupation; and time worked during daughter's youth</u>	secretary part-time ages 12-14	family business from home	independent business part- and full-time from age 10
<u>Father's Education</u>	high school	some college	B.S. and some graduate
<u>Father's Occupation</u>	salesman	family business- deceased	computer programmer
<u>Sisters' Occupations</u>	1. deceased	1. social worker 2. secretary	-----
<u>Brothers' Occupations</u>	1. lab technician	1. carpenter	1. student 2. architect

TABLE 3 (continued)

<u>Age</u>	26	29	32
<u>Current Relationship Status</u>	In Relationship	No Relationship	In Relationship
<u>Mother's Education</u>	high school	high school	high school
<u>Mother's Occupation; and time worked during daughter's youth</u>	secretary part- and full-time ages 12-17	teacher from age 7	store clerk part-time from age 10
<u>Father's Education</u>	B.A.	some college	B.S.
<u>Father's Occupation</u>	electrician	health inspector	lab technician
<u>Sisters' Occupations</u>	1. nurse 2. dental assistant	-----	1. sales clerk 2. student
<u>Brothers' Occupations</u>	1. store clerk 2. factory worker	1. investment consultant	

worker, and brothers' jobs range from factory worker to carpenter to architect.

Judy

Judy is placed in this second group of women because her stories suggest that she has managed a healthful resolution to her achievement-related dilemmas. All of her stories are elaborate, specific in detail, carefully written, and moderate in emotional tone. They are consistently among the longest stories written by any women in the sample. It is clear that Judy approaches this task with care and much seriousness.

Achievement

Judy's first story tells of a "young woman who has been trying to live independently," who works hard "to make ends meet" and to have time and energy

to encourage the flow of her creative talents into lyrical poetry.

In her tale, Judy acknowledges her character's "hard work" and depicts a woman who

feels a solid sense of accomplishment at having her work recognized as publishable material. This praise of the reviewers, of course, only adds to her sense of achievement.

Judy's feelings about achievement are expansive, and are not constrained by doubts or fears. Not only is the experience of accomplishment satisfying in and of itself, but it is even further motivating. Judy continues,

Debra's accomplishment not only makes her feel all the hard work was worthwhile, but gives her a new sense of purpose. She is eager to tackle the next project ... Her belief in her talent (not always supported by her family) has been validated and that gives her hope to go on.

Judy introduces parental figures into this story, although she encloses their apprehensions in parentheses, as if to demonstrate both their circumscribed and relatively unintrusive influence, and also her ability to manage their input effectively, and without being pulled off track. In fact, Judy's final paragraph seems almost to reflect the productive, self-enhancing internalization of parental concerns.

Writing poetry will probably never be an easily pursued career; Debra recognizes that. She also knows that an initial success doesn't guarantee future kudos. But she's a hard worker and confident enough in herself to know that even though poetry, to some extent, realizes its essence in being shared--she can enjoy her craft independently as well as in the glow of public praise.

Judy is capable of receiving intrinsic pleasure from her work; unlike women in the first group, Judy does not depend primarily on others to feel good about herself. She revels in her praise, and is not inhibited by deeper conflicts about her autonomy.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Judy's second story recognizes many of the same conflicts that women in the first group articulate. Parents are uncertain about this career pursuit because it is "a difficult field for a woman"; father's "conservative reservations" center on financial practicalities; and mother's concerns are for her daughter's relationship with

a fiancée. What distinguishes Judy sharply from the women in the first group is her final resolution to these dilemmas.

With thorough and balanced sensitivity, Judy explores her character's great difficulty reaching this decision to go to medical school. She contains parental advice by actively postponing telling them

until she was firm in her own mind about what she wanted to do.

Confident of her skills and sensibilities that suit her to the profession, and encouraged by teachers and friends, the protagonist can make her own choices.

More so than any other participant, Judy elucidates the strain between the protagonist and her fiancée, who, in spite of wishing "to be supportive," has "mixed feelings about medical school. Because the stimulus itself includes mother, and Judy chooses to focus on a fiancée, it can be speculated that, in disguised form, the same concerns about relational distance and closeness function between mother and daughter.

...he knew that it would put strains on their relationship not only because medical school was a tough environment for anyone to survive, but also because he had accepted an offer of employment in a different state than Ellen would be going to school ... In addition, the marriage would have to be postponed or be a very part-time arrangement which was something he was not looking forward to.

Judy does not flippantly dismiss these realistic and complicated factors that impact on her decision-making. Rather, she weighs alternatives and consequences, and exercises sound judgement.

Ellen, of course, realized that this was a complicated decision. She had the right to make an independent choice about her life. But she knew those closest to her, those involved in her life, would be affected by her decision, and to some extent she had to take them into account. This, in effect, was what her mother wrote her in the letter --think of us! And she did think of them and she did go to medical school, but she didn't marry Barry.

This resolution demonstrates Judy's capacity to make independent decisions, even if it alters valued relationships. Judy is neither debilitated nor constrained by the needs or expectations that others have for her. She is accepting, but not fearful, of the ramifications of her autonomous moves.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Judy enters into the world of her third story immediately, and with a definite sense of interacting with it. She appreciates and conveys the potential for distorting one's self-image, but convinces the reader she sees clearly.

Sleek! Of course its hard to see her image fully since the mirror is fogged from the steamy shower. But Michelle is well aware of what her body looks like, she's seen it often enough! She looks at herself in the mirror and says, "Congratulations, beautiful person, you are now a full fledged partner!" She is pleased with herself and excited about going to the informal party friends at the office are throwing in her honor that night to celebrate her promotion.

As the story unfolds, Judy moves from her ability to take pleasure in herself onto a more self-reflective look into her character's work. The protagonist has chosen to take a lower paying job doing public interest law, but she gets

a great deal of satisfaction offering her services to those who need it most.

She struggles with the sense of having something valuable to give to others.

It's hard to say just why Michelle feels compassion for these people. She has had a relatively easy life thus far. The only child of well-to-do parents, Michelle certainly didn't experience poverty. Law school was difficult for her as she was breaking into the still predominantly male profession of law. But her father and mother had supported her both emotionally and financially all along.

Although Judy cannot directly express the inner impoverishment that may conduce an identification with disenfranchised people, her associations within the story provide evidence that it exists. Judy ends her story revealing again deep satisfaction, but also another longing.

But she is also at a point where she would like to share her accomplishment, her goals and desires, to meet her needs on a deep personal level with one special person. About the only thing missing, perhaps, from this attractive woman's life is a strong emotional partner.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

The fourth stimulus elicits feelings of frustration, anger, and annoyance from Judy, as well as providing the impetus, more typical of her stories, for self-examination and understanding. She begins with her character's frustration "with the bureaucratic structure," a gnawing sense that in spite of her qualifications and skill, something is keeping her from doing her job well--"something is missing."

She had just had another "encounter" with her boss about something to be done when this thought (about having a penis) came unbidden to her mind. Subconsciously, I suppose, she was thinking that if she were a man her boss wouldn't harass her so much, talk down to her, and give her such a hard time. If she were a man he would treat her with more respect.

This makes her angry.

Judy continues to allow her thoughts to wander freely within the structure of her story. She describes, at length, a husband who "is sympathetic ... but doesn't really understand," and a woman friend, in whom she "confides ... often." Once again Judy returns to the actual fantasy and attempts to explain its emergence.

Marie was surprised to find herself thinking about having a penis because she'd never had that thought before. At first she wondered if it meant she had lesbian tendencies. Then she remembered something about "penis envy." Finally, she figures it had something to do with her relationships with men. That's when she remembered all the encounters with her boss and she revived her anger.

Where the women in the first group would be likely to stop their stories at this point, Judy looks more deeply within herself and arrives at a resolution that is ultimately more satisfying to her. She concludes,

At some point Marie has got to face the feelings of inferiority her boss arouses in her. With help from [her friend], Marie will eventually work up the confidence and energy to confront her boss and demand better treatment. Her job probably won't get any easier, but she will feel better about it.

Judy possesses the resources, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, to respond to a distressing, unfair situation. This she does without overlooking her underlying feelings, and without relegating all her pain to the external environment.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Judy initially responds to the last cue with a critical disqualification of it. She writes parenthetically, about the cue itself.

(how does she know it's her mother? on the phone?)

She calls into question the validity of the stimulus, thereby taking it more literally than she seems to have taken the others, and highlighting its unrealistic properties. Following the more angry and even inadequate feelings aroused in the previous story, this comment suggests a discomfort with feelings that have been stirred up.

Judy's actual story begins with a tone of nonchalance and mild defensiveness.

So what else is new? Jennifer often thinks about masturbation. It's one of the few pleasures she gets out of life during this period. Jennifer may feel a little guilty about her thoughts since it's her mother on the phone (they rarely discuss sex) but she certainly doesn't worry about it or think it's "weird" to the point where she'd give it up.

She continues, accounting for the knowledge that it is mother calling, by explaining that it is "her mother's usual calling time." The thoughts of masturbation are almost justified by a recent absence of sexual contact, and after a "chit-chat with her mother," Judy's character plans "a date with her lover for the weekend."

... For the time being, however, a little self stimulation would feel good.

Jennifer is very aware of her body and her needs. She acts to meet those needs and while they are not always fulfilled she doesn't get "hung up" about it. While she feels somewhat alienated from her parents because of their different sexual backgrounds that doesn't prevent her from communicating with them. Jennifer and her parents will probably never see eye to eye on many things. But she is a well adjusted

healthy young woman determined to meet her goals (such as getting a Ph.D. in Sociology).

This stimulus seems to have caught Judy more off guard than the others. Her story is as long as her previous ones, and in fact much longer than almost every other participant's response to this particular cue, but there is a strain of discomfort that does not appear in her other productions. In spite of this, Judy reaches a manageable, comfortable resolution. She is cognizant of the distance between generations, but can accept that, and move on.

Martha

Martha is included in the second group because her stories indicate not only the presence, but also an awareness and management of achievement-related conflicts. Although her first story is filled with powerful indications of conflict, and the resolution she constructs is not ideal, Martha is different from women in the first group because she can envision a resolution without sacrificing her work or her self. Her other stories support her placement in this second group, and Martha, too, is a reminder that these women fall in a continuum, rather than in absolute categories of conflict negotiation.

Achievement

Martha's first story, like all those she writes, is particularly rich, self-reflective, engaging, and fluidly written. In this vignette, Martha exhibits troubling ambivalent feelings about her accomplishments. Her initial response to the cue is to be "puzzled"--

"pleased by the prospect of success" but "uneasy". She questions,

Why did critics like her work? They must not have understood its implications. Perhaps she had not made them clear--perhaps her desire for success and approval had betrayed her into compromising her vision...

She spent a lot of time studying her work--where was it a whitewash?

There is minimal sense of deserving the praise awarded. Martha focuses her attention on aspects of her character's work which she considers illegitimate or "smoothed over," has serious doubts about the reviews, and fears that she compromised, and even lost "her vision" to gain success. She virtually distorts the acclaim, feeling "confused" and mistrustful of her work's reception.

They seemed to understand what she had done, but this seemed impossible to her. Perhaps the popularity stemmed from a profound mis-reading or perhaps she herself did not have anything really special to offer.

Martha resolves feelings of being "torn between these possibilities" by withdrawing from others.

Debra took a 6 month retreat, writing only for herself. She made a decision to, temporarily at least, write only for a select group of individuals whose ideas mirrored hers.

Threatened by her acclaim, fearful of standing out, and ready to feel misunderstood, Martha seeks safety through retreat and familiarity.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Martha's second story explores more fully the impetus behind her protagonist's withdrawal in her first vignette. Here, Martha sensitively and searchingly describes a painful, but tolerable,

tension between mother and daughter. Martha's tale begins with mother's reminder of family support, pride, and encouragement. But, Martha points out, "She did not say anything about her own feelings."

To this fact, Martha responds with impressive sensitivity and identification with maternal affective experience.

She knew what her mother's ambivalence must be, much better than her mother herself knew. Ellen felt them herself. She felt how much more suited her mother would have been for medical school, for any success, than she (Ellen) was. She felt the constriction of her mother's world each time she thought about her own choices.

For Martha, awareness of maternal conflict can preclude a more autonomous emotional experience. Her story indicates that mother's ambivalence need not be communicated directly or verbally, but that a daughter can be predisposed to sensing unsettling ambivalent affect in her mother.

Unlike most of the women in the first group, Martha transcends her dilemma and proposes and carries through a plan to bring mother and daughter closer.

This time, though, she decided to confront her mother and open this issue between them. She wrote her mother. She wrote her about her loyalty to her mother, her sense of commitment to her. She wrote about her fears that her life would look like a betrayal, a rejection of her mother, a callous enjoyment of what others lacked. And as she ended her letter, she had a thought--she strongly encouraged her mother to apply to medical school. She knew her mother had always dreamed of it. She enclosed information on her school's older student program, and on loans and grants. Then she went to bed and prayed she wasn't being condescending.

Martha knows her dilemma well. She interprets it as a struggle laced with feelings of loyalty, betrayal, and rejection. In this story,

Martha constructs a poignant and restitutive reconciliation of her own feelings, and of the distance between mother and daughter.

Martha's story indicates an extraordinarily empathic capacity to understand another's feelings.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Martha consistently allows herself to enter into the world of her characters quite fully. Here, she tells a moving and utopian tale of the clash between a woman's wishes to reconcile her femininity with a predominantly male work world, and the reality that she perceives.

She was struck by the contrast between the softness and richness of her own body and the way it looked when she put on her three-piece suits, her hard shoes and hard clothes. It made her want to cry, the idea of all that beauty and dignity encased in ludicrous imitations of male achievement fantasies. She had fleeting images of herself in some other place, keenly intellectually alive and challenged, but able to be fully alive in her body and emotions, wearing practical, beautiful clothing and doing meaningful work.

Martha then emerges from her idealized fantasy, thinking about her deep involvement in her work, but also of its inherent frustrations.

She remembered how hard she had had to work to get where she was today, how much she valued the intensity of the work, the respect of her peers, the exhaustion that came from hard work. But the position she was in seemed increasingly meaningless and alienated. She reviewed her options as she prepared to leave for work; she could quit, she could continue, she could get a hobby, she could try to change the whole 3-piece world. Nothing seemed like it would work. She sighed and decided she had the best of all possible worlds.

Martha considers options in her story. In this vignette, she is capable of vividly imagining a world that is consonant with her values without rejecting or devaluing either her femininity or her world.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Martha's fourth story centers on her protagonist's sense that "something was missing." She considers whether this might be a penis because

It seemed to be so important to everyone she worked with that they had penises...

She briefly contemplated the possibility that it was motherhood and a good lay.

After serious consideration of how her life might be different with these changes, she rejects all these possibilities.

Probably whatever she was missing would not be replaced by a penis. It was more a matter of attitude.

Martha's attitude seems stimulated by her previous story. Her dissatisfaction with what she describes as female values and the demands of the work world leave her ready to make a life change. Somewhat impulsively, Martha's protagonist exercises her option.

Three hours later, Marie, who had been brainstorming at her desk, jumped up, ran into her boss's office, quit her job, drove home, wrote all night, and the next day ... began her career as a concert pianist.

This story reflects a sort of romanticized, idealized, almost escapist attempt to feel more complete, and more satisfied. Significant, though, is that Martha is neither overcome nor constrained by her external world. She can envision new possibilities, and permits action on them.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Martha writes again as if she has gathered momentum from her earlier productions. The task itself seems to have stimulated provocative introspective thought, and empowered her. In this last story, Martha's protagonist reaches personal insights, and works independently and "fruitfully."

Martha writes that after a brief talk with mother, her character was pondering the relationship between her work she had been looking at, and her sexual thoughts. Both of these things were real and had integrity; talking to her mother did not. She had often thought about why good studying and making love seemed so related to her. They both had guts.

Martha contrasts the integrity of sexuality and academic pursuits with what was evidently superficial contact with mother. It is not clear from this story what disturbs her about the quality of the mother-daughter relationship, but other stories allude to both an intensity and distance between them that is unsettling. Martha continues,

Periodically she resolved to make her life as full of real things as possible, and to throw out as many phony things as she could. Today, though, she came to a real understanding of this issue, very suddenly. She decided she would no longer make the kinds of compromises everyone felt were necessary.

Martha never directly addresses the notion of masturbation, but quite explicitly associates sexual autonomy with her achievement-related strivings. The second half of her story focuses on the productive and meaningful work spurt she has. Her description of it is vaguely suggestive of its sexual parallels. She writes, for instance,

When she stopped, she felt very satisfied. Martha's character "purposely pushed away thoughts" or reactions that others might have to "her new tack." Evidently, she anticipates some disapproval, but

at the moment she just wanted to sit and feel the power of doing something well.

Miriam

Miriam demonstrates a cognizance of the complexity and pain of achievement-related developmental dilemmas. Her acceptance and ability to manage these conflicts lead to her placement in this group of women. Miriam tends to enter quickly into her stories, and engages actively with the world of her characters.

Achievement

In her first tale, Miriam lets the reader know that for her, feelings associated with achievement are both complicated and painful.

She was euphoric and depressed at the same time. Clearly proud and somewhat overwhelmed by her success, Debra also foresaw a future more complicated and challenging than it had been in the past. Moreover, she suffered from partum depression--the project (one near and dear to her) was over. She wondered what she would do next, and whether it, too, would be positively received.

Miriam makes explicit, and has an integrative capacity to deal with the intensely ambivalent feelings success arouses for her. She likens her character's loss to a maternal loss, and is quite closely invested in her work. She foresees a future that is more complex as

a result of her achievement, but trusting herself, worries more about her work being received well, than about her own ability to produce worthy material. She concludes her story,

However, Debra has faith in her ability--and, after a long vacation in Hawaii, she is anxious to get back to work.

Miriam constructs a character who has an active emotional inner world. She allows herself a rest, and is free to proceed without constraining extra baggage. There is, too, a sense of escapism here, but in the context of her expressed feelings, this is not troublesome.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Miriam's second story tells of mother's ultimate support of daughter's decision, but acknowledges the reservations that arise under these circumstances.

Her mother, like most dealing with the "modern woman," was proud of her daughter's decision, supportive but concerned that it might be "too much for her." However, after voicing her initial fears, she offered Ellen both economic and moral support.

Mother's concern very likely reflects a maternal feeling of inadequacy which she passes on to daughter by conveying doubts about daughter's capacity to handle what she wishes to take on. Fortunately, in this vignette, Mother still comes through strongly and predominantly supportive.

Ellen's mother did indicate that Ellen's father was less than pleased and grumbled about the cost of sending a daughter to medical school--especially since three more children were either in college or planned to go. But, even though her Mother hadn't worked--she had saved some inheritance \$ and told Ellen it was hers to use for school expenses, "no matter what your father says."

On one level, there is a conflict between parents regarding daughter's growth; daughter comes between them, and mother sides with daughter. On another level, (and considering too that Miriam's father had in fact died while she was still a child), this difference between maternal and parental sanction may indicate a further, albeit disguised, elaboration of mother's mixed reaction. In an effort to preserve mother as good, Miriam attributes reluctance to father. It is most significant, however, that regardless of the origin of this split, an unrestrained support eventually overrides other concerns.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Miriam's third story has her character looking honestly at herself, recognizing her shortcomings, and having the resources to enhance herself without engaging in self-criticism or self-deprivation.

She examines it carefully and decides it's gotten a bit flabby from too much sitting and not enough exercise. So, Michelle decides that with the promotion and the extra cash it brings, she will join a spa. Maybe she'll even sign up for those tennis and ballet lessons she's been dreaming about but couldn't afford...

As she gets dressed, Michelle finds herself smiling. Although a bit out of shape, she's basically pleased with her body and knows that the decision to get some exercise will make her feel better, both physically and emotionally.

Miriam constructs a character whose body affords her satisfaction and pleasure, and whose promotion affords her the opportunity to both give herself a treat, and promote her feeling of well-being.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Miriam does not allow herself to enter into the fourth cue, but rather rejects and rationalizes her response to the stimulus. The tone of the story is defensive and protective, and Miriam denies any concern about, or importance in, the feelings aroused by the cue.

She writes in entirety,

Although Freud would make a lot out of her daydreaming, Marie is amused and unconcerned. It certainly is no more or less bizarre than her other dreams. She's determined to stop wasting time daydreaming, and to use her time more efficiently. After all, one can't stay at the top by daydreaming.

In her story, Miriam views daydreaming as wasteful, and one can imagine that the stimulus makes her wonder, even if unconsciously, how her stories may be interpreted, and whether all this fantasizing is worthwhile. Miriam writes this story as if she is anxious to move on; she is intolerant of such daydreams, and tells the reader that her intolerance is connected to what she must do to "stay at the top." To maintain her position, she must push these thoughts and feelings away.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

In her last story, Miriam construes mother's call as a reminder of their different values. She perceives mother as disapproving of sexual activity, and imbues her with an almost omniscient quality.

It figures, Jennifer thinks--"just as I start thinking about sex, my Mother would call." It's almost as though Mothers know when we're doing something they think we shouldn't be doing. And sex definitely qualifies.

Miriam's vignette continues, and in it, a link is made by association between the autonomy inherent in sexuality, and that achieved in separation and individuation. The protagonist's "long talk with her mother" is "better than usual" because

Mother seems in a better mood and isn't trying to talk her into coming home after she gets her Ph.D.

After Jennifer hangs up she returns to her bedroom. Her thoughts return to masturbation and she masturbates.

Evidently, mother has had difficulty both understanding daughter's life and letting her go, and maternal affect has an impact on daughter's emotional state. Here, however, there is a change. Maternal demands are no longer intrusive, and daughter is free to return to her private activity. For Miriam, there seem to be connections between the ideas of masturbatory autonomy, sexual autonomy, achievement-related autonomy, and autonomy established through healthy separation.

Additional impressions

It is noteworthy that after she completes her stories, Miriam says she does not want to receive further information about the study, and writes,

Hope your degree goes better (e.g., faster) than mine!

She seems to encapsulate a spirit of competitiveness when she makes a comparison between her own efforts and those of the researcher. One can wonder if Miriam's helpfulness obscures some underlying hostility or envy which is not more thoroughly revealed in her actual vignettes, and which she is reluctant to encounter by learning more about the research.

Adrian

Adrian is included with other women who acknowledge, appreciate, and healthfully manage achievement-related dilemmas. Her stories tend to be positive, and particularly revealing of self-satisfaction and pleasure.

Achievement

Adrian's first story is thoughtful, even if brief, lacking in depth, and rather undetailed and general. It begins with self-reflection on the hard work and accomplishment, and the memory of feeling "like giving up." Adrian continues,

She felt appreciative of her family and mate. Somehow they had known she could complete what she often doubted. How she had learned, for future goals, that she could do it--it wouldn't be easy but it could be done.

Although in retrospect, "it seemed easy," Adrian openly acknowledges some of the struggles in her work. These struggles do not impair her, however, and this seems related to the family and mate she introduces in this story. It is they who have more faith in her than she herself does. When self-doubts surface, Adrian can safely fall back on the support of others to sustain her.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Again, in her second story, Adrian demonstrates appreciation for the complexity of feelings aroused by the stimulus. She constructs a compact, but compelling story.

The letter was kind of unusual for her mother. Although her mother rarely gave direct advice, it was clear that Ellen's mother was happy about Ellen's choice. Ellen knew that part of the happiness her mother felt was bitter-sweet. Her mother would have liked that same opportunity. Ellen realized that this would be both a proud moment for her mother and a bitter one. Ellen wanted it for herself though and was going to put all of herself into it.

Adrian tells of a mother who rarely intrudes, but who could reach out to her daughter when she feels strongly for her. In her story, Adrian is quite sensitive to mother's emotional life, aware and tolerant of her intense ambivalence about daughter's accomplishment. Unlike women in the first group, Adrian can appreciate these feelings, and although she fears that mother's feelings will diminish her own, ultimately, her autonomy is not threatened by them. She is clear that she will hold onto what she has, and that complicated maternal feelings will not compromise her efforts.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Adrian's story to the third stimulus is quite positive. Her first words, "She smiled" seem to both begin her story and articulate her response to the cue. She sets the pleasant, calm, self-satisfied tone of the rest of the tale.

She felt good and looked it ... She enjoyed her body now more than ever. It was as if she was finally content with herself--totally.

It was fitting. She was quietly pleased with her promotion, herself. It was reflected in the mirror. She got dressed, looking forward to the evening. She decided to wear something not just professional--a new image perhaps--a little more sexual.

Adrian's character's appreciation of her self, her capacity to see her internal experience reflected in the mirror in a positive external image, and the pleasure in her desire to wear clothing that is presumably more revealing of femininity, all speak to her satisfaction with her self, her accomplishments, and her body.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Adrian also begins her fourth story with her reaction to the cue as she writes, "She smiled." From there, she settles into thoughts about having the fantasy described, but does not address the fantasy itself, and this story seems more self-conscious than her others. Adrian is accepting of the cue, and her references two times to smiling, once to her thought being "funny", and another time to her character who "giggled to herself" seem to indicate a sort of secret intimate pleasure rather than any unsettling anxiety to the stimulus.

Her protagonist observes "how primitive we all are" and recalls fondly her pleasure in a sexual relationship of the previous night. She notes that such pleasures are becoming more important to her.

She often giggled to herself as a memory of a pleasurable evening floated through her mind during a business meeting or while engaging in serious conversation. She felt integrated--more total than she had before. She smiled and got back to work. It was nice to take breaks and fantasize.

This story, like the previous ones, suggests not only a deep sense of personal satisfaction, but an increasing productiveness and personal integrity arising out of integrating feelings encountered as she proceeds through developmental stages. For Adrian, the thought of a penis brings forth an almost naive, fresh enjoyment of sexuality.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Adrian opens her last story, responding directly, it seems, to the intrusion of the phone call on her private thoughts. "She felt very sexual, a bit frustrated." Like many women in the first group, Adrian draws a connection between sexual energy and the energy needed for academic work that leaves one sacrificed for the other. However, unlike the women in the first group, Adrian has progressed beyond that split. She envisions different autonomous behaviors as consonant.

Often during her comps she had felt so nonsexual as if her whole mind and body were consumed in her work. But, as she had progressed she had more time to feel "human".

Adrian does not refer to the fact that the cue describes mother calling, but in the context of her other stories, mother's presence does in fact seem to be less crucial than the intrusion itself. Prominent is the lost time for herself, for relaxation, and for satisfaction. Even this, however, Adrian can tolerate peacefully.

She thought about when she'd have a chance to be alone and relax and possibly be satisfied sexually. Maybe tonight she thought. She answered the phone, thoughts of masturbation settled in the background.

Leah

Leah's stories tend to be brief, at times to the point, and convey a distinct sense of having been rushed through. (This is corroborated by her writing, "Realistically, I'd never get around to reading it" when asked if she would like to receive more information about the research at its completion.) Leah is in the second group of women because she demonstrates some recognition of the dilemmas

connected to achievement, but establishes a notably positive resolution to these conflicts when she manages to express them.

Achievement

In her first story, Leah writes of a character who has been "writing and rewriting the poems" for years. While she does describe the protagonist's own feelings independent of others, the reader learns that

Although she had always gotten helpful suggestions from others she spoke to, and lots of support, she was never really sure how a large, critical public, who didn't know her and who had no commitment to her personally, would react. So publication involved putting herself on the line.

Leah is sensitive to external validation; however, she does not seem problematically reliant on it. Her character's response to the reviewer's praise is to accept it jubilantly at face value, to trust it, and to take it in.

...the praise was a tremendous boost--she couldn't do anything for days but be deliriously happy. When she got through that phase, she was highly energized to work on the next collection.

Leah almost takes for granted the support of others, and there is little that stands in the way of her further accomplishments.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Leah seems to reach more deeply into herself to write her second story.

Ellen's family was from a solid, working class background. She was the first kid in the neighborhood to go to college ... Her mother was very pleased at Ellen's success, but it was clear to Ellen that she was rapidly moving into a world of young, mobile

professionals and out of her customary background. She felt a lot of nostalgia for her family and neighborhood, and tried to think of ways to keep class barriers out of her relationship with her mother.

Leah's rather poignant story suggests the pain and loss of having opportunities and the ability to move beyond parents' place in the world. It can be surmised that the barriers between mother and daughter are emotional as well, and that such feelings arise in part from mother's ambivalent feelings about her daughter leaving home and moving on. While Leah does not explicitly offer the means by which she tries to minimize the distance between mother and daughter, she is included in this group because there is no indication that her effort to do so is thwarted, or that the situation itself is so burdensome that it keeps her from getting on with her development.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Leah writes her longest story in response to this stimulus, and it seems to have elicited more introspective consideration than some of the other cues. She begins, describing her character, for whom

Surviving law school, passing the bar, finding a decent job, and convincing the men at work that they needed to take her seriously was a long, hard struggle.

Her "long overdue" promotion is viewed as a means to move on.

Leah's protagonist then "evaluates" the "toll" stress has taken on her body.

She was tired, not quite standing up straight, looking a little softer/less lean than she used to. But throughout the whole ordeal, Michelle had not abused

herself and still was obviously a strong woman--both physically and emotionally. Basically she liked the way she looked.

Admittedly, she has changed over the years, but these changes neither induce self-loathing nor disaffirm her strengths. Leah draws a character who can accept maturity, can acknowledge the costs of living the life she has chosen, and can still greet changes with an appreciation for her own strengths and attractiveness.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

In her fourth story, Leah associates having a penis with being like a man. Her depiction of masculine qualities, in the context of this fantasy, is unappealing and undesired, albeit necessary at times.

She thought to herself that she had had to acquire some very masculine traits to make it in the business world--aggressiveness, occasional sneakiness, etc.--- but acquiring a penis was going too far! She laughed at the idea and hoped she would never turn into one of those male monsters at the office who equated financial success (and all the dirty tricks necessary to get it), fast cars, and sexual prowess.

Leah's story line is not particularly well developed, but the imagery she uses is strikingly distasteful. She writes of "aggressiveness... sneakiness...male monsters...dirty tricks," and one wonders how this picture is reconciled with her sense of her femininity. Leah tells us that this image is pressing for her, but dismisses it too easily.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Leah's last vignette, is again, only superficially developed. It hints at more complex affect than that which is written, and the feeling is that Leah chose not to put more effort into her

participation. She writes,

Heavy bummer--since mother was very Catholic and anti-sexual. But Jennifer had a cordial conversation, then hung up, decided to do a little more work, then quit early and smoked some pot before she went to sleep, and masturbate if that put her back in the right mood.

There is little indication of closeness between mother and daughter. Instead, there seems to be a compromised, but likely painful, acceptance of their distance and difference. There is almost a sense of numbness in the response to this cue. Leah's character casts aside her conversation with mother, and goes about her own activities in as easy and uninvolved a manner as Leah seems to treat her participation in this study.

Betty Jo

Betty Jo is included with those women whose stories suggest that they both experience and positively resolve conflicts about achievement. She writes less explicitly than many of the women do about deeply ambivalent feelings, and does not reveal the way in which she has negotiated these conflicts as thoroughly as other women, but she is judged to be more like the women in this group than any other.

Achievement

Betty Jo begins her first vignette with the straightforward, even brusque information that

Debra worked her ass off writing and it was a struggle all the way.

She follows this statement with a gentler admission of the doubts that accompany achievement-related strivings, and her character becomes more sympathetic.

She didn't believe that they would really be published until she saw the book with her own eyes. She kept thinking that the publisher would realize that they weren't any good and change his mind.

Betty Jo's character discovers the news of her publication and the positive reviews unexpectedly and with deep pleasure. She feels connected to, and invested in her productions, seeing them on the one hand as a reflection of herself, and on the other hand, as almost alien to herself--a pattern that is repeated in response to these scenarios. She writes,

It was almost as if it had taken on a life of its own.

For Betty Jo, the acknowledgement of accomplishment is quite private. No new characters are introduced in her story, and there is a sense of satisfaction with herself and in revelling in her work.

She tucked it away on her desk so she could look at it from time to time...

When she realized it was hers she just looked at her name standing there. She rubbed her fingers over it lightly again and again. Wow. No fireworks, just a soft cool wow flushed over her.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Betty Jo draws the reader immediately and again, almost gruffly, into the dilemma she encounters with her mother around her achievements.

Ellen's mother didn't know how to deal with the whole thing. She (mom) was proud of Ellen's ambition and

achievements but wondered why her kid wanted to choose such a hard life for herself. Of course she was impressed and proud and supportive--but other mothers had normal kids who got married and settled down in an apartment down the street.

Betty Jo creates a mother who cannot understand or fully appreciate her daughter's choices. She puts forth her best effort, but it does not bring them closer or minimize the distance between them. Betty Jo's character reacts emotionally and thoughtfully.

Ellen was a bit put off by this. It was sort of like she deprived her mother of her due.

Betty Jo is sensitive to a maternal injunction that she is owed something, but rather than sacrificing her autonomy or her plans, she experiences anger, suspects that maternal demands are greater than she can ever meet, and individuates adequately, ultimately able to support herself.

But in time other siblings would follow the other path (it's not clear that mother would be altogether happy with that either). Ellen, of course, entered medical school and through trials and tribulations, made it through her first year. Exhausted but victorious, she went for a summer's rest on the beach. (She worked for money, but that was only during the day.)

Ellen worked hard and became a doctor. She is very dedicated to her work and is good at it. She enjoys her life which is varied and well rounded socially and professionally.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Betty Jo's third vignette takes place in a hotel room. This unusual construction suggests a number of connotations, ranging from the glamorous to a feeling of isolation. For Betty Jo, however, it seems to imply that the characteristics of the stimulus arouse

feelings of not quite fitting in. While Betty Jo's character is in "good spirits", and does enjoy the "energizing ... city atmosphere," Betty Jo more subtly reveals an underlying tension of not belonging.

She writes, for example,

Walking down the street she sort of swings her paperholding leather case (whatever you call those things).

Betty Jo's protagonist is initially taken aback, critical, and self-conscious when looking in the mirror. It is as if Betty Jo is unaccustomed to self-examination.

Michelle was surprised to see herself standing there. "What a stupid place for a mirror!" ... Weird to watch yourself drying yourself. Even weirder to watch yourself watching yourself. "Humph" she thinks.

Betty Jo in no way rejects her self, in spite of the discomfort she conveys with this scenario. It is not clear which characteristics of the stimulus, or whether it is a combination of looking at oneself and a promotion, startle Betty Jo.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Betty Jo conveys both her imaginative capacity and her sense of humor in her fantasy that is elicited by this scenario.

It was a big rubber circumcized one. And she held it in her hand and wobbled it back and forth. She imagined herself sitting at a big desk rehearsing some important points she was going to make, emphasizing them shaking the penis at no one (but in the direction of where her "audience" would be) ... She saw herself facing a somewhat rotund older man in a suit making the points she'd rehearsed before, shaking the rubber penis for emphasis.

Betty Jo does not imagine the penis to be part of herself; she expresses no wish to actually be different. She associates the penis with potency in relation to others in the work world. Although somewhat self conscious in her fantasy--she refers to it as a "strange image" and suspects it "is full of major psychological implications"--Betty Jo follows it through, enjoys it herself, and proceeds with her day.

She started to laugh, turned her chair to face the window and put her feet up. "It's time for a break" she said aloud ... She ... went out to get some coffee.

This stimulus does not evoke feelings of deficiency or envy for Betty Jo, but rather a realistic and manageable appraisal of the ways in which men are perceived to have more power than women.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Betty Jo's last vignette is somewhat evasive. She avoids addressing the masturbation aspect of the stimulus directly, yet she both acknowledges and manages her mother's interruption of her private thoughts.

...Her mother is chattering about some pleasantries and various events but Jennifer isn't in a chatty mood. She is still emerging from a daydream state and feels sluggish (yet warm and cozy). At first Jennifer is annoyed by the interruption but as the conversation goes on she gets into the discussion. They talk for quite some time.

Mother is not perceived as overly intrusive, and her phone call is therefore neither troubling or unusually problematic. Although Betty Jo does not return to the masturbation thoughts at the conclusion of the phone call, her story ends with her character pleasurably engaging

in other less anxiety provoking self-focussed, if not self-indulgent, activities. She has "a little something to eat," goes to bed, and in spite of her intentions to do otherwise, sleeps late the next morning.

The Interview: Judy

Judy was asked to participate in an interview because her stories seemed typical of other women in this second group. During the interview, Judy was warm and engaging. She laughed good naturedly from time to time, demonstrated a good sense of humor, and spoke with certainty and vitality. Judy is quite invested in her work and her developing career, but manages to retain an easy, balanced attitude toward it.

Although she said she occasionally finds it difficult to complete her written work, Judy more typically spoke about her work with active enthusiasm, pleasure, and confidence. Judy's academic department is predominantly male, and she recognizes the breadth of problematic aspects of this. Nevertheless, Judy's experience leads her to emphasize that women in the department "are supportive of each other." She explains that she personally has not felt inhibited by "the old boy network." When asked to wonder how it might be different for her in her department if she were a man, Judy conveyed her capacity to negotiate her way through circumstances that might be more thwarting to others.

J: ...Women have told me this too--that my style is different in a way. The way I approach professors; I like to be very direct and it's not the typical female role. ...Men and women have told me this. I don't play the typical female role so either they don't know what to do with me because of that or they act like you know--the

gender thing is not a problem or an issue. So maybe it's my own particular style that makes a difference too, and I'm not aware of that gender issue as much. It's an issue, but not such a problem for me. It's hard for me to say because I'm not in that position.

Judy reflected on a deeply positive bond when she was asked to describe her relationship with her mother.

J: We are very close. We always have been. We talk to each other a lot. Some things I don't tell her ... Maybe some things she doesn't tell me. I mean I used to tell her everything, but now I don't. Partly because I don't want to upset her, or because my lifestyle is different from what she may envision. We're very honest with each other. I know she loves me, she knows I love her. We have a lot of the same tastes. She says I remind her of herself when she was younger. We seem to have similar personality characteristics. We have differences, but we like some of the same things. I know what she likes and I like to do things for her to please her, and she does things for me that I like. A lot of give and take.

Judy notes the reciprocal identification between mother and daughter and experiences this as bringing them closer without a loss of autonomy for either one.

L: How has your relationship with her changed over the years?

J: We've become more like friends over the years. We relate more as adults now as well as mother and daughter. It's gotten more full, more rounded ... It's grown over the years.

Judy does not find it necessary to minimize the difficulty she or her mother have experienced as Judy has grown up. Their changing relationship has had rewards, but has been painful for them both at times.

L: What times have been the hardest for you and your mother?

J: It's harder in some ways now. You can be yourself with your family--at least that's the way with me. When you're separated physically or geographically, or start to separate yourself emotionally as a result of growing up, then it's harder because you're alone. At least it became harder for me. Either you have friends to help you through it, or you learn to rely on yourself or both. You have to commit to relationships. You don't have a ready-made family--you have to make it. That's why I make an effort to know people in different places. I travel around a lot, and so I have ready-made families out there.

L: What aspect of your being a graduate student do you think your mother finds most difficult?

J: The amount of time I spend on my work. This is the view I get from her ... It's hard on her that I spend so much time on my school work ... She'd like to see me more, that's what it is. Up until I started graduate school, my first priority was my family. If I had extra time, I would go spend it with my family. Now I spend time with my friends, or on my school work. They're not always first priority and that has had an impact on my mother. She'd like to see more of me.

Judy's confident, proud feelings about her work and her accomplishments, and the parental support suggested in her storytelling are corroborated in her discussion of her mother's feelings about her daughter's work.

J: I know that my parents are very proud of what I want to do. You could just see it in their eyes. It's a really good thing ... They say "you do what makes you happy and that's what makes us happy" ... That was the best feeling--to know I don't have to do anything. I just have to be myself and these people say "that's great." That was the neatest thing. That's what I get from my parents. I don't have to do anything and they accept me.

Although Judy can appreciate the ways in which her advanced education and career pursuits may be difficult for her mother, this tension does not appear to threaten their connection.

L: How do you think your accomplishments affect your mother?

J: It's hard. Intellectually, she cannot discuss things on the same level. She hasn't had a college education. She's more common sensical... She admires my intellectual achievements and what's difficult for her is to feel like she can participate in that at some level. But it's not like we feel that's necessary, but she recognizes that difference between us.

Where women more problematically negotiating achievement-related conflicts may experience their mothers as depending on them to extend their own wishes and disappointments, Judy is firm in her awareness of the separateness between mother and daughter.

L: Do you ever have the sense that your mother is living through you--sort of vicariously experiencing your accomplishments?

J: No. She has enough going on on her own ... We're very close. But it's not like she's not her own person. She's got her own ideas; she her own person. She's interested in knowing what I'm doing, but it's not like she has to know the details of my life so she can experience it. She does take part in my life, but she doesn't live my life for me.

The healthful, positive picture Judy draws of her feelings about her work, and of her relationship with her mother are matched by her experience of her own femininity.

L: How do you feel about having a woman's body?

J: I like being a woman. I like being a woman very much, and I like having a woman's body. I know sometimes I complain about menstrual periods, but I don't have problems with that ...

I like having the shape I do ... I like getting clothes that look nice and make me look shapely ... I like it. It's comfortable ... That's what I was born with and I feel comfortable with it, and I feel like it's me.

... I never particularly felt it was because I had a woman's body that I couldn't do things. I've always been active ... I may feel not accomplished but it's not because I have a woman's body, but because I didn't develop the skills ...

... What I don't like about having a woman's body is when other people look at me and denigrate. Like walking down the street and some man makes a comment ... a tone of voice that signifies a woman's body can be yelled at. I really hate that. Because what it does is the person yelling is not looking at me, but my body. But what happens is that I get angry at the person. It doesn't make me want a different body. I'm not going to change my body to change the circumstances.

Unlike other women who have not developed the inner resources to cope with an external world that can be unfair, Judy demonstrates both in her story-telling and in her interview that she can maintain her self esteem in spite of societal injustices. It is particularly interesting that in a culture where many women distort their body images negatively or view themselves as too fat to fit the ideal, Judy is aware of doing just the opposite.

J: A lot of times I have a self image of my body that's different from the way my body really looks. I mean I envision my self as being a lot slenderer than I am.

Independent of any explicit question in the interview, Judy connects her feelings about her femininity to her relationship with her mother.

J: The way I experience myself in a woman's body has been positive. A lot of it has to do with my mother because I have a good relationship with my mother.

Judy's memory of her first menstrual period, while not particularly detailed, illustrates a maternal attitude toward femininity which was evidently effectively passed on to Judy.

J: ... My mother talked to me about it ... I was curious ... anxious for it to come ... I wanted to see what it was like ... The way mom explained it was "it's a natural part of your bodily processes." So it was no big deal. I wasn't afraid of it, I was comfortable with it ... Mother explained it, told me what to use, and then left me to myself and if I needed anything to tell her. I always knew I could go to my mom and ask her.

The interview with Judy indicates that her mother communicated positive, healthful views of both femininity and autonomy to her daughter. Judy's current experience of her self, her achievements, her relationship with her mother, and her sexuality seem to be consistent with these strong, fitful views. Judy's descriptions suggest that she appreciates the complexity of the intrapsychic and interpersonal tasks of development, but that she is managing these conflicts without damage to herself or to her important connection to her mother.

Summary

The six women in this group demonstrate an awareness of the complicated and even painful conflicts that arise around their achievements, but are generally able to reach a positive resolution to their dilemmas. For them, achievement is ultimately a satisfying,

accepted, and self-enhancing experience. Most of these women do not introduce others into their first stories, suggesting that, for them, achievement is not problematically embedded in relationships with others. Those women who do introduce parents or friends do so parenthetically or with an emphasis on the support and encouragement received. While these women can acknowledge their struggles, they tend not to rely primarily on others for a sense of worthiness; they are able to integrate their ambivalent experiences, and exhibit a definite capacity to move on with their developmental tasks.

In response to the second stimulus, all the women in this group write stories which indicate their deep appreciation of the tensions in the mother-daughter bond as the daughter attempts to individuate. Like the women in the first group, these women demonstrate an impressive empathy for maternal internal experiences of loss, rejection, betrayal, and envy. However, these women are markedly different from the women in the first group because they have the resources to contain, process, and transcend these tensions. For none of the women in this group is autonomy thwarted or compromised by the expectations, demands, or pain of others.

Four of the women who respond to a stimulus that evokes feelings about femininity and accomplishment with a noticeable capacity for honest self-reflection. They all draw accepting, valued, positive views of their bodies and their femininity. Even those who are dissatisfied with what they see can recognize their shortcomings, and are able to enhance themselves without excessive self-criticism or devaluation. The few women in this group who contrast femininity

with the predominantly male work world are remarkably able to maintain integrity and respect for their work, and to consider alternatives and options without devaluing or rejecting either femininity or the external world.

In response to the stimulus that elicits fantasies about having a penis, four of these women comfortably entertain their associations. Again, there is a tone of self-examination for these women, two of whom explicitly wonder about a sense that "something may be missing" in their lives. While a number of the women in this group point to their perceptions of the ways in which men and women are treated differently in this culture, they are not overcome nor restrained by the external world. In general, these women are able to articulate their anger, envision new possibilities, and confront reality without overlooking or externalizing underlying feelings.

As with the first group of women, the image of masturbation, achievement, and mother-daughter relationship evokes the greatest variability of responses for these women, too. The most consistent themes are those that acknowledge the different values between mother and daughter. Even when maternal demands affect daughter's experience, they are not viewed as intrusive, but manageable. Communication between generations is never undermined by these differences. Two of the women in this group draw links between the autonomy of sexuality and achievement-related activities. One woman distinguishes between the energy needed for academic work and sexual energy, but unlike the women in the first group who make this distinction, she allows them to co-exist. Three women in this group respond evasively or

defensively to the final scenario.

C H A P T E R V

AVOIDED OR MINIMAL NEGOTIATION OF ACHIEVEMENT-RELATED CONFLICTS

Introduction

For the five women in this group, there is a gross tendency to avoid or minimally confront the developmental tasks entwined with achievement-related conflicts. Because these women use their intellect to restrict the elaboration of internal and interpersonal conflict, it is difficult to speculate about their underlying dynamics. These women typically back away from, reject, or superficially address ambivalent feelings and relationships that affect their negotiation of achievement-related conflict. Although these women do not demonstrate a capacity to resolve the dilemmas they must face in the developmental process, it is possible that they would exhibit such a potential were they able to respond differently to this particular task or less defensively reveal more of their inner worlds.

Demographic Data (see Table 4)

The five women in this group range in age from 24 to 32, with a mean age of 28.5. Three of them are currently involved in heterosexual relationships, and two are not presently involved with any particular person. Two of the women have mothers who have a high school education; one has attended some college; and two of the mothers have bachelor's degrees. Three mothers have been employed during their daughter's youth. A real estate broker has worked full

TABLE 4

Participant Characteristics - Group 3

	28	24	28
<u>Age</u>			
<u>Current Relationship Status</u>	In Relationship	No Relationship	In Relationship
<u>Mother's Education</u>	some college	high school	B.A.
<u>Mother's Occupation; and time worked during daughter's youth</u>	real estate broker	store clerk	homemaker
<u>Father's Education</u>	full-time from age 5	part-time, ages 15-20 full-time since 20	
<u>Father's Occupation</u>	high school	-----	high school
<u>Sisters' Occupations</u>	bank clerk-deceased	----- deceased	carpenter-deceased
	1. secretary	1. musician 2. homemaker	
<u>Brothers' Occupations</u>	1. bank clerk	1. business man	1. construction worker 2. shipyard worker 3. car mechanic

TABLE 4 (continued)

<u>Age</u>	31	32
<u>Current Relationship Status</u>	No Relationship	In Relationship
<u>Mother's Education</u>	high school	B.A.
<u>Mother's Occupation; and time worked during daughter's youth</u>	secretary from age 16	homemaker
<u>Father's Education</u>	some college	B.A.
<u>Father's Occupation</u>	business man-retired	business man
<u>Sisters' Occupations</u>	1. travel agent	1. homemaker 2. independent business
<u>Brothers' Occupations</u>	-----	-----

time since her daughter was five years old; a store clerk has worked part time since her daughter's adolescence; and a secretary has worked since her daughter was 16. Two of the mothers have been primarily homemakers.

In this group, there are two fathers with a high school education, one with some college, and one with a B.A. (Information was not provided for the remaining father.) Their occupations range from bank clerk to carpenter to businessman (2). Three of the five fathers of women in this group are now deceased.

All of the women have at least one sister or one brother; one woman has no sisters and two have no brothers. Sisters' occupations range from homemaker to secretary to musician, and brother's employment ranges from car mechanic to bank clerk to businessman.

Sally

Sally is included in this third group because her stories are characterized by a restriction in affect, content, and length. She feels self-conscious about this and writes at the end of her last vignette,

I realize my answers have been brief, but what I have written reflects my initial reaction to the scenarios presented, imagining myself to be the woman in each case.

It is as if Sally tries so hard to conform to the directions of the task, that she inhibits any imaginative flow of feeling or thought.

Achievement

Sally's first two stories are her most complete ones. Here, she writes a superficially positive tale that reveals little of her inner world.

Debra is on the phone getting the news, and is very pleased that the reviews were favorable. She had put a lot of time and effort into her collection, as well as into the efforts to get it published, and is now encouraged to continue further writing as a means of supporting herself. The outcome is that she will continue to write poetry and to publish.

Sally introduces no additional characters into her story. Her protagonist receives her good news without excitement, and on the phone, creating an indirect, and even distant contact between her and an unidentified caller. This distance is felt in the tone of her story as well; like her protagonist, Sally seems to be struggling with great effort to produce. Her tension-free story, however, indicates more avoidance than genuine emotion.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Sally finds it easier to identify with her character in the second story. While still restrained and inhibited in tone and development, this tale tentatively addresses feelings in a more complicated way.

Ellen's mother was supportive of her efforts and her goals, and offers encouragement. Her mother reminds her that such a step would not have been possible for her at a similar point in her own history, but is happy that opportunities are now more open. Ellen feels some sadness about the difficulties and lack of options that her mother endured, but respects her mother's integrity and is not constrained by her feelings.

Difficult, even painful feelings are aroused in this vignette but Sally's straightforward and unemotional resolution to her dilemma suggest an intellectualized or rationalized approach to her emotional world. The reader learns that mother stirs up mixed feelings, and daughter experiences sadness when she can have what was unavailable to her mother, and that this is important. However, one suspects that Sally's protagonist is "not constrained by her feelings" because Sally is either unable to let feelings in, or cognitively pushes them away when they are threatening.

Achievement and female body/femininity

In this story, Sally gives her initial response and does not develop it at all. She writes only a single sentence.

She is pleased with her appearance, as she works at staying healthy and fit, and proceeds to get dressed.

One can almost see Sally's constipated response to these stories; her inner life is inaccessible to her and she dares not write more fully or freely lest underlying conflict emerge. She conforms with the request nominally, but at the expense of her fantasy life.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Sally writes only,

You've got me on this one--can't relate to it.

She is shocked, inhibited, aware of the researcher's presence, and must reject the stimulus entirely. Her apology directed at the researcher conveys her frustration and discomfort, and some sense that she is concerned about her own impoverished responses.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Sally's final response reveals her defensive style more explicitly than her other stories do. She writes in entirety,

She doesn't dwell on the event, and answers the phone.
Outcome--phone conversation.

Sally deals with these stories as she deals with other unsettling predicaments. She avoids deeper implications or complications, complies superficially, attends to the pragmatic, and experiences her inner world as bland and empty.

Rachel

Rachel varies in her ability to engage with her stories but on the whole, she defends against any meaningful interaction with them. She either portrays characters that are flat and undeveloped, or she rejects the stimulus entirely.

Achievement

Rachel's first story is only superficially positive. Limited in plot and depth, it tells little about Rachel's experience. She writes,

She is, of course, delighted; as are her friends, her family, her professors. She completes her MFA, confident that she'll land a job in a comfy little college somewhere. She spends a year searching for jobs, but in spite of her publications, gets nowhere. She heads back to school for her Ph.D.

Rachel's protagonist's pleasure and confidence, as well as the delight of the others she introduces, belies a more despondent sense of meaninglessness. Like her character, Rachel's story goes nowhere; she presumes a positive affect and outcome "of course", but when these

expectations fall through, she backs away from any feeling.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Rachel's second story is her most compelling, complete and fluidly written. It is alive with detail and feeling, and the plot is developed. The prominent themes are of relationships with others that undermine her pursuits, and of maternal needs that threaten to deplete daughter's resources and compromise her plans. Rachel's story indicates little conscious cognizance of the conflicts she presents.

Rachel's character, previously a graduate student, had to drop out "when her crumbling marriage made academics impossible." Now, the decision to go to medical school elicits financial concerns from mother.

...since Dad had died two years earlier, leaving her a penniless, untrained housewife, half-crippled by arthritis, with two of Ellen's brothers out of work and living at home, Mom had come to depend on the \$50 a week Ellen had managed to squeeze out of her secretarial salary to send home. Mom would manage; she always did; but Ellen feels somewhat guilty and writes to assure her mom that she'll have a teaching assistantship and \$5000 a year in loans--she would take out more loan money than would actually be needed, and send some of it home, as needed.

Rachel depicts a mother who depends on her daughter for very basic needs. Unlike other family members who are unable to leave home, Rachel's protagonist is struggling to extricate herself from handicapping ties. Whether she can succeed in this endeavor is not clear. Autonomous moves provoke guilt and are construed as possible only when maternal demands are appeased, even if that necessitates

self-sacrifice.

This story is particularly powerful in the context of Rachel stating that, in reality, her mother never worked outside the home after she married because her father would not let her. Rachel's father is not alive, and it is likely that this story elicits some very disturbing, salient, and raw fears and responsibilities with which Rachel must contend.

Achievement and female body/femininity

After her personal, involving, and revealing story, Rachel backs off. She gives a superficial, affectless, and starkly empty response. It is difficult to know whether it was this stimulus, or the feelings aroused by the previous one, that lead to Rachel's inability to respond more fully to this cue. She writes only this sentence.

She gets dressed and goes to work.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Even though it is not developed, Rachel's response to this cue conveys a definite affect. She writes,

You've got to be kidding!

She directs her comment to the researcher, finds the cue intolerable, and cannot allow herself to entertain the fantasy. Rachel manages her own discomfort by construing the task as absurd. Because the two scenarios that most directly elicit feelings about femininity and masculinity are the ones which leave Rachel most unable to create stories, it is likely that she is frightened by these aspects of herself.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

In is her last story, Rachel recounts events, accounts for time, but does not enter into her character's emotional life. She is inhibited in affect, if not in activity.

She picks up the phone, chats with her mother for about half an hour, says goodbye, hangs up, notices that it's after 11:30 and heads for bed.

Once in bed, she remembers that she had felt like masturbating before her mother called. She's not that sleepy, so she plays with herself until she comes, and then falls asleep.

The matter-of-fact tone of Rachel's tale disguises the anxiety that one suspects the cue stimulated for her. Considering the intensity of connection between the mother and daughter in her second story, and that she cannot respond adequately to two other cues, it is likely that Rachel's emotional experience is only defensively as flat and acceptable as depicted.

Esther

Esther's responses to all the stimuli are consistently and peculiarly idiosyncratic. Instead of using her imagination to write a story, she uses her intellect to obsessively analyze each scenario. Her vignettes are calculating, deliberate, and indicate that Esther is restricted in her fantasy life, intellectualized in her approach to the world, and oblivious to the internal experience these cues may have aroused in her.

Achievement

Esther finds it necessary to stick as closely to the scenario itself as possible. She takes virtually no risks in her story-telling. She prefaces each statement with an apparent fact to justify it, or begins with a qualifier to permit it. She writes,

She is probably feeling quite pleased and proud. Writing poetry is a difficult task that involves a relatively high degree of self-disclosure. As reviewers generally don't unanimously praise anything to a high degree, this response was probably unanticipated and therefore even more likely to be positively reinforcing. I would assume that if her work is receiving so much high praise that the book will be accepted for publication, obviously something that would make Debra happy.

Esther puts so much distance between herself and her character that when she writes in the first person, it is not her character speaking, but her own voice explaining her character. She presents her story like a legal case; one thought follows logically to another, and her conclusion gives the illusion of being self-evident. For Esther, this illusion must afford her safety from the unpredictability and irrational nature of her inner experience.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Esther interprets the stimulus to mean that mother has written daughter a letter of recommendation for entrance into medical school. This she appropriately describes as "dubious as a recommendation" but which "seems likely [to be] helpful as a symbol of mother's approval and support." She continues in her circumstantial, rational, and non-committal style.

The outcome, assuming it's Ellen getting into medical school, isn't clear from the information given. It seems reasonable to expect that much more than a letter from one's mother is needed, all the way from grades to other recommendations to financial resources.

The stimulus is construed in such a way that maternal efforts at support are obviously inadequate. One can speculate that this story-line is prominent in Esther's underlying emotional world, and that it contributes to her participation in this task, and in life, with an "as-if" quality.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Esther's third story is constructed in much the same vein as her others. She writes,

If this is not a normal practice for Michelle, she may be assessing herself in light of the change in her life ... She may try to equate her perceptions of her physical attractiveness to her occupational success. When events happen, we look for reasons why they happen. Michelle may be trying to at least partly reassess her position in the law firm and her new self-image by looking at the "outer" self, which is a factor in judgments made about us. The outcome will be related to her perception of her new position and herself.

Here Esther is strikingly reluctant to take a stand. She writes with a sense of bolstering her argument with the "obvious" so that what she says will be acceptable and indisputable. She is so unable to reveal her inner world that in this vignette she cannot even articulate a particular outcome.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

In this story, Esther elaborates her more didactic stance to explaining the scenarios. Again, her conclusions are presented as if they are obvious and irrefutable; she has hidden all that is controversial or painful.

Going through changes in life can result in changes in ways in which we think about ourselves. Since Marie is "surprised" at her thoughts perhaps she is not making a connection between her new position (where it can be assumed to be predominantly male) and "sizing herself up" to her new co-workers/competitors. Although the connection seems pretty obvious, if not necessarily correct and/or useful, the outcome depends upon how well she resolves her "surprise". If she can attribute her thoughts to some personally acceptable rationales, then no negative consequences should occur; if she can't, then obviously she will be in a state of uncertain identity and self-image.

Esther's response is bizarrely analytic. She sacrifices her inner life to meet what she imagines to be the expectations of others and the inflexible demands of tasks. She attends to the word "surprise", connoting it as problematic, and one senses that Esther is a woman void of spontaneity and genuine affect.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

In her story, Esther once again conveys that her affective life is extremely constricted, ruled by cognitive screening, and severely masked by an obsessional, rational attitude. The cue, which is typically anxiety-provoking because of its intimate and private sexual content, is responded to no differently than any of the other cues, emphasizing the extent to which Esther is completely removed from her emotional responses.

How Jennifer feels about her "thoughts" probably depends upon how often her mind "wanders" to masturbation. If this only happens when her mother calls ..., her feelings will probably center on why her mother elicits such thoughts. If she never thinks about masturbation, then her range of attributions increases. I have no way of speculating on Jennifer's attitudes toward masturbation, which obviously would affect her assessment of her thoughts, and whether or not to put her thoughts into action. If her thoughts have only "wandered" then, if she is inclined to masturbate, perhaps it is most likely she'll be able to wait until she gets off the phone.

Esther is particularly interested in the word "wander" in this vignette. On one level, it provides a cornerstone of her analysis. On another level, Esther seems drawn to this word because she is so reserved and exacting that she is perplexed by the freedom and flexibility implied by the word itself.

Alice

Alice approaches her stories with an alive, active quality that makes the fact that she never develops them seem somewhat inconsistent. She is included with this group of women because all of her productions are brief, and they represent glimpses or flashes of her inner world, rather than stories which would reveal more about her.

Achievement

Alice's first story alludes to ambivalent feelings about achievement, but Alice backs off from her story just as soon as she begins it. She writes,

Debra finds the praise heartwarming and confusing. She has always wanted to succeed in this field but she was always given to feel it was an impractical

and frivolous wish.

She wonders what it means to succeed in this field and whether she should cultivate a profession "just in case."

While Alice's reservations are realistic on one level, her doubts also seem suggestive of deeper conflict over whether her productions can be valued by herself or by others. Her character cannot trust praise because she worries that being taken seriously is simply a wishful fantasy. In her story-telling, Alice seems to be similarly constrained. It is as if she is inhibited in her writing by a fear that her creations are frivolous.

Achievement and relationship with mother

Alice interprets the letter in the third scenario as a letter of recommendation for admission to medical school. This mother writes to recommend her daughter "with great praise and confidence."

Ellen's mother, a gifted and respected surgeon was able to assist Ellen in realizing her goal through her honest and thorough support for her daughter.

It is unlikely that in reality a mother would write such a letter for her child, and one would expect a university doctoral student to recognize this. In that context, Alice's story can be seen as a wishful fantasy of an idealized mother who can offer her daughter help in getting what she wants for herself. Both the storyline and affect within the story are undeveloped, making it impossible to speculate further about underlying emotional conflict.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Alice responds to the third scenario with a lovely and detailed positive description of her character's body. Her femininity is emphasized, and is accepted with pleasure and pride. However, once again, there is an incomplete story line, and the reader is left only with an image.

Her breasts were full and round. Her waist slim and feminine. She could see that the five pounds she had lost improved her small body's shape.

Her legs were slim, too, and her face beautiful and strong with a look of quiet perseverance.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Alice is surprised by this stimulus, and again, fails to create a story that might more deeply reveal her associations or underlying feelings. She writes,

After the shock, she found the thought comical. Me? Have a penis? She wondered how strange it would look with her full breasts and pencil-eraser shaped pink nipples.

Here, Alice manages her anxiety by taking the scenario quite literally and perceiving it as ridiculous. Clearly, her female body is consonant with her self image, and Alice reasserts her femininity in this vignette. She does not allow herself, however, to play with or associate to the fantasy.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Alice's final story is her most complete, and her most telling. Masturbation evokes thought of adolescent years, struggles around separation and autonomy, and feelings about maternal intrusiveness.

She is reminded of her adolescent years. Living at home when she tried to keep her thoughts of sex from her family. Guiltily, she remembers hiding her masturbation and the guilt she felt when her mother caught her and her boyfriend when she was sixteen mutually masturbating each other.

For Alice, masturbation is associated with sexuality as an independent, private activity that is experienced during a period of difficult, but increasing separation from mother. The guilt Alice depicts in her character is guilt connected with sexuality, but may also be related to asserting oneself and breaking primary ties. That separation struggles might be particularly guilt-provoking for Alice is supported by a recollection of the mother Alice drew in her second vignette, who might be seen as inappropriately over-involved in daughter's adult life.

Nancy

Nancy's stories make her one of the more difficult women to classify into a particular group. There is considerable evidence of conflict around dilemmas of achievement, but this material appears to be less accessible to Nancy than it is to women in the first group. Although she may appear to positively negotiate some of these conflicts, there are indications that such a resolution is superficial. Although her stories tend to be more complete than most of the other women in this group, Nancy is included here because overall, her stories are judged to indicate considerable underlying conflict, which is unrecognized and avoided.

Achievement

Nancy's first story has a somewhat distant tone to it. It is as if she uses this story to determine whether and how she will participate in this research. One can imagine that her character's dilemma in this vignette matches her own as she writes.

Nancy tells of a character who has "worked hard" and would like to "receive recognition which would ... further her career." However, she has reservations about having them judged ... On the one hand, she was proud of them because they were quality poems and they expressed some ideas and feelings that were personally meaningful to her life. But on the other hand, she felt that reviewers were not necessarily her judge of their worth.

The emphasis in her story is on judgement by others, and the ambivalent affect this arouses. While Nancy tries to convince herself and the reader of primarily positive emotions regarding her productions, her sensitivity to judgement highlights her self-doubts, and leads to her admittedly "defensive posturing" about being judged.

Nevertheless receiving praise about them, she felt happy and good about herself. In effect the praise helped her put aside her previous defensive posturing about submitting them for judgement.

For Nancy, praise can be experienced as reassuring. Rather than leading to further anxiety and defensiveness, it leads here to a relaxation of defense and a release of affect.

Achievement and relationship with mother

In her second story, Nancy writes manifestly of maternal support for daughter's decision. There is, however, a notable undertone of disappointment that is never explicitly addressed. Although Nancy

begins and ends her story with an overt sense of maternal acceptance, she both moves away from more discomfoting affect, and alludes repeatedly to latent, but undefined conflict.

Her mother wrote her a letter expressing her confidence in Ellen and her support for this undertaking.

Nancy continues, writing that her protagonist "had always wanted to be a Dr.", and yet mother

had figured that Ellen might change her mind. When she received the news that Ellen was in fact preparing to go, she was not surprised. While Ellen's mother was confident she'd do well and wished her luck, she was not particularly overjoyed--that is she thought whatever Ellen wanted--that was probably best. Generally the letter was supportive. Ellen was glad for the vote of confidence.

Mother appears ambivalent about daughter's decision, and while daughter wants more from her, this wish is not developed. While Nancy tries to persuade herself and others that maternal response is adequate, she seems to use that stance to mask deeper and more painful feelings related to mother's only half-hearted support.

Achievement and female body/femininity

Nancy is simultaneously critical and accepting of her body's imperfections. In this vignette, she focuses more on her external appearance than on her inner world.

She liked looking at her naked body but she was critical of it--looking for pockets of flab and wrinkled skin ... She still had a very nice figure and she generally liked her body ... She wished she could dress more sloppily and comfortably and hated having to wear clothes that she felt she couldn't get dirty ... The main drawback to this new position ... was the necessity to conform in dress, even if

she did push the limits a bit. She liked her work and set off to work.

Apparently satisfied with her body, Nancy's character is dissatisfied with the requirement that she present herself in a particular way. There is a discrepancy between how Nancy feels inside and how she believes she must present herself on the outside and to the world. Reminiscent of her first story, Nancy tells here again of her uneasiness presenting herself to others. Because other women wrote positive stories that also pointed to external demands for a particular self-presentation, it is important to note that for Nancy, the discrepancy between inner experience and external appearance is drawn within the context of a critical view of herself, and her stories, which are as a group, suggestive of less adequately resolved conflict.

Achievement and fantasy of a penis

Nancy's fourth story is perhaps the most assaultive, aggressive response written by a participant to this cue. In an intense, even explosive style, Nancy dramatically equates possessing a penis with violence and hostile assertiveness. She reacts defiantly and angrily to the stimulus.

Nancy begins by attributing the fantasy to the fact that "everyone around her had one."

She was getting progressively more and more fed up with their projections and erections of power situations. Every move they made whether in meetings or in individual encounters seemed to exude penile fantasies and infantile baby power maneuvers that were all generally masturbatory in nature. Marie thought about what it would be like to wack herself

off the way men do both in private (i.e., literally) and in public (i.e., the standard practice of men in maintaining their power). Thinking about having a penis made her very angry because she thought about how women's sexuality is always defined in terms of that organ. For her the penis symbolized violence, but if she had one maybe she would experience the world differently. She decided she didn't want one.

Nancy's anger is connected to the ugly power manipulations she attributes to men, and to her perception that femininity is defined in terms of masculinity. Nancy's character supposes that she might see the world differently were she to have a penis, a statement that suggests, at least in the context of this story, that she experiences a barrier between men and women, and alludes to her painful sense of isolation. Nancy's isolation, and possible feelings of emptiness, conceivably arise from insufficient maternal mirroring. There is, perhaps, an underlying envy, but Nancy's associations are so violent, angry, and defiant that they spoil the possibility of anything desirable in the fantasy.

Achievement and masturbation/autonomy

Nancy produces an unusual and seemingly spontaneous response to this last stimulus. While most women interpret mother's call as an interruption to private fantasy and activity, Nancy construes mother's contact as further stimulating.

She moved the phone into the bedroom and proceeded to lightly finger herself while discussing travel plans for Thanksgiving ... But Jennifer could not stop thinking about her mother's big breasts and this excited her more and more. Finally she became so worked up that she told her mother she had to hang up as someone was at the door. She hung up and continued to masturbate. It's unclear what led up to this excitement.

Nancy herself finds her story perplexing and difficult to explain. On one level, it tells of a sexualized maternal, if not more generally homosexual, image that may reflect either a healthy or more problematic narcissistic acceptance and attraction to oneself. Although there is little said about the actual relationship between mother and daughter in this particular vignette, Nancy's second story raised the possibility that Nancy makes due with what mother gives her, but longs for more. In that context, Nancy's fantasy may represent an eroticized wish for closeness to mother--eroticized, perhaps, to underscore the forbidden and threatening nature of a satiating connection between this mother and daughter. Nancy is alone among the participants to have mother's presence so vivid and compelling in her masturbatory pleasure. To the extent that masturbation shares characteristics of other autonomous activities, this story may suggest a difficulty in comfortably separating from mother. In fact, there are allusions to confusion indentifying with, being close to, and being differentiated from mother.

The Interview: Esther

Esther was chosen to participate in an interview because her stories seemed representative of the varied, but typically avoidant stories written by women in this last group. Because her stories revealed little of her inner world, it was not expected that the experiences she conveyed in her interview would necessarily be representative of the experiences of the other women who responded to the story-telling task in a similar way.

During the interview, Esther was pleasant, soft-spoken, and thoughtful. Although initially quite straight-forward, rational and not particularly emotional, Esther warmed up as the interview proceeded. Her answers tended to be to-the-point, and she did not respond to questions in as freely an associative way as did the other two women interviewed. It is interesting that the interview with Esther was briefer than the interviews with the other women.

When asked how she typically feels about her academic accomplishments, Esther described both positive feelings, and her reliance on the feedback of others in order to feel good about her work.

E: I generally think I've done okay or minimally adequately, or think of all the things I could've done that I didn't do. And then little by little things come back to me. Others say, "Oh, you did a really nice job" ... Usually I feel like I did well enough, but for the most part, I tend to underestimate--in terms of other people's feedback of what I did.

As if to soften this image of vulnerability to others' judgement, Esther explained further that it depends on "who's saying it."

E: Usually I try to contextualize people's remarks. I give much more weight to remarks of people I respect as opposed to someone I don't.

Talking with Esther gave some indication of the complexity of experience that was barely alluded to in the stories she created. Esther is divorced and her current career is the second one she has pursued seriously. Her father died while she was an undergraduate, and this event was understandably disruptive for her entire family. Esther spoke about her relationship with her mother, and the changes

they have gone through together, particularly after her father's death, and her mother began to work out of necessity, and she herself was married and then divorced.

L: What's your relationship with your mother like?

E: We get along well. I don't get to see her that often. We talk on the phone once a week. We have, I guess, a friendship kind of relationship. We'll discuss problems. She's relatively open with me--if something's on her mind, she'll tell me about it. She'll also occasionally call me for advice ...

Since my father died, and we've gotten older, we've gotten to be more and more on equal kind of basis. I was raised in a very traditional type of household where parents were your parents and you did what they said. So my mother felt, "I'm your mother so you have to listen to me." And that has changed very much.

Esther's description of the changes in her relationship with her mother suggest the efforts she made to extricate herself from her mother's potentially increased dependency on her after her father's death. Although not without tumult, a balanced relationship was achieved. And Esther now talks proudly of her mother's feelings about her daughter's accomplishments.

E: Right now she's getting quite enamored of the idea that she's going to have a daughter who has a Ph.D. When I first started graduate school--I think she really couldn't understand why I was doing this. Except that she knew I didn't like my job. Once I had my Master's, she thought I'd go get a real job ... And she couldn't really quite understand why I needed all this education, particularly since I had been divorced and there were no prospects for the future, and my mother was concerned I wouldn't find anything and wouldn't be able to build a future.

At the same time, Esther acknowledged and accepted the difficulties that the differences between her own and her mother's experiences can engender.

E: Sometimes it's difficult ... I have to try to translate the academic jargon into things you can talk to your family about, and that can sometimes be really difficult. I gave her a copy of the paper I presented. And when I told her about it, she was really excited. It was a hot shot title, and when she saw it, she kinda said, "Oh." I'm sure she hasn't read it. She was pleased to get it; it's nice that I gave it to her and she wants copies of everything I do ...

The bottom line is that she's been very supportive. She's excited for me, and thinks it's wonderful, and to me that's much more important than her understanding what I'm doing.

... I think my accomplishments affect her very positively. She's very interested in what her kids do. She's just pleased as punch if I do well. She thinks it's marvelous.

When questioned about her body and her femininity, Esther focussed on her good health and good luck to have a strong body. She recalled menstruating for the first time as initially disturbing, and takes responsibility for not having understood what was happening to her.

E: My mother had talked to me about what it was and explained it to me. I remember her explanation-- it wasn't physiologically oriented, and she explained what would happen rather than why ... What I got out of the conversation was you bleed, and at that time, the only connection I could make with bleeding was being cut or hurt in some way, shape, or form. So when I got my first period, I woke up with blood on my sheets, and I was just horrified. "Oh, my god, this is awful" ... My mother had talked to me but I misinterpreted what she said or didn't know what to expect, and when it happened, I was frightened ... My mother was nice, said, "Don't worry; it's normal."

In contrast to the other women interviewed who seemed to receive

something of value from the interview by using it as an opportunity for self-exploration, as well as to comply with the researcher's requests, Esther reported doing less of the former. Just as Esther managed to write stories that exposed little of her inner world, she explained that she did not learn anything new about herself in the course of talking.

L: Did you find that you learned anything new about yourself, or talked about yourself differently as we talked?

E: No, I don't think so. I don't know exactly why except that I'm interested in women's issues, and so I think about these things more than some other people might. I couldn't say I learned anything new. And I have talked about these kinds of things with other people ... I think because of that I didn't learn anything new.

The interview with Esther suggests that she approaches her life and her work with a maturity that was not evident in the stories she created. Although Esther was interested and cooperative, neither the story-telling task nor the interview seemed to provide an adequate enough setting for Esther to relax with the tasks as much as the other women did. Nevertheless, Esther's current experiences of herself, her accomplishments, and her relationship with her mother seem to reflect reasonably successful efforts to deal with a tremendous amount of change and adjustment in her life. There is a sense that for Esther, life does not necessarily go smoothly, but that both she and her mother allow each other and themselves the opportunity to make mistakes and grow. This has evidently strengthened and secured a bond between them and aided Esther in her autonomous pursuits.

Summary

The stories written by the five women in this group can be characterized by a restriction in affect, content and length, or an intellectualized avoidance of deeper implications and complications of what is experienced. Almost all the women seem to be oblivious to, or avoidant of, internal experience. Because of this avoidant style, it is difficult to speculate in detail about the nature of these women's achievement-related conflicts.

Three women write superficially positive stories to the first stimulus, and the other two either back away from suggested ambivalent affect or convey a lack of recognition of implied ambivalent feelings. When presented with a scenario about the mother-daughter bond, all five women avoid an elaboration or resolution to underlying conflict. One woman rationalizes away painful feelings; one demonstrates no conscious awareness of self-sacrifice implied in her story; another emphasizes superficial maternal support and masks an undertone of disappointment. Two women interpret the scenario to refer to an actual letter of recommendation for daughter's admission to medical school, at least in part representing a wishful, but undeveloped maternal support.

In response to the scenarios that address fantasies about femininity, having a penis, and masturbation as they relate to achievement, these women produce an exaggerated version of the discomfort, shock, or anxiety seen in a few of the women in the other two groups. Four women write either single-sentence stories to these last scenarios,

reject the stimuli entirely, or are so analytic or brief in their story-telling that free association is entirely precluded.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

The central inquiry in this dissertation involved adult women's conflicts about achievement. Theoretically, this research was grounded in a changing, dynamic psychoanalytic conceptualization of female development. Because masochism and penis envy were initially seen to be the crux of femininity, these notions were examined both to trace the development of psychoanalytic theory, and also to understand the ways in which these powerful, even if fundamentally misogynist terms, can speak to the depth of women's experience of being female.

Before discussing more specifically the aspects of women's achievement-related conflicts that were examined in this research, it is important to comment on the limitations and constraints of such a project. Clearly, participants in this study were self-selected. Only 24 of 200 women recruited ultimately returned completed stories. It is noteworthy that all three women interviewed, and a number of the women who described their own academic work in detail in response to a written question about their field of interest, pursue areas in their own work that are related to the study of women. The task requested of women may have been intimidating on a number of levels: it required time, the ability to use one's imagination, and taking a risk with regard to anticipated interpretations on the part of the researcher. Although the central questions of the dissertation were not articulated to participants, the story-telling cues, and the

nature of the participation itself, were highly revealing of the general arena of inquiry. Women sensitive to women's issues intellectually and personally, as well as women who more typically do not engage in conscious consideration of their femaleness, were understandably suspicious of, or uninterested in, this type of research. It appeared that the women who did participate were more likely to come from this former group of women.

The method itself posed limitations. The scenarios were designed to elicit material about particular aspects of unconscious experience. While in fact every story was multiply determined and created by conscious and unconscious considerations, the cues, particularly those about femininity, sexuality, and body experience, were face-valid and anxiety arousing in such a way that they seemed to evoke a conscious appraisal of the researcher's intended purpose. Although this may not be problematic in and of itself, responses to the final three scenarios, which were the more anxiety-provoking cues, suggest that such a conscious appraisal may have inhibited some women's more freely-associative productions. When the scenarios were constructed, a balance was sought between a focussed area of investigation and the potential for freedom in response; this research highlighted the delicacy of achieving such an optimal point.

In this dissertation, adult women's conflicts about achievement were understood developmentally, both within the context of the mother-daughter relationship, and within the context of a sense of femininity. Because of the breadth and depth of these contextual bases, the data collected and the ensuing analyses of them can be

construed mistakenly as a full analysis of a participant's personality. It must be emphasized that these cues were intended to address specific questions. While inferences were drawn with an attempt to discuss participants as whole people, this was done with respect for the integrity of each individual. It would be a distortion of the intention of the scope of this project to view the analyses as efforts to explain the whole of a person's personality as if an entire projective personality battery had been administered.

The third group of women, those women referred to as demonstrating avoided or minimal negotiation of achievement-related conflicts, importantly illustrate this limitation. These women tended to write superficial, intellectualized responses to the cues, or to reject the stimuli entirely, thus making an explication of their underlying dynamics more loosely grounded in data. Although interpretations were made, and these interpretations often took the form of analyzing the nature of a participant's defensiveness, it is possible that the defensive style evidenced by these women was primarily task-induced, or at least task-specific. While interpretations treated participants as complete individuals, this treatment was limited by the actual data, and it is quite likely that another, or more extensive set of personality measures would reveal greater complexity in experience. In fact, this point was demonstrated in Esther's interview; whereas her stories were extremely restricted in affect, she was able to reveal considerably more of her inner world in an interview situation.

Because this research was designed to understand a small group

of women intensively, there are considerable limitations on the generalizations that can be drawn from this study. The research was intended to explore particular aspects of female psychological development by collecting data that could either illustrate or fail to substantiate theoretically based specualtions. In addition, this study was conducted with the intention of expanding theory on the basis of what the participants revealed about themselves. So, although statistical generalization is ungrounded with such a small sample, theoretical generalization that offers the possibility of new ways to understand women's experience, is justified.

In spite of its limitations, this methodology proved to be immensely productive in eliciting material relevant to the areas examined. In fact, there was considerable support for the major speculations of this dissertation. Even within a small sample, there were both individual differences and commonalities in the nature of women's conflicts about their achievements, and in the ways in which they negotiated these conflicts. Nine of the women included in the study gave direct evidence that they devalue success, deny ambition, or feel undeserving of their accomplishments. Furthermore, as was speculated, to the degree that a woman experienced her mother's ambivalence about her separation, autonomy, and accomplishments, the daughter was conflicted about her achievements, and these conflicts were embedded in the mother-daughter dyad. For almost all of the women for whom conflicts around achievement were unsettled and disturbing, there was a tension between preserving a dyadic bond with mother and sacrificing one's autonomy. Sensitivity to maternal inner

emotional experience typically left these women with fears that autonomous functioning would be met by fear, bitterness, and a sense of loss in mother. The connection between the mother's ambivalent experience of her daughter's increased differentiation and autonomous achievements, and the daughter's degree of conflict about her accomplishments was repeatedly made by these women. In fact, for almost every woman who engaged in negotiating unresolved achievement-related conflicts, these conflicts were problematically embedded in the mother-daughter dyad.

And finally, although the evidence was less direct and consistent, it seemed that to the extent that a woman received her mother's ambivalent communications about being female and about developing sexuality and femininity, the woman was conflicted about her achievements, and these conflicts were intertwined with her conflicts surrounding her femininity and sexuality. Those women who were more conflicted about achievement tended to experience their female bodies negatively, even critically, and associated the judgements of their bodies as unacceptable with the incompatibility of taking care of oneself and achieving. Thus, those women who were not able to integrate maternal ambivalence about autonomy also tended to view femininity as inconsistent with, or an impediment to, achievement. There was some evidence that for some women, feelings about autonomous activity as symbolized by feelings about masturbation, were related to women's achievement-related conflicts; the autonomy of sexuality and of intellectual pursuits were construed as parallel by a few women. More interesting, perhaps, was the fact that maternal ambivalence

about femininity significantly affected the daughter's conflicts surrounding her own sense of femaleness. This connection was indicated in the stories, and supported quite powerfully in the interviews, as will be discussed later.

There was very little evidence of a fantasied relationship between intellectual functioning and having a man's body, or being a man, although almost all women drew links between having a penis, being a man, and the greater ease of achievement in a male-dominated culture. The fantasy of having a penis typically brought to mind feelings about social limitations to women. It is noteworthy that women who had more adequately negotiated achievement-related conflicts were able to entertain the idea of the penis representing an internal experience of deficiency, a sense that "something was missing", while those women who were more conflicted could not. This difference in all likelihood reflects the greater comfort with which women who more positively managed their conflicts about achievement experience themselves in all realms; considering the possibility of biological or personal limitations was not as threatening to them. In fact, these women did tend to be more obviously and generally self-reflective in their story-telling. None of the women, however, attribute the advantages they perceive men to have to an internal deficiency in women. Being a man or having a penis was often seen by women more conflicted about achievement as symbolizing a legitimization of achievement or autonomy. No one directly related to a penis to issues of separation from mother, but given the demand characteristics of the cue, the introduction of mother into a story would have been rather peculiar.

Perhaps one of the most fascinating aspects of this study was the considerable evidence that in fact, high-achieving women do experience unconscious conflicts about their achievement that are embedded in their relationships with their mothers, and that are entwined with their experience of femininity. While the conceptual and theoretical literature points to these connections, it is significant that such associations could be documented empirically through a projective technique. That some women doubt their adequacy or undermine their competence can clearly be understood intrapsychically and interpersonally within a complex psychodynamic framework, as well as in terms of social and cultural conditions.

The sample in this study, while relatively heterogeneous in terms of demographic information such as area of study, parental education and occupation, was actually quite homogeneous with regard to degree of pathology. All the women in this study are high functioning, high achieving, doctoral-level graduate students. It is self-evident that their achievement-related conflicts have not been so inhibiting as to preclude their level of achievement, and it must be kept in mind that this sample was chosen, in part, for that specific reason. The conceptual underpinnings of this work suggest that there are developmental tasks intrinsic to the process of women's maturation that directly impinge on conflicts related to autonomous achievement. Although the word "conflict" is used, it is not meant to necessarily imply pathology; conflict is viewed as essential to development and growth. The investigation here focussed on the different ways that high achieving women experience and negotiate the normal developmental

dilemmas associated with achievement. While it is clear that some women may have managed these developmental conflicts more successfully than others, all of these women are capable of proceeding quite productively with their lives. This telescopic view of generally healthy women, however, does have implications for women who experience more serious work inhibitions. The universality of these developmental dilemmas is substantiated by the fact that all the women in this study, whether they were judged to be problematically or more positively negotiating achievement-related conflicts, did show evidence of the conflictual nature of achievement, and did exhibit connections between their work, their experiences of femininity, and their bonds with their mothers. Thus, important directions for understanding more disturbed women, who are more seriously impeded by similar conflicts, are suggested.

This study draws attention to the dramatic ways in which the reciprocal identification between mother and daughter affects a daughter's sense of her self, her femininity, her autonomy, and her achievements. Repeatedly, women indicated their impressive sensitivity to the internal emotional experience of their mothers, and the impact this had on their lives. Maternal conflicts about femininity, about autonomy, or about achievement were powerfully communicated to their daughters. This research suggests that mothers who were more narcissistically dependent on their daughters to fulfill their own longings and to compensate for their own disappointments did contribute to more intense and insurmountable emotional binds for their daughters. It can be speculated that more disturbed mothers, or mothers more

pathologically dependent on their daughters for their own sense of self-worth, would have daughters who could achieve autonomy only with great pain and difficulty. The excruciating tension between sacrificing one's self to preserve a bond to mother or maturing and leaving mother angry, envious, and empty would be magnified in such cases. In the most extreme, one might see a schizophrenic woman, symbiotically tied to mother and completely sacrificing her autonomy to act as a complementary appendage to an inadequate mother. A mother's severe pathology may contribute to the daughter's development of a masochistic self-sacrifice as a particular defense against separation.

Further research into the relationship between mother and daughter's psychological experiences is suggested by this research. In the realm of femininity, communication between mother and daughter seems especially important. The interview data on women's memories of menarche are intriguing in this context since menstruation confronts a young woman with her femaleness, and for the first time, with her potential for child-bearing. The experience typically involves an interaction between mother and daughter, and this interaction proved to be revealing of their relationship. For Kate, who experienced significant and troubling conflict about her achievement, autonomy, and femininity, onset of menstruation was marked by fear, distress, and little, if any, information, reassurance, or affirmation from her mother. For Judy, who reached a positive resolution to conflicts associated with achievement, autonomy, and femininity, the onset of menstruation was characterized by feelings of curiosity, pride, and a generally educational, affirming, and

supportive response from her mother. Although the actual data were not included in this study, this pattern was strikingly evident in the pilot interviews as well. To the extent that daughters identify with their mothers as women, and a mother's attitude about her own femininity and her daughter's growth are expressed in her reaction to her daughter's menarche, it seems that this episode would be important to investigate more thoroughly.

There were a number of unanticipated, but recurrent themes that evolved in this research that are worthy of further investigation. Although speculations were made regarding the connections between masturbatory autonomy and achievement-related autonomy, and there was some evidence to support this association, there was also a commonly drawn association between the need to sublimate or repress sexuality in order to achieve. Academic and sexual energy were distinguished by five women, and for these women who tended to be more conflicted about their achievement, this distinction left them frustrated and wanting, but reconciled to such a necessity. In the language of object relations, rather than in the language of instinctual energy that was used by the participants, this split between choice of objects is intriguing. How might it reflect a woman's experience of needing to make a choice between her two parents' attitudes and life choices? How might it reflect an integration of self that seemed to necessitate a splitting off of particular aspects of one's self? It is not clear how these women came to see sexual and intellectual energy as incompatible, but it is reminiscent of the early nineteenth century theory that sexual activity debilitates the mind and body (Rosenberg, 1973),

and requires further attention.

Although an effort was made to make the sample as homogeneous as possible, there were some demographic characteristics that varied across the three groups of women in unexpected and interesting ways. (It must be kept in mind that the groups were not only small, but unequal in size, so that these differences are not statistically, but theoretically significant.) Over half of the women judged to have a complicated and problematic negotiation of achievement-related conflicts were not involved in a primary intimate relationship at the time of their research participation, while the majority of all other women were in relationships at that time. Although an absence of a relationship is not in and of itself an indicator of a poor capacity to relate, the high proportion of women not in relationships in the first group does, at the very least, raise questions about the more generalized difficulties these women might experience in their lives.

It is striking that the women in the more conflicted groups have parents with higher educational and occupational status than do the other women. In fact, over half of the mothers in the first group have at least a bachelor's degree while most of the mothers of the women in the remaining groups have high school degrees, and none have graduate degrees. At first thought, this is surprising since one might expect mothers with a greater degree of education to be less ambivalent about their achievement, and have daughters who can better manage their developmental tasks related to this. In addition, the fathers of women in the first group are far more educated than the

fathers of the other women; two-thirds of the fathers in the first group have Ph.D.'s, J.D.'s, or M.D.'s, while none of the other fathers has more than an undergraduate degree. How does it happen that the women who experience the most disturbing conflicts about their achievement have the most highly educated parents in the sample? The answer may be two-fold. First, even though these mothers have more education than other mothers in the sample, their level of employment was not necessarily commensurate with their education. For instance, there are college educated mothers in the first group who work as homemaker or secretary, while no mothers of the women in the second group are homemakers, and none are so notably underemployed. And second, it is within this first group that there is a greater discrepancy between mothers' and fathers' level of education and occupation. All of the parents in groups two and three had high school or bachelor's degrees, and so there was less difference between each mother and father on these dimensions. Perhaps it is in those situations where mothers are not only educated and underemployed, but fathers are high achievers that women received confusing and ambivalent messages about what it means to be a high achieving woman.

As must be the case with any research limited by time, money, and human capacity, there were significant areas of inquiry directly related to women's achievement-related conflicts that were simply excluded from this study. Because the developmental dilemmas examined in this project were organized around the mother-daughter bond, the role of the father was not explored. Although only a few women introduced their fathers into their stories, all three women interviewed

spoke spontaneously about their fathers. Judy, in fact, when given the opportunity to reflect on the interview, wondered about the absence of questions about her relationship with her father, and noted her own tendency to respond to questions about her mother by referring to both her parents. Certainly, the presence of two parents impacts on a woman's development. Beyond the scope of this study remain questions about the particulars of a family constellation. Are parents in agreement about a daughter's achievement, or does one parent encourage her while another discourages? At what costs does she manage this difficult position? How are different siblings treated differently? How do parental aspirations differ for siblings born in varying places within a family's configuration? For siblings of different sexes? In what ways does being the oldest, youngest, or neither matter?

In addition, feelings about intimate relationships with partners, and feelings about one's own potential motherhood were not explored. How does one arrive at a personal and broad definition of success, and in what ways do parental and marital achievements interplay with experiences about work-related achievement? These areas were touched upon in the interview, but not in sufficient depth to draw any generalizations. Hypothetically, however, one can speculate that to the extent that women who were more conflicted about their achievement received ambivalent communication about femininity and autonomy from their mothers, they would also have greater difficulty forming and sustaining satisfying relationships, and would be more problematically ambivalent about becoming a mother themselves. It can be recalled

that in fact, over half of the women judged to be experiencing difficulty negotiating achievement-related conflicts, but very few of the other women, were uninvolved in a relationship at the time of their participation in this research. How do women handle their conflicts between loosening ties with parents in order to form new bonds? Further investigation is clearly needed to clarify and substantiate these areas.

In the ideal, perhaps, research might be conducted that would take into account the mother's, as well as the daughter's perspective on these issues around achievement. Given that the connections being made are based on early developmental experiences, as well as adolescent and adult ones, it would be most illuminating to do a longitudinal study with observation of mother-daughter interactions, and interviews that extend over a period of years. The depth and complexity of the interpersonal and intrapsychic dynamics related to the unconscious conflicts examined in this project render many efforts to explore this topic superficial. Certainly, clinicians with extensive and intensive knowledge of individual women might have important data to illuminate the questions raised by this study. Hopefully, this research will likewise contribute to a conceptual framework in which clinicians can better comprehend the painful ways in which women doubt, devalue, or undermine their autonomous achievements.

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A P P E N D I X

APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter and Participation Materials

Dear

I am currently working on research that examines particular aspects of female psychological development that may be important to women who are in the process of working toward a graduate degree. Therefore, I am asking for your participation in this study.

Participation in this study should take one or two hours of your time. Although I cannot provide monetary compensation for your effort, I will be pleased to send you the results of the study at its completion, and will be happy to answer any questions or discuss the study with you at this time. In addition, pilot research suggests that you will find your participation evocative, enlightening, and enjoyable.

Enclosed you will find a series of verbal scenarios. I would like you to make up a story about each one. (Full instructions follow with the scenarios.) I recognize the intimate nature of some of the scenarios, and I assure you that your responses will be kept fully confidential. Please do not put your name on any of these forms; they are coded by number for my own record-keeping.

You will be demonstrating your consent to participate in this study if you complete and send back the forms. You are under no obligation to participate in this study. If you are not interested in participating, I would appreciate it if you would return the blank forms in the enclosed envelope through campus mail.

Within a couple of months, I will contact a small group of randomly chosen participants to request that they take part in a 2-3 hour follow-up interview with me. Completion of these stories in no way commits you to additional participation, and you are free to decline further participation if I contact you.

Thank you for your interest, time, and participation. I hope to hear from you within the next two weeks.

Sincerely,

Linda Kanefield

INSTRUCTIONS

This is a storytelling task. I would like you to read each scenario and make up a story about each one. Tell me what is happening in each scenario, what led up to it, what the people are thinking and feeling, and what the outcome will be.

Write your story as fully as possible in the space provided. Please do not look ahead; complete your story about each scenario before moving on to the next one.

When you have completed all of the enclosed pages, please return them to me in the envelope provided.

Debra just published her first collection of poems and the reviewers praised her work highly.

When Ellen decided to go to medical school, her mother wrote her a letter.

Michelle, who was just promoted to law partner in a small firm, stepped out of the shower and looks at her naked body in the full-length mirror.

Marie, who was recently promoted to a high level administrative position at her office, was surprised one day to find herself thinking about having a penis.

Just as the phone rings with her mother calling, Jennifer, an advanced doctoral student, realizes her thoughts have wandered to masturbation.

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your area of study? _____
3. For what degree are you enrolled? _____
4. Are you currently involved in an intimate relationship? _____
 With a man? _____ With a woman? _____
5. Do you have any children? _____
 Please list age and sex of each. _____

6. Do you have any sisters? _____
 Please list their ages and occupations. _____

7. Do you have any brothers? _____
 Please list their ages and occupations. _____

8. What are your parents' ages, occupations, and levels of education?
 Mother _____
 Father _____
9. During which years of your life, if any, did your mother work outside the home? Please indicate the kind of work she did and whether she worked full- or part-time. _____

10. How much time did your participation in this study take? _____
11. Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview with me at your convenience? _____
12. Would you like to receive more information about this research when it is completed? _____
13. Your phone number _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND HELP.

APPENDIX B

Interview Material:
Informed Consent Form and Interview Schedule

Informed Consent Form

Participant's Name:

Date:

In this study, I am interested in particular aspects of female psychological development that may be important to women who are working toward a graduate degree.

If you choose to participate in this interview, then I will be talking with you about yourself, your feelings about your work, your relationship with your mother, and your feelings about your own body. I am sensitive to the fact that the material we discuss may be very personal at times. Please remember that you may let me know if a particular topic is too distressing, and that you are free to withdraw from participation at any point.

I will be tape-recording our interview for my own use. Please be assured that our discussion will be kept confidential. In writing up the results of this study, I will disguise all identifying information about you and your life.

I hope that you will find your participation interesting and enjoyable.

Signature of participant

Signature of participant-investigator

Interview Schedule

I. Feelings about own achievement

What kind of work do you do? What are you interested in? Where are you in your progress in your program? What kinds of things are viewed as achievements in your field? Have you had any major accomplishments in your academic/professional life?

Most people have all sorts of feelings about who they are and what they do. I wonder how you feel about your work as a graduate student.

How did you come to be a grad student in this field?

How important is your work to you?

What aspects of it are most satisfying? most difficult?

What is your style of working: procrastinate; work steadily?

What are your ideas/goals for a career? How do you view your career as fitting in with the rest of your life?

Try to recall a specific time when you accomplished something-- passes comprehensives, completed MA defenses. What was your reaction? What happened and what were you feeling? Is that typical?

Do you ever find it difficult to feel good about your accomplishments? In what ways/circumstances?

Have you ever had the sense that you undermine yourself or don't do as well as you feel you might? How do you make sense of this?

What is it like to be a woman in your field? in your department?

Have you ever thought of how it might be different if you were a man? How?

II. Relationship with mother

How do you get along with your mother? What is your relationship like?

How has your relationship with her changed over the years?

What periods have been easiest/hardest? Why?

Do you and your mother talk about your graduate work and career interests?

What's it like to talk with her about it? What does she think or say? Do you ever suspect she has other feelings that she's less willing or able to express about it? What might they be?

How do you think your accomplishments affect your mother? Is she proud, envious, both...?

Do you ever feel like your mother is living through you--in a sense, vicariously experiencing your accomplishments? How does this make you feel?

Have you ever felt that your mother encouraged your work? dissuaded you from or undermined your work? How?

What do you think is the hardest part about being a graduate student as it affects your relationship with your mother? What do you think she finds most difficult about your being a graduate student?

III. Relationship with men/marriage, career, children.

Are you currently involved in a relationship with a man? What is that like? How long? Plans for future?

Do you ever think about having children? What do you think/feel about that?

How would having children fit in with your career?

How does your relationship fit in with your goals for yourself?

What would you most like about being a mother? least like? What would you describe as the major stresses in your relationship?

IV. Sexuality/autonomy/sense of body

How would you describe yourself physically?

What do you think of your body?

What do you like most about it? least about it?

How do you feel about being a woman? What do you like most about being a woman? least?

Did you ever think about having a different kind of body? How would it be different?

In what ways do you think having a woman's body affects you and who you are and how you experience yourself?

Can you remember back to when you first got your period? Do you remember what you knew about it? How you felt/What your mother told you?

When did you first become sexually active? What were the circumstances? How did you feel about it?

Do you remember your first experiences of touching your genitals, of exploring yourself, or of masturbating? What happened? Did your mother know about it? Say anything? How did you feel?

Do you feel like you know your body well, or is it a mystery to you?

