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PERSONAL MEANINGS AND COPING PROCESSES

A Hermeneutic Study of Personal Background  
Meanings and Interpersonal Concerns and their  
Relation to Stress Appraisals and Coping

by

Judith Culbertson Wrubel

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Human Development and Aging

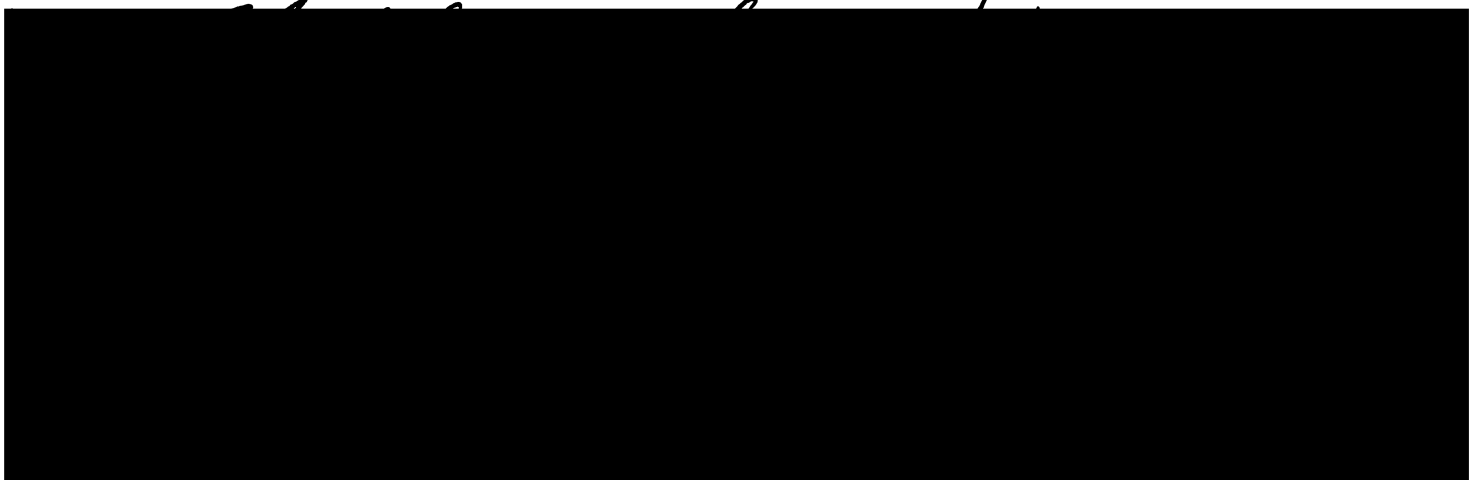
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Many people have helped me in the writing and completion of this work. I would like to acknowledge their contributions.

Richard L. ... opportunities for ... beginning of ... and for his ... Robert L. ... through ... greatly ...

To my husband and all my sons

of the ... Susan ... Catherine ... with me to analyze the ... And I am also indebted to the participants in the ... and Coping Study who gave so generously of their time and shared

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My husband, Bob, provided a sympathetic ear, editorial assistance, and child care on demand. But most of all, he never once asked me when the work would be done, and for this I shall be eternally grateful.

This study... contact... that... pressure... its... low... situation... fifteen... All ten cases were... in order to interpret... interpersonal concerns and to demonstrate their position in

## ABSTRACT

## PERSONAL MEANINGS AND COPING PROCESSES

A Hermeneutic Study of Personal Background Meanings  
and Interpersonal Concerns and their Relation to  
Stress Appraisals and Coping

by

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This study proposes a conceptualization of the person-context relation which can account for the finding that people do not understand and cope with particular life situations in terms that would be predicted by their assessed cognitive traits. The person-context relation presented here views people as embedded in a context of personal meanings. The research aim is to show how this relationship is manifest in stress and coping processes. It is proposed that the approach presented here offers useful possibilities for research in and understanding of the processes of coping, the links between those processes, and the outcomes of coping encounters.

The ten cases interpreted here are a sub-sample from a larger study conducted by Richard S. Lazarus and his colleagues on stress and coping in aging supported by a grant from the National Institute on Aging (AG 00799). Each case is comprised of twelve two-hour interviews conducted once a month for a year. All ten cases were studied in depth using hermeneutical methods in order to interpret personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns and to demonstrate their relation to

stress appraisals and coping strategies. It is shown that coping strategies cannot be accounted for as discrete efforts to solve a problem, and that appraisal and coping are intrinsically tied to all the meanings at work in an episode and to personal meanings as they are expressed in an individual's life.

The personal meanings interpreted in the case studies are then used as a basis for approaching two concepts of current interest in coping research--personal control and social support. It is found that understanding personal control in meaning terms provides a better accounting of the kinds of stress events encountered, the coping strategies used, the emotions felt, and the outcomes of coping episodes than does a measure of internal/external locus of control.

The analysis of social support in meaning terms reveals its coping aspects. It is shown that depending on the meanings involved, the use or non-use of social support can make either a positive or negative contribution to the outcome of a coping episode.

#### Chapter Four

and Coping

Case #01.

thinking of as  
of that. That is

Interpersonal Concerns  
Personal Background Meaning  
Holds the Possibility of Revealing His as  
Inadequate or Worthy



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Chapter One. The Person-Context Relation: Issues Issues and Themes	6
The Person-Context Relation: New Directions in Research	9
The Person-Context Relation: Two Conceptualizations	15
Representation	15
Cognitive Structures	18
Beliefs and Personal Background Meanings	22
Interpersonal Concern and Interpersonal Commitment	26
Chapter Two: Theoretical Perspective	31
The Lazarus Appraisal and Coping Paradigm	31
The Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Heidegger	38
Embodied Intelligence	39
Perception as Grasp of a Whole	41
Background Meaning	42
Personal Background Meanings	47
Interpersonal Concern	47
Chapter Three. Methodology	51
Description of Sample Characteristics	52
The Interviews and the Interviewing Process	54
Interpretive Methods	59
Chapter Four. The Relation of Interpersonal Concern and Personal Background Meaning to Stress Appraisals and Coping Processes: Case Studies	62
Case #01. "When I have time, I wonder what they are thinking of me. When I'm real busy, no time to think of that. That's why I like busy days better."	64
Interpersonal Concern: Owning the Other	78
Personal Background Meaning: Every Encounter	81
Holds the Possibility of Revealing Him as Inadequate or Worthy	81

Case #02. "Why do we have to feel guilty if we want to do or not to do something?"	97
Self-Protective Concern. Interpersonal Connection without Interpersonal Engagement	113
Doing for the Self Versus Doing for Others: A Mismatch of Concern and Personal Background Meaning	116
Case #03. "I don't mind being angry. It feels good sometimes. If I'm right, I'm right... I'm always right so I don't mind getting mad when something is wrong."	134
Interpersonal Concern: The Other Completes the Incomplete Self	147
Personal Background Meaning: The World as Threatening and Dangerous	150
Case #04. How did you learn to deal with your temper? "I grew up and got a little more mature. It's too far back to know how I did it. Now I know how I do things. I take time out, pray, ask for guidance in things, and that will help."	165
Interpersonal Concern: Engaged Care	174
Personal Background Meaning: The Unknown is Threatening but Manageable	177
Case #05. "I'm an insider who's an outsider. The upshot of it is that I did nothing."	187
Interpersonal Concern: Interpersonal Disengagement as a Sought for Ideal	189
Personal Background Meaning: Stress Encounters Are Controlled Not by What He Does but by What He Is	190
Case #06. "I always have such a calm existence but I plan ahead and try to avoid traffic--emotional or other kinds."	194
Interpersonal Concern: Self-Care in Balance with Care for Others	199
Personal Background Meaning: Must Live up to Own and Others' Expectations	201
Case #07. "I like to think that my mind can control what I do. I like to think that I can do that."	204
Interpersonal Concern: Engaged Care	207
Personal Background Meaning: Loss of Self-Control Is Dangerous	210
Case #08. "I really do believe that everybody has a piece of the truth."	216

Interpersonal Concern: Non-Reciprocal Engaged Care	216
Personal Background Meaning: There Is Order and Meaning in the World	218
Case #09. What have been the good breaks and bad breaks in your life? "I think you make your own."	222
Personal Background Meaning: Situations in which the Self Is Not in Direct Control Are Threatening	227
Interpersonal Concern: The Other as a Presence to Affirm the Self	229
Case #10. "I felt like screaming inwardly, 'Why me?' I can't do anything."	232
Interpersonal Concern: Dependent Care	235
Personal Background Meaning: She Cannot Handle Alone What Happens in Life, but She Must Handle it Alone	238
Chapter Five. Understanding Personal Control in Meaning Terms	242
Introduction	242
Personal Control and Meta-Coping	244
Personal Control, Personal Background Meanings and Interpersonal Concerns	249
Personal Control Meanings and Locus of Control	262
Chapter Six. Personal Meanings and Social Support	269
Personal Meanings and a Social Support Stance	270
Social Support in the Coping Episode	284
Social Support in Meaning Terms and Emotional Support Questionnaire Scores	291
Conclusion	295
Chapter Seven. Meaning and Process	299
Meaning and Process	299
Meaning	299
Process	299
The Role of the Larger Context in a Stress Episode	300
Meaning Shifts within the Episode	302
Coping with Simultaneous Stakes and Meanings Contributed by Another	303

Coping with Conflicting Stakes	306
Conclusion	308
Meaning and Process: Some Further Implications	311
The Issue of Objective Reality	311
Radical Freedom	312
Meaning Changes: Growth and Breakdown	313
Appendix A	316
Appendix B	388
References	393

## LIST OF TABLES

	page
Table I. Meaning of Personal Control	264
Table II. Social Support Stance and Personal Meanings	277
Table III. Social Support Coping Strategies	290
Table IV. Social Support Stance and Emotional Support Scores	293

## INTRODUCTION

This study of the stress and coping process has the aim of demonstrating the relation of personal meanings to appraisals and coping strategies in order to further an understanding of the process of coping. Psychological stress has been defined as a particular relationship between the person and his or her context (Lazarus, 1981; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to this approach, the process by which this relationship is given psychological meaning is appraisal, which is the person's understanding of the relevance of an encounter for his or her well-being. Coping is what the person does by thought or action to deal with those situations which are appraised as being beyond his usual adaptive resources.

Appraisal and coping are not a one time assessment and a single responding action. Appraisal of what is going on, of what needs doing, and of what resources are available for doing it, change as the relationship changes over time. Likewise coping usually involves more than one strategy, and different strategies are used as the person's appraisal changes. This coping process, by which is meant both appraisal and coping strategies, is described as transactional, that is, it is a reciprocally influenced relationship between the person and that person's context which occurs over time. These, in brief, are some of the central features and definitions of the coping paradigm used in this study.

The Lazarus coping paradigm, a thumbnail sketch of which is presented above, is centered around the idea of transaction, the relationship established between person and context by processes of appraisal and coping. The hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger (1962) provides a philosophical approach to the issue of the relationship of the person to his or her context which is congruent with the idea of the person-context relationship presented in this coping paradigm. The coping paradigm uses the term appraisal to mean the person's understanding of the salience of a situation for well-being. Heidegger uses hermeneutic phenomenological methods which are based on the idea that the person grasps the situation directly in terms of its meaning for the self. This philosophical perspective is used here in addition to a psychological theory of coping because it details the nature of the person-context relation in a way that is important to defining personal meanings, and because it reveals the difference between this approach and other concepts of the person-context relation.

The focus of this study is on the relation between personal meanings and coping processes. It is proposed here that viewing personal meanings as the condition that makes appraisal and coping possible offers greater understanding of individual coping transactions than does the use of personality traits. One reason for this is because personal meanings, as they are defined in this study, themselves reflect something of the person's relation to his or her context. Definitions of the

particular personal meanings used in this study--personal background meaning and interpersonal concern--illustrate this point. Personal background meanings are the person's sense of reality which form the basis of what is true for the person. They render the person's world understandable and meaningful. Ordinarily, one's sense of reality is not seen; it is seen through. It provides the significance and coherence of what is seen.

Concern describes the way the person is existentially involved in his or her world. Concerns account for what matters to the person. The term not only encompasses what the person cares about but also how the person cares. There are many different concerns a person may have. This study focuses on interpersonal concerns and their various forms of expression in different people.

A study based on a relational theory and which offers relational concepts for the interpretation of interview material must also reflect these principles in the process of data collection. This is the case here. The ten cases which are interpreted in this study in order to demonstrate the relation of personal meanings and coping processes were drawn from a study of one hundred community-residing men and women who were interviewed once a month for a year. The goal of the semi-structured interviews was to gather as much information as possible about the person's life, background, work and family life, as well as careful descriptions of the positive and



negative events which occurred each month, what the person thought, felt, said and did during those episodes, and what transpired as a result.

Interpretation of the interview material focuses on the relation between personal meanings and coping processes, and its purpose is to show how personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns determine both what counts as a stress and what counts as coping for the person. This demonstration adopts the holistic view which regards stress as an integral part of human experience which under certain conditions can be growth-enhancing and under others harmful. From this perspective, coping is not seen as an antidote to particular stress those events, but as meaningfully related to the person's understanding of events. A correlate of this view of stress and coping is that coping effectiveness cannot be viewed unidimensionally. The understanding of coping processes in terms of personal meanings adds another domain to the established finding that coping effectiveness can only be evaluated in context (cf. Wrubel, Benner & Lazarus, 1981).

These then are, very briefly, the theories, terms and concepts used in this study and the contribution it aims to make, that is, the study of the person in the lived context as an avenue for gaining an understanding of coping processes. The following chapters will discuss, illustrate and demonstrate these topics in detail. Chapter One discusses themes and issues relevant to a study of the person-context relation. Chapter Two

is devoted to two theoretical formulations, the Lazarus coping paradigm and those aspects of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology which highlight the nature of the person-context relationship and which underlie the definitions of personal background meaning and interpersonal concern. Chapter Three is concerned with a discussion of methods: the process of gathering the data for the larger Stress and Coping Study from which this study is drawn, analytic procedures utilized, and modes of interpreting the ten cases in this study. Chapter Four includes four full case studies and six case summaries which are the evidence for the thesis of this study, namely that personal meanings determine what counts as a stress and what counts as coping. Chapters Five and Six approach the same issue from another perspective: concepts of personal control and social support are discussed in meaning terms. Both concepts have figured largely in recent coping research. Chapter Seven provides summary and conclusions. Certain theoretical terms used in the study are briefly reviewed in order to provide a basis for definitions of meaning and process and to show their inextricable linkage.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PERSON-CONTEXT RELATION: ISSUES AND THEMES

The search for sources of internal stability and the examination of external forces contributing to breakdown roughly describe two of the approaches used in the study of the person coping with stress. The first approach is exemplified by those who seek to identify coping traits or styles. For example, defensive styles and or cognitive perceptual styles have been identified as predictors of coping outcomes (e.g., repression-sensitization, Byrne, 1964; Welsh, 1956; field dependence-independence, Witkin et al., 1962). The second approach is represented by research on life events (cf. Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974) in order to predict pathological outcomes based on a tally of the occurrence of presumed stressful events.

In addition, from very early on, research in stress and coping has employed a third approach, that of studying what the individual actually does in particular contexts. For example, Lindemann (1944) studied the grief responses of those bereaved by the Coconut Grove fire; Grinker and Spiegel (1945) studied the stressful effects of combat conditions on soldiers, and Lucas (1969) studied the coping of miners trapped in a cave-in. These studies and others like them showed that while a stressful event may have qualities which are understood similarly by people who share a culture, differing coping resources, both personal and social, will make the experience of the event and its

pathological implications different for each one.

Developmental psychology has added further dimensions to this method of study in stress and coping. Erikson (1963) proposed that the study of development not be limited to the early years, but be viewed in the context of an entire life. In this approach particular emphasis is placed on the changing contexts of life and life demands that occur over the entire life course. Since then many studies have been done on the stressful demands of changing life contexts. Some of these studies focus on a particular life transition, such as first-time parenthood (Cowan, Cowan, Coie & Coie, 1978), menopause (Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1968), or entry into a nursing home (Tobin & Lieberman, 1976). Others examine broader features of the changing life context, such as mid-life transitions (Levinson, et al., 1978) and life stages (Lowenthal, Thurner & Chiriboga, 1975; Chiriboga, 1982; Fiske & Chiriboga, in press).

These developmental studies further the concept of studying the person in a context in several ways. First, the context is viewed not as an unusual or crisis situation, but rather as the everyday experiences of ongoing life. Not only does the context not reflect just precipitous events, but it includes events which are generally thought of as positive or as challenges (e.g., birth of a child, a promotion). Further, in these studies the context is viewed as covering a longer period of time than more crisis-oriented research. And finally, the person is not seen as a static feature who either copes well and

survives or copes badly and suffers pathological reverses; rather, the person is seen as an inherently adaptive being who can experience a range of possible adaptive outcomes.

This developmental approach to the study of the person in a context has influenced the data gathering process for this investigation. The aim was to study the person over time in his or her everyday life situation, trying to capture both the positive and negative events which occur, and perhaps recur, and record as nearly as possible what the person thought, felt and did during those events. This was deemed the most appropriate method for gaining an understanding of coping processes, which include antecedents, appraisals, strategies, effectiveness and outcomes.

The principle of studying the person in context requires a conceptualization by which to understand the person-context relation. Even research which aims at capturing the person in the situation often falls back into one-dimensional conceptualizations of an immutable context impinging on the person, or of a single-trait person coping alone with a stressful situation. In fact, it is clear that in real life the context shifts and changes, either of its own accord or because of the impact of the person's actions. Also, the person rarely brings just one kind of coping to a stressful situation, and he or she, being embedded in a social context, does not necessarily draw only on his or her own private resources. Further, since these exchanges occur over time, there is a constant exchange between

person and context, with concomitant shifts in the person's assessment of threat or harm, feelings, and sense of what is to be done.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to an examination of the issue of how best to study the person in context in such a way as to capture coping processes. First some current research in coping will be examined for the new directions it provides. Of particular interest here are the insights to be gained from fine-grained analyses of the coping process and from approaches which involve the uncovering of meaning. Then, two conceptualizations of the person-context relation will be discussed for the background they provide in understanding this study's proposal concerning the person-context relation and personal meanings as a manifestation of that relation. Finally, the personal meanings examined in this study, personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns, are discussed in terms of past theory and research.

#### The Person-Context Relation: New Directions in Research

Despite the tremendous amount of research completed in the field of stress and coping, understanding if coping works, how it works and what it means to say it works still remain a challenge to the researcher. As Pearlin et al (1981) have noted:

It is especially striking that despite the attention given separately to the various components of stress, the intricate linkages that join them have not yet been unraveled ... As a consequence, little is known of the manner in which the various components of

stress are interconnected to form a process (p. 337).

One direction for such process research that has become increasingly clear is into the area of fine-grained studies and analyses. Research into the kinds of events that are implicated in stress has pointed the way to daily life experience as the most useful avenue by which to approach the linkages in the stress process. For example, Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer and Lazarus (1981) compared the effects of major stressful life events with daily hassles in terms of their independent effects on reports of psychological symptoms. An aggregated measure of daily hassles was a significantly better predictor of later symptom levels than the life events measure. A later analysis of the same study by DeLongis, Coyne, Dakof, Folkman and Lazarus (1982) also found hassles to be better predictors of physical health than major life events. Eckenrode (1984) in a study based on interviews and daily diary data found concurrent daily stressors and physical symptoms, and previous levels of psychological well-being to be the most important direct determinants of mood. Chronic stressors and life events affected mood indirectly through these other variables. These studies strongly suggest that the effects of life events on outcomes such as physical symptoms and mood can best be understood through the ways they affect the individual's daily life.

In a study of daily life it is possible to sift out effects not visible when the issue is approached from a broader angle. For example, the differential pull of varying contexts

(e.g., Mills & Krantz, 1979) can be assessed. And the effect of the person on the environment can be observed (see Coates & Wortman, 1980, and Rubinstein & Timmins, 1978, for examples of how depressed people can negatively affect existing social support). These, of course, are examples of aspects of the stress and coping process in daily life. The linkages in the coping process can only be made through studies of the whole process. An example of such a study is provided by the Folkman & Lazarus (1985) study of college students' coping with a mid-term examination. Assessments of emotion and coping were made at three points--before the exam, between taking the exam and receiving the grade, and after receiving the grade for the exam. The process approach to the study of coping allowed the researchers to assess both the complex and sometimes contradictory emotions and coping strategies at each point as well as to observe the changes that occurred at each point in the episode.

As researchers have undertaken the study of the coping process up close as it is experienced in daily life, they have encountered and affirmed the importance of understanding coping processes in terms of meaning. Meaning has appeared as relevant for these researchers at two points in the coping process, at the point of the person's evaluation of the situation (i.e., appraisal), and at the point of doing something about the situation (i.e., coping). For example, McCrae (1984) classified the descriptions of recent coping events provided by



255 men and women into losses, threats and challenges and found that each kind of event had its own particular effect on the choice of coping strategies used. Viewing different kinds of events as having different meanings for people, and thus calling for different kinds of coping runs contrary to the view of coping as a trait or disposition. McCrae (1982) in an earlier study took on this same issue in relation to the elderly. Countering some ego psychologists' claim that as people age they regress in their coping to more primitive mechanisms, McCrae showed that elderly people use the same kinds of coping younger people do in the same kinds of situations. But elderly people encounter many more losses and fewer challenges than younger people. He concludes that

to the extent that coping responses are determined by the nature of the stressful situation, differences that are associated with age may really be attributable to differences in the types of stress that people of different ages typically encounter (p. 457).

In considering the issue of the meaning of the situation for the person, it must be noted that not only are different kinds of situations understood in different ways, but also, the same situation can be understood in different ways by different individuals. The illness experience is one area which has highlighted this point. Lipowski (1970) asserts "that coping strategies are directly related to the individual's personal meaning of and attitude towards his illness, injury or disability" (p. 98). He goes on to describe the culturally

prevalent meanings of illness. Other researchers studying those suffering from illness, injury or misfortune have observed the same relation between the meaning of the event for the person and that person's kind of coping (e.g., Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Melzack & Weill, 1965; Chodoff et al., 1964; Visotsky et al., 1961; Beecher, 1956). In a like vein, but in another arena, that of the issue of control over an event, Thompson (1981) proposes that "reactions to potentially stressful events depend on their meaning for the individual" (p. 89) and offers three dimensions of possible meaning which reflect a person's understanding of an event's controllability.

As noted earlier, researchers have encountered the importance of understanding meaning for the person both at the point of appraisal of the situation, and at the point of coping. In the course of developing a measure of daily coping Stone and Neal (1984) conducted a study using a fifty-five item check list whose items were distributed into eight categories (e.g., distraction, situation redefinition, direct action, etc.). They did not achieve acceptable levels of internal consistency in this study. In the next study, they had the respondents themselves sort the items into categories and they found that different people understood the same coping strategy in different ways. For example, the strategy of "counted my other blessings and generally focused on the good things in life" was classified as a distraction (35% of the time), religion (35% of the time) and as situation redefinition (23% of the time). In

their final study, the researchers used an open-ended coping assessment which allowed their subjects to describe both what they thought and did and to indicate to which class of coping it belonged, so that they could capture the meanings of the strategies for individuals.

Thus it is that the up-close look at people's coping in daily life reveals the importance of understanding the meaning of the episode and of the coping for the person. Then, once meaning is acknowledged as important, it becomes clear that up-close fine-grained analyses are required to capture it. This is the path that this study follows, since it is now clear that structural approaches and approaches that assume in advance of inquiry the meaning of the event for the person have some limitations in common. They do not provide information about what is actually being coped with or how the person does in fact cope, and they do not include accounts of changes that occur in appraisal and emotion. It is proposed here that this kind of information is what is needed in order to trace the links in the coping process. Studying the person in the daily lived context and carefully describing the meanings, appraisals and coping strategies the person expresses in daily life will help further understanding of this process. The studies discussed above, many of which have taken this fine-grained, micro-analytic approach are offering a new avenue for the understanding of coping.

### The Person-Context Relation: Two Conceptualizations

As indicated in the discussion above, recent research has provided indications for the usefulness of studying the meanings expressed in people's everyday coping activities. This study also seeks to add a theoretical dimension to the methodological one by offering a conceptualization of the person-context relation based on the particular role of meaning. Two views of how the person exists in and perceives his or her context are discussed here. One is based on the idea of representation and the other is based on the idea of cognitive structures. Both of these terms are a kind of short-hand or summary of a whole way of thinking about what the relation is between the person and the context. And both of them represent theoretical solutions to the question of how people learn. Or, from another perspective, they are epistemological answers to the question of how the person takes in context. These two ways of thinking about the person are discussed here because, while they do not reflect the understanding of the person-context relation which is presented in this study, they are widely held notions both in the social sciences and also in the general culture. They are presented at this point in order to clarify the issues they raise for the study of the person in the context.

Representation. Representation describes one way of conceptualizing how the person relates to and understands his or her world. This notion can be traced to the theories of Descartes, who posited that the mind and the body are distinct

entities. In his view, the mind is reflective, while the body, unlike the mind, is physical and has extension in space. Since the mind cannot come into direct contact with the external world, it has to internalize representations of the world which might be more or less correct approximations of reality. The internalizations of the mind are private, accessible only to the individual. Behavior, on the other hand, is public and available for all to see. Internal (i.e., mental) experience is causally related to events in the external world by means of the body. And the body, through sense organs, becomes the vehicle for external events to become impressed upon the mind. In this way, the body becomes part of the external environment as far as the mind is concerned. Since the body is the only vehicle by which the mind can express the internalizations garnered from experience, behavior is the only data available for one to understand another's mental experience which is otherwise inaccessible.

In the Cartesian view representation describes the person-context relation. In fact, in this view, representation is the key to the person's relation to the world and to self. The world as currently experienced through the sense organs is represented in the mind. The world as understood and remembered is stored in memory and represented through recall. Representation is a stated key concept in a number of psychological theories, the most prominent of which include behaviorism and the information processing model of cognitive

psychology. Elsewhere in psychology the notion of representation is expressed not directly as a theoretical tenet, but indirectly through one of two assumptions to which the basic concept leads.

The first assumption is that personal meanings are private. This means that they are personal in an idiosyncratic way. They are not commonalities between people because, first, they are individual creations, and second, they are not directly accessible to another person. This assumption of the privacy of meaning has found expression in psychological research in several ways. For strict behaviorists it means that only behavior is accessible for study. For cognitively-oriented behaviorists and for others it means that meaning cannot be studied directly; it must be inferred. But since meaning is still understood to be idiosyncratic, it in itself is not the object of study, because idiosyncratic meaning will only reveal aspects of a particular person, but nothing about people in general. And so researchers devise ways of conceptualizing, organizing and describing personal meanings not in terms of specific content, but in abstract or generalized categories to which groups of people might belong.

The second assumption which derives from the notion of representation is that personal meanings are a less than perfect apprehension of what is really out there in the world. Personal meanings are subjective and reality is objective. This assumption has implications both for how some social scientists

conceive of how to assess the health or illness of human functioning and for how most conceive of their method of study in the first place. The degree of skewness between assessed behavior, inferred personal interpretations and objective reality forms the basis for assessing health of functioning for some psychologists. Also, because of the assumption of an objective world versus subjective meanings, many social scientists tend toward methods of study which will permit the objective study of the person, so their conclusions will be judged objective and communicable, and so that other social scientists can have a basis for agreement on the truth or accuracy of the findings.

Cognitive structures. The second approach to the person-context relation is based on the idea of the priority of cognitive structures to experience. Cognitive structures are mental frameworks which determine how the world is to be understood as well as what behavioral response is to be given. In the structural approach the task for the researcher is to identify structures which all people have in common, or which are shared by groups of people. Structure cannot be thought of in terms of the specific content of personal meanings because content is too situation specific. The point of a structure is that it is applicable to different contents. For example, according to a structural approach a person high on the trait of dominance will respond to an exam, a marriage proposal and the death of a parent in ways that reflect that characteristic, and

those ways will be similar to those responses given by others who are high on the same trait. Thus, a cognitive structure is like a set of rules for how to act. An understanding of the structure can be gained by observing it in actual situations, but the structure itself is understood as applying across situations. Because cognitive structures are ideas, forms or organizers, they cannot themselves be conceived or understood in terms of contextually relevant particulars. And since they apply across individuals and are used as a way of grouping individuals, they cannot be thought of in terms of individual life experience.

Studying people in terms of their cognitive structures is considered useful from two points of view. First, cognitive structures are a basis for explaining a single life and the consistency which we sense in people. Second, they provide a way of organizing people into groups in order to compare them and observe the differential effects of behavior which is theorized to arise from one trait versus another. In either the intra- or inter-individual approach, the person-context relation is one in which the person's cognitive structures are viewed as the organizers of the context, that is, they determine what the context means to the person and what to do about it.

However, this view of the person-context relation has not satisfied a number of social scientists who have observed that coping traits frequently poorly predict how people actually cope in specific situations (for reviews see Cohen & Lazarus, 1973; Folkman & Lazarus, 1980; Lazarus & Launier, 1978). The



conclusion that these researchers have reached is that in certain situations, the behavioral demands of the situation are so clear and/or so strong that they override any personality disposition in the person. The issue here is how to explain how the situation can exert such an influence over the person, or in metaphorical terms, how does the situation exert its "pull?"

If the situation is so powerful as to override the structurally dictated ways of organizing information and interpreting it, that is, if the situation cannot get to the person via cognitive structures, what does it hook onto in order to pull the person? It is not that the pull is a force which makes the person perceive a more real or "objective" reality, because in research in comparing trait and state measures, the felt pull was not the same for all. Everyone did not see the situation in the same "more objective" way.

The view taken in this study is that the person-context relation is one in which the situation presents itself as already organized in terms of salience (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, in press; Dreyfus, in progress). If the person can be thought of as a whole, embodied knower, and personal meanings as a grasp of what is, based on shared understandings (rather than as private and idiosyncratic distortions of reality), then the person-context relation can be thought of as one of direct apprehension of a situation which is seen in terms of its meaning for the person. In this approach, representation arises when a person thinks reflectively, but does not the explain how the person

understands his or her context in daily, non-reflective, practices.

In sum, this study seeks a conceptualization of the person-context relation which can account for the finding that people do not understand and cope with particular life experiences in terms that would be predicted by their assessed cognitive structures. A new person-context concept is especially relevant since the failure of traits to predict behaviors or outcomes has been noted in the more fine-grained studies of coping, and it appears that it is precisely those daily stress and coping experiences, which the fine-grained studies focus on, that are more predictive of outcomes. Thus, ways of examining the stress and coping of daily life are needed, since these processes seem to be the key to understanding certain pathways to adaptation. And yet, present concepts of the person-context relation are not adequate for the task of understanding how the context "pulls" the person in these daily encounters. The view proposed here is that the person-context relation is based on meaning. Meaning here cannot be understood in the Cartesian sense of a private mental representation, but must be seen as a grasp of an already interpreted world (see Chapter Two).

Two kinds of personal meaning which enable this grasp are examined in this study for their role as the conditions which make appraisal and coping possible. The next two sections are devoted to a discussion of these personal meanings, personal

background meanings and interpersonal concerns, as they have been expressed theoretically and in research on beliefs and commitments.

### Beliefs and Personal Background Meanings

Personal background meanings are presented in this study as one kind of personal meaning. They are a person's sense of reality. The concept of background meaning is drawn from Heidegger (1962) and it offers a non-Cartesian understanding of the person-context relation. In psychology, the term belief is used to describe personal meanings; however, a belief is a mental representation and so discussions of beliefs as personal meanings always view the person in the Cartesian person-context relation. For this reason, personal background meaning rather than belief is used in this study to describe one kind of personal meaning. The following discussion touches on some of the ways belief is viewed and used in theory and research in order to clarify the overlap of interest between those approaches and the one presented here and in order to indicate the distinction between them.

William James declared that "Belief, the sense of reality, feels like itself--that is about as much as we can say" (1910, p. 286). James intended to discount an introspective approach to the study of belief when he made that statement. Later investigators have disagreed with his conclusion, feeling that much more could be said about belief, but all agree on that one definitional point that belief is one's sense of reality.

Beliefs form the basis of the person's sense of not only what is true, but also of what is.

Rokeach (1970) and Bem (1970) have theorized concerning the nature of beliefs and their role in human understanding. Beliefs, both researchers agree, reflect reality to their holder. They are the way things are, and so require no confirmation or justification. Because they form the basis of what is real to the person, the beliefs themselves are not, in normal circumstances, visible to the person.

Our most fundamental primitive beliefs are so taken for granted that we are apt not to notice that we hold them at all; we remain unaware of them until they are called to our attention or are brought into question by some bizarre circumstances in which they appear violated (Rokeach, 1970, p. 5).

Rokeach (1970) tried experimentally to create just such a circumstance, that is, one in which beliefs would be disrupted. He gave hypnotized subjects a new group of beliefs ranging from their name to their political affiliation. Then, post-hypnotically, but still under hypnotic suggestion, he had the subjects fill out questionnaires concerning their beliefs. All subjects reported experiencing extreme anxiety when answering questionnaire items according to the hypnotic suggestion and contrary to belief. Rokeach speculates that the prolonged disruption of beliefs could cause a complete breakdown in the person.

The issue of the centrality of beliefs as a basis for both a sense of personal coherence and for action is basic to the

success of some clinical interventions. Clinical work aimed at uncovering beliefs done by Ellis and his colleagues (Ellis, 1962; Ellis & Grieger, 1977) has furthered theoretical understanding of them as central for personal coherence. In the course of conventional psychoanalytic practice, Ellis gradually came to the conclusion that people have beliefs which underlie their understanding of events and which affect their behavior because people act in accordance with them. The people who came to see Ellis as patients had beliefs which Ellis calls "irrational" because once the belief is uncovered and examined it appears to the person not to be true at all. Examples of what his patients have believed include

The idea that it is a dire necessity for an adult human to be loved or approved by virtually every significant other person in his community (Ellis, 1962, p. 61).

The idea that one should be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving in all possible respects if one is to consider oneself worthwhile (p. 63).

While beliefs are viewed as personal expressions, some researchers find their origin to be the society or culture the person lives in. From another point of view, Bem (1970) proposes that beliefs result from social influences, which include

...society's ability to inculcate an entire non-conscious ideology into its citizens, to actually create the underlying premises and basic values which generate their interpretation of the world (1970, p. 71).

Borhek and Curtis (1975) take this approach further when they propose a "sociology of belief". They view belief as a

cultural phenomenon.

Belief has an independent reality over and above any given believer or combination of believers. This is not to say that belief systems are independent of believers and exist in some sphere of "essences" or have life in the sense that an organism does. Without believers there exists no belief system; but the belief system itself is not coextensive with any given individual or set of individuals (p. 42).

To Borhek and Curtis belief is a meaning shared by a culture or sub-culture that finds partial expression in individuals. They base their position on the stated assumption that reality is encountered directly and is not constructed out of individual processes (e.g., Berger and Luckman, 1968).

In this study, the term personal background meaning is used, rather than the term belief. Personal background meanings are defined here as a personally held but culturally derived sense of reality. They are completely taken for granted, and under normal circumstances, transparent (that is they are not seen, but seen through). It is a premise of this study that personal background meanings are not systems or abstract organizing principles, nor can their depths be plumbed, or ramifications enumerated. They are part of a cultural tradition which exists historically. This whole could never be encompassed by a person, since all people live and change within history. It is a further premise of this study that personal meanings, of which personal background meanings are one part, need to be understood as they are lived. To view them as systems or structures means that they cannot be seen in transactional

process terms. In this study personal background meanings are described in terms of content rather than in terms of kind (i.e., category of belief, type of structure, or personality trait). Nor are they viewed as propositional knowledge. This allows them to be seen as transactional, and leads to greater understanding of the processes of appraisal and coping.

In the Cartesian view meanings are necessarily private. Personal background meanings, on the other hand, arise from cultural background meanings and so are shared by groups of people, who, as individuals with individual histories, take them up in individual ways. This position has two important implications for the study of personal background meanings. First, if the members of a culture manifest meanings which are variations or partial expressions of the larger cultural meaning, that is if meaning is shared, then it is not necessary to disregard the content of meaning as too idiosyncratic and focus on structure as the only common feature. And, second, the researcher, by virtue of belonging to the culture, has access to the content of meaning, a kind of access which is not possible under the Cartesian epistemology.

Interpersonal Concern and Interpersonal Commitment: A  
Comparison of Two Concepts for their Usefulness as  
Relational Concepts

Along with personal background meaning, interpersonal concern is offered in this study as a kind of personal meaning. Like personal background meaning, interpersonal concern

describes a kind of contextual embeddedness which acts as a transactional basis for appraisal and coping. There are many concerns which a person may have, but this study is limited to an examination of interpersonal concern. The notion of concern is a concept drawn from Heidegger (cf. Dreyfus, in progress), and it has had, up till now, no currency in the social sciences.

Commitment is a concept which in certain ways resembles concern, and which has a tradition of use in the social sciences. The following discussion is aimed at clarifying why concern is a more useful concept for the study of transactional meanings than is commitment.

The term commitment is used both formally and informally to describe what is meaningful and important for a person. Commitment is understood as a factor in why people do what they do, that is, it implies motivation. Commitment, as it has been defined by sociologists, is a relational term; it describes not just the person or the context, but the relation between the two. The nature of the meaningfulness of what the person is committed to changes as a result of the exchange over time between the person and the context. For example, Becker (1960) describes the development of commitment as the interactive effect of a person's satisfaction in pursuing a course of action while at the same time other courses of action become no longer possible. In this view commitment is the combination of an individual's internal preference and external pressures. Becker proposes this as a motivational schema for general understanding of why



people pursue courses of action.

Kanter (1972), also a sociologist, takes up Becker's notion and adds to it in her discussion of utopian communities. She proposes that commitment is a relational concept which describes the person in a self-defining relationship.

This reciprocal relationship, in which both what is given to the group and what is received from it are seen by the person as expressing his true nature and as supporting his concept of self is the core of commitment to community (pp. 65-66).

This resembles the view offered by this study, that people are embedded in a context of meaning which is defined by the person and by which the person is defined.

However, although commitment is defined in relational terms (see also Leik & Leik, 1976; Kelley, 1979, for examples from psychologists) it does not have a matching relational concept for use in research. Kanter (1972), for example, breaks commitment down into person and situational variables and tries to show how these variables independently affect the strength of a commitment.

Furthermore, commitment is understood as a continuous variable that is always analyzed in terms of its strength or weakness (Kelley, 1977). At the positive end of the continuum the person is seen as wholly engaged and self-defined.

When a person is committed, what he wants to do (through internal feeling) is the same as what he has to do (according to external demands) and thus he gives to the group what it needs to maintain itself at the same time he gets what he needs to nourish his own sense of self (Kanter, 1972, p. 66)

This description of a strong commitment resembles Mayeroff's (1971) description of caring:

Obligations that derive from devotion are a constituent element in caring, and I do not experience them as forced on me or as necessary evils; there is a congruence between what I feel I am supposed to do and what I want to do (p. 9).

Thus, Mayeroff defines caring as a concept like commitment, that is, as being on a continuum marked by degrees of strength. Under this view, researchers have not been able to account for seemingly contradictory findings, for example, that marriages can be simultaneously stable and unhappy (e.g., Cuber & Haroff, 1963; Wrubel, Lubin & Benner, 1979). When a person's relationship with another is described in terms of interpersonal concern, however, the relationship is described in its own terms, in its meaning for the person. This kind of accounting can clarify the issue of the consequences of or the outcomes associated with different relationships. For example, in this study there are examples of long-term, stable marriages which are not happy, intimate or possessing open communication between partners. And yet each one of these factors have been selected by researchers as exemplifying strength of interpersonal commitments, and strong interpersonal commitment is supposed to be the sine qua non of stable marriages. It is proposed here that viewing relationships in terms of interpersonal concern could provide understanding of outcomes such as marital stability. This study uses interpersonal concern and personal background meaning to examine another outcome of current

interest, that of the use and availability of social support.

In sum, commitment is a term which describes what matters to a person. It is described theoretically as arising out of the person-context relation, but it is examined in research not as a relational term, but as the result of independent person and context variables. Furthermore, the person variable is always thought of as a continuum of strength to weakness. This means that a commitment, like interpersonal commitment, is conceived of as one kind of relationship, and all relationships are measured by how strongly they approach it.

Concern is a term which also describes what matters to the person, what is meaningful. In its theoretical conceptualization, concern is not seen as an interaction between person and context, but as an involvement of the person in the context. In its application in research here, interpersonal concern describes how the person cares, rather than how much. By describing interpersonal concern in terms of its meaning for the person stress appraisals and coping strategies which arise from that meaning are illuminated.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This chapter presents the theoretical perspective upon which this study is based. First the Lazarus appraisal and coping paradigm is described. This psychological theory proposes a transactional person-context relation as one of its central tenets, and it offers an approach by means of which particular individual coping episodes can be interpreted. Then, the hermeneutic phenomenology developed by Heidegger is presented in order to clarify the nature of the person-context relation in which particular situations present themselves as organized in terms of salience. This person-context relationship provides the theoretical basis for the concepts of personal background meaning and interpersonal concern as utilized in this research.

#### The Lazarus Appraisal and Coping Paradigm

The Lazarus appraisal and coping paradigm as it has been developed by Professor Richard Lazarus and his colleagues at the University of California at Berkeley (Lazarus, 1966, 1968, 1981; Lazarus, Averill & Opton, 1970; Lazarus & Cohen, 1977; Lazarus, Kanner & Folkman, 1980; Lazarus & Launier, 1978; and Folkman, Schaefer & Lazarus, 1979) initially grew out of investigations into stress. Stress, it has been argued, is the event or external agent. Others have said that is the stressor; the stress is in the person's response. Lazarus and his colleagues now believe--and indeed posit as a main tenet of coping theory--

that stress cannot be defined in terms of either person or situational variables. Stress involves both the person and the situation for it results from the person's appraisal of his/her adaptational relationship to the context. This relationship is called a transaction.

The person-environment relationship is called transactional because this term nearly captures the reciprocal influence of context on person and person on context. Transaction describes a relationship between the person and the context that translates the separate sets of variables of person and environment into a new, higher-level interpretive concept. In sociology, the concept of alienation or "anomie" (Durkheim, 1897/1951) is just such a transactional concept. "Anomie" is Durkheim's term for what happens (anomie) when environmental conditions change faster than the person's adaptational response:

In the case of economic disasters, indeed, something like a declassification occurs which suddenly casts certain individuals into a lower state than their previous one ... But society cannot adjust them instantaneously to this new life and teach them to practice the increased self-repression to which they are unaccustomed (p. 253).

The outcome here depends not only on the environmental change but also on vulnerability, that is, the incapacity of certain individuals to deal with it. The central theme of a transactional approach is that adaptational outcomes depend on both person and context, and reflect a new and special relationship that is given an interpretive term, for example,

anomie. To assign the term either to the person (trait) or to the environment (press) is to misapply the concept.

An examination of the coping process makes the notion of transaction clearer. At first, the person must evaluate the event as posing threat in order to experience stress. Then, what the person does (that is, coping, which includes intrapsychic action) may serve to mitigate or terminate the threat or danger. Alternatively, the troubling event may end because of changes external to the person's coping efforts. Whatever the case, only a view over time allows one to see the nature of the stressful relationship between person and context as an ongoing process.

Thus, the coping transaction is a reciprocally influenced relationship between the person and that person's context. The assumption that the relationship is transactional means that research in coping must focus on the process of the adaptive relationship. Process implies both chronology and context, because it refers to what happens over time and across encounters.

Two theoretical concepts which partition the coping transaction and help make visible the adaptive process are appraisal and coping. Appraisal is understood as the way people interpret their experience. It is the evaluation of an encounter with respect to its meaning for well-being. Although stress appraisals have theoretically been divided into types or categories (threat, harm, challenge), these theoretical

divisions are not meant to be the final reduction of appraisal, or the only information necessary to know about the stress appraisal. Within a particular coping transaction, the meaning aspect of appraisal is represented in what is called the "stakes."

If the person's evaluation of an adaptive encounter results in a stress appraisal, that is, an appraisal of threat, harm or challenge, then the person is involved in a coping transaction. Coping has been classified into four modes (Lazarus & Launier, 1978). The first of these is information-seeking, on which reappraisal of the harm, threat or challenge, or some form of action may depend. The second mode is direct action to change the environment or oneself in some way in order to undo the injury, prevent the harm, or meet the challenge. In the third mode, inhibition of action, the person resists acting because it is poorly grounded, dangerous, embarrassing, or morally reprehensible. Finally, there is a complex class of intrapsychic forms of coping, or what might be better called cognitive coping, in which the person manipulates his or her attention or changes the way events are apprehended in order to reduce the sense of injury or threat. In other contexts this has been referred to as "palliation" because such self-generated cognitive coping makes the person feel better about things even though the situation may not have changed. Cognitive coping includes denial, avoidance, intellectualized detachment, and other intrapsychic processes. Coping has two

functions, to alter the situation, and to manage the emotions. Each of the four modes of coping have the possibility of performing either or both functions of coping.

Emotions are also an important part of the coping process. Emotions which accompany stress appraisals reflect the stakes, that is, the meaning of appraisal. In some instances managing or otherwise dealing with emotions is a central part of what is seen as the coping demand. The shift and change in emotional experience is also one way the person has of understanding how the coping episode is going. Negative emotions which cannot be managed can affect the short and/or long-term outcome of the coping episode.

The coping paradigm does not evaluate coping on the basis of what form of coping the person chooses, but on the basis of the effectiveness of the coping. To be effective coping has to work on three levels: the physical (health), the psychological (mood), and the social (effective functioning). Because it is transactional, the theory recognizes that some situations cannot be effectively coped with.

This theory does not postulate any ideal form of coping. It is not proposed that the best copers are those whose lives are without stress. It is impossible to be engaged in living and avoid stress. Because one is engaged in a transaction where the situation makes its own contribution, one cannot expect to avoid stress simply by arranging never to see anything as threatening. One suffers more harm by calmly allowing oneself to be run over by



a bus than by admitting the threat, feeling the rush of adrenalin, and leaping out of the way.

Culturally, we place a strong, positive value on problem-directed activity, and a negative value on simply changing how we feel. This theory recognizes that making oneself feel better, or at least not feel so bad, is not a pathological alternative, especially since there are a number of situations where action is impossible or inadvisable. Not doing something, where avenues for direct action are closed, is adaptive. Even when possible, direct action can be maladaptive. It has been shown experimentally that stress is in part a function of the number of coping responses. Even in the case where behavior is effective, the greater the number of responses, the higher the stress (Weiss, 1968).

Additionally, the theory assumes that people not only can survive, but can flourish as well. There is a growing amount of evidence which suggests that stress in manageable amounts can be growth-enhancing. Elder's (1974) study of the Children of the Great Depression is a case in point. He examined the longitudinal data gathered by the Oakland Growth Study of people who were ten in 1930 when the study first began. He divided the people according to class and deprivation level (an economic index Elder created). The deprived middle class children did extremely well as adults on all measures of adaptation, work, marriage, health and adjustment. The non-deprived working class subjects also did well as adults. The deprived working-

class people had very poor adjustment by age thirty-five, but so did the non-deprived middle class! Working class status has long been recognized as placing people at risk for all manner of physical and psychological symptomatology. The double burden of working class status, plus the gross economic deprivation in formative years produced an unmanageable stress whose effect appears to be lasting. The non-deprived middle class children, however, had all the advantages, were protected from the vicissitudes of economic deprivation, familial disruption and other effects of the Depression. And in being so protected, perhaps never developed the skills, the toughness or the sense of self-effectance that would see them through the problems of adult life.

In sum, the transactional approach to coping distinguishes between short-term and long-run adaptation. The transactional view provides a way of accounting for the reciprocal contribution of person and context to such outcomes in the concepts of appraisal and coping. Appraisal denotes a person's direct apprehension or direct understanding of experience. It arises out of personal meanings as they are experienced in specific contexts. Coping strategies refer to what the person does either internally or externally to deal with a situation that is appraised as stressful. It is a premise of this study that coping strategies as well as appraisals are meaningfully related to personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns.

### The Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Heidegger

The hermeneutic phenomenology of Heidegger (1962) also addresses the issue of this kind of transactional person-context relation. Phenomenology presupposes that the situation is apprehended directly. And, in this usage, hermeneutic presupposes that people interpret their experience, which is to say that what people grasp directly is meaning. The Heideggerian view is presented here because it elaborates on the nature of the person-context relation out of which appraisal arises, and because that relation provides the basis for definitions of personal background meaning and interpersonal concern.

Heidegger's understanding of person and context is totally different from that of Husserl (1964; cf. also Dreyfus, 1982) and the American psychologists and sociologists who have followed the Husserlian assumptions (e.g., MacLeod, 1964; Kohler, 1966; Berger & Luckman, 1968). That school of phenomenology agrees that the situation is apprehended directly, but believes that meanings are assigned to it by the individual. Out of the process of the individual assignment of meaning develops a kind of intersubjectivity that is based on a consensus of private meanings. By contrast, in the Heideggerian formulation, the situation is apprehended as already interpreted, that is to say, what the person apprehends directly is a context which is understood in terms of its meaning for the self. This view is made understandable by the concepts

of embodied intelligence, perception as grasp of a whole and background meaning. These concepts, in turn, provide the basis for defining the terms personal background meaning and interpersonal concern. Each of these ideas will be taken up in turn below.

Emodied Intelligence. Heidegger's notion of background meaning is enriched by the concept of embodied intelligence which holds that people have rapid, non-reflective, non-conscious ways of grasping or sensing a situation (Lazarus & McCleary, 1951; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1968; Polanyi, 1966; Dreyfus, 1972; Sudnow, 1978). The body responds in an integrated way to meaningful situations. For example, in the Lazarus and McCleary (1951) experiment, the person's galvanic skin response accurately corresponded to syllables which had been paired with shocks, even though the person was not able verbally to discriminate among shock and non-shock related syllables. More recent psycho-physiological research corroborates this early finding. Wolf (1981) noted that some experienced blood donors responded to the blood bank situation by increased capillary constriction and increased blood pressure prior to donating blood. Dreyfus (1983), following Merleau-Ponty, calls this the ontological capacity of the body to respond to meaningful situations.

It is a correlate of this view that this behavior cannot be duplicated by conscious attending, although skilled activity usually begins with such attention and thought. Skilled bodily

behavior is flexible and can be done many different ways depending upon the context. In addition to the flexible, non-analytical performance of highly skilled capacities people also acquire a culturally skilled habitual body. For example, people learn culturally appropriate distances for standing in different social situations without ever learning the appropriate distances conceptually in feet and inches. This is understandable if the context itself is seen as relating to the body by presenting itself as organized according to human purposes and past concrete experiences complete with their significance (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, in press).

People understand contexts because of the ontological capacity of the body to take on cultural forms and habits and because objects are used by the body as tools. Skilled use of tools can become like an extension of the body. For example, when a blind person first uses a cane to feel a curb, he feels pressure in the palm of his hand; when he becomes skilled in the use of a cane, he feels the curb. The cane becomes an extension of his body. The use of tools as extensions of the body organizes context-meanings in terms of practical behavior (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Dreyfus, 1972).

In Western culture practical behavior is regarded as "lower" than conscious, reflective, mental activity. But Heidegger argues that all theoretical, reflective knowing is dependent on and tied to practical behavior, or sensori-motor ways of knowing. Put another way, the referential context

provided by practical activities (and by means of symbols and signification made possible by perception or embodied ways of knowing) enable people to generate conceptual knowledge.

Perception as grasp of a whole. The phenomenological view of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) goes somewhat as follows: In perception, things are always perceived against a background. It is the nature of human perception that the background is perceived as indeterminate, but necessary for the object to be perceived. While the field provides definition for the object, the person also contributes to the definition by taking in the object as a whole and in relation to intents and purposes. Aspects not in the visual field are taken into account, but are not salient or in the forefront of attention. All perceptual modes are integrated. Not only are perceptual experiences synesthetic (e.g., we see wooliness), but they are integrated into the whole body's skilled way of interpreting the world. Finally, perception, just like skilled behavior, changes its nature when one reflects upon it. When I watch myself type, I cease to be able to do it smoothly. When I watch myself watch, or listen, or smell, the experience is likewise transformed (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, in press).

This view of perception and of the person as an embodied intelligence leads to a notion of the person-context relation in which people apprehend their world because it is their world. Things are not seen floating in space, but firmly located within

a familiar context. Context is used as a guide, not for recognition, but for interpretation, because when we see things, we do not see them in a generic sense (i.e., in terms of objective properties or as representative of a general class), we see them for what they are in relation to their surroundings and function. I see my chair in front of my desk. The context provides the background for understanding the object, but the context itself is not reducible to determinate data (Dreyfus, 1972).

Thus, people are able to perceive, know and do things in an embodied way that is not available to reflective consciousness, that indeed, is interfered with when reflective consciousness comes into play. That is not to say that reflective consciousness is not important. It clearly plays a role in explicit cognitive activity; it also plays an important role in interpretation when implicit understanding breaks down. However, Merleau-Ponty argues that the importance of reflective consciousness has been overestimated because of the predominance of the Cartesian model of the person as a dual thinking being and extended being. And the importance of embodied, non-reflective understanding has been underestimated because it changes its nature when it is thought about reflectively. This view of the person as an embodied intelligence paves the way for understanding how meaning can be public and shared and also personal and individual.

Background meaning. According to Heidegger (1962), a culture provides a background of meaning which is taken up from

birth. This background provides the basis of what is taken to be real for a particular group of people. It is not a veil that stands between people and the factual world; it is what allows them to perceive facts. Without it people would not perceive anything except incomprehensible something or other. Because people are embodied intelligences they can take in their cultural background meanings before they have reflective consciousness. Since meaning is taken up in this way, and since it operates nonreflectively, it is not ever totally available to reflective consciousness (Dreyfus, in progress).

Caudill and Weinstein (1969) provide a good example both of how we are brought up with certain ways of understanding reality, and how those background meanings vary from culture to culture. In a study of Japanese and American neo-nates in which the researchers carefully observed and recorded mother-child interaction, they found that by the age of three to four months the infants were thoroughly Japanese or American as a result of the culturally distinct interactive patterns of mother and child. The Japanese babies were physically passive and content to be watchful of things and people around them. The American babies were physically active and constantly engaging vocally as well as physically with their mothers. The researchers sum up the cultural meaning in this way: The Japanese act as if the infant at birth is a separate, autonomous being who needs to be brought into the family and made dependent on the kin group; the Americans act as if the infant at birth is a helpless, dependent



being who needs to be encouraged to become autonomous.

What Caudill and Weinstein have demonstrated is not that the infant produces specific acceptable behavior for a small baby in a culture, but infants of three months knowing what it is to be a person in a culture. Their understanding of themselves (not consciously speaking of course) at the age of three months can be seen to be culturally relevant at any age in each culture. For example, the importance of self-reliance in American culture has been pointed out and examined by cultural observers from DeToqueville to Hsu, and more recently by Bellah, et al. (1985). And yet in all these observations and analyses, the full meaning of self-reliance has never been made totally explicit. It cannot be made totally explicit because in its deepest form it is tied to what it means to be a person in our culture. It is not limited to attitudes or belief systems but is embedded in cultural practices and skilled activity. Moreover, this self-reliance is known in bodily ways that enable us to navigate our life course, and bodily understanding, it has been shown, is not fully amenable to conscious reflection. Finally, self-reliance or any other aspect of background meaning is not complete, finished and whole. As people in a culture live out the background meaning over time it is modified; it takes on new forms and expressions. For example, on the popular level, the Horatio Alger myths of a few decades ago have now been replaced by the "take responsibility for your own life" mottoes of the Self-Actualizers.

While background meaning suffers (in Western analytic view) from the limitation that it can never be made completely explicit, this limitation is actually an advantage. Because we are in the world in a bodily, non-reflective way, we are able to function for the most part smoothly. If we had to attend explicitly to every detail of our daily activity we would be like the person with central nervous system damage who cannot feel pain, and thus must consciously attend to everything that might be injurious.

This smooth functioning is really what is meant by embodied understanding and is the result of constant non-reflective interpretations of the self in the world. This is what Heidegger means when he says that people are self-interpreting beings. The background meaning is a shared, public understanding of what is, and people use this understanding of what is to interpret the world around them by means of and in relation to their bodies.

Sometimes smooth functioning breaks down. The background meaning does not work. Normally, when the background meaning is working well, people have no occasion to notice it. It is invisible because it determines for us what counts as real. When it does not work well at some point, then one begins to attend to it. The breakdown of smooth functioning that accompanies trying to live and achieve goals in a foreign culture is a case in point. The term "culture shock" (Oberg, 1960) has been used to describe the errors, frustrated

expectations, anger and disappointment that result when one's taken-for-granted background meanings do not apply. Conscious reflection comes into play at this point, but because of the limitations outlined above, the person cannot treat the self as an object and understand what is going on. Cognitive operations are essential to understanding those parts of our world which can be treated as objects, but our selves are constantly engaged in the world and in interpreting it. We can never stand back from the self in the world and maintain smooth functioning, because once we stand back from it and treat it objectively, it changes its nature for example, if someone lives in a foreign culture long enough, he/she usually recovers from culture shock only to experience culture fatigue--the exhaustion of having constantly to make decisions about what to do or say in situations that are usually taken-for-granted or automatically understood by the natives.

To sum up briefly, under the traditional Cartesian view, the mind of the person has only indirect contact with the world (which includes other people) through mental representations such as beliefs, memories and images. Under the view proposed here, the person is an embodied intelligence and so has direct grasp of the world. There is no intermediary step of representation in most activity. Although people can and do engage in reflection, it is not adaptive for a great deal of living. What people grasp or apprehend directly is meaning. It is not a reflexive meaning, an object for the mind to ponder;

it is lived understanding. People are embodied intelligences who grasp experience as a whole in terms of its meaning for them, and that meaning is part of a shared background of meaning for the culture.

### Personal Background Meanings

Although the basic meanings in a culture are shared, each individual takes up these meanings in a way that is both culturally general and yet personally individual. This is inevitable since the background meanings are not "objective," but are lived and experienced. Each life takes on in certain respects its own individual way of living out these meanings. These personal versions operate in the way described above; they are embodied, and tacit. These individual versions of background meaning are called personal background meanings in this study.

### Interpersonal Concern

The shared background meaning which is manifested in an individual's personal background meanings is only part of Heidegger's view of the person-context relation. The other part is concern. People understand themselves and their lives through shared background meanings, but they define themselves through their concern (see Dreyfus, in progress).

Concern, like background meaning is characteristic of people. Heidegger has illustrated the difference between an object and a being that has concern by contrasting two uses of the preposition "in." An object can be "in" in a spatial sense. A

person, when seen as an object, can also be "in" in this spatial sense. But only a person can be "in" in the sense of being involved, for example, being in love (see Dreyfus, in progress).

Heidegger (1962) describes the spatial sense of inclusion as "being in," and the involved sense as "being-in" or "being-in-the-world." Being-in is a way of summing up an essential part (aspect) of human existence (Dasein). People are characterized by the fact that things and people matter to them. They are involved in an existential rather than a spatial sense. Heidegger calls this way of being involved "concern."

The expression "concern" [Sorge] will be used in this investigation as an ontological term for an existentielle ... This term has been chosen not because Dasein happens to be proximally and to a large extent "practical" and economic, but because the Being of Dasein itself is to be made visible as care (pp. 83-84).

People care about other people and things. But this is not an economic concept. People do not invest x-amount of care in some other. Care describes involvement (being-in). Dreyfus (in progress) illuminates this involvement with the term "in-habit."

Another existential aspect of Being-in which can be expressed better in English than in German, is "in-habiting." Heidegger says that Being-in makes being-absorbed-in possible. He calls this absorption Sein-bei--i.e., "being at home"--which is very badly translated as "Being alongside." The English being at home does not fully capture the German "bei" or the French "chez," but we do have the notion of inhabiting. When we in-habit something it is no longer an object for us but becomes part of us and pervades our relation to other objects in the world. Michael Polanyi calls this way of Being-in "dwelling." He points out that we dwell in our

language; we feel at home in it and relate to objects and other people through it. The relation between me and what I inhabit cannot be understood on the model of the relation between subject and object (Chapter 5, pp. 5-6).

Only by viewing concern as a transactional concept can we avoid the problems inherent in the economic and the subject/object notions of relationship. In the subject/object view, one's personal characteristics and significant others are viewed as possessions or attributes instead of being constitutive of the self (see Sandel, 1982). If concern is viewed in either of these two ways, it becomes a linear, quantitative measure. The question inherent in either view is "how much?" and the answer runs from zero on up. If concern is seen in a transactional sense as involvement, the question to be asked is "in what way?" and the answer is a description of the nature of the involvement.

Traditionally, the problem of why people do things, make the choices they make, has been answered by theories of motivation. From Bacon and Locke through S-R theorists to cognitive behaviorists, the answer has been the same. If people are seen as separate from their world, and the world as an object to be taken in and reflected upon, then what motivates people has to be either people's own internal drives, needs or structural traits, or external prods or rewards in the environment. In the transactional formulation, motivation comes from the relationship people have with their world. It is not a relation one can get by adding together two separate elements of person

and environment. People are only to the extent that they have this connection to the world, and this connection is concern. Where people care about people and things, they will turn their attention to them (cf. Klinger, 1975). People cannot turn their attention and then care. How they care is determined by the significance that other people and things have. The way people care defines themselves. And so concern is not an issue of degree, but of kind (cf. Rubin, 1984).

In sum, personal background meaning and interpersonal concern are concepts appropriate for the study of stress appraisals and coping processes. They are transactional concepts which describe the relation of a person to a context and a context to a person. This relation is defined in terms of meaning, and so personal meanings described in terms of context relevant content are central for a study whose aim is understanding transactional coping processes. Personal meanings form the matrix out of which stress appraisals arise and coping processes issue. It is the task of the remainder of this study to demonstrate the kinds of personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns held by a sample of ten participants in the Stress and Coping Study of Daily Life Stress, to show how these personal meanings relate to appraisal and coping, and to examine the implications of this relationship for understanding personal control and the use of social support.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses aspects of methodology relevant to this study. First, Heideggerian hermeneutics as a method for interpreting meaning is briefly examined. Then information concerning the collection of data is presented: the sample characteristics, the interviews and the interviewing procedures. Last, the interpretive methods used on the case material are described.

The purpose of this study is the examination of the relationship of personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns to stress appraisals and coping processes. Since it is a study of transactional meanings, an interpretive method, hermeneutics, developed by Heidegger (1962) and applied by Charles Taylor (1971), is used. Hermeneutics is a method of interpretation and explanation whose aim is the unveiling of background meaning, which is defined in terms of the person's understanding as manifest in everyday practice, not as objectifications of experience or as mental structures. Since a goal of this study is the revelation or uncovering of the meanings manifest in such lived understanding, hermeneutics is an appropriate interpretive method because it offers a way to study people embedded in a context of lived understandings.

According to Heidegger, one must enter a hermeneutic circle in order to engage in this process of interpretation. This process appears circular because it involves moving back



and forth between a horizon of general understanding and specific details. One never begins the circle as a tabula rasa, but always has an understanding in advance of gaining an understanding. This circular nature of hermeneutics, in which one has to know in advance in order to interpret what is not already known is described by Palmer (1969), who uses the example of simply reading:

...in order to read, it is necessary to understand in advance what will be said, and yet the understanding must come from the reading. What begins to emerge here is the complex dialectical process involved in all understanding as it grasps the meaning of a sentence, and somehow in a reverse direction supplies the attitude and emphasis which alone can make the written word meaningful (p. 16).

#### Description of Sample Characteristics

The study undertaken in this dissertation was pre-planned and partakes of the stated over-all goals of the Stress and Coping Project, namely "the systematic description and measurement in a naturalistic setting of stress, coping and patterns of emotion in daily life in a middle-aged population." The research project undertook to discover the factors influencing stress appraisals, as well as the coping engaged in when such appraisals arose.

This dissertation is based on a sample of ten cases drawn from among 100 cases from this year-long study of patterns of stressful events, coping and adaptation in middle-aged persons. The Stress and Coping Project's sample was comprised of 100 45-64 year old men and women living in Alameda County, California.

They were selected from a sample of 4,864 people who had participated in a study conducted by the Human Population Laboratory of the California State Health Department. (First survey 1965, sample=6,928; second survey 1974, sample=4,864.) The 100 participants in the study were drawn from a subject pool limited to those 45 to 64 years of age, white, Protestant or Catholic, with at least an 8th grade education, better than marginal income (\$7,000+ in 1974) and without the most severe disabilities (not bedridden). Randomly selected subjects fitting these criteria were contacted by phone. Of the resulting 216 initial contacts, 107 refused to participate; 109 agreed to be studied. The 107 who refused differed significantly from the 109 participants only in education (refusers had less education). The 109 participants were distributed similarly to the 4,864 members of the sample pool, except that in 1974 more of the Project's participants had more than adequate income than did the HPL sample as a whole.

Nine participants dropped out. Fifty-two women and forty-eight men completed the twelve-month study (100 participants). Age was stratified into four five-year periods (45-49 n=27, 50-54 n=25, 55-59 n=24, 60-64 n=24). The sample was predominately married (n=86), well-educated (mean = 13.9 years of education) and high income (median greater than \$20,000 per year) as is the white, 45-64 year old population of Alameda County.

The sample for this dissertation is comprised of ten

cases randomly drawn and stratified by sex and interviewer. The five men range in ages from 45-62, and the women from 47-62. They cover a range of occupations, incomes and levels of education. Based on an examination of all 100 cases, it appears that these ten cases are neither more nor less candid or verbal than the group as a whole, nor do they differ in any extreme way from the sample as a whole on the factors of interest, namely personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns. The goal of this study is the illumination of the relationship of personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns to stress appraisals and coping processes. It is not its goal to enumerate the universe of possible personal meanings. Nor is it a goal here to contrast extreme groups. The cases from the larger study were selected to avoid as much as possible extremes of pathology, either physical or mental. In this regard, the sample used here is a microcosm of the larger sample.

#### The Interviews and the Interviewing Process

The Lazarus Coping Paradigm is based on the idea that people interpret their experience. Appraisal is the term that refers to kinds of interpretations relevant to outcomes of transactions, that is, to one's well being. Appraisal depends on both contextual and personal factors. Thus, the coping paradigm dictated that the study include multiple data collection approaches and an analytic process appropriate to both theory and data. The interviews aimed at capturing interpretations or appraisals in the protocol. The more

structured interviews (family relations, life cycle, work and aging) provide life context information, background meanings and concerns as these are understood by the participant. The coping and emotion interviews provide actual episodes which reveal how certain personal background meanings and concerns are activated through specific life encounters -- both positive and negative -- and the coping efforts people make to deal with the stressful encounters.

The seven coping and emotion interviews reflect careful efforts to create procedures to gather theory-relevant material. The interviews were designed to elicit descriptive information about what went on. The one coping interview elicited recent coping episodes by asking specifically about stressful events. The six emotion interviews elicited both coping episodes and episodes involving positive emotion by asking about strong feelings recently experienced. It was not decided in advance what kinds of encounters or feelings would be stressful (or pleasurable) to the participant because part of the task of data collection was to secure just that information. So whatever episodes the participant describes (strong emotions, difficult situations) were recorded. He or she chose what to talk about in the emotion and coping interviews. These interviews are the one place where all aspects of the coping process are spelled out for one episode: the specific context, personal meanings, appraisal, emotion (and changes in emotion), coping, and the results of coping (change in the person, in the

situation). Given the fact that the participants chose what to talk about, there is a possibility that there were events that the participant chose not to talk about. This could have affected how representative the coping interviews were of the stresses in a participant's life.

Not only did the interviews seek to gain a description of actual episodes which involved coping or which involved positive emotion, they also sought to record what people encountered repeatedly and over time in naturalistic settings. This allows for ultimately, the examination of the short- and long-term consequences of coping, that is, what happens in a single episode and what happens over many episodes and in consequence of them.

The seven interviewers were chosen using the criteria of prior experience and demonstrated skill in actual interviews. The interviewers were given six weeks of training prior to the beginning of the study. Training sessions of practice interviews were videotaped in order to educate the interviewers in the use of the semi-structured interviews which were designed to elicit the story of a coping episode.

Each participant saw the same interviewer for the full twelve months of the study. The interviewer-interviewee relationship that ensued from the repeated contacts became crucial for the research goals of chronicling long-term stressful events and repeated stressful encounters. The relationship was also central in overcoming any reluctance on the part of a participant to be anything less than fully candid.

Meetings of the research staff and interviewers continued throughout the interview year, both in order to train the interviewers in the different interview protocols and to allow for discussion of interviewing problems of relevance to the entire group. Members of the research staff also supervised the interviewers individually. The supervisor would go over the interview material and make sure the interviewer was getting the whole coping "story," and discuss any problems the interviewer brought up.

The participants were interviewed in their homes or at their work once a month for twelve months. The first interviews began May through August 1977, and the twelfth and last interviews were completed May through August 1978. Participants were also left self-report questionnaires to complete between interviews. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. A case study is comprised of the transcripts of these interviews. Seven of the twelve interviews were designed to elicit both stressful episodes which required coping and episodes of positive emotion as they occurred during the interview year. One interview was devoted to issues of family relations, including family of origin. Two interviews were devoted to expectable life occurrences such as menopause, children leaving home, parents aging and death, own widowhood, own aging and retirement. Included in here were questions about current work (see Appendix A for interview formats).

The aim of the coping and emotion interviews was to gain information about what happened during a particular episode, rather than try to identify traits, or inquire about what a person usually did. (An episode refers to a naturally occurring event that is identifiable as an unfolding sequence of behavior, events, thoughts and feelings that are related.) The goal was to get the participants to tell the story of the episode, with the interviewer going back over it several times to have the participant fill in the chronology or anything that was unclear in the telling. It was not expected that the participants would be able to say that they used a particular mode of coping, like, for example, inhibition of action. It was believed that the nature of the appraisal and the coping would emerge from the telling of the whole story. In this manner the research Project emphasized the importance of context in order to understand coping, and stayed close to the basic tenet of coping as a transaction.

Additionally, the research aimed not to locate only a single coping strategy or type of strategy. It was important to know what were all the coping strategies brought to bear in any particular episode. And, since many stressful encounters are not clearly defined in time, it was necessary to observe the longer process of coping over time. The over time view also provided information about chronic or repeated stress, patterns in coping and effectiveness of coping strategies.

### Interpretive Methods

Two interpretive approaches were used on the case material. First, the coping episodes alone were analyzed and coded by a group of nine graduate students working on the project. These episodes were analyzed into various aspects of the coping process: appraisal, secondary appraisal (i.e., assessment of resources available or unavailable for coping), emotions, coping strategies, effect of coping on the emotions, and effect of coping on the situation.

We first met to analyze episodes as a group exercise to train ourselves in interpretation and generation of categories, beginning with a rough outline of categories (see paragraph above). As the coding proceeded categories were refined, added or eliminated. The content of the categories were derived from the coping episode itself. For example, coping was not coded into the general categories of direct action, or intrapsychic coping; a phrase was developed to describe the kind of direct action (e.g., power play) or intrapsychic coping (e.g., distancing) was involved. In this way patterns and contrasts in coping that would not otherwise be apparent emerged. Also, the more descriptive terms, such as martyr manipulation, permitted views of coping that were somewhat more complex than the reductive categories.

Each new coping episode presented some new stakes and coping strategies, and the coding group consciously avoided reducing them at this point. In this way, the descriptive level



was maintained so that a range of questions could be asked. This is an important goal of all primary research--to make original data available both for validation and for other research. Two other dissertations have been completed which used this coding method (Benner, 1982; Golden, 1982).

Once secure in method, the larger group divided into groups of twos and three and coded the same episodes, then came back to check on level of agreement. A gratifyingly high level of agreement was obtained, but disagreements were valued too, because eventually they all led back to questions of theory, and refinements of the group's understanding of coping, as well as raising questions which sometimes could not be answered with the data at hand.

Any code had to be based on material overtly expressed in the interview. It could not be inferred that the participant felt, thought or did something, it had to be stated in the interview. Every code was supported by a quote and page reference (see Appendix B for examples of coded coping episodes).

Once the group had attained good reliability as coders, each smaller group took different coping episodes, coded them and then presented them to the group. The group would discuss the coding, question the coders who would defend their codes. This way the element of consensual validation was retained, but the process of coding was speeded up. The coded coping episodes used in this study have all been validated by this group of

coders.

The second interpretive method used in this study was case-by-case analysis using the entire twelve interviews in a case. First the case was read carefully and thoroughly. Then the case was read a second time and notes taken on large note cards. Each card had a theme or category at the top--e.g., relation to wife, own aging, self-control. As new themes come up, a new card was started. References to the case were noted on the card with a quote if short, or a summary if long. The themes on the cards changed as understanding of the case became clearer. When completed the cards formed the basis for writing the case study. First a case study describes the person in terms of his/her life, work, family, friends. Then the person's central interpersonal concern and personal background meaning were interpreted and discussed in relation to coping, emotion and effectiveness of coping. All interpretations and conclusions are substantiated by quotations from the interview text.

This kind of interpretation is different from that of grounded theory (Glaser & Straus, 1967) which attempts to find theoretical understanding and to derive theory terms. Hermeneutics searches for meaning terms, in this case personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns, which are comprised of, and can only be understood in terms of concrete content.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE RELATION OF INTERPERSONAL CONCERN AND PERSONAL BACKGROUND MEANING TO STRESS APPRAISALS AND COPING PROCESSES: CASE STUDIES

Four full case studies and six case summaries are presented in this chapter. The case studies describe the life circumstances of the participants, interpret the interpersonal concerns and personal background meanings revealed in the interviews and explore their relation to stress appraisals, coping processes and emotion. The cases provide evidence of the theoretical position stated above, namely, that personal background meanings and concerns are meaning terms that account for what is appraised as stressful in a coping transaction, and that shape the possible choices in coping.

Each case study is drawn from twelve two-hour interviews conducted over the course of a year. The repeated interviews provide an in-depth view of the participant and a full picture of stress appraisals and coping processes as they occur over time. In an over-time view of the person's coping encounters the personal meanings (i.e., personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns) show up more clearly than in a one or two-time interview, because they emerge as salient across situations and as distinct from situational pull.

The case study, then, is a thematic analysis designed to identify interpersonal concern and personal background meaning, and to demonstrate their roles in stress appraisals and

coping processes. Or, in brief, the case study shows the relationship between meaning and coping.

Four full cases are included. The remaining six are presented in summary form. Each case study begins with a description of the significant relationships in the participant's life. This might include spouse, children, parents, siblings, and friends. The participant's work experience is also described including past experience, current employment, relationship to boss and co-workers, and attitudes and expectations about retirement. Then the primary form of interpersonal concern is defined. Its relation to emotional life, appraisal and coping is described. Finally the central personal background meaning is demonstrated, and also its relation to emotional life, appraisal and coping. In the case of 02, interpersonal concern and personal background meaning are mismatched and their conflict leads to stress appraisals and, therefore, their relation to emotional life, stress appraisals and coping is discussed together.

The cases are identified by the numbers 01 through 10. Names have not been assigned to the cases to avoid giving mistaken impressions about the participant. Also, the original case numbers are not used in order to protect the privacy of the participants, since the case numbers are known by all those who worked on the Stress and Coping Project and by the participant him/herself.

"WHEN I HAVE TIME, I WONDER WHAT THEY ARE THINKING OF ME. WHEN I'M REAL BUSY, NO TIME TO THINK OF THAT. THAT'S WHY I LIKE BUSY DAYS BETTER."

### Introduction

The interviewer describes 01 as "an old-looking 50". He is a big, tall man, balding and overweight. He works as a purchasing manager for a public utility. He has been married twice, with three grown children from his first marriage, and a 15 year old adopted daughter from his second. His wife is an alcoholic whose drinking has brought tremendous strain to 01. Six months before the interviews began she was arrested for shoplifting. She was sent to a private hospital for one week and assigned to weekly psychiatric sessions for two months.

### Relationship to Wife

01 has been married to his current wife for twenty years. A striking feature of the relationship is 01's deep and abiding care for his wife. He grabs at any bit of advice for how to help her with her drinking problem. One brief contact with a psychiatrist provides the basis for his coping strategy for episodes involving her drinking during the entire year of interviews (i.e. inhibition of action, ignore her drinking). Five of the nine coping episodes coded from his case involve dealing with his wife's drinking, and mentions and discussions of her drinking occur in almost every interview.

01 vacillates between attitudes of recognition and denial of his wife's alcoholism. He is always ready to forgive her when she says she wants to change, and to be proud of her when

she can pull herself together for an occasion. He does blame her when she goes on a binge, and wonders "why, why, why can't she just take one drink?" But he also manages to divert his anger against her on these occasions by blaming himself and blaming others (particularly their daughter). When his wife isn't drinking he tries to reformulate the situation into a "problem" that has solutions. So he claims at one point that he doesn't think she's an alcoholic, she's just bored and needs something to occupy her time. He seems to have an endless ability to generate hope about his wife's conquering her drinking problem, but feels very strongly his own inadequacy to help her.

(How wish you felt?) That I could understand what the situation was and that I could contribute something concrete to eliminate it. I feel extremely over-inadequate. Like the 17th wheel on a wagon--not just the fifth wheel. That fifth wheel can come in handy.

Although O1's care for his wife is central for him, it cannot be said that they have an intimate relationship (in the Eriksonian sense of the word). There is not much sharing or mutuality. They disagree about money issues most of all, and so things like vacations, nights out and retirement (his big, sustaining dream) are more often points of conflict rather than shared pleasures or anticipated pleasures.

They do not discuss her drinking when she's not drinking. And his current coping strategy (inhibition of action) means he won't bring it up when she is drinking. The one time in the interview year when her drinking came up as a serious topic of discussion it became a coping encounter for O1 because

he felt the occasion was a golden opportunity that he could easily blow by saying the wrong thing.

Their sexual relationship is limited. She is only interested when she's drinking, but she is not attractive to him at those times. Their one point of agreement and main topic of conversation is their teenage daughter who they both think is spoiled and lacking in respect and natural filial affection for her parents. (More about the family dynamic in Relationship to Daughter.)

In brief, the daily relationship with his wife is characterized by his being watchful to find out if she has started a drinking binge, and his being careful to avoid topics or behavior that might set one off. When she is drinking, she manages to get dinner on the table (for which he is grateful) before she passes out on the sofa. He then cleans up, reads the paper and watches T.V. until bedtime, when he wakes her up and gets her to bed. At certain crucial points she does manage to rally and come through for him, which makes him extremely pleased, proud and happy (cf. the Thanksgiving dinner, and a fight with his boss over the air-conditioning contract).

Thus, their relationship is not characterized by intimacy. Possibly the word which would describe the relationship is symbiosis. Each derives from the other that which in themselves they don't have and which they require for survival. This, of course, cannot be meant in the literal physiological sense, but rather in the psychological sense.

During the course of the interviews he reiterates "I need her. She is necessary for me." He mentions several times how, unlike himself, in social situations, she is outgoing, friendly, "life of the party."

She comes to conventions with me. She's a lot of fun in a group of people. She has an outgoing personality, attracts a lot of people. I've met a lot of people through her, even in my own business. I'm not one to go up and shake hands.

He believes she is responsible for his holding his current job because she pointed out the ad in the newspaper. But perhaps the most poignant example of their interdependence is his sense of depletion when he sees her looking old and wrinkled. The occasion is the time when she voluntarily admits herself to a hospital specializing in psychiatric care.

I looked at her and thought she looked 80 years old. It sank in with me that we're all getting along pretty well. She looked haggard, wrinkles that are not even there, were there (he demonstrates with hands along face), she was almost breaking her hanky in two (he demonstrates the motion, he is acting out the scene). I don't know how to describe that feeling--standing there, looking at her--inadequate, unhelpful, completely apart and away from the whole thing. If I'd wanted to reach out to her, I couldn't have. I was very low ... (how feel?) Inadequate. Old myself, tired, shoulders drooped--almost like looking in a mirror and being surprised at what you see.

When his wife comes out of the admission interview a little while later, she looks better. The wrinkles are gone, color back in her face and then Ol feels better too. At this point he is able to accept the situation and "make the best of it."

He articulates further this unique balance between the



two of them when, in discussing his wife's alcoholism, he indicates that if she didn't drink, he could be the one with the problem.

How life would be without this--maybe the reverse or anywhere inbetween ... I might have the drinking problem. (What do you mean?) Things could be reversed. The three martini lunches would be getting to me. I don't have three martini lunches. That is, without this problem, then maybe another problem, and I'd be the center of it. Everything could be turned around backwards to what it is now.

He thinks sometimes that her problem is boredom, but he does not really encourage her to go out and get a job. In part he worries at the effect on her morale should she fail (as she apparently did recently in attempting a typing test), but also he prefers her to be at home. But since she's not "a joiner" (i.e. clubs, volunteer work), nor has much contact with the neighbors, she spends a lot of time alone with her concerns, depressions and temptations of the bottle.

Just as O1 believes that his wife's attributes complement and balance his lacks, so are her failings felt as personal threats by O1. Her drinking is a "family secret" that he is ashamed of. When asked (in the 8th interview) what would he feel if her drinking weren't a secret, he says:

I don't think I could say it--my alcoholic wife. I couldn't bring myself to say that. More personal to me--selfish on my part--how could big shot me allow this thing to happen. My ego. (A reflection on you?) I'd take it as a personal affront.

#### Relationship to Daughter

O1's relationship to his daughter is not as complex as

that to his wife, although it does contain elements of conflict. In the first interview, he describes life with his fifteen year old daughter as "one continuous hassle". He repeats throughout the year's interviews that he wishes his daughter would be more affectionate with him. The daughter is involved in gymnastics, and travels all over the Western U.S. to compete in meets. Ol has become very involved in the parents' group that supports her team. He frequently works as meet director, and has rewritten the bylaws and constitution, and set up procedures for the State organization. He is often present during the competitions. But his daughter, apparently unlike the others, will not come up and hug him after she performs well, but will walk right by and not even look at him. This hurts him, and he goes to strange lengths to offset her rejection of him. He thinks that she may resent his involvement in her world.

Sometimes I get the feeling that she resents my asking. Get dirty look, no answer, etc. Doesn't want me that involved. When I am announcing something, sometimes I will purposely make a mistake so that she will think that I'm not such a big expert-- I've done that--it doesn't do any good or harm--my doing that.

While he wishes his daughter were more affectionate with him, it appears that in the context of the family, he sides with his wife against his daughter. The wife and daughter fight a lot. He says he can see both sides, but in the one coping episode involving the three of them, the dynamic seems to be as follows: the daughter will do something that makes the wife angry; Ol will side with the wife and try to get the daughter to

toe the line because he wants to forestall the wife's drinking.

Although O1 longs for closeness and affection from his daughter, it appears that there is in fact an unusual distance between them (compared, for example, to the rest of our sample). In the interview in which O1 describes the fight with his daughter, he comments to the interviewer concerning a recent conversation with his wife:

[Daughter] has never left, never threatened to do it (i.e. run away from home) and we were wondering why.

When he is telling the interviewer how much he dislikes Christmas he says,

No real great closeness between daughter and her mother and myself. She relies on us--for food, driving, etc.--but is very independent little girl.

And in the Life Cycle Interview, in speaking of the thoughts and feelings surrounding his daughter's anticipated future departure from home, he says,

...one biggest change--which I can't anticipate--is the thought of contact with our daughter after she's left--if that would be easy or hard. We're not the closest of families. She wouldn't be constantly consulting us. I don't know if we will have repeated close contact. That's a question mark--I hope there will be, but I don't know ... the strings that bind us aren't heavy or aren't ones that can't be easily broken.

One thing O1 does get from his daughter is tremendous personal satisfaction from her gymnastic achievements. He is as proud of her success as if he had attained it himself, and he says so explicitly. This is reminiscent of the relationship with his wife. There too, the other person's qualities are seen

as a part of the self.

#### Relationship to Children from First Marriage

O1's first marriage ended one day when he came home from work and his wife said she wanted a divorce. He had thought everything was normal when he had left for work in the morning. His wife, however, had been having an affair with a friend of O1's.

He has three grown children from his first marriage. He has had no contact at all with one son, limited contact with the daughter and sporadic contact with the other son (this son, wife and twin sons visited over the Thanksgiving holiday during year of interviews--first time son had ever been to his home).

The Thanksgiving holiday was a big moment for O1. Seeing his son and family was a very happy occasion for him. But he comments that he felt closest to his daughter-in-law who he thinks is a very warm person. His son, he thinks, is very cold.

All these children were adopted by his first wife's second husband, and so bear that man's name. It sometimes bothers O1 that he is the end of his family's line.

#### Family of Origin

Both O1's parents are deceased, and both died at fairly advanced ages within three months of each other. In the first interview, he states that he was not close to them. Most of the feeling tone is for his father, but he actually saw little of his father because he travelled as a construction boss. When O1 was a teenager, his father seemed to have strange fits of

violence towards him. O1 himself describes these scenes without bad feeling, but as situations which taught him something. He was most distressed at father's death because he wasn't there at the time.

### Relationship to Sister

Mentions of O1's sister pose a puzzle. He mentions her three times. The first two times he comments that they were never close and that he doesn't communicate with her. In the eleventh interview he says that his sister died two years ago! He had found out six months after she had died when a mutual friend said something in passing.

### Work

During his first marriage he worked in sales and was a total failure ("worked six months and didn't make one month's salary"). This failure was a great blow to his self-esteem--he calls it "ego-shattering". As mentioned earlier, he credits his wife with his having his current employment as a purchasing manager because she pointed out the ad to him. He's had his current job for 17 years and is happy and satisfied with the work. He thinks that life would be completely different, that he would not have any of the good things he currently has, if he didn't have this job.

It appears that O1 is competent in his work from the accounts we are given of it. For example, he is awarded a certification based on experience, course credits and an oral exam. But competence is not more important than interpersonal

concerns for this man, the way it is for others in the study. The ease with which he makes mistakes on purpose in an effort to gain closeness with his daughter demonstrates dramatically the kind of investment he has in his own competence. He is competent, and knows he is competent, but it is not deeply meaningful to him. It does not shape his appraisal of coping encounters unless it is directly challenged.

#### Relationship to Boss

O1 does not like his boss. Three of the nine coping episodes he relates to the interviewer concern work and the boss is involved in all of them (in one only to a minor degree, in two he is central to the threat). Early on (second interview) he tells us:

I don't have the highest esteem for my boss--feel he's a first class jellyfish.

He protests that he doesn't respect his boss, but nevertheless his boss has the ability to shake him up and make him feel bad about his own competence. In the sixth interview, his boss questions his request for an advance to attend a conference. O1 becomes very angry because the boss "made me feel like green kid ... I got very angry that my past experience being questioned." In the ninth interview, O1 tells of a fight with his boss over being asked to assign (illegally) an air-conditioning contract to the boss's brother-in-law. O1 is very distraught over this conflict and fears for days that he will lose his job.

### Fantasy Power Relationships

In contrast to the uncomfortable relationship with his immediate boss, O1 speaks frequently of his close relationship to the General Manager and other people in high places. It becomes clear, though, as the interviews progress that he doesn't really have close relationships with these people, although it does seem that he experiences it that way. He speaks several times of his close relationship with the General Manager, but he always chooses not to go to him when he has a conflict with his immediate boss. The boss, O1 believes, is jealous of this close relationship. The tenuousness of the basis for this assumed closeness becomes clear when there is a change in the upper management and a new General Manager is appointed. O1 fantasizes that he might be appointed head of his own department because of a conversation he had several years ago with the now new General Manager. He does nothing to approach the new Manager, he just hopes he will remember him and their conversation.

In spite of the somewhat Kafka-esque feeling one gets when reading about this powerful personage whom O1 somehow never calls upon for help, in context, it doesn't seem that this behavior is quite as bizarre as it sounds. First of all, O1 does not have close relationships with anyone. Further, the basis upon which he might judge a relationship close or not is atypical, since he experiences a strong sense of closeness or support from what to others would seem distant relationships.

Second, references to these fantasy power relationships appear in the context of coping episodes, and undoubtedly perform useful coping functions. For example, in the case of the hoped for appointment to his own department by the new General Manager, O1 had recently suffered a distressing confrontation with his boss over his request for an advance for a conference. It was unquestionably soothing to him to imagine himself out from under his boss's thumb with his own department. (Note, however, that it would be taxing to him actually to go out and try to secure such an appointment for himself. In his case the dream is sufficient.)

### Retirement

Retirement is O1's big dream. He mentions it again and again beginning with the first interview. He is thinking of retiring at fifty-five when he will have twenty-five years with the company. He wants to buy property in Oklahoma and live a simple, rural existence with a few cattle, hens and a vegetable garden. His retirement dream helps keep him going when his current life is at its most depressing:

Times when she is completely asleep because of drinking. First thought--what's it all for--and I start thinking about retirement--that's what it's all for.

At these times, O1 gets completely into the dream; he lives it, planning all the details. This makes the dream seem very real to him. At one point he describes how he has designed the house in his head. The interviewer refers to this as fantasy. He



replies that this is more reality than fantasy because he's designing a small house.

In fact, to the reader, O1's plans seem very much the impossible dream. He had his eye on some property in Oklahoma, and was hoping to buy it, but it was sold to someone else. Money is always tight for him, so retirement at fifty-five seems not too practical. And, most important, his wife doesn't agree at all with his notions. He's hoping to bring her around in the next few years, but for the time being retirement is one more on the list of things they don't talk about because they disagree.

#### Other Social Relationships

O1 belongs to a number of civic groups (Lion's, etc.), work-related group (purchasing managers), and the parents' group which supports his daughter's gymnastics. He frequently goes out to meetings in the evenings, and spends weekends directing gym meets.

He does not have any close friends or neighbors. In answer to a question concerning the importance of friends, he replies:

On a scale of 10 -- below half. I'm kinda independent person. Not a loner, but I don't rely on friends for assistance, etc. ... I'm not one to get out and share feelings -- don't need someone to talk to. Haven't required that ... Lot of people that I'm friendly to -- fellows at Lion's Club, families at gym club, purchasing -- but don't have social life that surrounds group of people.

In spite of the apparent social isolation of his life, O1 derives a strong sense of closeness or support from what might to

others seem very sketchy relations. For example, when he receives the certification for purchasing manager he feels that the entire room shared his pride, because they were all professionals and all knew what it meant. What I have tagged his "fantasy power relations" seem to fit into this same way of feeling closeness in what others would see as distant.

He is not a loner in the self-reliant sense. He is open to help from others in trying to deal with his wife's drinking. He uses the suggestion of the counsellor at the hospital that he shouldn't react to his wife's drinking, but should ignore it. In fact, that becomes his main strategy for dealing with her drinking bouts, and it seems to have some effectiveness. He is so open to ideas for how to deal with her alcoholism that one of the interviews inadvertantly turned into a therapeutic session for him. The interviewer was asking him why his wife's drinking was a secret -- being interested in the stake there. O1 talked very explicitly about the self-esteem issues involved there for him, and then it suddenly struck him that maybe it wasn't the right approach to keep it a secret. Perhaps that was participating in his wife's manipulation. He became very taken with the idea, which, as the interviewer noted, seemed to have hit him like a ton of bricks.

In sum, we can say that O1 is unusually socially isolated, but this isolation is offset somewhat by his ability to derive a sense of closeness or support from very distant contacts. Also, his isolation doesn't prevent him from using

help when it is presented to him.

Interpersonal Concern: Owning the Other

O1 does not have an intimate relationship with his wife. There is not a physical closeness, and rarely a verbal sharing of dreams, triumphs or even everyday concerns. Rather, he takes on his wife's cares as his own. He suffers with her, feels old and tired when she looks old and haggard, looks for solutions to her drinking problem, and always acts as if he could control her drinking by his actions. This form of interpersonal concern, that is, owning the other's life, has been described as sharing the ego of the other by Cath (1965), who sees this as a not atypical process of long-married couples. The striking element of this kind of interpersonal concern as expressed by O1 is that it occurs in the absence of expressions of intimacy and closeness.

Implications of this concern for emotional life.

Taking on his wife's cares as his own means that he doesn't just suffer with her, but that he also experiences positive emotions as a result of her successes. When she pulls herself together enough to put on a Thanksgiving dinner one day after getting out of a drying out stint in a hospital, he feels as much pride in her achievement as if he had done it himself. The same is true to a lesser extent with his daughter. He feels the same kind of pride in her athletic achievements. But the daughter is not willing to share in this way, and she pulls away from him.

He has a similar experience of pride after the out-of-

town business-related conference at which his wife joins him for a weekend. She does not get drunk or act too conspicuous, which O1 perceives as her coming through for him. Similarly, after a major confrontation with his boss over an air-conditioning contract (boss wants him to award the contract to his brother-in-law without going through required bidding procedures), O1 sees his wife as being very supportive. She listens to him, sympathizes, and does not get drunk.

Implications of This Concern for Appraisal and Coping. The implications for appraisal and coping engendered by a concern which owns the other, or takes on the other's life as one's own is that O1 understands his wife's drinking bouts as demands that he do something. This form of concern leads to appraisals or interpretations of stress episodes created by his wife's behavior as involving something that is (or should be) within his control.

A coping episode in the fourth interview provides an example of how this concern affects O1's involvement in stress events. O1 and his wife have returned happy from their four-day weekend at a conference. The daughter has stayed home and has had a girlfriend stay with her. When they return to a messy house, the daughter is not present. The wife gets very angry. O1 sits down to watch a football game. It is known from other interviews that the wife does not like him to watch football games and has implied that it drives her to drink. Later in the afternoon, the daughter returns home. O1's wife is extremely

angry ("almost to the point of violence"). At this point O1 becomes concerned over keeping his wife calm. He takes on his wife's concern about their daughter's behavior and becomes involved in a stormy argument with the daughter.

Six of the nine reported coping episodes have as a stake an interpersonal concern involving O1's wife. A number of these episodes involve his wife's drinking. Because he takes on his wife's life as his own, he appraises these episodes as a demand that he act. As mentioned earlier, his current coping strategy, suggested by a psychiatrist a few months prior to the beginning of the study, is inhibition of action. That is, his goal is to do nothing at all -- no recriminations, lecturing, trying to control her access to liquor, in short not acknowledging that she is drinking when she starts on a binge. But ignoring his wife's drinking is very hard for O1 to do. In fact, his coping strategy creates a whole new demand. He says of his efforts to hold back saying things or expressing negative feelings, "I had every horrible reaction. The hardest part was suppressing it."

He now must cope with his coping strategy, which he does by drinking, distraction, and blaming himself and others for his wife's drinking. But the effect of this effort at doing nothing is that he feels he is doing something.

Even a serious, sober conversation in which his wife expresses remorse and a wish to stop drinking becomes a coping episode for O1. They are just talking calmly. His wife says how guilty she feels and how much she wants to do better. O1

feels that anything he says might make the conversation go one way or the other. The outcome of the talk rests solely on his shoulders: "Very tense though -- any moment afraid I'd say something and boom! Very tense and very careful about what I said, said it over in my head before I said it."

To summarize, interpersonal concern for O1 takes on the form of owning the other. A person is defined by his/her interpersonal concern. In this form of concern, O1 is defined by his wife's cares, problems, successes and failures. If she drinks, he must act to stop it. If she is deeply angry at their daughter, he takes over the anger and the argument. If she manages to pull off a Thanksgiving dinner for his son and family, he is as proud as if he had done it himself. This kind of concern of owning the other causes O1 to interpret events involving his wife as being within his control. Thus, he believes he must act when coping with events which originate with his wife. He cannot draw upon a full range of coping options, for example, palliation, because of his understanding of what he must do. Even when he copes by inhibition of action, the effort involved to do it makes it feel like direct action to O1.

Personal Background Meaning: Every Encounter Holds the Possibility of Revealing Him as Inadequate or Worthy

The present and the future are the aspects of time that are important for O1. He describes in the seventh interview his attitude toward time:

Could be that I'm shutting out my past. Not concerned

with what's happened. Spend a lot of time looking forward. Thinking a lot now about the future. What happened yesterday, not important at all. Present -- busy working at it. Run out of that, go into future planning.

He has a particular ability to disregard the past, to put it out of his mind. In the ninth interview, he relates a fight he had with his boss over his boss' request to assign illegally an air-conditioning contract. The fight took place on a Friday. O1 put it out of his mind until Monday morning:

(I'm intrigued about keeping it out of your head for 2 days.) It's something I do. Can't explain it. Like former marriage -- ten years -- I put it out of my mind ... I can turn off ... Sometimes it's voluntary, sometimes it isn't ... Something really bothering me, I can ignore it. Go on like never existed. Have it with people -- been angry -- next time see them, forgotten it ... Unhappy situations disappear.

He continues to describe how he thinks he developed this ability. As a child he had a stutter. An instructor of a remedial class in grammar school taught him to think of a "big white cloud", or to think of blackboard and erase it clean. He tells the interviewer that he had forgotten all about the speech impediment until just now. This is typical of O1. There is no integration of the past into his present. The past, particularly the unpleasant past is erased, as if it had never been.

Never integrating the past into the present, always placing the full weight of meaning in the present and the future means that one is always in a state of becoming and never being. This is what has happened to O1. He has high expectations for

himself, and is always striving to attain these expectations. Every meaningful transaction with his world bears the weight of his becoming, and is interpreted by him in terms of the tacit beliefs that are central to his own self-understanding.

The range of what he can possibly become at any moment in the present is limited to the meanings that are thematic to O1. For him, every meaningful encounter holds the possibility of revealing him as inadequate or achieving, making him feel ashamed or proud. Lynd (1961) gives a definition of shame which sums up the central aspect of O1's life stance:

Shame is defined as a wound to one's self-esteem, a painful feeling or sense of degradation excited by the consciousness of having done something unworthy of one's previous idea of one's own excellence. It is, also, a peculiarly painful feeling of being in a situation that incurs the scorn or contempt of others.  
(pp. 23-24)

The two aspects highlighted by this definition appear constantly in O1's interviews -- the feeling of falling short of his own expectations of himself, and the sense of this inadequacy being revealed to others. His relationship with his wife, discussed earlier, contains these elements. He constantly reiterates his sense of inadequacy in his efforts to help his wife. Also, his wife's alcoholism must remain a secret from others. He carries with him the sense of the contempt that others would feel for him if they only knew.

In his work life, too, these same aspects are present. The following lengthy quote explicitly reveals this life stance as well as its existential implications.



[The interviewer has just asked 01 to describe some high point or low point that occurred during the last month.]

No low point. High point all the way through it. Very challenging. Coming up with ideas. Low is when you're by yourself -- I didn't have that experience. Just above normal to high all the time.

(I ask about marking "making decisions" 3,3 on uplifts.)

Mid-month -- I had a lot of decisions to make at the desk. My job is 75% decision-making.

(Up on that?)

What to do first, what direction to go, who to please. Did a lot of buying in the month of March.

(Good feeling?)

I knew I was important, contributing in my job. That's the best part of that -- your mind's only on one thing. 100% concentration.

(Because you're so important then?)

Right! Nothing happened until I make my decision ... First a challenge and a responsibility. At the end of the day when I'm finished, I can see that I really accomplished something. You're necessary, wanted, you're respected.

(That different from other days?)

Other days, you're questioned, held in suspicion, I'm trying to think of the word -- I wonder what they are thinking of me. When I'm real busy, there's no time to think of that -- that's why I like busy days better.

\* \* \* \* \*

(How feel inside?)

When I'm busy? I'm not thinking about it. Day goes by very rapidly. Those are the days I'm proud of. I know a lot's been done.

(What's good about a lot being done?)

Security aspect. I know I'm valuable. Someone sent the work to me -- they're counting on me. Maybe the feeling that the District can't operate without me -- vital cog and the wheels continue to turn as long as I'm doing it.

(Thoughts in other direction?)

At times when my authority is bypassed, I have fleeting thoughts, what am I here for? Too far along to consider quitting -- these are the thoughts I try to avoid. If I dwell on it, I'm in trouble. Hard changing jobs past 50. My future plans don't include working another 15 years. Changing jobs is absolutely out -- that thought creeps in -- who am I? My purpose, why am I here?

(Where that come from?)

When I'm not terribly busy. My mind wanders. It's an inward insecurity, inferiority -- everyone has a little. When I'm looking for something to do -- the thought comes.

The result of the experience of shameful inadequacy is isolation from others. One feels oneself set apart, an object of scorn. As Ol comments above, on days when he is not busy, "[I] wonder what they are thinking of me." Conversely, on good days, when he's busy, he feels a part of the team, that he belongs and is needed. When he received his certification, an occasion on which he felt proudly successful, he felt close to a whole room full of people.

Ol's particular kind of interpersonal concern acts in concert with his personal background meaning about shame and self-esteem. Ol's concern takes the shape of owning the other. He has this one way of being in touch with another and no others in his repertoire. Thus he cannot experience the usual social exchange which can provide a basis for receiving the approval of others -- the casual chat with a neighbor, the evening visit with friends, the bonhomie of co-workers. In his isolation he has to figure out for himself what others might think of him. When he is feeling inadequate, it is not possible for him to think others aren't thinking the same thing. And since he has taken his wife's life as his own, and his wife continues to fail in her battles with the bottle, he must constantly fall short of his own high expectations of himself, and his own self-interpretation of such shortcomings is that he

is shamefully inadequate. Every time his wife goes back on the bottle, or every time his wife is too loud, too outgoing in a social situation, he feels shame and embarrassment, and is once more the outsider, cut off from the group.

Another consequence of this life stance and the isolation it engenders is that one is vulnerable to the loss of meaning, or what has popularly become understood as existential angst. So as O1 describes, when his authority is bypassed, that is, when he experiences this sense of falling short, of being inadequate at work, he questions: "what am I here for? who am I? my purpose? why am I here?" Similarly, at home, when of an evening his wife is passed out on the sofa, a blatant reminder of his failure to stop her drinking, he questions "what's it all for?"

Implications for Emotional Life. It is not surprising that at those times when meaning falls away that O1 should feel lonely and remote. Also, it is clear that from the earlier discussion that shame and embarrassment are recurring negative emotions for O1. He engages in management efforts to forestall their experience. He is ashamed of his wife's drinking. He is also often concerned about being embarrassed when his wife is sober, because she is a very outgoing person. For example, in the seventh interview, he describes a weekend at a work-related conference and notes that he had an almost constant fear that his wife might embarrass him.

Anger is another emotion that falls into the particular

pattern of meaning by which O1 understands his life and experience. In situations in which he feels inadequate and especially when this inadequacy is pointed out by others, O1's anger boomerangs back on him and intensifies his feeling of inadequacy. For example, in the sixth interview he describes a situation in which his boss questions his request for an advance on expenses for a work-related conference. O1 becomes angry, but it is not the self-righteous anger that can infuse one with a sense of potency. Rather, the experience of anger in this situation is associated with a feeling of inadequacy.

I don't lose temper -- but anger is when I lose control. Angry.

(Did you lose control?)

I did until I expressed myself.

(When lost control?)

Inside, not in control of the situation. I'm not sure what I said -- that's what's bad ...

He says of his boss, "He made me feel like a green kid."

(Not that he treated me like a green kid.) O1 is experienced at his job, and knows what he's doing. He says this to the interviewer. But the boss' criticism so undoes him, he can't concentrate for the rest of the morning.

Later in the interview, O1 is asked about his coping options:

(Wish you'd done anything else?)

Yeah, sure. Any time you're angry you wish you'd done something else. What really -- I don't know though what I wish I'd done. Always wish done differently.

Regardless of his justification, O1's anger does not make him feel powerfully in the right. Being criticized, even

wrongly so, evokes a feeling of shameful inadequacy. His anger does not counter the feeling, but serves only to make him feel exposed. The expression of anger is itself shameful, because it makes one visible. He is left with the wish that he had acted differently.

In another major coping episode in which he has a fight with his daughter, he expresses again the same attitude toward his anger -- the sense of ineffectiveness and regret that speaking in anger brings to him.

Ol's episodes of positive emotion reflect the exact obverse of the negative emotions of shame and embarrassment. He reports three episodes of positive emotion -- all deal with the emotion of pride. In one episode, he receives certification as a purchasing manager. The experience of pride at the award of certification is enough to counteract several negative aspects of the evening -- arriving late because he took BART, eating cold food, and having his name misspelled on the certificate. All eyes are on him as he walks up to the podium to receive his certificate (he's not the only one -- the names are called out in alphabetical order). He is bursting with pride. He comments to the interviewer that he wasn't "the least embarrassed". She is puzzled that he should mention embarrassment.

No embarrassment, I'll tell you that!  
(Why would there be?)  
Some people walking across the room -- it never  
entered my mind.

He describes his feelings as he's waiting for them to

call his name:

Just prior to waiting for my name to come up felt anticipation, jittery, come on hurry up. Also possibly way in the back of my mind that little fear that maybe I didn't get it -- hesitancy, lack of confidence -- still way back the thought that maybe something could go wrong.

For Ol the situation can go either way. The encounter will reveal to one and all what he is -- a success or a failure. The judgement is in -- he is successful. It could have gone the other way, and then with everyone looking on, he would have been exposed to contempt and the experience of shame. It didn't go that way. He has everyone's approbation, and with all eyes on him he is proud, not embarrassed.

In his second positive emotion episode, he again experiences intense pride, and again the situation could have gone either way. His son, daughter-in-law, and twin grandsons have come up for Thanksgiving dinner. Their first visit to his home. His wife, only discharged from the hospital two days before Thanksgiving, pulls herself together enough to make dinner work. He is anxious about her right up to the last minute, and tries to act as buffer between her and potential stressors, like noisy grandchildren. For him, the high point of the day was the moment they all sat down at the table. He tries to describe the feeling:

Possibly the fact that they all looking at me -- while I carving that big bird -- all mine, and they're looking at me. I felt pretty well cared for at the moment, and proud of everyone there before me.

Again it is the situation in which everyone is looking at

him which is understood emotionally by him as crucial. This is the kind of situation in which he can feel the love and approbation of others.

In his third episode of positive emotion, he feels pride over his daughter's achievement in gymnastics. He is present at a meet where she attains a very high score. He is as proud of her achievement as if he had attained it himself. When asked explicitly by the interviewer to describe another situation in which he had felt this "ecstatic" (his word), he compares it to the night on which he received his certification. In this episode and in the one at Thanksgiving, his concern, that is, his owning the other, provides the life stance by which he can feel this kind of pride.

Shame/self-esteem and engagement in coping transactions. In six out of the nine reported coping episodes, concern over self-esteem or negative social evaluation is at stake for 01. Three of these episodes involve his wife's drinking, two involve work, and one involves an argument with his daughter. In the two work-related episodes, concern over self-esteem is the only stake engaged. In the episodes involving his wife and daughter, other, relational stakes, which spring from a concern which owns the other, are engaged as well.

While it is not possible within a single episode to dissect out cleanly which coping is directed at which stake, coping being multi-functional at any rate, it is possible to perceive through the repetition of coping strategies a pattern

which is stylistic and which is related to the belief about self-esteem.

For O1, two forms of cognitive coping emerge as characteristic -- fantasy and lowering expectations. As an example of how they work in the coping process, we can look again at the work episode in which his boss questions O1's request for an advance on expenses for a work-related conference. After the angry confrontation with his boss, O1 has trouble concentrating. Eventually his anger dissipates and he is able to get back to work. He believes that the incident is ended. However, two days later a secretary asks him what she should do with a sheaf of papers. O1 looks at them and discovers that his boss has made photocopies of all his past expense accounts. At this point he reappraises the effectiveness of his coping as ineffective, since the boss apparently is still suspicious and questioning his integrity.

At this point, there does not seem to O1 that there is anything he can do actively. Although he does not relate it directly to the fight with the boss, he begins to fantasize about being appointed head of his own department. This would make him on an equal power footing with his current boss. That this is fantasy is clear from the text of the interview. A new general manager has been appointed. Two years ago, O1 had an informal conversation with him. He now wonders if the newly appointed general manager will remember him, and on the basis of that conversation, reorganize the office and give O1 his own



department to run. O1 does nothing actively to promote this change.

A second cognitive coping strategy O1 uses at this point in the coping process is to anticipate a recurrence and thereby lower his expectations. For him, apparently the expectation is that he will not be upset because he knew it was going to happen again.

Accept it and expect it, therefore no problem anymore  
... try not to let it bother me.

Both these strategies, fantasy and lowering expectations appear again and again throughout the interviews. Fantasy in particular plays a rather large role in O1's life. His fantasizing about retirement is a major way for him to get through the bad evenings when his wife is drunk and passed out and his resentment threatens the concern he feels for her. In his work situation he is, in fact, stuck in a low-power position with an unpleasant boss. His fantasy of being appointed head of his own department comes to life when there really is nothing else he can do. He has already lodged his protest. In another work-related coping situation he refers to his close relationship to the general manager (not this newly appointed one), and tells the interviewer he could go to the general manager about the problem (namely, his boss' refusal to distribute a memo), but he decides not to. The ability to fantasize in this way, to imagine possibilities where none seem to exist, to believe there is support on high levels when it is doubtful that it could be

activated, is truly bolstering to O1. And, given the life he has, his other alternative could well be despair. He comes close to despair, we find, in the seventh interview, and his ability to fantasize pulls him back from the brink.

Times when she completely asleep because of drinking.  
First thought, what's it all for? and I start thinking  
about retirement. That's what it's all for.

Paradoxically, his escapism allows him to remain engaged in the world. In his life, O1 is confronted with the demands of dealing with a low-power job and a chronically inebriated wife. His ability to imagine himself in a better world than the one he lives in enables him to remain engaged and continue to struggle with the demands of his life. For the short term, then, this strategy is effective. He bolsters his threatened self-esteem with notions of promotion and thoughts of friends in high places. He counters despair and existential angst with images of a rosy future.

One might question, however, how useful this strategy might be in the long run. What happens when the day for retirement finally rolls around? Because of the second coping strategy O1 uses, which is also stylistic for him, the long-term results might not be as disastrous as one might think. O1 has a basic stance in advance of any encounter which allows him to accept things not working out. We see this stance twice in the very first interview. When he is asked about his wishes and dreams for the future, he speaks first of his wish that his daughter might compete in the Olympics:

If everything was perfect she could go, but things have a way of not being perfect.

Then he talks about his big retirement dream--buying land in Oklahoma and having a small ranch. He has a picture on his wall of some land in Oklahoma that he had been planning to buy. He had been putting money in an account in Oklahoma towards paying for the land (which was owned by a relative of his wife). The land, however, was sold to someone else. He accepts this without complaint, and still keeps the picture on his office wall.

In the fourth interview, he talks about the dinner at which he was awarded his certification as purchasing manager. He tells the interviewer that he hopes the certification will entitle him to a pay raise, but he adds, "I won't be disappointed if I don't, but it would be nice." In the sixth interview, the interviewer asks him if he secured a pay raise from the certification. He replies:

Well, that was good news and bad news--good news was the congratulations. Still I have the satisfaction of having it.

### Conclusion

Understanding the meanings by which this man lives makes interpretable the social distance and isolation that seems to characterize his everyday life. He does not even solicit the friendship of the interviewer to whom he revealed so much. Belonging is part and parcel of success. Belonging is bestowed, in just the same way as ostracism, but both must be earned and

deserved. And so each new major encounter is met with the understanding that he will stand revealed to be one or the other--success or failure, accepted or rejected, proud or ashamed.

One can function in this mode of perpetual self-realization only by severing all ties with the past and placing central importance on the present and future. This Ol succeeds in doing. While some might hold that it is a bad thing not to integrate the past, it must be acknowledged that Ol's past contains much that was unhappy and unsuccessful. In his orientation to the future, he is optimistic. He believes that life will be better. And if he fantasizes about the future, he does not do it at the expense of any other action in the present. Close inspection of the coping process as it unfolds in the coping encounters discussed shows that he fantasizes at the point at which there is nothing else to be done.

His optimism about the future finds expression in daily life. He is able to derive considerable satisfaction out of very small experiences. When he is awarded his certification, the woman who is head of the certifying organization (an acquaintance of his) gives him, and only him, a kiss. He expands on this at length, and repeats it later on with evident pleasure. He is very pleased whenever his wife comes through for him. She does this in important episodes during the year--at Thanksgiving, at the Newport conference, and after the fight with his boss over the air-conditioning contract. But he is

also grateful that she manages to get dinner on the table (frozen T.V. dinners) before passing out on the sofa.

Above all, this stance, even with its limited range of meanings, makes him open to possibility. His is not a closed system. When a psychiatrist suggests that he try to ignore his wife's drinking, he embraces the suggestion with fervor. It is difficult for him to restrain himself, and he really has to work at it. And while it doesn't succeed in making his wife stop drinking altogether, the strategy apparently has an effect on the length of the drinking binge.

In being so open to possibility, and so concerned to save his wife from her drinking, he turns one question from the interviewer into a moment of self-questioning and self-revelation. These instances nearly force one to share his conviction that despite bad indications in the present, good things might possibly happen in the future. But whether the dream is ever realized, he will continue to pursue it, to long for that closeness to others that is so ephemeral and elusive for him, to struggle with the pain his caring brings him, occasionally to question the meaning of it all, in short, to remain strangely but appealingly human.

"WHY DO WE HAVE TO FEEL GUILTY IF WE WANT TO DO OR NOT TO DO  
SOMETHING?"

Introduction

O2 is a 62 year old woman. She is married with one adult daughter living. A second daughter died two years before the study began. O2 works as a secretary for a parochial school.

O2 is eager to please. In the first interview she asks the interviewer "if it's all right" to take her vacation on a certain date. She always provides the interviewer with cookies and coffee and when the interviewer tells her how nice that is, she responds, "We aim to please." She often says to the interviewer, "I hope I am a good subject." In the light of this desire to please, it is not surprising that she often responds in what she must think is a "socially desirable" way. As a result, she frequently contradicts herself. For example, at one point she says she doesn't want to speak out for fear of hurting someone else's feelings, then when the interviewer reflects this back to her, she asserts that she's not afraid to speak her mind. The role and meaning of this eager-to-please stance will become clear when the relation between her tacit belief, interpersonal concern, and her coping episodes is examined.

It is possibly a corollary of her wish to appear in a socially acceptable light that O2 pays a good deal of attention to how others appear--others in particular and in general. The teachers and parents at the school where she works often do things that anger her. She seems to be constantly angry when she

talks to the interviewer--sometimes even pounding the table to emphasize her anger. The world in general is also going to the dogs. Many of her complaints about people and the world take the shape of positive comparisons in which she appears in a good light in comparison to these other people.

### Relationship to Husband

02 has been married for 34 years. It is a first marriage for both of them. Her husband works as a cabinet maker and is one year away from retirement. Through the episodes she tells, the off-hand comments she makes, and the interviewer's observations of husband-wife interactions, it appears that 02 cares for her husband, but is also concerned that he not make too many demands on her.

She speaks of her marriage in general on different occasions during the interviews. She describes it as "comfortable, like an old shoe," and, "it's not young love, and once in awhile there are ups and downs, but it falls into an entirely different pattern. I think you are much more considerate ..."

To the interviewer, 02's manner toward her husband appears distant. He describes their behavior towards one another on one occasion as follows:

She and her husband snap at each other, disagree with everything the other one says, and seem to be in a pattern of nit-picking.

This distant attitude shows up in the interviews themselves. In the Family Relations Interview, for example,

she responds to the two questions concerning how she helps her husband when he is upset and how he helps her when she is disturbed by telling anecdotes in which her husband does not figure at all.

In the twelfth and last interview, 02 is asked what has changed most in her life in the last year. She replies that she has to deal more with her husband's "hyper" behavior. She refers to his "hyper" behavior in quite a few interviews, and apparently what she means by the term is that her husband is very active, works hard and has many projects. This activity on her husband's part becomes a concern and a demand for 02 in two ways.

In one way she is worried that he will do too much and become too tired or ill. He is aware of this tendency in himself, but often can only acknowledge it after the fact when he realizes that he has done too much. Her concern at this point is that he will now become a demand on her. This does happen after he has surgery for varicose veins. But the nature of the demand is not that he is sick and needs constant attention, but that when he is home during his recovery time (during which time he works around the house) he fouls up her daily schedule.

Her husband's "hyper" activity concerns her in a second way because it means that his work will entail work for her. In one interview in which she describes her husband as "hyper" she harkens back to an incident that must have happened at least twenty years ago if not longer. They were moving into another house. Her husband made china cabinets and when he had finished



he wanted her to unpack and put away all the china. She was tired and thought it was too much to do. She only convinced him that she couldn't do it by breaking into tears.

This little piece of ancient familial history is illustrative of the problem as 02 sees it. There are a number of incidents during the interview year in which her husband's activity involves her in activity too. The most clearly articulated by her is an emotion interview in which she describes her anger at her husband for asking her to get some stain from the hardware store and bring it to him at their daughter's house where he was engaged in a project. She is furious that her Saturday schedule should be interrupted.

Retirement is another issue that concerns 02 because of the demands she fears her husband will make on her. She mentions this repeatedly during the year. When asked directly about what difficulties she anticipates when her husband retires, she replies:

I think there are going to be difficulties, you can't avoid it unless the woman--you have to have it straightened out, have a routine. Oh gosh, I hope I can. I think the man should get out of the house. I think you both have to work at it. Go out and do something, not to crowd each other all the time. I like to be alone. I treasure that.

Although she is distant towards her husband, and constantly concerned lest he impose on her time and "space" she also cares about him. The strength and intensity of her caring is mitigated by her wish to protect herself from his demands. She avoids thinking or worrying about things that are direct

threats to his well-being, like illness or surgery. When there is a suggestion that he may have to have surgery for varicose veins, she claims that she is not going to worry about it until it happens, and apparently she succeeds in doing just that. It is not until several months later that the surgery actually takes place. On the day of the surgery, she goes to work as usual (after first visiting her husband in the hospital). She describes her day as follows:

I was very quiet about it, but I don't think I was really fearful. But, I was apprehensive ... When you face something like that, you know you have to accept it. I was very forgetful that Monday when he went in. I was so forgetful, I made more mistakes! I guess subconsciously I was apprehensive, but calm.

In a later interview she describes a similar reaction to a health problem of her husband's:

Last weekend [husband] went to the doctor passing blood. The doctor said to watch it. And he did it again. We went to the family physician on Friday morning and they gave him another barium enema. Then they had to do it all over again. He just had a little hemorrhoid. He called me up at work and I just about cried I was so relieved. [Interviewer's note: She brought this up to illustrate that you don't always know when something is really bothering you.]

Thus, in two incidents involving her husband's health, she avoids, somewhat successfully, the negative feelings attached to her concern over the threat to his health. Her care for her husband has two mitigating aspects that interfere with both the expression of her care and with the stress that results when her caring is threatened. First, she is deeply concerned about herself, and about her own freedom to do what she wants and

not have to do things for her husband. Second, there is apparently something unthinkable about the threats to his health. She cannot even know when it is a worry to her, or in her own words, she knows it "subconsciously."

In their daily lives, 02 and her husband seem to assume buffering roles in relation to one another. For example, their daughter has a job in a hospital where she encounters many stressful situations. When she comes over for dinner, she oftens tells her father all about it. 02 comments:

He gets tired of hearing it. 'Uh, tell me (02 points to herself and talks in a whisper). Dad's had a hard day, too. You know it bothers him.' ... I know his moods and ways. He's earned that, to have a nice quiet time.

The husband, for his part, does not succeed in protecting 02 from his own demands, but does attempt to protect her from the demands of others. When the interviewer first called up to arrange an interview time, her husband answered the phone and asked a number of questions before he would put his wife on the line.

02 also tends to interpret her husband's comments in this buffering or protective light. 02 does her daughter's laundry, although she finds it a big hassle (more so possibly because of the drought that year). She continues to do it until her husband "forbids" her to do it any longer. When she complains about the hassle of buying and sending greeting cards to her extensive family (she has five brothers and sisters), her husband asks her why she bothers and essentially gives her

permission to stop.

### Relationship to Daughters

02's younger daughter died two years before the study began. She died of complications from rheumatic fever, after being ill for three months. The daughter was married and living away from home at the time. 02 relates that this daughter was different from the beginning of her life. She was very low birth weight, although she was full-term, and as an adult was under five feet in height. The only particular thing that 02 relates about this daughter is that she was the favorite of her (02's) father. He would come by the house and play with her, and try to get her to eat because she was so small. 02's father was always very distant and strict with his own children, but with this granddaughter he was very affectionate.

02 tells the interviewer that she has "accepted" her daughter's death. During the three months when she was ill, she says, "I knew she wasn't going to make it ... I think I waited for it and it happened." Both her husband and her son-in-law are still grieving over the loss. 02 seems comfortable in talking about it and in showing pictures or looking through albums. These same albums, however, make her husband cry. She is concerned over his failure to adjust to the loss.

02's older daughter is divorced and lives not too far from her parents. She is employed, and has her own house. Her parents did not approve of her marriage and were glad when it was ended. When describing the time when her older daughter was

married, she says, "I just knew we had to sit it out. Sit and stick by what I felt was right, and I was right."

Apparently 02 let her disapproval show; for, the older daughter once told her sister that she "could feel the coldness" when they went to visit. The younger daughter told her mother this, and 02 was "very hurt."

Now things are better, 02 believes. She sums it up by saying that "[Daughter] is happy. [Husband] is happy helping her." Indeed, during the interview year, 02's husband spent a lot of time helping his daughter around her house. Always active, 02's husband performs many handyman functions for his daughter. The daughter also dines frequently with her parents. 02 did her daughter's laundry for her until her husband "forbade her to do it." Since the husband was constantly involved in doing things for the daughter, his forbidding her to do the laundry can be seen as a response to her direct or indirect complaints about the work. In the interview after she reports this, she says that she and her husband bought a washer and dryer for the daughter and had it installed while the daughter was at work so it would be a surprise. She says of the present that it was "the likes of which no one has ever done for me."

#### Family of Origin

Both parents are deceased. They were European immigrants who ran a bakery in Oakland. Although they were not poor, a theme of deprivation runs throughout all her comments about her early life. Her father was very strict and cold. She

comments several times that there was not much affection shown in her family, and mentions that she wishes more had been shown. Her mother would always side with her father in any parent-child debate. She and all her brothers and sisters had to work in the bakery, and she had to buy her clothes out of the money she was paid for her work.

### Relationship to Siblings

02 has five brothers and sisters. They all live in the Bay Area. The family ties are close apparently. But during the year 02 makes decisions and moves to loosen the obligations these ties bring to her. She is bothered about having to send out so many greeting cards (she has many nieces and nephews, so lots of marriages and babies). She decides not to go to a family picnic one Sunday, and is relieved when she resists the obligation to go.

The one obligation that is not easy to resist, however, is that which is placed on her by having a disabled sister. The sister has cerebral palsy (from birth), and upon the death of her parents was cared for by her spinster sister. She has just recently been put in a home for the aged because the spinster sister could no longer cope. The sister, however, goes at least once and sometimes more often every day to see the invalid. This drives 02 nuts. She feels pressured by the spinster sister's caring into sharing some of the burden. She hates feeling guilty, but she doesn't really want to go visit her sister all that much. The spinster sister's health is failing though. 02

responds mainly by being very angry with her spinster sister for taking on such a burden, and for not going out and doing things now that the invalid sister is well taken care of.

#### Relationship to Son-In-Law

The widowed husband of 02's younger daughter lives some distance away in Northern California, but he comes to visit twice during the interview year. The first visit takes place on his birthday which is also the anniversary of his wife's death. He has apparently been grieving intensely for two years, but now 02 feels he is doing better. He has taken his dead wife's pictures out and put them up again, and is willing to talk about her with anyone. When he comes to town he does not stay with 02 and her husband, but visits and has dinners with them. At the time of his second visit, the husband came home while the interviewer was present and commented to his wife that he had run into the son-in-law at the cemetery. From this, and other interviews, this reinforces the sense that 02 has put her daughter's death behind her, while her husband and son-in-law are still grieving. There is no mention made of 02 visiting the cemetery. 02 thinks ahead to the time when her son-in-law will remarry, and wonders if she'll be "jealous" of his new wife. She is very fond of this son-in-law, and derives pleasure from his visits.

#### Relationship to Neighbor

One non-family person who figures into a number of 02's interviews is a widowed neighbor who relies on 02 for rides to Sunday mass and occasional trips to the bank and market. The

neighbor is a very self-absorbed complainer who is a source of irritation to 02. 02 mentions several times to the interviewer that he ought to interview the neighbor because she's a real "case." At one point 02 says of the neighbor:

If you could sum up her life you'd get selfish ... me,  
my and mine ...

02 resents having to take the neighbor to church and on one occasion decides not to go to church at all. She only barely admits that she doesn't go because she doesn't want to take the neighbor, since such behavior appears to her as unchristian.

#### Work

02 works as secretary at a parochial school. She has held the job for seven years. She volunteered for one day a week for nine years at this job before it was offered to her full time. When asked how she feels about work she says,

It's my salvation. It's a pleasure. It came at the  
right time. I love it.

Unquestionably 02 is involved with her work, but not in the sense as is usual for work-involved people. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that 02 is involved with her work-pace rather than with her work per se. Work-involved people in the study tend to have coping episodes over the issue of work badly done, incompetent supervisors, or conflicting orders. 02's work coping episodes involve inconsiderate principals, teachers and parents who interfere with her getting her work done. The principal doesn't give her the work long enough ahead of time so that she can complete it without rushing; the teachers come into



the office and talk or use the phone on her desk so she can't concentrate, and parents don't adhere to the rules, pay attention to the notices she puts up, or remember which days are half days. The work itself is rarely the focus of her concern, possibly because it is fairly routine.

Along with specific complaints about inconsiderate people who interfere with her work, she also mixes general complaints about the way children are being raised these days. One girl, who is expelled from the school during the interview year, becomes the fascinating object of 02's concern. She tells stories of this girl's misdeeds and her parents' mishandling of the situation with obvious relish.

She receives material appreciation from the school and the students on formally set occasions: roses at graduation, candy on Valentine's Day, and cards on National Secretary's Day. She likes to receive these marks of recognition, but she seems to like even better just being in this place where she has a certain amount of power, although she never wields it directly. For example, she never confronts the principal, teachers or parents directly over issues which displease her.

What she seems most to enjoy about her work are the duties which have informally either been assigned or taken on by her. During registration she interviews the parents and screens the children for admission. Also, there is no school nurse, so when a child is hurt the teachers call on 02. One day a child who had suffered a stroke two years previously, and who

still had some impairment, began acting strangely. 02 was called upon to deal with the child. She did so quickly and efficiently--checking out the child to see that she wasn't having another stroke, and locating her mother. She is unafraid during and after the episode. She interprets the encounter in challenge terms, with her own competence being at stake.

#### Relationship to Boss

02 has three different bosses during the interview year. The interview began at the end of the school year, and in response to questions about work-stress, 02 spoke of the principal who had been her boss during the past school year. A new principal came to work during the next school year, but only for that one year, so at the end of the interview year, 02 was gearing up to work with a new principal with whom she met to plan out the following year. With this high turnover in bosses, 02 remains kind of a figure of stability in the school. She knows almost all the children and their mothers, and follows their progress over the years. The principals must rely on her knowledge to some extent.

The first principal was not too competent and gave 02 lots of problems. She has no complaints about the second principal. The third principal is somewhat of an unknown factor, but it seems that she plans some changes, including taking over the admission interviews from 02.

#### Other Social Relationships

02 comes from a large family, all of whom live in or near the Bay Area, so there is a certain amount of socializing in

relation to family occasions. For example, during the interview year there is a wedding and a death.

Since 02 has lived in the same city all her life, she has a certain number of people she has known since childhood. She and her husband socialize with these people on an irregular basis. On one weekend a group of ten couples go to a seaside resort together where they have rented condominiums.

There is a fairly regular mention of these kinds of social events, most of which she enjoys. She seems to enjoy the friends more than the family. However, her social life does not figure into a kind of pattern of closeness or intimacy. These get-togethers are things they do with other people they know. They have fun together, but don't seem to generate a feeling of closeness. 02 has a good time with her friends, but there isn't much "hangover" of good feeling into later occasions.

When she is asked directly about her friends and their importance, she comes out sounding like a Hallmark card:

Ways in which friends are important?  
In sharing confidences, in social gatherings, sharing their joys and sorrows, sharing their children's accomplishments and problems, and a deep appreciation of their friendship. When you need comfort, you realize how dear they are to you, especially in stress. It's a reinforcement. There's something they all give. This is friendship.

In fact, this is not representative of her reported behavior during the interview year. Perhaps others share their joys and sorrows with her, but she doesn't seem to share with anyone else. She says she doesn't talk about her work problems

with anyone else but the interviewer. And when her husband is in the hospital she doesn't talk to anyone about that either. She says:

I don't burden. Other people might be concerned too, and that might just add a burden.

### Retirement

The issue of retirement has been touched on above. 02 is concerned that when her husband retires he will interfere with her schedule and make demands on her. When her husband is home after his varicose vein surgery she says, "I'm thinking that when he retires, it's going to be something. You have to map out some of these things." In another interview, she says that when they retire they will have to have "strict schedules."

A big change in attitude occurs at the end of the last interview when she tells the interviewer that her husband has decided to retire the following year, and that she might retire too so that she could "be free to travel and move about with him and not have to worry about work." Although she doesn't go into much detail, her decision seems to have something to do with the new principal that is taking over in the fall. She plans to give it a year to see how it will work out. As mentioned earlier, when this principal met with 02 in the spring at the end of the school year, she began planning changes that would interfere with the usual responsibilities that 02 had assumed, like screening parents and children for admission. Perhaps this is of concern to her. At any rate, she now suddenly asserts that she thinks

she will be able to work it out with her husband being home all the time.

### Rejection of Future Goals and Dreams

O2 rejects any discussion of the future in terms of goals and dreams. In the first interview she says in response to the questions on the Cantril, "Is there something wrong if I don't have any life goals?" A few months later, she responds similarly to questions on another questionnaire.

Can anyone imagine what their life will be like in ten years? I think it's stupid for anyone to plan too much, you may not be here tomorrow ... live for today, happily today and enjoy it.

In response to the question in the Family Relations Interview concerning what she and her husband don't talk about, she says they don't talk about retirement. The interviewer sums up her reply as follows: "She doesn't like to talk of retirement and says husband should do what he wants to now. It's tempting fate to talk of the future because she has seen too many people who didn't get to experience it."

It is possible, although we can only speculate, that the untimely death of her younger daughter has caused O2 to take this attitude toward future goals and dreams. It is a consistent position throughout the twelve interviews, and one about which she is always forceful, almost vehement about in her replies.

While she rejects discussion of future goals and dreams, she does engage in a certain amount of anticipation of likely future events such as retirement and widowhood. In the

preceding section, it was clear that she was anticipating difficulties having her husband home all day, and was planning on instituting "strict schedules" to keep things in control.

She has also anticipated widowhood, and has a clarity about what she will do, and how she would like to feel. In answer to a question about how her marriage has changed, she ends with a general statement that she does not feel dependent on her husband, and that "if he should die she does not want to give up, only to remember the good of their relationship."

In a later interview, when asked her thoughts about widowhood, she replies:

I'd work as long as I could, for one thing. For the main part, I'd work. I would stay in my home as long as I could. When you are used to your own home -- too many women have made that mistake. You can't act too hastily. The sorrow will still go with you wherever you go.

Apparently, she has thought about the condition of being widowed, and has clarity about how she will conduct herself should that occur. It is the wishful planning for the future that she rejects. It is almost as if she can think about the state of being widowed, but not the process. The being there, but not the getting there. This is supported by her avoidance in relation to her husband's health problems.

Self-Protective Concern: Interpersonal Connection Without Interpersonal Engagement

Self-protective concern describes 02's stance toward her interpersonal relations. She is interpersonally

connected, but not interpersonally engaged. In the self-protective form of concern interpersonal connections are seen as demands, and the self is viewed as having a finite amount of resources. Doing something for the other means having less of something for the self. This is in contrast to other forms of concern in which the person is interpersonally engaged. In these forms, the person is solicited by others in such a way that in responding there is no sense of self-loss. It is as if what the person does for the other is not experienced as an outside demand, but an inward pull.

02 is distant towards her husband and seems intent in her daily life on keeping his demands on her under control. He is not viewed as a source of comfort or support. In fact, in his prolonged grieving over their daughter, he seems to be the needy one. At the time of their daughter's death, 02 became very ill and her older sister came over every day. (The same sister who cares for the invalid sister.) She never mentions her husband's role at this time.

When asked directly how she helps her husband when he is stressed, she replies with an anecdote about how she helped her sister-in-law when her son "flipped out" from taking too many drugs. The interviewer says of 02, "She does not offer her sympathy but lets her (sister-in-law) know that she is there if needed." She believes that her sister-in-law is partly responsible for the son's condition, and this may be why she does not offer sympathy. One may speculate whether the sister-in-

law would ever find she needed 02's help given the lack of sympathy.

She has worked at the parochial school for sixteen years (seven years part-time, nine years full-time), and although she knows all the faculty and parents, she has no one among them who is her particular friend or even buddy. Both the teachers and the parents are discussed during the interview year only as sources of demand, hassle or irritation.

She has people whom she has known since childhood, and with whom she and her husband occasionally socialize. She enjoys these social occasions, but she never discusses any of the long-known people as intimate friends or confidantes. When she is asked about the importance of friends, she says they are important in "sharing confidences." But according to 02, she doesn't confide in anyone the things she tells the interviewer. She also says that friends are important "when you need comfort." But at the time during the interview year when she most might have needed comfort, when her husband had surgery, she apparently didn't offer herself to anyone as being in need of comfort.

A constant theme throughout the interviews is that people need to be responsible for themselves. For example, she says of the principal at work, "How can I help her when she and others won't help themselves?" Or, when discussing her neighbor, she says, "She never learned to take responsibility for herself" [before her husband died]. Or she comments even of her spinster sister, "There are some things people have to do for



themselves," when it looks as though her spinster sister is wearing herself out looking after the invalid sister and is not taking any vacations now that the invalid is in a rest home.

She comments in a like vein about people in particular and in general. Parents aren't responsible enough for rearing their children properly. People aren't disciplined, and so on. She takes this attitude seriously in her own life; it is not simply a cliché she offers to the interviewer. She is responsible for herself. When asked if she's talked to anyone about her husband being in the hospital, she says:

I don't burden. Other people might be concerned too, and that might just add a burden.

She would ideally like it very much if other people would be responsible for themselves in the way that she is responsible for herself. This would limit the number of demands that they would make on her, because, and this follows from her tacit beliefs to be discussed in the following section, she cannot limit their demands herself by not complying.

#### Doing For The Self Versus Doing For Others: A Mismatch of Concern and Personal Background Meaning

02 lives her life in a basic conflict between her feeling of obligation towards others, and her wish to do things for herself. She believes she should act selflessly in relation to everyone and every situation, but she wants to be able to expend her personal resources (time, energy, and so on) according to her own choosing. Her tacit belief will not let her refuse a demand

from another, but her stance of self-protective concern will not let her respond to a demand gladly. When her husband interrupts her Saturday schedule with an errand for her, she doesn't tell him at the time how angry it makes her. At work, she does not speak up when people are imposing on her even though it makes her furious. When her palsied sister is placed in an old folks home, but the caretaker sister still goes to see her every day, O2 thinks she too should go to see the sister more often, although she doesn't want to. When the complaining widow next door asks for a ride to the bank, or expects to be taken to church, she is irritated, but she complies. She acts this way because she believes that it is the proper way to act. It is a culturally familiar model for women.

But this common cultural role will only work if the tacit beliefs behind it are fueled by an interpersonal concern that identifies the cared-for-others' needs as the self's. O2 is not solicited by her concern in her interpersonal dealings; she is compelled by her personal background meanings.

There is an element in O2's tacit belief that makes it fit theoretically with her interpersonal concern, and that is the expectation that eventually there is a pay-off, a reward for all the giving, sacrificing and not complaining. O2 has lived her life according to this expectation, and in the present she is trying to live as if she is enjoying the "pay-off." When her kids were home, she felt their needs came first. Now she's happy that she can buy things for herself "without a qualm." In the

Family Relations Interview she emphasizes repeatedly in answer to different questions that "she does what she wants to do." In answer to a question concerning what she would like to do that she doesn't do, she reiterates that she "feels perfectly free to do what she wants to do. She does not 'hesitate'." But this only works in theory, not in reality. Because the pay-off is a reward, it has to be given; it cannot be taken. And others do not recognize that she deserves a pay-off now. This issue is a constant theme in the interviews. By the fourth interview, the interviewer can sum up her position as:

At what age do you feel comfortable enough to say to people 'I have my needs and desires too, and it's about time someone catered to them.'

02 has lived a "selfless" life and should now be able to indulge herself. She tries to set her life up this way. But if people continue to make demands, she is not free to assert her "selfishness." She feels guilty if she doesn't do what is expected of her. She sums it up herself: "Why do we have to feel guilty if we want to do or not do something?"

She feels guilty if she doesn't do what is expected of her, or if she doesn't do what internally she feels must be expected of her. But if she does do it, then she feels angry because she has had to give up her own time or "space." She makes efforts to establish her independence from these demands. In the December interview, 02 and the interviewer have an exchange about this theme:

"You know I am really learning to say no."

[Interviewer note: She had raised this as an issue-- "when will I feel free to say no?"--in one of the initial interviews.] As an example, she said she usually has at least five batches of cookies baked by now and in the freezer. She didn't do it this year. "I don't care what people think!"  
 Interviewer: "About the cookies?"  
 She said it was not just the cookies, but that she is asserting herself in a lot of places.

The key to the relation between stress appraisal and this personal background meaning for O2 is in the degree to which she perceives something as an obligation. She feels that people expect her to bake the cookies, and she interprets this expectation as a demand. She has understood many of her actions in the past and now in the present as doing what she "has" to do. The "good" wife and mother bakes Christmas cookies. She is a "good" wife and mother--hence ...

#### Implications for Emotional Life

When O2 feels the pressure of an obligation, she has the feeling that she has "too much to do" and experiences frustration. In one episode, she describes the emotion as "flustered," a word which captures the feeling of the kind of pressure which does not facilitate getting things done. For example, she feels she has too much to do when she has taken on the chore of her daughter's laundry, and another time on one Sunday morning when she doesn't go to church. She feels particularly frustrated in relation to her husband, especially when he is home recovering from surgery and interferes with her schedule.

O2 feels guilty over not wanting to do something which she perceives as an obligation--her daughter's laundry,

visiting her invalid sister, baking Christmas cookies, sending greeting cards, taking her neighbor to mass. She hates feeling guilty, but also dislikes performing these duties and tries to find justification for not fulfilling these obligations. Coping with guilt is a regular demand on O2. Her typical ways of dealing with guilt will be discussed in the following section.

She feels worry and anxiety over her husband's health, but she is not always aware of having these feelings, as was evident when there was a suspicion of colorectal cancer for her husband. She nearly cries with relief when she hears it was just a hemorrhoid, and she didn't even know that she was worried. She feels worry and anxiety at the time of his surgery, but apparently not at all in the months before when the possibility and the need for the surgery are being discussed with his doctor and surgeon. She says:

The doctor is concerned about one large vein. There's worry about whether it will burst. I'm just not going to worry about it. I'll see what the surgeon says. I'm not all worked up about it, I can't borrow worry.

Most of all O2 feels anger and resentment. In the first emotion interview, both episodes that she recounts concern anger and resentment. In the second emotion interview, she recounts four such episodes. She is aware of the predominance of anger and comments on it on two separate occasions before the interview proper begins.

I got angry again. What is hapening to me? Things irritate me easier.  
I seem to be mad all the time off and on, especially

with the inconsiderate parents.

She is already in a position of trying to get out of obligations. She wished that people didn't expect things of her. And so when people go further and expect her to do something that is not really an obligation, or impose on her time and schedule, or ignore her "rights and needs," she becomes enraged. Her anger makes her feel justified, or as she says, that "right was on my side." She does not have to cope with her anger, it is the fuel for her coping. This type of anger is an example of how it can feel good to feel bad--a usual response when there is an issue of fairness or of being in the right. In addition, for 02 feeling righteously angry is preferable to feeling guilty.

In the emotion interviews, she relates two episodes of positive emotion, both refer to the emotion joy. She is joyful when her son-in-law comes to visit. The occasion is a mixed one as it is both his birthday and the anniversary of his wife's (her daughter's) death. She is very happy on this occasion, to see him and visit with him. The interviewer asks about the effect of the reminder of her daughter's death, the coincidence of anniversaries. She replies:

These things can be kept in little compartments. You can keep some things out of your mind ...

The other episode of positive emotion which was also an occasion for joy, occurred when she invited an elderly disabled man (polio victim since childhood) to dinner. The man resides

in the same home as 02's invalid sister. Her sister is not present on this occasion, but her brothers are. She has her husband drive to pick him up and his wheel chair. The following excerpt from the interview is very revealing of the source of her joy.

He cuts his own meat and was able to pull his chair right up to the table. It was just a pleasure. [Interviewer note: Her face was glowing while she was talking. She had her hands clasped, her eyes wide and her face flushed.] I will have him over again. He wrote a beautiful thank you note and that must have been hard for him.

How did you feel before and during the dinner, especially when you noticed his pleasure?

I was happy before the dinner knowing I was having him over ... I felt that way the whole evening, I enjoyed the dinner immensely.

Can you describe the feeling?

Relaxed, happy, thankful that I could do it. Grateful that I'm able to do it, and that [husband] loves to do it. Last Sunday he had to cart my sister over. She's much more difficult to handle, a heavy weight to get in and out of the car.

The man's ability to cut his own meat is an indirect comparison to her sister who has cerebral palsy and who is always very messy when she eats and needs help. This man is easier to get in and out of the car too, and he writes lovely thank you notes. At the end of the interview, the interviewer recaps and describes 02 as looking "angelic" when she clasps her hands together with remembered pleasure.

Her experiences of joy in both cases occur in situations in which there is no demand or obligation placed on her. The son-in-law visits (he lives in another part of the state), but he does not stay in her home. The man with polio has been invited by

her. He did not expect it of her, and he is explicit in his gratitude for the invitation. These are both situations which do not conjure up her conflict between self-protection and selfless giving. When no one appears to be taking from her, she is free to give.

### Doing for Others Versus Doing For Self and Engagement in the Coping Transaction

O2's personal meaning that she should act selflessly towards others, but that this selflessness should now be leading to a reward in permission to do things only for herself places her in the position of regarding almost any interpersonal demand as threatening. Demands can be made upon her directly by others, or she can see them as implicit in a situation (e.g., the Christmas cookies that she feels she should bake). So sensitive is she in this area that she appraises many kinds of non-demand encounters as infringements on her rights or as impositions (e.g., the noisy teachers in her office). That is, even situations in which there is no direct or indirect demand for her to do something, only some annoyance or hassle, are understood in the same way. When the noisy teachers keep her from her work, she cannot speak up and tell them to go away or be quiet because that would make her feel guilty, but she perceives their behavior as an intrusion and an imposition, and a failure to recognize her rights and needs.

All encounters whose stakes arise wholly or in part from this belief (seven out of nine episodes) fall into two categories



each of which has its own distinctive pattern of emotion and coping. They are encounters in which the other(s) has a right to make a demand, and encounters in which the other(s) does not have such a right. In the first kind of encounter, O2 experiences a conflict between her personal background meaning that she should do something and her wish not to do it and as a result she experiences guilt. She uses one of two cognitive coping strategies in this kind of situation: (1) a blame the victim strategy which allows her to change her feelings from guilt to anger (e.g., it's her sister's own fault that she's overburdened), and (2) a choosing not to do strategy which enables her to escape the pressure of the obligation, without feeling guilty.

In the second kind of encounter, encounters in which she feels that the other(s) are not entitled to make demands, she would feel guilty if she refused to comply or to be imposed on, so she does not refuse, but feels very angry. In these kinds of encounters she uses two strategies of indirect action: (1) indirect power strategies (e.g., giving the cold shoulder to someone who has made an unwarranted demand or imposition), and (2) indirectly getting someone else to intervene on her behalf.

Blame the victim. O2 experiences the conflict of her personal background meaning particularly in relation to the situation involving her invalid sister. This situation is never resolved, but in the main episode she relates to the interviewer about this situation she deals with her feeling of

guilt by becoming angry with the spinster sister who has devoted her life to caring for the invalid sister. This sister still visits the invalid at least once a day in the home in which she is now living, although her own health is not too good. This example of devotion is perceived by O2 as a demand that she spend more time with her invalid sister and maybe lessen the burden on the spinster sister. O2 becomes very angry with her spinster sister for not getting out more and doing other things or taking vacations. In effect, she takes "blame the victim" attitude, and views the spinster sister as the source of her own troubles. Note, however, that she does not say this to the spinster sister. This is purely cognitive strategy that does not shape or direct her action--it simply makes her feel less guilty about not going to see the invalid sister more often.

Choosing not to do. She feels free, not obliged and hence not stressed when she feels that she has chosen to do or not to do something. One Sunday she decides not to go to church. Her neighbor relies on her for a ride to church, and this bothers O2. This particular Sunday she feels she just has "too much to do." "I needed to have time to choose, to make a choice. That way I could decide what I can do and what I cannot do ..." She chooses not to go to church, and experiences great relief from pressure once she makes her choice. The interviewer asks her how much her irritation with always having to take her neighbor figured into her decision. She ruminates on this: "I wonder if I would've gone to church if I could have gone alone? I wonder if

I'm tired of taking her, of the obligation."

On another Sunday she decides not to go to a family gathering and again she experiences a great release from a feeling of being pressured. As long as she feels that there is an element of obligation, she cannot choose to do something; she can only choose not to do it. The obligation to send greeting cards (mentioned above) becomes something she wants to choose not to do.

The importance of "choosing not to do" as a coping strategy for O2 is highlighted by those occasions on which she chooses to do something. The most dramatic example is found in the dinner party to which she invites a fellow resident from her invalid sister's nursing home. Having this disabled man over for a family dinner is something that O2 chooses to do. Having her sister over for dinner is an obligation. Being able to choose to do something, especially an act of Christian charity for which the recipient is going to be very grateful, makes her feel very good.

The strategy of "choosing not to do" is effective at the time of the stressful episode. O2 goes from feeling pressured or "flustered" to feeling relief. Also, since the ability to choose to do something is meaningful to someone with O2's personal background meaning, we can see that stylistically this strategy operates not only for coping in stressful encounters, but also as a means of providing good feeling in episodes of positive emotion. As a long term strategy it is not effective,

because it cannot forestall the reoccurrence of an obligation. The following Sunday, the neighbor was still expecting to be taken to church.

Indirect power strategies: The martyr manipulation.

02 feels she cannot say no to an obligation, even when the people asking (or taking or imposing) have no right to ask it of her. She has spent years not asking for herself, not asserting her wishes before others, not responding directly with anger when enraged, but always complying with others wishes even when she doesn't want to, because she believes that this is the way to be. She copes with the stress this conflicted position has placed upon her by using indirect power strategies. And the essence of her indirect power strategy is basically a martyr manipulation. That is, she uses her selfless uncomplainingness as a means of protecting herself from feelings of guilt (which are intolerable for her) while simultaneously trying to induce guilt in others.

The martyr manipulation can assume several forms. One form is not to say anything, but to act out her feelings at the time. With the teachers who come in and make it difficult for her to get her work done she "pursed her lips, hunched her shoulders, and turned her back"--in other words she gave the appearance of being put upon.

Another form of the "martyr manipulation" is the cold shoulder. She says of a teacher at school who has angered her, "I'm ignoring her now, non-committal about everything she does ...". With her elder daughter she was cold and silent when the

daughter made a marriage she did not approve of. She is aware of this as a typical approach, and describes it as follows:

Sometimes the situation is saved because I kept my mouth shut ... maybe that's better. Sometimes silence and actions carry more weight than words. Maybe that sinks in a little better with people than loud words.

The third shape this strategy assumes is "telling it later," that is, she attempts to achieve this shifting of guilt by calmly saying afterwards (after she has completed the task, or already been imposed on) when the heat of anger has passed, that she thought the other(s) had been in the wrong.

A typical example of this strategy is found in the fourth interview. 02 relates an episode from the preceding Saturday. She has her own schedule which she likes to follow on Saturdays which includes cleaning house and having her hair done. 02's husband went over to their daughter's house to work on a project there, and finding that he didn't have enough wood stain to finish the project, he called 02 and asked her to go buy it and bring it to him. This makes her furious. But she does not say anything at the time. She buys the stain and takes it to him, and then later in the day she tells both her husband and daughter that she "resented being interrupted, and you [husband] weren't thinking of my priorities." She consciously decides not to say anything at the time, or to show her anger.

I said to myself, 'I'll tell him in the afternoon when I'm calm.'  
People sometimes don't think or they create unpredictable situations when they spontaneously blow up.

The martyr manipulation is an effective strategy for coping with guilt. It doesn't just help her avoid the experience of guilt, it makes her feel superior to the person or persons who are the source of stress. The price of the avoidance of guilt and subsequent superior feelings is that she has to comply with demands or submit to impositions, and feel very angry. It is thus not an effective strategy for coping with the situation. The people whose behavior O2 has to cope with do not seem to feel guilty for what they have done, and so in that regard the strategy is not effective in its intent. Also, this strategy does not prevent these people from doing something similar later on.

Getting Someone Else to Intervene. Another form of indirect action for O2 is to get someone to intervene on her behalf. It is an indirect strategy because O2 never asks directly for help. The episode with the noisy teachers is illustrative of how this strategy works:

"I go in to TRY to do my work. On this particular morning, everyone was visiting in the office not considering that I was there." She described the attitude of these teachers as a "terrible lack of consideration. It was terribly difficult for me to just keep calm and do my work, I pursed my lips ..." O2 did not say anything at the time ... "There I was going [to work] so faithfully to get all my work going, I don't have time to sit around and talk." ... She still could not say anything, although her stomach was churning and she got progressively angrier as time went on. She sort of hunched her shoulders, turned her back, and continued to type. "But I had trouble hearing on the telephone." Finally the principal came out and said to them, "You can go staple those things in the library," and they left. She was

thankful that the principal had noticed her plight and gotten her out of it.

By pursing her lips, hunching her shoulders and turning her back, she conveys her displeasure. It seems to be a clear enough message for the principal to get, although the teachers either did not or chose not to get the message.

As mentioned earlier, her husband "forbids" her to do their daughter's laundry anymore, although it seems likely that the "forbidding" was something of an interpretation on 02's part. The greeting card episode is probably a clearer example of the interaction:

I think I should skip the birthday cards, I'd feel better. Sometimes you can make yourself a slave to these situations. If I forget the birthday cards, just skip it for a year, I'm busy--why should I make myself frustrated? ... Since I'm the one [who sends all the cards] [husband] says how long are you going to keep this up?

02 takes his query, "How long are you going to keep this up?" as permission to stop sending the cards.

This strategy has the advantage of being "guilt-free." 02 doesn't have to express her anger to someone, or have to refuse to do something, or be imposed upon if someone will intervene on her behalf. It is an ideal strategy for her because she can still be the selfless person she is supposed to be and yet have someone tell her or give her permission to be "selfish."

This strategy of getting someone to intervene reflects 02's basic attitude towards social support. She doesn't like to ask for help because, in a reciprocal system, someone would then

have a claim to ask something of her. Such a situation is to be avoided if she is to be successful limiting the demands others make on her.

02 offers an interesting comparison to 01--a man who was not able to solicit social support, but could use it if offered. 01's attitude toward social support derived from his belief about his worthiness being conferred by others. He was open to possibility, and could accept whatever was offered him in the way of support or suggestions (see case for full discussion). 02 is not open to a range of kinds of support. She wants one thing from others--that is that they recognize that she deserves to be let alone to do what she wants, that she has earned the right not to have to do things for others. She wishes this would be conferred without her having to ask, but from the interviews it appears she usually has to "ask" indirectly through her behavior.

Thus far the discussion has focussed on coping episodes whose stakes are anteceded by her personal background meaning and on the stylistic coping strategies that relate to this meaning and these stakes. These coping episodes represent the vast majority of those coded from the interviews (seven out of nine). The two remaining coping episodes reveal one last stylistic strategy which is consonant with the preceding.

02 has a self-protective form of interpersonal concern. One effect of this form of concern as antecedent to appraisal is that she does not become deeply distressed in situations that typically unravel or tax people with forms of concern which



involve engagement with the other. Usually one of the most demanding kinds of situation for a person to deal with is one which involves the health of a cared for other. The remaining two coping episodes both involve the health of another; one the health of a young girl at the school where she works, a girl who two years previously suffered a stroke; the other concerns her husband's surgery for varicose veins. She is anxious about her husband, but not apparently in the months before the surgery when the danger of the swollen vein was discussed with the physician and an operation seemed to be in the offing. She is not anxious about the young girl. She very calmly and efficiently sets about doing what must be done (i.e., checking to see if the girl were having another stroke, and tracking down the mother). In both cases, once the little girl or her husband was in the hospital, she resorts to a cognitive coping strategy Mechanic (1962) has tagged "comforting cogition," that is, she mentally says phrases to herself to help her feel better. In both cases she says to herself, "He (she) is in good hands." This strategy works for her.

Psychodynamically speaking, O2 would be said to be isolating or distancing. It is stylistic of her coping to do this. When it appeared her husband might have to have surgery she says she won't worry about it until it happens, "I can't borrow worry." And she doesn't worry about it. She doesn't even know she is worried about the possibility that her husband might have colorectal cancer until she gets the report that he

just has hemorrhoids.

She is aware of this as a major approach to dealing with sadness, worry and anxiety. She says to the interviewer when asked how she dealt with the feelings aroused by the two anniversaries of her son-in-law's birthday and her daughter's death:

These things can be kept in little compartments. You can keep some things out of your mind.

Isolating and distancing work for O2 in that she is able to manage, limit or eliminate negative emotion aroused by the threatening episodes she experiences. But it is important to note that this strategy works because it reflects the meanings by which she understands her world, namely her self-protective form of concern. Likewise, her other stylistic coping strategies (blame the victim, choosing not to do, martyr manipulation, and getting someone else to intervene) are all reflective of her self-protective concern and selfless-giving-to-others tacit belief. Even though these latter strategies are not effective in terms of changing the situation, they maintain the meaningfulness of her world.

"I DON'T MIND BEING ANGRY. IT FEELS GOOD SOMETIMES. IF I'M RIGHT, I'M RIGHT...I'M ALWAYS RIGHT SO I DON'T MIND GETTING MAD WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG."

03 is a 54 year old carpenter by trade. His work is seasonal and subject to economic fluctuations. There are periods of two weeks to a month during the interview year when he is out of work. He is married to his second wife. He has four grown children from his first marriage.

03 drinks a great deal, smokes a great deal, coughs a lot and often describes what is usually thought of as depressed behavior. He is often angry and rarely describes experiencing positive emotions.

03 is probably an alcoholic. On the Cantril list of current concerns, he answers that his wants and wishes for the future are to have a 6-pack of beer, a bottle of brandy and a bottle of vodka a week. His wife then adds, "Some people say [husband] is an alcoholic, but he's not. We just like to have fun." In another interview, the wife reveals that 03 consumes two bottles of brandy a week (in addition to an undisclosed amount of beer and vodka).

He describes his normal routine when he is out of work is to go to the union hall in the morning, come home and drink beer and brandy until he is "half stoned" then go to sleep.

#### Relationship to Wife

03 has been married to his current wife for eight years. She is in reality his third wife; for, before her he was briefly married to an alcoholic. The marriage was annulled after six

months. His first wife died at age thirty-two from a heart attack. O3 was thirty-six years old at the time, and describes himself as "just a kid at heart." His first marriage lasted sixteen years; they had four children, a boy and three girls. He was very unhappy in his first marriage, and in one interview he describes the years of his marriage and the following ones of widowhood as his "dark years."

He met his current wife at a bar which she owned and which he frequented with friends. She is Dutch-born, and according to the interviewer, warm, intelligent and witty. She is employed as a bookkeeper and she writes short stories in her spare time.

O3 says in answer to a question about what is most satisfying in his relation to his wife:

Just being with her. She's company. She's lots of fun. She's a real hell raiser. I'm babied to death and sure, I like that ... I still get breakfast in bed - on weekends. She furnishes everything I need without any problems. I mean, I don't have to chase anything down. She goes out and buys the cigs, the booze and the beer. I just don't have any problems. I don't have to worry about her coming home. She always does. And there are no outside problems.

His wife does indeed take care of him, and it extends beyond "the cigs, the booze and the beer." She writes letters for him, figures out all the accounts, makes phone calls, visits their lawyer, and would even answer the interviewer's questions if permitted. When his union makes a mistake on his blood bank dues, he tells his wife to "write them a snotty letter." When there is a problem getting the insurance company to pay for accident damage to their car, his wife visits the lawyer on her

lunch hour. When the interviewer arrives for the interview, the wife chats and visits and offers coffee. Keeping the wife out of the interviews was a major problem for the interviewer, and one which she never completely solved. That it was such an intractable problem is of course in itself very revealing about the husband/wife relationship.

03's wife is very deeply, romantically attached to her husband. Although he is not by the interviewer's lights particularly good looking, or intelligent, or even that easy to get along with, to his wife he is the greatest. She tells the interviewer the following story:

I ran into [husband] on the freeway. The first time in all the years we've been together and I was so excited I had him pull over. I wanted to kiss him and he seemed troubled and just asked me if I had wrapped his boots which I was returning and sent them back.

To which the husband replies:  
I was tired and on my way home from work. I could have kissed her at home.

Although 03 does not have the same romantic attitude as his wife, he is still deeply attached to her, and a strong basis for this attachment is the way that she takes care of him. They do everything together. When the wife finally agrees to leave the house during the third interview, they both comment that this is the third time that they have been separated, except for work, in the eight years of their marriage. Once when he has a blow-out on the freeway, he calls his wife when he gets home.

I: Why did you call [wife]?

03: I called her to let her know I was home safe. She usually calls when I'm home and if she had tried and

couldn't reach me she would have been worried. We keep close track of each other.

They both also point out to the interviewer that they are sexually active in their relationship. For example, in the twelfth interview they tell the interviewer they spent the previous week-end in Reno at a motel that had king-size waterbeds and X-rated movies in the rooms.

Just as 03 speaks of his first marriage and widowhood as his "dark years," so does he refer to his marriage to his current wife as a major turning point in his life. "She straightened out my life again."

His summary of their relationship appears in his answer to a question about his favorite way of expressing affection:

I didn't know I had one [i.e., a favorite way of expressing affection]. I don't do anything special. It's like the cheetahs at the zoo -- the touch, the togetherness. [Wife] and I went to the Sacramento zoo this past weekend. All those other animals were going mad, pacing back and forth but not the cheetahs. That's because they were a couple. They were a pair. They were just laying there contented. They didn't give a damn about anything. It was just like us. The singles were stalking back and forth but the cheetahs were just like us. Happy being together. Contented.

After reading the entire case, it seems more likely that the simile of the cheetahs originated with the wife (who does write short stories in her spare time). But the important thing here is that, first, 03 buys it completely as the image of their relationship (although the romantic element implicit in the image seems more often to be supplied by the wife), and, second, he seems to see her as something of an alter ego and so it doesn't

matter that the simile was hers to begin with, because what is hers or is her is also his or him. When asked about how the pressures of his wife's work affect him, his first answer is, "Being alone at the house when she's at work."

The nature of the closeness of the relationship is possibly best exemplified by 03's answer to a question about male menopause, whether he thinks there is such a thing and whether he has experienced it.

I think they go through hot flashes. But I think a man's is a more physical thing. It doesn't lead to depression, etc. As for myself, I've had what I think are hot flashes but I think I've been too busy coping with other problems to notice anything else. I have had hot flashes but maybe I was feeling sorry for [wife].

03 is the only male participant in the study to say that he has experienced hot flashes. Though he is not usually very self-reflective, his last comment probably is close to the truth.

03 does not reciprocate the taking care of that his wife provides him. As he observes in the Family Relations Interview in response to a question concerning how he influences his wife,

I just out and ask and she complies. There aren't any problems on that score. Now the other way around, she has problems and she doesn't move me. If I don't want to do it I just don't and that's often. I'm talking about housework things ... home repairs and the like.

03's wife then is a major source of support and strength for him, both practically and emotionally. She takes care of him, but he does not feel that it is up to him to do the same for her. The two times during the interview year when we see him

angry with his wife, it is for failure to take care of him properly, or to be completely one hundred percent his.

In the fifth interview, the interviewer arrives the evening of the day that 03's house has been burglarized. The wife was not working because she was recuperating from a hemorrhoidectomy. She was out visiting a friend briefly and so was not home during the break-in. She apparently disturbed the thieves in the middle of their work, because some things had still not been taken. When the interviewer arrives, 03 is in a very angry mood. He is not at all concerned about the possible threat to his wife's safety. In fact, he apparently blames her for not being at home during the robbery. (The wife confides this to the interviewer.) 03 tells the interviewer that he thinks that the friends of the son of his wife's friend were responsible, and that "it was a set-up job." So, in just having this one woman-friend, his wife has indirectly caused the robbery to happen.

On the occasion of another interview, the interviewer arrives in the middle of a quarrel between 03 and his wife. The evening before was his wife's birthday. They had another couple over for dinner, and shortly before dinner his wife's son from a former marriage (age 30), calls and comes over to join the celebration. 03 acts rudely, although his wife doesn't accuse him of it. He denies being angry with her, but acts angry. The telling of the incident gets very convoluted, but the essence seems to be that 03 is jealous of his step-son, and liked it



better when he didn't even send his mother a birthday card so he could justifiably tell her to ignore him. As with the robbery, where the woman-friend was a source of competition for 03 so here is the step-son seen as a rival. 03 wants his wife totally for himself. 03 wants his wife the way a child wants his mother. The lucky thing for him is that his wife is happy and willing to have this kind of relationship.

#### Relation to Children

03 has four grown children from his first marriage. Of the four, the only one with whom he has any contact is the eldest, a son about 30 years old. Two of the three daughters live in another state, and the third in the Bay Area, but he does not know their addresses.

The years following his first wife's death were apparently chaotic. He frequently contradicts himself about what happened at that time, but the following is a rough outline of the events: At the time of their mother's death, the children's ages ranged from 7 to 14. On the way to his wife's funeral, 03 had a car accident. He and his son were not hurt, but the three daughters were. At some point all the children were put in foster homes. After 03 married his current wife, the children came to live with them. Although 03 doesn't say, a rough computation of the children's ages indicates that probably only the two younger daughters who were then probably 14 and 16, came to stay with him. The others would have been twenty-two and twenty. At any rate, the daughters were not happy with 03, and

both of them ran away to get married. The next to youngest daughter sought help at church.

And then there was that business with [daughter]. She had the whole church praying for her -- praying to make us understand her. She'd run away too. She had 500 people praying for her because of problems at home she said. She was still living with us then when that happened but she sat here and bullshitted us -- she never told us that she had 500 people praying for her or that she supposedly had problems communicating with us. She never let on.

The communication problem persists into the present. During the interview year the youngest daughter called her former foster mother to get news of her father and step-mother. Another daughter writes a letter in which she says he hadn't been a "close father."

03's feelings about his children are difficult to assess. He seems truly happy that they've gone and he can have his wife all to himself. But he is also frequently contradictory when he talks about them. Partly this seems attributable to his desire to put on a good front, since having your children taken from you and put in foster homes is not something people are usually proud of. Partly, too, his contradictions seem to be related to a general tendency to avoid painful things. In the Family Relation Interview he replies to the question concerning what he was most dissatisfied with in his marriage:

I don't think there is anything now. I can't think of anything. Not in my married life. Yes, I am dissatisfied with my relationship with the kids. It's mostly that they are so distant -- so far away. There's no communication. But I just put it out of my

thoughts. I don't let it bother me. [Wife] brings that up more than anything else. The fact that we don't communicate with the kids. I think it bothers her and so that's why it bothers me, but it's not really a part of what I think about.

This is a typical response to any question about his daughters' rejection and criticism of him. He doesn't think about it; he puts it out of his mind; he says it isn't important to him. But when his son calls him on his birthday he is very happy.

My son called up for my birthday. I was excited about that ... when he called I was surprised. It made me feel good. (Why?) Because somebody was thinking of me. Out of all the goddamn children we have, he's the only one who called. One out of five. He called in the evening and I felt good all the rest of that night and I felt good all the next day. (Did you share it with anyone you know, other than your wife?) I told some of the guys at work that I got a call from my son. He's a 30 year old guy engaged to an 18 year old girl. I bragged about it.

From this one could conclude that he would like to have communication from his children, but he is not willing to put himself out for them. He particularly does not want any demands from his children.

#### Family of Origin

03's parents were Russian immigrants, and Russian was spoken in the home. He can still speak and understand Russian. His father died when he was seven years old, and this was a turning point in his life. His mother was able to be economically independent, but she couldn't control him, so he did not have to go to work, but from that point on he ran wild.

I learned how to ride the freight, steal, skip school. I learned how to make a fast nickle or dime or quarter, and a fast buck. So I never went without money. I

was on my own from the time I was a little kid ... I just started galivanting and I didn't stay studious. I wasn't a bum but I learned all the ins and outs. My mother couldn't control me.

His mother remarried a man who held a steady job, but went on binge drunks on the weekend. In retrospect he idealizes his parents' relationship: "There was a lot of warmth there ... It was different between my mother and my step-father. There were harsh words between them." Of his step-father he says, "I didn't have respect for him at the time, but after he died I grew up a little. I had a better understanding of why all that drinking went on." His step-father died when 03 was in the Navy in 1942. His mother died a few years ago at 84.

03 also has a sister. All he says of her is that she never married and lived with his mother. Whether she is still living or not, he doesn't say.

### Work

When he is asked if the death of his father was very difficult for him, he replies:

At that time not, but in later years yes. If he was alive I wouldn't have become a carpenter. He would have seen to it that I was more than that.

From the above quote, it is clear that 03 believes that he has a low-status job, and that he was deprived of attaining a higher status one by the early death of his father. He learned carpentry while in the Navy in World War II, and carried on with the trade when he got out of the service.

Carpentry is hard, physical work, and 03 comments on how

you have to get in shape again once you've been off work for awhile. He has lost at least 15 jobs and it seems that he is not referring simply to the lay-offs that are normal for his trade, but to actual firings.

But construction work is that way. If they don't like the way you part your hair, they give you your walking papers.

It is not surprising that he should get fired from jobs; he is a very feisty person, quick to anger, and quick to assume that someone is trying to get the better of him or "rip him off." And so when his tools actually are stolen, he tells the interviewer that if he could find who did it, he'd "hit the guy over the head with a hammer."

Although he regrets that because of the untimely death of his father he has had to accept what he considers a low-status job, he is not at all eager for advancement. For O3 responsibility means the possibility of blame.

What I'm saying is that he [foreman] wants me to go get things fixed up for others who are just as qualified as I am to do it. I don't consider that a compliment. Not when things are getting screwed up and I have to answer for them.

I don't want any advancements. The pay for them isn't worth the headache they bring you.

O3 is laid off twice during the interview year. The longest lay-off, a month, is distressing to him, although he refuses to admit it at the time. He acts in a very depressed manner, going to the union hall in the morning, then coming home drinking brandy and beer, then going to sleep. In the twelfth

interview, when he is once again working, he describes being out of work as his notion of stress:

Being out of work ... I get nervous sitting around doing nothing. I sit around here and there's lots to do but I can't do it because I'm feeling stress.

### Retirement

Work for 03 is a means to an end, and that end is retirement. He hopes to retire in three years but it all depends on his getting enough hours in his union's pension fund. A great deal of his current activity focuses on the possibility of this early retirement. He and his wife are taking an upholstery class at night school, redoing their own sofa. They don't take any long vacation that year, just weekends in Reno, because he doesn't want to lose the possibility of getting his hours in for the year.

He has no concrete retirement plan, nor any definite retirement dream. He occasionally speaks of going to Europe for a year, or buying property in the mountains, but most of the time he speaks of retirement as a time when he can just "loaf."

His wife will retire when he does. And although she will not be eligible for her Social Security until she's sixty-two (she's now fifty-four), he is convinced that they will have no problems financially when he has his full pension of \$750/month. It is difficult to assess how realistic this is. Both 03 and his wife mention that they have had to live on little money before (when they were first married and had big debts to pay off). He still has his house from his first marriage (vacant

seven years because he didn't want the hassle of being a landlord), which is now worth quite a bit of money. Also he has his skill as a carpenter, and mentions that he could build a house, live in it a while, and then sell it. Whether he will ever do this is another question. He mentions this possibility once; he mentions just wanting to "loaf" frequently.

#### Other Social Contacts

03 has a few friends. He and his wife socialize with one set of neighbors (he doesn't get along with the others because of their pets). He describes this activity in terms of their past and proposed 4th of July celebration:

Get together with neighbors. Drink salty dogs and set off car flares. We get pretty outrageous.

They are friendly with another couple. The woman of the couple is the wife's friend that 03 is jealous of. And during the interview year, the interviewer met an old friend of 03's who was visiting. They had known each other since they were five years old.

03 describes his social relationship with his friends as "visiting" and says that they don't go out with other couples. Friends for 03 are important "because we can do things for one another. I ask as much as they ask of me."

#### Relation to Time and Notion of His Own Development

03 does not have a picture of his own development as one of passing from youth to maturity. He pictures his past in terms of the good times (when he was in the Navy), and the bad times

(when he was married to his first wife and when he was widowed). The present is also good. He speaks of his years in the Navy with fond nostalgia, and he says he learned many things in the Navy. But the only time he refers to maturity is in reference to his step-father. "I didn't have respect for him at the time, but after he died I grew up a little. I had a better understanding of why all that drinking went on." His step-father died in 1942 when 03 was in the Navy.

On the whole, however, 03 does not have a sense of his own development. When he was widowed at the age of thirty-six he says he was "just a kid at heart." When he is asked to tell what he thinks are the good things about being 54, he says:

"I'm closer to retirement ... 54, 24 I see them as the same except at 54 I'm closer to retirement."

When he talks about the future, he sees it as completely positive. He puts five years from now and ten years from now on the Cantril Ladder at ten, the highest score. (The present is also a ten.)

Interpersonal Concern: The Other Completes the Incomplete Self

03's form of interpersonal concern regards the wife as the necessary completion of an incomplete self. This is not the same as a complementary relationship in which each one's attributes balance or act as foil for the other's. This is a relationship in which the wife fills in the gaps in the husband's self. That his wife is there for him is all-important. She



takes care of him. They do everything together -- so much so that they can count on the fingers of one hand the times they have been apart except for work since their marriage eight years ago.

03 is not particularly socially skilled. He is most often feisty and aggressive. When he's angry he can be particularly obnoxious to the world in general. His wife is witty and fun. She carries the social ball for him, while 03 sits back with a big grin on his face enjoying himself. The interviewer experiences their particular brand of tandem interviewing, but also has an opportunity to observe on one occasion when a very old friend of 03's pays a visit (known each other since five years old). 03 and his wife interact with him the same way. The wife and the friend carried on the conversation while 03 sat back and grinned.

03's friends are important to him because they do things for one another. 03 tells the interviewer, "I could live without them if that's what you're asking." He could not, however, live without his wife. In response to the question on the Cantril about fears and worries about the future, he responds, "My wife not coming home is the only thing that would make me unhappy."

#### Implications of this concern for emotional life.

This form of interpersonal concern has major implications for 03's everyday emotional life. He needs his wife's presence in order to feel whole. He experiences positive emotions when they are together. ("Just being with her. She's company.

She's lots of fun.") And he is unhappy when she's not around, even if he is just alone at home while his wife is away at work.

Because she is a necessary adjunct to himself, he cannot share her with anyone else. He is jealous of his wife's relationship to her friend Lucy and her son from a former marriage. From his description of the wife's birthday party (after which he and his wife quarrel because of her son's visit), it is clear that O3 even tried to pick a fight with his step-son in order to alienate him and drive him away.

There was nothing else to do. It wouldn't do any good to talk to him. He's got a good excuse for everything. I even mentioned it. I said there are lots of cute little girls better than what he had. But he doesn't react. Nothing whatsoever.

He appraises as threatening any situation in which his wife's presence with or loyalty to him is in question. A visit from her son (see above) or her visits with her one woman friend are stressful for him. When his house is burglarized, his appraisal of the harm done him is compounded by the fact that at the time of the burglary his wife (not working because recovering from surgery) was out of the house visiting her friend.

O3 appraises the above described situations as threatening or harmful because in his form of interpersonal concern his wife completes himself. He cannot "share" her with others without experiencing loss. But in demand situations which do not threaten loss of his wife, his interpersonal concern, that is, his understanding of his wife as completing himself identifies her as a central agent in his coping. She

provides every kind of support. She listens sympathetically and is emotionally supportive. She provides material comforts. She also acts directly on his behalf by writing letters, making phone calls, and visiting their lawyer.

Personal Background Meaning of the World as Threatening,

Dangerous

I don't go out and try to screw someone over or try to give them the fast shaft. I'm not trying to make a buck over someone else. But others attempt it over me.

At the heart of every stressful encounter described by 03 during the interview year rests the personal background meaning that the world is threatening and dangerous. What is specifically threatened is that someone will take advantage of him, and 03 consistently assesses situations in these terms. In the interview in which he describes his anger at an error in computing his union's blood bank dues, he also says he's mad about the President having "given away" the Panama Canal, and he's mad about welfare. Even his casual reference to an evening out becomes an occasion to expound about being badly treated -- at the restaurant they were given a table away from the windows, the service was bad and the food was lousy.

03's understanding that he is in danger of being taken advantage of makes him highly vigilant about assessing fault. He searches for someone to blame on every negative occasion. He takes the error in the union blood bank dues out on his business agent. He thinks that the attorney he has hired to get the

insurance company to pay for accident damage to his wife's car is "in cahoots with the insurance people." When his house is burglarized, he blames his wife for going out and also decides it was a "set-up job."

I had a feeling right off that it was a set up job. [Wife's friend's] son hangs around a bunch of rough looking characters and they might have done it or we have Negroes living next door and some of their friends might have done it.

He is correspondingly avoidant of situations in which he might be at fault. He gives this as a reason for not assuming more responsibility at work. And he does not claim responsibility for mistakes or problems, most notably in his relationship with his children, but also with ordinary daily life issues like getting his car repaired.

In sum, his understanding that the world is threatening and dangerous leads him to appraise situations as potentials for personal loss, either to money, possessions or honor, and part of that appraisal, and of later reappraisals, involves assessing blame, and finding someone responsible for intentionally harming him.

Implications for emotional life. Given his understanding that he is in danger of people intentionally harming him it is not surprising that 03's predominant emotion is anger. He has a whole vocabulary of anger words and expressiveness: About the situation with the attorney he has hired to sue the car insurance company, "Pissed, I was sore. Hot and bothered. The whole works." Over the error in the blood bank dues, "I was

peevd. I was pissed, excuse the French. I got loud. You could tell I was angry by my loud voice." When his tire blows out, "Boy, was I angry ... I got out there on the road. I said you dirty S.O.B. to the tire. I swore a little."

He responds aggressively to these situations, and is moved to plans and thoughts of violence. When his tools are stolen at work he says, "If I caught him I'd hit the guy over the head with a hammer." After his house is burglarized, he buys two guns, one for the house and one for the car. He claims that he has "lost his head" only once in his life.

It was before we were married. I was living on [ ] Avenue and I had a dog. My next door neighbor kept calling the cops on me because of the dog's barking. One afternoon I was out in the back and the dog started to bark, so I smacked him on the nose with some newspaper and the s.b. [sic] of a neighbor had been looking through the fence and then he told me that if I didn't stop beating my dog he'd call the cops. I blew up. I jumped the fence and ran after him. The guy ran like hell. I just went out of my head.

Anger is the one emotion that he feels free and open to express to the interviewer, because anger is related to his sense of being in the right, while someone else is in the wrong, and, most usually, has wronged him. In the interview in which he relates the incident with the union blood bank dues, he tells the interviewer

Being angry didn't bother me. I don't mind being angry. It feels good sometimes. If I'm right, I'm right ... I'm always right so I don't mind getting mad when something is wrong. Right was on my side.

His anger is an emotional validation for his personal

background meaning that he is indeed in danger of being wronged, and for the specific appraisals that arise in threatening episodes.

Except for anger 03 is not very expressive of his emotions. He says that he keeps his emotions "on an even keel". His wife says that he is "secretive". "I don't mean to be secretive," he says, "I just keep my mouth shut and listen and look until I can't stand it anymore and then I just go off."

Although he is not particularly expressive of his emotions when telling them to the interviewer, he does seem to have a rather intense and varied emotional life. He is sad and lonely when his wife goes to the hospital for surgery. He is scared (and then angry) when he has a blow out on the freeway. He is frustrated when he has to do work over. He is depressed when he is laid off work. Being robbed sickens, disgusts and frightens him:

I think about coming home and feeling that someone has gone through my material possessions and it feels down and out. It's a sickening feeling really ... It's a goddamn nightmare effect. I'm apprehensive every day, almost every night I can't sleep. At the slightest noise I'm up ...

His only reported episodes of positive emotion involve "excitement," a word he uses in preference to happy, joyful or ecstatic. He is excited when his son calls him to wish him happy birthday. He is excited when he buys two guns after his house is robbed. The interview in which he tells of buying the guns is most revealing about the nature of his emotional expressiveness.

During this interview 03 stated calmly and without affect that he had gotten excited when he bought his guns. After the interview he shows the guns to the interviewer, and he becomes transformed. His eyes sparkle; he hops from one foot to another in his excitement. The difference between the expression of the emotion from the time of telling to the time of showing is indicative of the true intensity of his emotional experiences and the fact that he feels he must be "secretive" about his feelings when he talks about them.

Implications for appraisal and coping. 03 is in that kind of transactional relationship with the world wherein not only do his appraisals of situations arise from his personal background meaning, but also the situations which do arise serve to validate his sense of reality. In short, while he does tend to interpret situations in terms of intentional harm for him, harmful things do happen to him. The following is a list of his main coping episodes: his tools are stolen at work; he can't get the insurance company to pay for accident damage to his wife's car; he is given the wrong set of building plans on a job; the union makes a mistake about his blood bank dues; his wife has surgery; his house is burglarized; he is laid off work, and he has a blowout on the freeway.

In all of these encounters, except for his wife's surgery, 03 finds someone to blame. Even when he has a tire blow out, he decides that either the tire (which was new) was flawed, or that someone slashed it while he was in the union hall.

03 has three coping strategies which are stylistic for him: emotion-focused direct action, feeling and acting angry, and forms of avoidance.

Emotion-focused direct action. 03 repeatedly describes himself as a "fighter." When someone "screws up" or "does him wrong," he acts. When his union makes a mistake on his blood bank dues, he has his wife write them a "snotty" letter. He also mentions it to his union representative the next day. When given the wrong plans at work, he compares his with his boss's and the architect's. When the insurance company won't pay up, he hires an attorney, and also writes to Action Line. Of the car problem, he says, "I won't take second best. I won't fix the outside until I get what I want and I'm damned determined to get it."

When speaking theoretically of coping strategies, we have discussed their function in terms of being either problem-focused or emotion-focused, always recognizing of course that in actual psychological experience coping strategies can perform both functions. Generally, it has been thought that strategies of direct action are primarily problem-focused, even though just the fact of doing something in a stressful situation can make a person feel better. In the case of 03, however, strategies of direct action function mainly to make him feel better and only incidentally ameliorate the situation. The car insurance payment problem is a good example; for, even though he goes through all the motions of seeking redress, he seems to derive



pleasure only from the sense of righteous indignation the event inspires in him. When the attorney informs him that his case will go to court, he is not the least bit happy. Rather, he is irritated and feels hassled.

In the other encounters listed above his actions are even less appropriate and effective. When his tools are stolen at work he fantasizes catching the thief and hitting him over the head with a hammer. But he doesn't ask if anyone saw it happen, or report it to his boss. When his tire blows out on the freeway, he says that it was so demolished he just threw it away (even the rim was bent). Such extensive damage is truly unusual for a new tire, and might well have provided strong evidence of a flaw. (This was when Firestone was marketing tires which did blow out dangerously, but we don't know the make of his tire.)

When his house is robbed, he purchases two large hand guns, and a great deal of ammunition for them. (The interviewer saw both guns and ammunition.) His reason for buying the guns is so he can "get" the robbers next time. In fact, his house was robbed when no one was at home, and so if there is a next time, it is likely that the guns will be stolen too. He makes no plans to change the locks or add new ones or other efforts to make his house more secure.

It appears that while 03 may be a "fighter" as he terms himself, he is not a winner. Indeed winning, given the way 03 appraises events, is not a concern. But fighting and feeling that even though others may try to get the better of him he is well

defended and able to defend himself is a concern. 03's efforts at direct action are not effective objectively-speaking, but subjectively he experiences them as effective because they make him feel better.

Anger. Anger in 03 is an emotional response to appraisals that he has been wronged. But anger is also for him a coping strategy. He uses both feeling angry and acting angry as a way to make himself feel better. As he says when interviewed about the episode of the error in blood bank dues: "I don't mind being angry. It feels good sometimes." His experience of anger is the somatic experience of being right. He feels justified; he has been wronged, and thus he is not to blame. His view of the world is once again validated. He repeatedly tells the interviewer that he sees things in black and white. And it does seem true that there are no shades of meaning for 03 when the issue at hand is assuming some share of blame.

03 bolsters himself by acting angry. It not only makes him feel right when he's been wronged; it makes him feel good when he's down. When he's laid off and has a difficult time of finding another job, he becomes depressed. He succeeds in finding someone to blame -- his business agent and those who instituted and follow affirmative action laws. This lets him feel mad instead of down.

(You seemed to indicate that it ticked you off a little not being "the right color." Can you tell me what you felt when this happened or happens?)

It made me feel mad.

(Mad at whom or what?)

Mad at my business agent. I say he's making his own stupid rules. I felt frustrated.

(How did you make yourself feel better?)

I got mad.

(O.K. What do you do when you're mad?)

I just -- I don't know. I got cross. I speak a little loud. I demand things. I want this. I want that. I get outspoken. I say "gimme" rather than please may I have. Not just here at home -- everywhere I go, like restaurants and stuff. I demanded all kinds of forms from the business agent without any regrets -- just "gimme" and no bullshit ... What I do is I become a snotty bastard and I get away with it. I do it just about anywhere I am. People shrink back when people act like that.

To someone in a low power position, who is experiencing the lack of power and feels misused, the generalized expression of anger is a form of power. It is a form of aggression 03 can "get away with". He is aware of his effect on people, even people who have done nothing to him, and it makes him feel good. As a strategy, it is effective in making him feel better, but it is not effective in ameliorating the situation. When the problem at hand is getting work, being ingratiating, humorous, or optimistic would probably be more effective than being a "snotty bastard."

Forms of Avoidance. 03 is concerned to present and maintain a certain image to the interviewer, that of a fighter, a man who has been wronged, but who can and will defend himself. This concern over self-image is rooted in his belief that people

will try to take advantage of him. They will try, among other nefarious acts, to place blame on him. Thus he insists that others are without scruples, but he is a man of principles. He is, he maintains, not only well-defended if attacked, but is not all that vulnerable in the first place. He is invested in convincing himself and the interviewer that stressful events don't bother him very much.

This is not the full picture of 03, and over a period of a year, a different image is bound to emerge. In the seventh interview the interviewer notes that, in contrast to her other participants who were becoming more open and frank with her, 03 was becoming less so. Because of his need to maintain a chosen image both to himself and to the interviewer, 03 contradicts himself more and more frequently. He says that he "wasn't really worried," when his wife was in the hospital, but he doesn't sleep well. He states that he's not bothered about being laid off, but once he's employed again, the interviewer hears how much it did bother him. He claims that "I never get upset so much," and when the interviewer asks about when he was robbed a few months earlier, he denies that he was very upset. The interview data contradicts this since the interview took place the same day as the burglary. Even a month later, he describes his feelings about the burglary as "goddamn nightmare effect," and tells the apprehension and insomnia. In the tenth interview he describes how he cared for his children after his first wife died: "I did the cooking, ironing, the whole goddamn

works." At this point the interviewer notices that he is drumming his fingers on the edge of his chair. She adds: "I've not noticed any movement on his part ever before. When we talk I'm not aware of any of his body other than his head because he keeps so still. This drumming business must mean something, mustn't it?" What the interviewer has forgotten, is that ten months earlier in the first interview, 03 told her that his children were placed in foster homes after his wife's death.

These blatant contradictions are part of a stylistic coping pattern of avoidance on the part of 03. He is invested in appearing the man of principle who's been wronged, the manly man who doesn't get upset, not only to the interviewer, but to himself as well. In the twelfth and final interview, he is puzzled when he notes that his behavior and his self-image don't match.

It's funny but I've noticed especially in filling out the homework, that one day you do one thing and the next you do something else and it doesn't necessarily comply with who you are all the time.

Through the interviews we see four avoidant strategies: contradiction, distraction, putting out of mind, and drinking/napping. In the actual interview encounter, 03 avoids discussing painful topics by contradicting that he is bothered, or that an incident was meaningful. He denies that an episode caused stress emotions for him. Or, he denies that the event happened.

When the interviewer presses 03 for a response, or

pursues a topic he finds uncomfortable, he distracts the discussion. For example, he will turn and call to his wife in the other room to ask her a question, or have her tell the interviewer some story.

While denying that an event was meaningful or stressful to him, he also describes a cognitive coping strategy of "putting it out of mind," that is, a way of not thinking about something. For example, when he is asked in the Family Relations Interview about conflicts among his relationships to his family, he replies:

I'm highly contented. I don't have any conflicts. I haven't let myself down with anyone else. The foreman has been treating me nice lately. More than nice.

(Interviewer's Note: I asked about the letter he had received from his daughter wherein she stated that he wasn't a close father.) Oh, that thing. I just pushed that out of my mind. That's not important to me.

A fourth strategy, drinking/napping seems to be used in encounters in which other forms of avoidance won't work. Drinking and napping go together for 03, (as a coping strategy that is, there are other times when he drinks for fun, and not for avoidance). He describes drinking and napping as a normal routine for him at the time when he is out of work. First, he goes to the union hall.

I have a routine when I get home. I have a piece of cheese, an olive, a pickle, an onion and then I have a drink to quench my thirst. There's no water on the job so I'm thirsty. I get half stoned from the brandy and beer so I want to sleep.

Being out of work is a main stressful event that elicits 03's coping strategies of anger (see above) and drinking/napping, but he also drinks/naps when he's jealous over his step-son and when his wife is in the hospital.

These different forms of avoidance which are stylistic for 03 are temporarily effective in dealing with the unpleasant things that 03 does not wish to talk or think about. These strategies are not effective in any long-term sense; for, neither do they change the distressing situation, nor do they change the way he feels about the situation, so that when he is again faced with it, it is again distressing.

### Conclusion

03's tacit belief that people will always try to take advantage of him places him in a socially isolated position. Because he is always suspicious of the actions and motives of others, he feels he must present a strong front to the world. The basic mistrust which arises from his tacit belief and the illusion of invulnerability which is created by means of his stylistic coping strategies create distance between himself and others. He cannot allow himself to appear as either an easy target for others machinations, or as in any way needy. His wife is the only exception to this rule. She is the whole of his social network providing both emotional and material support at all times; however, as defined by his interpersonal concern, she is not "other" but part of his self.

As has been noted, a number of bad things do happen to 03

during the interview year. They are all appraised in the same way, that is that people harmed him or try to harm him with malicious intent, even though the events are quite different. He is always ready with a story about how someone has tried to take advantage of him, but much less ready to talk about episodes of positive emotion. It is clear that he was extremely pleased when his son called him on his birthday, but he will only agree to label the emotion "excited." Of his friends he claims that he "can live without them, if that's what you're asking." To care about a birthday phone call too much would make him appear too vulnerable, too hurt when it is omitted. To rely on friendship too much would make him appear an easy target when let down. In short, his tacit belief combined with an interpersonal concern of an incomplete self leads him to cut himself off from anyone other than his wife and the positive emotional support, or simply the positive emotional experiences they might provide.

03's three stylistic coping strategies, emotion-focused direct action, feeling and acting angry, and forms of avoidance, are all aimed at the same goal of creating the subjective experience of being strong, effective and invulnerable. He is a "fighter" so he engages in direct action, and acts aggressively when he feels threatened. He avoids thoughts or discussions of topics that would make him seem weak -- here weakness is synonymous with sad, guilty, regretful and the like. The three stylistic coping strategies all have in common the aim of making him feel good (i.e., strong, manly,



invulnerable), and all also share a similar ineffectiveness in dealing with the stressful situation. This is not to suggest that the ideal coping response is direct action aimed at changing the situation, for there are many situations one can do nothing about. But 03's stylistic coping efforts do not distinguish between situations in which he can do something and those he cannot. He directs his wife to perform all the direct action coping efforts which might in a practical way change or terminate a stressful situation.

03 is a man who wishes to appear in control of himself and events. His stylistic coping strategies create for him an "illusion of control," because he subjectively experiences himself as strong, a fighter and so on. His understanding that the world is threatening creates the climate in which this notion of self and importance of feeling in control is crucial. The cost of this stance is that the human experiences of guilt, regret, dependence on others all appear as weakness and are to be avoided. And in order to feel strong and invulnerable he must resort to subjectively pleasant but objectively ineffective forms of action such as expressing anger, and buying guns.

(HOW DID YOU LEARN TO DEAL WITH YOUR TEMPER?)  
"I GREW UP AND GOT A LITTLE MORE MATURE. IT'S TOO FAR BACK  
TO KNOW HOW I DID IT. NOW I KNOW HOW I DO THINGS -- I TAKE  
TIME OUT, PRAY, ASK FOR GUIDANCE IN THINGS, AND THAT WILL  
HELP."

04 is a sixty-four year old woman. Her husband is semi-retired. She works part-time in a department store. Both she and her husband will retire in a year. She is very involved in her church and in an active social life with many friends. She has two children and five grandchildren (two of whom, twins, were born during the interview year). The major source of distress in 04's life is her aging mother who is frequently irrational. 04 moved her mother to an apartment for elderly people four years prior to the interviews, where she receives meals communally but lives independently. She causes 04 a great deal of grief, pain, hassle and just plain aggravation during the interview year with her nightly phone calls, complaints that 04 has stolen her money, unescorted (and unsafe) wanderings around town, changes of bank account, and just general change into someone other than the mother 04 has always known.

In the interviews 04 expressed concern that she be seen in a whole context and not just as someone with a lot of problems. She says, "It seems strange in these interviews, me doing all the talking. It seems foreign to my nature. You must think that I have nothing but problems." In fact, she has many moments of happiness and pleasure during the interview year, and the structure of the coping interviews allowed her to describe them. The picture that emerges is that of a person whose life is

balanced, and who is active herself in maintaining that balance. Throughout the interviews 04 was thoughtful and consistently concerned about being honest.

#### Relationship to Husband

04 and her husband have been married forty years. By all accounts they have a warm, supportive, satisfying relationship. In answer to a question concerning what she was most satisfied with in her marriage, she replies, "I'm most satisfied with my husband as a person. He's a very understanding person, very considerate." And he is seen being understanding and supportive of her during the interview year, both in her dealings with her mother and when she has problems at work. She tells him everything. She comments that if she held back anything he would know it. And venting to him is helpful to her. ("The sharing of feelings brings you out of it.")

However, since her husband is so thoroughly emotionally supportive and on her side in her dealings with her mother, her mother resents her husband and they do not get on well. Because of this, 04 feels she has to keep her mother and her husband apart. Thus, he is helpful to talk to, but he cannot take her place in doing things for her mother.

04 and her husband share many interests. They both like gardening and nature study. They love to plan their vacations together, studying maps and reading books about the places they visit. On these trips 04's husband takes photographs of nature subjects and 04 later assembles them into books. They also

share a love of music and an involvement in their church.

Because 04 and her husband do many things together one thing she is dissatisfied with in her current life is their incompatible work schedules. She would like them to have more days off together. During the interview year, they had a number of vacations, both short and long. These times together were always described as particularly fun and enjoyable.

The pleasures of togetherness have their limitations for 04. Her husband's former job kept him away a lot. Now he goes everywhere with her. He always takes and picks her up from work, goes shopping with her and so on. While she likes going out with him on trips, outings and visits, she has a little niggling in the back of her mind that when he stops work altogether, she will never have any time to herself. She is already dealing with this issue by discussing and planning their retirement time with her husband. They have decided that they will each have one day a week as "their day" when they can do whatever they want.

#### Relationship to Children

04 has a grown son and daughter. Both are married, have children and live in other cities in the state. 04 regrets that her children do not live closer to her. She would very much like to have the kind of relationship that develops from frequent informal contact. As it is, visits are always somewhat strained because the whole family is thrown together for days at a time. She is particularly let down after one such visit during which a

planned party had to be cancelled because her daughter came down with a twenty-four hour flu. She is interviewed the day the children leave, and she comments, "You anticipate so much joy being with your children, but really you have more fun being with your friends than with your children."

Even though she does not experience the kind of intimacy with her children that she would like, they provide central and meaningful relationships in her life. The grandchildren are also important sources of delight for her. She receives news of the birth of twin grandsons after a particularly harrowing day dealing with her mother, and it gives her a tremendous boost. She comments, "Nothing like babies to revive you."

#### Relationship to Mother

04's father died sixteen years prior to the interview year. She says that "the whole fabric of our life changed when my father died." Her parents had moved from another state to live nearer their children when her father retired. Her father and her husband became very close friends. When her father's health began to fail, 04 felt that her mother was not very understanding of his limitations. After her father died, her unmarried sister moved in with her mother and her mother became very dependent on her. When 04's sister died, her mother suffered a stroke and began to deteriorate mentally. 04 moved her to an apartment for elderly people where she has her own apartment, but is served meals communally.

04's mother calls her at least once a day, usually to

accuse her of stealing her money or to abuse her verbally in some way. Her mother is a source of nearly unremitting stress in 04's life. Her mother's daily phone calls are usually unpleasant. If her mother is rational when she calls, she usually complains. If she is not rational, she is abusive. Because she becomes unpredictably disoriented, it is not safe for her to go out alone. But she does go out on her own--sneak out really, since the apartment managers keep an eye out for her--and sometimes gets lost. 04 worries about what might happen to her on one of these forays. On one occasion she went to the bank and had her account changed from a joint one with 04 to a single one. 04 then had to go back to the bank and get the unsympathetic bank manager to change the account back to a joint one. She could have her mother declared incompetent, which would ease some of the practical aspects of caring for her mother, but she is unwilling to do it because she feels that her mother has just enough understanding left to know what that would mean. She believes it would be hurtful and traumatic for her mother.

Along with the daily demands of taking care of her mother, 04 has to deal with the grief she feels over the loss of her mother as she used to be. She describes this feeling after returning from a visit to her mother's apartment:

Just going down and clearing up the place makes you sad. Everything always used to be so nice. Now everything is a mess. Gives you such a feeling inside--can't believe it. Downhearted feeling that you get. Awfully difficult to handle someone who's been your boss all your life. No longer can carry on a satisfactory conversation. Not the communication

that there used to be, mother and daughter.

Dealing with her mother makes 04 reflect on her own aging. She used to have a positive image of aging, but she has now changed because of her experience with her mother. "Several times a day I say 'Dear Lord, keep me from being like that when I'm old.'" She is also aware of her own aging and her own reduced energy for dealing with demands. She says that her mother thinks she (04) is still forty years old and can run all over the place. Her mother doesn't realize that 04 is aging too.

Finally, because of the constant phone calls, accusations and strange behavior, 04 is in a constant state of expecting something, but not knowing what. The unpredictability of the demand is as threatening as the demand itself. She says that she expects something each month, but she never knows what or when it will be. This kind of situation would be difficult for anyone, but for 04 it is particularly hard because she likes things to be predictable. She likes to plan ahead to avoid problems and unexpected surprises.

### Work

Work plays an important function in 04's life, but it is not as important to her as other things. She herself names the most important things in her life: "My family, home, enjoy my church, friends--a lot of good friends--have a good time."

04's work history is not unusual for women of 04's generation. She comments that half of the women working at her store started there in order to pay the orthodontist. She

herself worked in order to pay for her children's college education. She started off as a temporary worker at age forty-nine and still works part-time in the same store.

She likes being paid for what she does and refers to her prior work as a volunteer an aspect of that work which was unsatisfying. Although she is not a full-time employee, her length of tenure has given her informal responsibility for her department.

They refer to me as managing [the department]. I didn't think of myself as that. I guess I've taken over--not consciously. They send customers to me with complaints rather than the manager of the department. At first I tried to shun it, then thought, oh well. There are no advantages from it.

There are no advantages to her unofficial responsibility, and there is the disadvantage of being older and more experienced than the people who are nominally her bosses. For example, she describes an exchange: "The boy that's managing the department rubs me wrong. He'll tell me what to say, like I'm born yesterday. I say, 'Oh sonny, I know what to say to customers.' I kid him."

Although work is not as important to her as family, church and friends, she does like to do a good job. She gains satisfaction from a job well done and reports twice in her interviews of feeling proud at having been praised for her work. Likewise she is upset when the display in the department is unsightly and others think that she is responsible for it looking that way.



She is an experienced worker and she knows not only how to do her job well, but also how to deal with others in such a way as to get her job done. She knows how to control or divert anger. At work (unlike her dealings with her mother) she never loses sight of the goal or end.

I got mad inside. But I have to think of what's at hand, what has to be done.  
(I can understand that in a situation where you are calm, but when you're angry?)  
I don't know. I've done this for so long, I don't think about it. Part of my actions. There's a young girl on the floor. I feel sorry for her. She takes everything to heart. She hasn't learned to shrug it off. I don't know how or when I learned that.

This is an example of what Benner (1984) calls "the cushion of experience", that is, a perspective or understanding of situations that develops over time in dealing with similar situations.

Although she has demands and irritations she must cope with at work, work is for 04 a wonderful resource for coping with her mother. Work is an involvement, an activity that permits her to forget temporarily about her mother. She uses it consciously as a distraction, and welcomes the hours when she will be too busy to think about her mother and the current problems her mother has created. Her work also literally takes up her time so that her mother cannot claim it.

### Retirement

During the interview year, 04 was in the process of disengaging herself from her work in anticipation of retirement. One reason for her continuing to work was the necessity to have

medical coverage until she would be old enough for Medi-Cal. As her sixty-fifth birthday approaches, she becomes more and more eager for retirement--anticipating and planning what she will do, and how she will replace work with other activities.

### Friends

Friends are very important to 04. She has fun with friends, and fun is also important to 04. She has a close, life-long friend with whom she shares important concerns and also is just silly. She uses her friends as models for how to be with her mother, and what to expect with widowhood. In the tenth interview she says of friends in general:

They are supportive in times of need. As you get older you don't have the same energy to run around, friends to visit and do things with fill a recreational need. You are not quite as independent as when you're young. Friends give you that outlet that you would get from other things when young.

Two of 04's emotion interviews focus on joyful, happy times spent with friends. One of these occasions was a New Year's party attended by all close friends. At one point in the evening, one close friend tells 04 "that the best day of her life was when her husband introduced us to her." 04 says she feels the same way about her friend:

So much sharing between the two of us. We share problems of our mothers and joys of our children. There are many things we have in common. Friends can be almost closer than your sister can be.

This closeness and intimacy is characteristic of 04's close relationships. She compares her close friendships to her relationship with her husband. The closeness is not based just

on sharing problems or being supportive of one another, but contains an equal, or perhaps even greater measure of fun and good times. Being able to enjoy herself with others is also an expression of intimacy for 04.

As she comments in an earlier quote, friends can be even closer than family. She even thinks of friendship as a way of extending her family. She often compares her life and values to her mother's and sees this area as a major difference.

My mother is so family oriented that she is choosy about friends. If they don't meet her feeling of looking right when she first meets them, she's not interested. I think it's important to enjoy a lot of types of people. Get into groups, then you have the support of the whole group. You have to enlarge your family, from blood relatives to others.

#### Form of Interpersonal Concern: Engaged Care

04 manifests interpersonal concern in the form of engaged care. In this form of concern, the person is connected to close others in such a way that being solicited by their needs is understood as an inward pull and not an external demand. Being solicited by close others is not experienced as a choice situation.

04 experiences engaged care toward her husband, mother, children and friends. There is an inward pull to respond to their needs when they are troubled or in trouble. Likewise, she is open to and feels their support when she needs it. But since in the engaged care form of interpersonal concern, there is no sense of loss to her self when she responds, the reciprocity of

caring is not viewed in balance sheet terms. Additionally, engaged care is a stance which involves O4 with cared for others in happy and positive situations, as well as stress encounters. Family and friends are not just to be responded to, taken care of and supported, and family and friends are not just for care and support for herself, they are sources of shared pleasure.

Implications of this concern for emotional life.

Engaged care has clear implications in O4's life for the experience of both positive and negative emotions. Having fun is something O4 likes to do, and she describes not only the experience of having fun, but also the anticipation before and the review after as pleasurable. But O4 only describes having fun as a shared experience. She has fun being with or doing things with her husband or close others. She describes two occasions of positive emotion (joy) in detail which involve time spent with close friends, and she mentions numerous other occasions during the interview year. The range of emotions she experiences while having fun include feeling pleasure, excitement, happiness, joy, being close and being silly.

The absence of the feeling closeness to cared for others makes her sad and let down. After the visit from her children, she tearfully describes her disappointment at the hectic quality of the visit, her fatigue from dealing with company and her sadness that she had not experienced some quiet, close time with her family.

She experiences grief and depression in relation to her

mother. 04's mother is no longer the person she used to be. 04 grieves for the lost closeness and sharing. She remembers the good times they used to have. It is an extremely difficult situation for 04 because she still regards her mother in terms of her own engaged care, but there is none of the interpersonal reciprocity that usually accompanies this stance. During the interview year, 04 appears to be in the early stages of disengaging from her concern for her mother, and this causes her to feel depression and guilt.

There are days when I don't feel I can bring myself to go down and see mother--emotionally coping with it. There are days when I think of my own feelings and desires more than I should. Sometimes I feel guilty.

Implications of this concern for appraisal and coping. Four of 04's six coping episodes have at stake an interpersonal concern of engaged care. Two involve her mother, one involves her children and one involves a bereaved friend.

The interpersonal concern of engaged care is reflected in her coping mainly in the giving and receiving of emotional support. In all four of the coping episodes with stakes reflecting engaged care, 04 uses the available emotional support from her husband and her friends. In the case of her newly bereaved friend and co-worker, she offers emotional support in concrete demonstrations of sympathy. She talks with her on the phone. She sends a plant to her house. And she organizes a sympathy card from other co-workers.

Giving and using social support other than purely

emotional support is also a characteristic coping strategy for 04. She describes in other interviews how she seeks and secures help and useful advice, as well as emotional support from others. When she had to relocate her mother, she found (through word of mouth) a man who specialized in placements for the elderly. She notes, "He counselled me on how to go about changing mother's residence. Everything he told me worked. He also gave me guidance."

Positive thoughts of relationship is a useful coping strategy for 04 too. When she is disappointed about her children's visit, remembering cute things her granddaughter did cheered her up. Likewise, when she is very down after a day of dealing with her mother, the news of the birth of twin grandsons buoys up her spirits.

Personal Background Meaning: The Unknown Is Threatening  
But Manageable

04 has a personal background meaning that the unknown, that is, an unexpected, unplanned or unfamiliar event, is threatening. She believes equally strongly that the unknown is manageable. Known familiar, anticipated, or planned for events are not threatening, even though they may be not happy or unpleasant. Unpredictable situations are threatening because they give 04 a feeling of having no control, and this makes her feel anxious. Being called for jury duty is one such situation:

(What was your worst apprehension?)  
The whole nuisance of having to do something which interrupted me from doing something I wanted to do.

The feeling that you have no control over the situation.

But it must be noted that 04's sense of control comes not from being able to make a situation happen or not happen, but from knowing what to expect will happen in the situation. When asked what made her most unhappy about being called for jury duty, she replies:

The unknown quantity of it. Finding my way there, and finding a place to park. Going into a strange situation ... Next time I will know what to expect. I won't worry about how to get there, and so on.

Even a potentially pleasurable occasion (and remember, this is a woman who places a high priority on having fun) creates anxiety because of the unknown elements it involves. 04 is nervous about an upcoming trip to Hawaii because she doesn't know in advance how to get around in the airports and hotels. She does what she can in advance of this situation to make it more familiar and manageable: she questions the travel agent closely, packs their bags two weeks before they're due to leave, then unpacks and puts all the clothes aside, not to be worn or used until the vacation.

Implications for Emotional Life. Emotionally, this personal background meaning is a two-sided coin. Unexpected and/or unknown events, even potentially pleasurable ones like a Hawaiian vacation are anxiety-provoking before they occur, while known and planned happy occurrences are all the more pleasurable for having been anticipated.

04 is anxious and apprehensive about jury duty. But she notes that the next time she is called, she'll know what to expect and will not be as bothered. She is also a little anxious about her vacation in an unfamiliar place.

She is apprehensive about her mother most of the time. Her mother is now completely unpredictable. 04 looks forward with dread to her mother's nightly phone call. She never knows if her mother is going to be rational and complaining or irrational and accusing. When she goes down to see her mother, she never knows what she is going to find. Once her mother's phone had been disconnected. Once her mother had changed her bank account.

She is also frequently angry at her mother. She is bound by her engaged care to take care of her mother, but this means she is constantly exposed to the unexpected. 04's mother constantly sabotages 04's best efforts at anticipatory planning and management. 04 is held by her concern from either exiting from or distancing herself from a chronically recurring situation, precisely the kind of situation which 04 is most anxious about. As a result, she is frequently angry.

On the other hand, planned for pleasurable events are all the more enjoyable to 04 for having been anticipated. She looks forward to pleasure with pleasure--an evening out with her husband, a visit with old friends, a party. 04 nurtures the feeling of anticipation of pleasure for its own sake. She also uses it to balance or offset other, unpleasant, things that



happen to her. This is a basic stance for her, and is thematic in her interviews.

Implications for appraisal and coping. 04's

understanding that the unknown or the unexpected is threatening but manageable is expressed as stakes in three out of six coping episodes. One episode involves her children and two involve her mother. But to understand the relation of her belief to her stress appraisals and coping strategies it is necessary to look beyond the individual coping episodes, because 04's belief involves her in meta-coping. That is, 04 always engages in planful anticipation so that situations which might be stressful for her are not because their demand factors are known and managed in advance. For example, at one point during the year her husband wants to give a big party. 04 says: "In the beginning, making plans, it seems overwhelming. Then I made a schedule of what to do every day and did it day by day." In this way she rendered the overwhelming manageable and had fun to boot.

Throughout the interview year 04 consistently assumes this stance of planful anticipation in advance of all kinds of events. This form of meta-coping is generally effective in dealing with the situations that arise in her life. It is effective because experience for 04 is transformational and not just a passage of time (cf. Benner & Wrubel, 1982). She learns from what happens to her. She describes her work experience as having changed her. She used to be shy in social situations; as a result of working she is not shy at all. She is aware of the

impact her life experience has had on her so that in retrospect she reappraises certain negative events as positive. For example, she describes the effect WWII had on her life:

The fact that the war broke into our life when it did turned out to be good. We were sent to California, and the experiences we had as a result of it broadened our idea of life and people--made us more cosmopolitan. We learned to accept all races and types of people.

The transformational nature of experience for 04 has a generalizable quality to it that contributes to the effectiveness of her planful anticipation. In one way experience teaches 04 to have a sense of her own resourcefulness and capability. In speaking of the war in another interview, she notes:

Another turning point was in my youth, when my husband went into the Navy. That was a crisis I had to meet and did. From those kinds of times, you learn that you can do it.

In another way, experience provides 04 with what Benner (1984) calls "a cushion of experience", or an ability to recognize similarities between current and past situations which facilitates problem-solving. 04 describes the operation of a cushion of experience in discussing her dealing with a mini-crisis at work: "I've done this for so long, I don't think about it. It's part of my actions."

04 is aware of the value of past experience for dealing with current threats and she tries consciously to use past experience to prepare herself for future events. This is a cognitive coping strategy which will be discussed below.

On the whole, this stance of planful anticipation is effective in 04's life. During the interview year, this stance enhances her pleasure in her social life and vacation experiences. It forestalls crises or renders overload manageable at work. But it is not an effective strategy for dealing with her mother because there is no way she could plan for all the possible contingencies that can arise. Her mother is completely unpredictable and this fact goes right to 04's most vulnerable point. To 04 the unexpected is threatening, but it can be managed through anticipation and planning or that, once experienced, it is over, leaving something learned for future events. But even after four years of dealing with her mother in her current state, the best that 04 can do is to expect something unpredictable to happen every month.

Another limit to the effectiveness of this planful anticipatory stance is that 04 experiences negative emotions when there is the expectation of something unpleasant on the horizon of the near future, especially when the upcoming event is not amenable to pre-management efforts. As a result, her anticipatory stance involves her in coping episodes in which she must deal with emotions of apprehensiveness, dread and anxiety. Since there is nothing to be done in these situations, 04 typically will try to avoid thinking about the anxiety-producing situation by getting busy doing something else. This avoidant strategy is often temporarily effective.

Within a coping episode, 04's meta-coping stance is

expressed in various coping strategies. First of all, she manages other people when they stand in the way of her accomplishing what needs to be done. This approach is to be distinguished from manipulation of others, because it is essentially a direct (although non-confrontive) approach. For example, she needs to change her mother's bank account back to a joint account and to do this she needs the cooperation and understanding of the bank manager. However, the bank manager does not return her calls, and when she goes down to the bank, he pointedly ignores her and makes her wait. She is angry at him for this treatment, but does not express anger or make a confrontation.

I felt like taking him apart for brushing me off. But I figured that wouldn't get me anywhere. So I made light. He came around. I think he was expecting a confrontation. I approached him with humor and it worked out O.K.

She uses this strategy in a number of different episodes, and it is always effective. By using humor, being nice and ignoring the anger or bad manners of others, she helps them get the job done.

Another kind of coping strategy that arises from her meta-coping stance of planful anticipation is a cognitive strategy of perspective. Experience appears to have taught 04 that nothing is as bad as it at first seems. In her own past life she has seen good things emerge from what she had thought were bad breaks. Now she consciously searches for these good things. She learns from experience. After being called for jury duty,

she says next time will not be scary because she'll know what to expect. After the unsatisfying visit with her children, she thinks about what she will do differently next time. While finding a lesson from experience does not change the outcome of the current coping episode, it does provide comfort by allowing her to see the event in a larger time perspective.

Not only does O4 consciously try to learn from experience in her coping, she uses the lessons she has learned from experience as cognitive coping strategies in coping episodes. She knows that the passage of time eases psychic pain, and telling herself that is helpful when she is distressed. For example, of her situation at work she says:

I've learned to live with it.

(How?)

This too will pass. Each crisis passes somehow.

Of feeling sad after a visit from her children, she says, "I know that the normal course of living will take care of it." She knows that outcomes are often not as bad as people expect them to be before the fact, and this also provides a helpful perspective for her.

Learning from experience is not as uniformly effective for helping her deal with her mother or her negative feelings when she is involved in a coping episode with her mother. In an early interview she sees herself as having learned from experience.

I always go down there and on my way say that I'm going to be calm, soothe her. I talk to myself and say what I'm going to do. I've improved a lot. Two years ago

would really have thrown me compared with now.

But towards the end of the interview year, 04 remarks that she has not learned from experience in dealing with her mother.

Each time [i.e., in each interview] I've always got the same problems. I have such good resolutions about improving. Each month there's not a big improvement. It marks my progress to go through this. Sometimes I feel like I'm going backwards.

Another form of perspective which is stylistic for 04 is looking on the bright side, or balancing the bad with the good. For example, after she hears of the death of a friend's husband, 04 says that she's happy her friend and her husband had two good years of fun after they retired. And after a particularly difficult time of dealing with her mother, she hears the news of the birth of twin grandchildren.

The very next day the babies arrived. That blocked out other feelings. There is nothing like babies to revive you.

Just as with the strategy of learning from experience, these cognitive strategies give 04 a perspective on the stressful encounters. This perspective mitigates negative emotion not through denial or avoidance, but by adding a positive element into the equation.

### Conclusion

In sum, it can be noted that 04's particular combination of an interpersonal concern of engaged care and a personal background meaning that the unknown is threatening but manageable act together in positive ways in her life. Her general stance of planful anticipation enhances her time spent

with others by ordering events and reducing hassle. And her coping with stress encounters is enriched by the help, advice, and support she is able to receive from others.

However, there are limits to the effectiveness of planning and management. In dealing with her senile mother, 04 has reached those limits. Both her interpersonal concern and her personal background meaning lead to stress appraisals in her encounters with her mother. In all coping episodes involving her mother, both personal meanings are expressed as stakes. Her mother is never going to be any better, and quite likely will deteriorate even further. Thus, her concern of engaged care will always be tapped in these encounters. The essence of her mother's senility is her unpredictability. Thus, her understanding that the threatening unknown will also always be involved. No amount of anticipatory planning or management can change or control her mother's situation. And so 04 is bound by the personal meanings by which she understands the world, and because of which she is generally able not only to cope effectively but also to grow and learn, into a situation which will always be stressful.

"I'M AN INSIDER WHO'S AN OUTSIDER. THE UPSHOT OF IT IS THAT I DID NOTHING."

05 is a forty-seven year old bus driver who used to be a Catholic priest. He has not resolved the meaning of religion in his life. He has been married for thirteen years and has two young daughters. Both his work and his family life are stressful for him. He also has chronic respiratory problems which are exacerbated by stress.

#### Relationship to Wife

His wife is a former nun who some years ago was extremely depressed to the point of being suicidal. 05 sometimes implies that he is careful of what he says to her because of her depressive history. He says bluntly that they do not have a good relationship. Their dynamic is that she is critical of him, or she gets into scenes with the children and he gets mad inside. The same events occur every day, and every day 05 becomes angry inside. He is expected to care for their one year old daughter when he comes from work while his wife prepares dinner. She arranges dinner time around his schedule, which changes month to month. Even when he is on a late run, she does not feed the children earlier, and although he wishes she would, he does not ask her to. His wife and ten year old daughter quarrel both before dinner, when his wife wants the daughter to help, and during dinner when his wife insists that the daughter eat all of her dinner, especially her salad. Other stressful encounters for 05 that derive from his wife involve her characteristic



tendency to be late, and to create a flurry of tension when preparing to do something.

05 and his wife do not go out socially, partly because they are unwilling to leave the children with a sitter, and partly because of 05's generally depressed condition which he describes as being low emotionally and physically. Any social events are attended by the parents with the children. Their routine daily life is filled with events that are irritating and angering to 05, but he never says anything.

#### Relationship to Children

05 has a ten year old daughter and a one year old "surprise" baby girl. He says that sports activities with his daughter are the most satisfying part of his family life. In fact the only reported episode of positive emotion for the entire interview year involved coaching his daughter's soccer team. His wife accuses him of ganging up on her with their daughter. He does often report feeling sympathy with his daughter in her quarrels with his wife, but he never says anything directly to her about it.

#### Relationship to Parents

05 is the fourth of six children. He feels no close ties to his family of origin. He did not cry at his father's funeral. He feels his father was ineffectual and that he is too. His mother lives nearby, and although he sees her regularly, he says, "I don't have much attachment for her."

Work

05 is intellectually capable of much higher status work than bus driving, but he is not able to function in the higher status jobs. After he left the priesthood, he tried teaching, but it was an "agony". He felt tense and sick to his stomach all the time. During the interview year, he secured a real estate license, but his work in this area is also a disaster. Bus driving frequently makes him tense and angry, but he stays with it partly because he can earn a decent wage and partly because he cannot make it in other jobs. His self esteem suffers from his downwardly mobile position.

Friends

05 reports that he has no friends. He says that it is his fault that he and his wife have no friends. "I fail her by not being outgoing. Part of the trouble is work. They are not the type of people I'd ask to come home and share a meal."

Interpersonal Concern: Interpersonal Disengagement as a Sought for Ideal ("I'm an insider who's an outsider.")

05 is interpersonally engaged, but just barely, and against his will. His highest goal is to attain dispassionate, abstract connectedness to humanity in general. When kids on his bus are wild and unruly, and when his wife and young daughter quarrel, he withdraws from what he calls "animal behavior". He dreams of living in a community "where justice is the fundamental principle." If he could attain his ideal condition of abstract connectedness then he would be a "good" person, and the quarrels

would not occur. In this way he assumes blame for the bad situations which occur within his family, but it is responsibility without guilt.

Personal Background Meaning: Stress Encounters Are Controlled Not By What He Does But By What He Is ("The upshot of it is that I did nothing.")

For 05 stress encounters can be controlled or prevented by being a certain kind of person. For example, 05 is president of his condominium group. It is his job to water the plants. (It is a drought year and everyone is very conscious of water use.) One night a neighbor, who is drunk and who has caused trouble for others, shines a flashlight on 05 while he's watering and verbally abuses him. 05 shouts back and becomes very angry. Eight weeks later he still thinks about the encounter a lot. He says:

Why would I have the kind of character or temperament that would stop a person like this from doing this to me. It makes me see myself as a vulnerable person, and I don't like that.

05's interpersonal concern and personal background meaning overlap and cannot usefully be untangled for separate discussions of their effect on emotional life, appraisal and coping.

Implications of this concern and personal background meaning for emotional life. 05 characteristically experiences two kinds of anger. One is what he calls "shakey anger". It is rage, a sick feeling, and a feeling of being out of control.

He feels this in situations like the encounter with the drunken neighbor when he feels exposed and vulnerable. He feels that these situations would not occur if he were closer to the ideal he strives for--a disinterested humanitarian. Then he would appear strong, manly and invulnerable to others, who would then not mess with him.

His second kind of anger is the felt part of a coping strategy. He is righteously, blamingly angry, usually at his wife, when she creates situations he does not "deserve". Another emotional component of this is resentment which is for him connected with his sense of being unfairly treated. Disgust is another coping emotion. He bolsters his own sense of superiority by being disgusted at the behavior of others.

He feels guilty when he feels exposed as incompetent. In one situation he says, "I began to feel guilty about my lack of control over the situation." In the one situation that guilt might have been expected, when he puts off buying a promised present for his wife until they are all sold out, he does not feel guilt, but rather depression.

Although he seems to be chronically depressed, depression is also a typical response to family stress episodes. (See section "Implications of Belief and Concern for Appraisal and Coping" for full discussion.)

05 describes feeling positive emotions on only one occasion during the interview year. He feels excitement, pride, and accomplishment while coaching his daughter's soccer

team in a winning game. Some of the parents compliment him on his coaching.

It feels good, like I've accomplished something and people recognize it and take a moment to tell me. I need adult approbation and approval. I had a strong kind of emotional response. It carried over for a few days.

His good feeling was not in his own sense of having done something, but in being seen and recognized. Just as the neighbor reflects to 05 a vulnerable, incompetent self, so the parents reflect back an achieving, competent self.

Implications for appraisal and coping. In five out of twelve reported coping episodes 05's own adequacy or competence is at stake. These stakes are both expressions of his interpersonal concern and his personal background meaning. 05's adequacy or competence is at stake in situations in which he understands people's behavior as a reflection of himself. Others behave as they do only because he is personally inadequate. And 05 demands (internally) that people behave a certain way so that he will see the self-reflection he strives for. Thus, at home in the evening he feels that if he were a better father, his wife and daughter would not quarrel. At the same time he thinks his wife should be better organized about fixing dinner and less rigid about their daughter's diet.

Stylistically, 05 copes in two ways. First, he blames the other. This strategy has an emotional component of anger, and while 05 does not go as far as 03 does actually to enjoy the expression of anger, it is for him preferable to feeling

inadequate. This anger (unlike "shakey anger") is always only an internal experience. It is never expressed to others.

Second, O5 stylistically employs an avoidant strategy of emotional withdrawal. For example, at home in the evening he will typically tune out the quarrel and wash the dishes. Since he never tells the others how much their quarrels upset him, or tries to change the way the evenings go, things go on with a relentless and depressing sameness.

### Conclusion

O5 remains depressed because the events of his life as he understands them gives him a negative self-image. According to this understanding if he were a better father, in his being, not in his deeds, his family life would ipso facto be smooth and pleasant. If he were a certain kind of invulnerable person, his drunken neighbor would not act up. However, withdrawing and becoming depressed are preferable to the alternative of speaking up, expressing anger. Then he would be just like the rest of them, who at their worst he describes as "animals". In his depression he maintains a martyred superiority. In his view, he may be inadequate, but he is still better than those who inflict their angry and unpleasant scenes on him.

"I ALWAYS HAVE SUCH A CALM EXISTENCE BUT I PLAN AHEAD AND TRY TO AVOID TRAFFIC--EMOTIONAL OR OTHER KINDS."

06 is a sixty year old woman, married with two grown children. She does not work, although she did before her marriage and before her children were born, and then again for a short while after her children were grown. She is college-educated, and fairly affluent. Her husband works at a high-paying job, and she has an inherited income of her own. She is very active running her household and engaging in various group and single activities during the day.

#### Relation to Husband

At the time of the interviews, 06 and her husband had been married for thirty-two years. The interviewer never met 06's husband. In fact 06 never tells her husband that she is participating in the Stress and Coping Project because she knows he would object, and she wants to do it.

06 does not live her husband's life with him, but considers what he wants important. She listens to his problems at work, and provides emotional support. She is essentially a "model" wife. She keeps the house just so, is good at entertaining, provides her husband's creature comforts and listens to his worries.

For his part, the husband appears cold, bullying, domineering and critical. He places high expectations on his wife. Although he views men and women as having separate spheres, he often takes over what she thinks belongs to her

sphere, such as decorating decisions, or menu choices for a dinner party.

She is matter of fact in reporting incidents involving her husband to the interviewer. She always tempers criticism of him by adding a rider, for example, "but he is a generous man," which is not exactly true. He is openhanded about some things, and stingy about others. He is most critical about how their children have turned out, which he holds to be his wife's fault. (The daughter works in agriculture; the son is an auto mechanic.) He brings this up to her frequently, and will even discuss it with virtual strangers.

Although 06 is resentful of his many criticisms, it is not a deep resentment for several reasons. First, she shares many of his values. For example, this is her job, she should do it well; he works hard to provide for her and so has rights to have things the way he wants them. In addition to these values she has her own world view about the difference between the sexes. Men act in certain ways because they are men.

Second, she is not deeply resentful because she is used to his ways, and knows that the relationship goes on regardless. She likes his predictability and has developed techniques for dealing with his criticisms. She does not give it credit. She lets it go and ignores it. And she reminds herself of her own value.

Third, 06 derives benefits from the relationship in general, and gets something out of the conflict in particular.



In general, she gets his protection and his taking on responsibilities she would rather not have. Also, while they do not have a particularly affectionate relationship, they do have an actively sexual one, which is important to 06. From the conflict with her husband, she gains points with him by not retaliating, and she also feels justification for doing nice things for herself.

#### Relation to Children

06 has a grown son and daughter. Neither one is married. Although her husband is disappointed in their career choices (he wanted them both to be professionals), 06 is satisfied with her children. She enjoyed having them, and now they are grown, she enjoys her empty nest. She reports that after the children left home, her husband became "mellow." She feels more freedom in their sexual relationship now. She likes having her children independent from her. She sees them frequently, but does not want them to bring their problems to her.

#### Family of Origin

Both of 06's parents shared the same ethnic background. Her mother was a college graduate (as is 06) and on her mother's side of the family were a number of prominent people. Her father was a successful businessman, and the family was financially very well off.

Her mother took on the main responsibility of rearing the three daughters. Her father was somewhat distant and very

involved with business and with the extended family which was of central importance to him. Her parents both died after long illnesses after living together for some years in a rest home. "By the time they died I have to say that it was more of a relief than a difficulty."

06's sisters do not live nearby, but she sees them each once during the interview year. She also reports visiting and vacationing with cousins. On the whole, though, she does not set great store by family. Her friends are more important to her.

#### Work History

06 worked before she got married, and continued to work afterwards until she had children (nine years in all). Then twenty years later she worked for three years part-time. She liked her work, and managed it well as she manages everything. She still has friendly contact with her former boss, and looks forward to her husband's extended business trips as an occasion to invite over former work associates.

#### Retirement

06 and her husband are planning for retirement, though he has not yet decided when he will retire. She looks forward to her husband's retirement as a time of rest and reward. She looks forward to travelling and having fun. She and her husband have good times on the occasions when they go away, and she is looking for more of the same. On the other hand, she is concerned that he might impinge too much on her freedom. "I hope he won't be in my

way or always asking where I'm going and when I'll get back. We'll have to arrive at an understanding." One wonders what kind of understanding she hopes to achieve, since even while he's working he wants her time accountable to him.

Her main concern about retirement is health. She has two friends who die during the interview year. Both deaths make her worry about her own future. When discussing her friend who has cancer, she says,

I can't help thinking about how you'd get in the same condition. I wonder if my husband would disown me ever. I mean her husband's retirement is gone to hell. My husband talked about that the other day. You spend your life working and then one gets sick and the other has to spend all his time taking care of them and that shoots all those years of trying to build a nice future.

#### Other Social Relationships

06 has a close group of friends with whom she meets on a regular basis. The group started out playing cards, but discovered that they were more interested in talking, so they dropped the cards and now just meet for discussion. 06 jokingly refers to her friends as her "therapy group," and it seems that they do indeed offer the opportunity to discuss personal problems and serious issues in an open way.

This group of friends forms an important, central part of 06's social support system. Being long-time friends, of about the same age, and with the same values, there is implicit understanding among them. Their relationships to their husbands are similar. 06 recognizes that spousal relationships

among her generation are different from the current generation's. One cannot be completely open with one's spouse because of role requirements, and because of the need to protect the husband from unpleasantness. The "therapy group" fills an important need for these women.

Interpersonal Concern: Self-Care in Balance With Care for Others

06's interpersonal concern engages her in care for her family and friends but it is a care which is always balanced by her concern for her own self-care. This contrasts with the self-protective concern of 02 who is interpersonally connected, but not interpersonally engaged and so perceives interpersonal connections as entailing demands which could use up her own finite resources. 06 is interpersonally engaged and self-engaged at the same time. While she is interpersonally concerned for others she also needs to look after herself and her own emotional needs. She gets emotional support from her "therapy group" but she does not have or long for the same closeness with friends and family that 04 has. In caring for others, 06 does not derive a sense of being cared for in return (in contrast to 04's engaged care). There is not a sense of reciprocal intimacy.

Implications for appraisal and coping. Stress episodes which involve stakes concerning care for others usually elicit stakes which involve self-care as well. For example, a stress episode resulting from her husband being diagnosed as

hypertensive elicited stakes involving her husband's health as well as concern over her own future well-being. A friend being hospitalized for the treatment of cancer elicited concern over the friend's health and concern over her own (06's) mortality. Five of the eight reported coping episodes involve these kinds of dual, conflicting stakes.

The stakes are conflicting because coping with one issue means exacerbating the other. For example, thinking about or planning to visit her sick friend intensifies her fears for her own mortality. Not seeing or thinking about her friend lessens her own self-concern, but intensifies her concern for her friend when she does think about her.

Two kinds of coping are stylistic for 06. Avoidance is one such form. She avoids by reading, by procrastinating and by making a conscious effort to change her mental state. An example of this last she describes in these terms: "You can keep a pleasant picture in your mind as you go about doing things."

A second form of stylistic coping is diminishing which is an attempt to reduce the degree of threat. For example, at one point she hears that her friend with cancer is immobilized. Later she finds out she is immobilized because of phlebitis. She uses this information to reduce to herself the severity of her friend's illness ("It was a great uplift to find that she wasn't immobilized due to cancer.") Blaming the victim is another way of reducing threat. Blaming the victim works because it is harder to feel compassion for someone who has brought suffering

on himself. Both avoidance and diminishing are effective temporarily in changing her emotional state from negative to positive.

Implications for emotional life. The effect of an interpersonal concern which gives rise to conflict in stakes in stress encounters which involve cared for others is to involve 06 in negative emotions of anxiety, worry, and fear. She experiences positive emotions in reaction to being freed from negative emotions. For example, the success of her coping strategy to diminish the severity of threat of her friend's illness gives her an uplift. In other cases she is glad, relieved, feels good or gets a kick out of something.

Personal Background Meaning: Must Live Up to Own and Others' Expectations

06 holds to ideal of herself which she feels she must live up to. Her husband has high expectations of her too, and part of her ideal of herself is to match his expectations. To this end she has become an expert housekeeper, menu-planner, cook, interior decorator, party-giver, hostess, and suitcase packer. For example, she describes her experience of "too much to do" as follows:

If he wants to do a big entertaining on short notice I have to fly around and then I collapse the next day, but it's O.K.; it doesn't bother me much.

(Why is it too much to do?)

Just because of the entertaining. You want everything to look nice and you want to look nice too, and your husband wants everything to be extra special

for his his friends.

06 has a meta-coping stance of advance planning and management. This is similar to 04, but different in its effect because of their different concerns and personal background meanings. For 06 advance management is not a way to master the frighteningly unpredictable, as it is with 04. Rather, this meta-coping management stance is a way to meet her own and her husband's high expectations. For example, at a party at which she is hostess, it is necessary that everything be perfect, and that she be calm and relaxed. This is only possible with careful advance planning. The anticipatory management stance allows her to be in control of situations most of the time. As she says:

I always have such a calm existence, but I plan ahead and try to avoid traffic--emotional or other kinds.

Implications for appraisal and coping. 06's personal background meaning makes her susceptible to threat appraisals in situations in which she sees herself as not living up to her ideal. Fortunately, she is accomplished at the tasks which are important in her life, and she is fortunate usually to have other resources to rely on when possibly unmanageable, and hence threatening, encounters arise.

One situation, however, does recur for her and is appraised as threatening. Her husband is dissatisfied with the careers their children have chosen and he blames 06. She believes that their children are just fine, and that he has no basis for criticism, but nevertheless her self-esteem is

threatened when her husband criticizes her. Two of the eight coping episodes involve concern over self-esteem when he husband attacks the quality of her parenting.

Her coping in these episodes matches her stylistic coping in dealing with stakes related to interpersonal concern, that is, she avoids and diminishes. In addition, she bolsters herself.

She uses avoidance by consciously trying to think of something else when she is under attack by her husband. She diminishes the threat by laughing at it (to herself), and by excusing the aggressor. For example, she says,

I know that he's taking out his aggressions from work on me. I know he wants the best for the kids, but he also wants to go around and say, "My son's a doctor."

She bolsters herself with comforting cognitions, self-nurturance, absolving herself of blame and positive comparisons. All of these coping strategies help temporarily. But she gets bothered when she thinks about the encounter later. And none of these strategies are effective at stopping her husband from bringing up the subject matter again.

Implications for emotional life. When her husband criticizes her she feels hurt, irritation, and frustration. When she successfully manages some event, she feels good.



"I LIKE TO THINK THAT MY MIND CAN CONTROL WHAT I DO. I LIKE  
TO THINK THAT I CAN DO THAT."

07 is a fifty-eight year old married man with two grown children. He is very health conscious and exercises regularly. Filling out the Study's health questionnaires made him think about how much he had been smoking and drinking, and he subsequently stopped both (except for social drinking). The discipline and self-control evident in this abrupt halt are features that appear throughout the interviews.

#### Relationship to Wife

07 has been married thirty years and enjoys a good relationship with his wife whom he loves and admires. Their relationship conforms to traditional roles, but not rigidly so. His wife works about thirty hours a week outside the home. 07 is very happy in his marriage. He tells the interviewer, "I've always enjoyed marriage. I never enjoyed anything as much as marriage." and "I'd rather be around her [wife] than any men or women."

They enjoy a closeness that grows out of a long-term intimacy in which words are not always necessary. Several times he relates to the interviewer the non-verbal ways in which they are aware of how the other is feeling.

He admires his wife. He is very accepting of her involvement in church activities although he does not attend. He believes that she is a good person, a better person than he is. He takes a protective attitude toward her and wants to shield her

from harrassment and being imposed upon.

### Relationship to Children

His son is married and has one child. He lives in a nearby town, and works as a policeman in 07's town. Because of his schedule and distance from his own home, the son eats dinner at 07's house four nights a week. 07 and his wife arrange their schedules around this quite naturally. 07 has always gotten along well with his son. By contrast, he has never gotten along well with his daughter who is twice divorced, living on welfare and dependent on her parents for extra support, material and otherwise. At the beginning of the interview year the daughter, who had been separated from her husband for five months, gave birth to his child. 07 considers her seven year old son from her first marriage almost like his own child because of the amount of time the child has spent with 07 and his wife.

Of his strained relations with his daughter, he says:

I've never had big arguments, screaming fits with anyone except my daughter.

(What's your approach to her now?)

Stay away from her as much as possible. Don't communicate. Try to help her financially. She causes an uproar around here all the time.

Avoidance is his strategy for dealing with his daughter. But that does not mean that he abdicates familial responsibility. He cannot get along with her personally, but he regularly gives her money and things (e.g., gives her furniture, pays for the installation of her phone, does handyman jobs for

her).

### Family of Origin

Both of 07's parents are now dead. He grew up on a farm in the northwest, one of eight children. He was the only one to leave the area. He reports having a good family life in a rural community.

He goes to visit his siblings about once a year. His wife's family lives in the area, so they socialize with them a great deal. He deeply values family attachments.

Ties with my wife's family and my own are one of the most important things in life. They're more important than friends.

### Work

07 works in a civil service job as a planner and estimator. He started out his work life as an airplane mechanic and never expected to reach the job level he has attained. He loves his work and is good at what he does. He likes the kinds of problems his work presents and because of his experience in the field, he is flexible and has options about how to solve those problems. He takes pride in his work and in doing his job well.

07 gets a new boss during the interview year and conflicts with the boss cause him to enjoy his work a great deal less. The boss is not an expert in the area that 07 works in and also is not privy to the informal rules under which his staff operates. At first 07 speaks of "breaking him in" to his new job, that is, socializing him to the ways of the office. But the boss is too rigid and lacking in savvy to learn. Instead he

insists on strict adherence to regulations that sabotages his staff's and especially 07's sense of autonomy and personal commitment to work.

### Retirement

At the beginning of the interview year 07 says he hopes to retire in three years. At the end of the interview year he says he plans to retire in a year when he is sixty. This advancement in retirement date is due to decreased job satisfaction because of his new boss.

Leaving the challenge of work will be hard for him. He remains unclear about what retirement holds for him. He does not see it as a reward for years of hard work or as a time to realize a longed for dream, but rather as a time when he might fade or even die. He thinks he should go to school or develop a hobby so he won't "waste away."

### Other Social Relationships

07 and his wife center their lives mainly around their grown children. This most particularly includes their son's four nights a week over for dinner and the childcare needs of their daughter. They socialize mainly with 07's wife's relatives. Many of their former friends have moved out of the area.

### Interpersonal Concern: Engaged Care

07 is a man who in his work life and in his purely mental dealings enjoys problem-solving. In this respect he resembles a typical sterotype of our culture, i.e., the rational male who

coolly takes in a situation, assesses alternatives and goes for the best solution. In his relational life, however, 07 knows that those same procedures do not apply.

When I have a problem I come up with solutions and alternatives. With people problems, sometimes there is no clear-cut right or wrong. It depends on how it affects people. These are the problems I'm most touchy about. With work problems you put two and two together and have a solution. When you're dealing with people, you get reactions that you don't expect sometimes. There are too many complications. Some people at work have a knack for dealing with people. I don't think I'm like that. I have feelings, but I'm not too sure what to do about it.

In his description of "people problems" as being contextualized rather than objective, and of the morality of their solution as being dependent on how those solutions affect the people involved, 07 reflects the kind of understanding Gilligan (1982) found to be representative of women in her study of moral development. And while 07 understands the difference between work problems and people problems, he still sees dealing with people problems as a knack which he lacks. But engaged care is not a skill, it is a relational stance. It does not guarantee the absence of interpersonal problems; it defines what the problems and what the coping options are. For example, in engaged care, exiting from a caring relationship is not an option.

Implications for emotional life. As with 04 who also has an interpersonal concern of engaged care, 07 enjoys a relational life in which there is a reciprocity of caring between him and his spouse, and an emotional life which is expressive of

this kind of closeness. Engaged care involves 07 in negative emotions when he is concerned for his wife, but generally their relationship engenders in him feelings of closeness, enjoyment, pride and respect. His worry for his wife focuses mainly on their relationship to their daughter who 07 thinks places too many demands on his wife. Usually in these situations he feels concerned about his wife and angry at their daughter.

Implications for appraisal and coping. 07's relationship with his daughter is a source of conflict for him. The daughter is difficult to get along with. She causes an "uproar" and a "commotion" (07's words) all the time according to 07. She is the only person he says who can get him involved in a screaming argument, which he views as an unacceptable way for him to behave. (See discussion under personal background meaning.) 07 cannot tolerate that kind of interaction. His solution is to let his wife deal with the daughter. This is not a withdrawal from the relationship for him; it is his way of remaining engaged in it. First, 07 thinks of his wife as his better half. She is his proxy in the relationship with the daughter because she is so much better at it than he is. Second, freed from the unpleasant, resentment-causing interactions, 07 can go on caring for and taking care of his daughter by giving money, material things and practical help.

This is his position during the interview year. And while, for the most part, it works for him in his relationship with his daughter, it creates a conflict situation for him in

regard to his wife. He copes with the conflicted situation with his daughter by turning it over to his wife. But then he becomes concerned that the daughter is placing too many demands on the wife. His first feeling is to protect his wife, but he needs her there on the front line with his daughter.

Four out of ten reported coping episodes involve his daughter or his concern over his daughter's demands on his wife. This is the influence of this interpersonal concern on appraisal. The influence of engaged care on coping is predictably in the area of social support. 07 frequently receives emotional support from his wife. She also, as shown in the above discussion, acts at his behest sometimes as buffer, other times as intermediary for him.

Personal Background Meaning: Loss of Self-Control is Dangerous

07 discusses the issue of self-control several times with the interviewer. In one of these discussions he says, "If you don't control yourself, there's no telling what a person might do." The range of possibilities of "what a person might do" who did not control himself covers acting hysterically, looking like a fool, making a mistake in an emergency. Self-control for 07 covers both physical and mental states, although he admits, "I can control my mouth, but I can't always control how I feel inside."

Implications for appraisal and coping. Two out of ten reported coping episodes involve this personal background

meaning directly. One involves standing in line and the other involves not being able to go to sleep. Since standing in line always makes 07 feel frustrated, and he cannot dispel that feeling by cognitive action, nor can he control the length of the line, 07 avoids standing in line whenever possible. Going to sleep involves being relaxed. 07 considers being relaxed a mental state which he should be able to control.

Other coping episodes which engage this personal background meaning involve his daughter. She is the one person who can make him lose control. He copes with this situation in general by getting his wife to take over so that he can avoid confrontations. Once this did not suffice. The daughter was in and out of the house one evening causing a lot of turmoil. 07 left the house and went to a movie alone, an extremely unusual thing for him to do. But in this case avoidance was the only way for him to maintain self-control.

07 also has a meta-coping stance which is visible both in advance of and during coping episodes. Experience for 07, like for 04, is transformational. He has learned from experience and uses what he has learned both to anticipate problems before they arise and to deal with problems when they do arise.

Implications for emotional life. Situational threats to self-control (i.e., standing in line, not being able to go to sleep) make him feel frustrated and aggravated. Interpersonal threats to his self-control (i.e., his daughter) make him feel angry. On the positive side, the success of



efforts at discipline and self-control in situations in which there is no threat make him feel good about himself. An example of this situation is his stopping smoking and drinking.

"I REALLY DO BELIEVE THAT EVERYBODY HAS A PIECE OF THE TRUTH."

08 is a forty-six year old woman. She holds an important voluntary position in her community. Her husband is a physician. They have three children. She is intelligent and poised. She is initially concerned about the issue of confidentiality, but once she agrees to the project she is very open with the interviewer.

#### Relationship to Husband

08 and her husband have been married twenty-four years. While their relationship is close, it is not reciprocally balanced. When 08 is troubled she talks to her husband about it, but unless she brings up her distress, or he witnesses it (as a fight with the daughter), he is not particularly in tune with her. When he is troubled or upset he tends to keep it to himself, to want to be alone, to work it out through work or exercise. When the problem is between the two of them, there is rarely a verbal disagreement. They both tend to "clam up".

Twenty years earlier 08's husband was operated on for a benign brain tumor. Three years before the interview year he suffered a brain blockage which was treated non-surgically. After five months he was fully recuperated, but the doctors did not know if this recent problem indicated new tumor growth. 08's husband lives with this concern and it has made him irritable and hard to live with. He tries to hide his concern from his children, which means his wife gets the greater brunt of

it.

Because of her husband's schedule the family does not do as many activities together as 08 would like. She does take the children on a trip to visit her relatives. Other than that, she and her husband often lunch together and take weekend visits to Carmel where they are planning on building a house.

### Relationship to Children

08 has three children, a daughter in college, a son who is a high school senior, and another son two years younger. She is close to all of her children, but seems closest to the middle child. She and her daughter seem to have a lot of conflict in their relationship. The daughter is described by her mother as always having been independent. ("She was born saying, 'I'll do it myself.'") The daughter has currently taken on a number of responsibilities outside of her college courses. 08 is worried about her trying to do too much and about her health, since she appears thin and run down. The daughter takes her mother's concern as criticism. The daughter also holds more liberal political views than her parents, and argues with her mother and brother on these issues. In the ninth interview, 08 reports an argument she had with her daughter which ended with the daughter saying she loved her father, but not her mother. This is a very painful occasion for 08, made all the more painful because she did not disagree with her daughter on the issues, just felt she was too extreme.

She describes a coping episode with her middle child

that shows the contrast between her relationship with him and with her daughter. With her son she is able to hold back from saying things she thinks will exacerbate the situation. She listens to him and tries to convey supportiveness, even though she is very concerned about what her son is proposing, namely taking two years off between high school and college.

### Family of Origin

08 grew up in a northwestern state with two younger brothers and a large extended family. Her father owned and administered a private school. Both her father and mother were college graduates. She adored her father. ("I think about my father as being one of the finest people who ever walked the earth.") He died suddenly at age sixty when 08 was twenty-two. Her mother died of cancer three years before the interview year. 08 took care of her in her home for the last five months of her mother's life. It was a very difficult and painful time, but her mother's attitude made her dying a beautiful experience.

### Work

At the time of the interviews, 08 held an important voluntary position in her community. The interview year was the last year of her term. By all accounts, 08 is extremely good at this work. When her term ends she is interviewed for a local paper and receives a number of letters praising her work. She is modest about it, but admits that this is unusual treatment for a retiring member. Up until she held this position, she had devoted herself to the care of her family. When asked what were

the surprise turns for her in her work, she says:

Perhaps the fact that I ended up liking it as well as I did and could be as effective as I think I was.

The striking feature of 08's relation to her work is that as involved as she is with it, her own self-esteem is never at stake. Success or failure is not personal to her. If things do not go her way, it is not a personal failure. But she cares very deeply that what is done be fair and right, and she fights long and hard for what she perceives to be just.

That is not to say that she perceived issues in a black or white manner. In fact, because she is very empathetic and because she can see issues from more than one perspective, what is the right course of action is not always clear.

She is good at getting people to work together, an important asset when attempting to get a diverse group of people reach an agreement.

People tell me that I am a good conciliator. I tend to not take the middle ground so much as try to blend extreme points of view into a workable compromise.

#### Interpersonal Concern: Non-Reciprocal Engaged Care

08's engaged care for her family is not reciprocal. This is in contrast to the engaged form of interpersonal concern seen in 04 and 07. In these two cases the caring stance is mutual between husband and wife. For 08, however, her caring for her husband and her children is neither received nor returned in its own terms.

Implications of this concern for appraisal and coping. Three of the six reported coping episodes involve 08's concern over the physical or emotional well-being of her children. Although her form of interpersonal concern leads her to appraise certain situations during the interview year as involving threat to her children, her engaged care is not reciprocated, and so in order to cope effectively with the situation she inhibits action, and the use of this strategy is facilitated by the use of perspective. Perspective also helps her manage her own negative emotions.

Inhibition of action is a coping strategy 08 used with both her husband and her children. In describing her relationship with her husband, and in several other brief mentions during the interview year, 08 outlines a typical interaction of her husband being distressed and her holding back from saying anything or trying to be with him because he prefers to work things out by himself.

In coping episodes with her children, she holds back from saying things (inhibition of action) because she knows they will not hear her words as arising from her concern for them, but will take them as attempts to interfere or control.

Seeing the other's side (perspective) is a coping strategy that both facilitates her ability to use inhibition of action and eases her own painful emotions. Because she sees the other's side in an empathic way, she knows that the other does not want to receive what she would like to give, namely presencing,

emotional support, and sympathetic advice. And, this understanding of the other helps manage her own negative emotions. With her husband she accepts that this is the way he is and does not take it personally. With her children, she takes it personally, but seeing the other's side gives her some distance.

This form of interpersonal concern also means that 08 does not receive the same kind of caring that she gives. She will talk to her husband when she is distressed and she describes him as a good listener. But her husband does not pick up on her unvoiced distress or offer unsolicited support except in the extreme case of the fight with her daughter, after which he is particularly nice to her. 08 does not expect to receive more support than she gets.

Implications for emotional life. Non-reciprocal engaged care means that 08 finds stressful events which threaten a family member's physical or emotional well-being. In these situations she feels concern, worry, anxiety, pain and distress. This form of interpersonal concern also means that good things that happen to her family will be pleasures for her too. It also means that she generally enjoys her family. She twice describes in detail the joy her family gives her.

Personal Background Meaning: There is Order and Meaning in the World

For 08, situations have a powerful pull in that she

believes that there is order and meaning in the world. This is neither a passive position in which she must be helplessly propelled by events, nor is it a controlling stance in which she has to dominate events and impose order on them. Rather, in 08's understanding, meaning resides in the situation and one has only to facilitate its emergence.

Implications for appraisal and coping. In four out of the six reported coping episodes, this personal background meaning influences what is at stake for her. In work situations she is concerned over making a fair decision. In interpersonal situations she is concerned over managing the situation the right way.

In all her dealings at her work she is un-ego-involved in a particular way which reflects her personal background meaning. She studies issues carefully and knows what she thinks, but never so dogmatically that she cannot hear another view. In decision-making meetings she never is invested in having things go her way, but only in making the best and fairest decision. For example, in her work she has to deal with a fellow volunteer who is very opinionated and who aggressively disagrees with everyone else. This colleague drives everybody else crazy. 08, however, gets along with her, even though she agrees that the woman is a pain, because she will listen to the other woman's viewpoint and consider it seriously.

Implications for appraisal and coping. In five out of six coping episodes 08 expresses this personal background



meaning either in the appraisal or in coping. (The one episode in which the belief does not appear concerns coping with her son's dangerous concussion.) In appraisal she expresses this meaning directly in concern over making a fair decision. In coping the meaning is reflected in the coping strategy of perspective. For example, the opinionated colleague really makes her angry once when she nearly sabotages an important project. Even in the midst of her anger she is able to take perspective.

Every time I get cross with her, I stop and try to think about what she is saying. She does have good ideas about one-tenth of the time and she does make a contribution. I really do believe that everybody has a piece of the truth.

She is able to be fair in her judgement of the woman even when she is really furious at her. Similarly, she uses perspective with her daughter after they have had a major blow-up. She reflects that she may not have been entirely fair in her part of the argument.

Implications for emotional life. When making a fair decision is itself at stake, she feels emotional distress sometimes to the point of crying in private. She also feels tense and worried.

### Conclusion

There is a fit between her personal background meaning and her concern. She is able to live fully and happily with her interpersonal concern of engaged care in relationships in which the others do not have engaged care. Her sense of perspective,

which derives from her personal background meaning, permits her to understand and accept the kind of interpersonal concern her loved others have for her.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE GOOD BREAKS AND BAD BREAKS IN YOUR LIFE?  
"I THINK YOU MAKE YOUR OWN."

09 is a sixty-two year old man, married for the second time with three grown children. He works as a supervisor in a trucking company. He likes to joke with the interviewer and to assert that he does not get upset about things. He claims in the first interview that he would not be a good person to study because he has so little stress in his life. This view of himself is central to 09. In his view stress results from being unable to control external circumstances and other people. As he says when asked about the good breaks and bad breaks in his life: "I think you make your own." His greatest fear would be to become crippled or bed-ridden. He could not bear not being ambulatory.

#### Relationship to Wife

09 has been married to his current wife for twelve years. His first marriage lasted twenty-five years. He left his first wife when he felt he could no longer stand her lax housekeeping standards or her refusal to discipline the children. His current wife meets his standards.

09 is satisfied with his current marriage. His wife keeps an immaculate house and likes to entertain. When asked what was most satisfying about his marriage, he says he is most satisfied with the company of his wife: "It's nice to know that there is somebody in the place." They do not do a lot of activities together. "We are independent of each other." They

both enjoy gardening, but they do not garden together. The garden has been divided; they each have their own areas, flowers and shrubs.

When asked, he says he is most dissatisfied in his marriage with not being left alone to read a magazine when he comes home from work. His wife would like to talk, but he feels he does enough talking at work. He says his wife complains that they do not communicate enough, and sometimes criticizes him for not being very affectionate. He says he expresses affection through his "deeds." His wife is supportive of him, but he does not confide in her because she is a "worrywart."

09's wife suffers from hypertension which is usually under control through medication. She has some bouts with bad health during the interview year. On one occasion she talks to the interviewer and describes an aspect of her relationship with her husband. They had recently returned from vacation: "It was like fifteen days of confinement. He never stops managing. He never tells me anything." She never knew their exact itinerary so she could not tell friends in Oregon when they would arrive. She added that she used to be independent before, and she used to work; "He takes over completely now."

#### Relationship to Children

09 has three grown children from his first marriage. The eldest daughter is married and lives on the East Coast. He has not seen her for ten years. He sees the other two, a married daughter and an unmarried son once during the interview year when

they come to visit at Christmas. He is happy to see his children and grandchildren. After they leave he says, "There was a little void after they all left for a few hours." He is strict with his grandchildren, and corrects their behavior when their parents do not.

He missed his children when he divorced his wife. Only the eldest had left home at that time. He had his children for summer vacations. His philosophy of child raising is that children should be independent. "Many of my friends live to be around their kids. I raised my children to think for themselves."

#### Work

09 likes to work. He describes working the night shift at Lockheed during the war. Even if there was not work to do, the employees were not allowed to go home. 09 got a doctor to write him a medical excuse saying he could not work in the night air so he could be put on the day shift which was much busier.

He started out as a truck driver and worked his way to a position of responsibility. He likes his current work, finds it challenging and never dull. He feels he has developed skills along the way in public relations, public speaking, socializing and handling people. He says that at work others will hand him the phone when an irate customer is on the line. In one interview, he says that if someone starts yelling at him on the phone, he will hang up. Then when they call back they are usually able to talk calmly. In another interview, he says he

just lets the customer talk until he is all talked out, then they can solve the problem.

He sees himself as a strict "taskmaster," and likes his employees to "put forth the effort." As with his marriage and his children, he has high standards he expects others to meet. In one incident on the job, a worker failed to follow instructions with consequent loss of time and money. He chastised the worker then turned him over to his immediate supervisor with the statement that if the man were working for him, he'd fire him.

#### Relationship to Boss

09 feels his own boss "deals too much in personalities," by which he seems to mean both that his boss gets bothered by people he cannot get along with, and that his boss does not make everyone follow the same set of rules. 09's boss leaves him alone to do his job, and is neither critical nor praising of his work.

#### Retirement

09 does not have plans for retirement. He will be eligible in a little over two years, but he does not want to plan on a time to retire yet, nor does he want to plan on what he'll do. He wants to know what his circumstances will be before he makes a decision. Given his level of job satisfaction and job involvement, it seems unlikely that 09 will want to retire in the near future. But he also typically does not hold expectations or hopes about the future. This stance will be discussed

further in the Personal Background Meaning section below.

#### Family of Origin

09 was the eleventh of twelve children of a northwestern farm family. His parents lived into their seventies. He respected and admired his father. He felt his father was honest, good and never said or listened to a bad word about another. He names his father as the biggest influence on him. He visits his siblings from time to time (though not during the interview year). They all live in different states. He is concerned that both he and his wife, being the youngest in their families, will outlive the people they know well and will have to deal with strangers in their old age.

#### Other Social Relationships

09 and his wife socialize a great deal with his wife's relatives. She has her sorority meetings which he unwillingly attends once a year at the spouses' picnic. His wife also has her church activities. He attends the church social dinners. They entertain business-related friends of his. And then he has his golfing buddies. Golf and gardening are his hobbies and he is intensely devoted to both. He is highly competitive and likes to try to "psych out" his opponent. He claims not to mind when others kibbitz; it makes him concentrate harder.

He says that friends are important for "associations, talk, jokes, regular socializing." He would never consider confiding in a friend, or asking a friend for help.

According to his wife he is very well liked by his

colleagues and associates. Three times during the interview year he is emcee or gives a (humorous) speech at a retirement dinner for someone who works for him. These are important and enjoyable social occasions for 09.

Personal Background Meaning: Situations in Which the Self is not in Direct Control are Threatening

09 tells the interviewer in the first interview, and mentions again in other interviews, that he is not afraid of death, he is only afraid of being "bedfast." Incapacitation is frightening to 09 because it would deprive him of the sense of control which is so central to him. He knows he cannot control many events, and so he directs his efforts to controlling his reaction to events and by limiting the impact others can have on his own sphere. For example, one way he controls his own reaction to events is by refusing to have expectations or to count on things happening. His relationship to his wife offers an example of how he limits the impact others have on his own sphere, as when he does not tell his wife their itinerary when they go on vacation, or when he describes how they each have their own "territory" in the garden. Thus, his personal background meaning leads him to a meta-coping approach to his life, so that he limits, dampens, or avoids threatening transactions in advance of their occurrence.

Implications for appraisal and coping. Many events cannot be prevented from occurring, and so 09 devotes his



energies to controlling those he can. He focuses mainly on controlling the behavior of others. He has very high standards for how others should behave. At work he prides himself on being a strict "taskmaster." At home he likes being married to a wife who keeps an immaculate house. Stress episodes occur when people fail to meet his standards. Four out of the five reported stress episodes contain stakes involving his demand that others behave in a certain way.

09's coping on these occasions involves efforts to enforce his requirements and to establish himself as being in control of the situation by forcing others to behave in a certain way. Thus, he typically engages not only in direct action coping strategies such as acts by doing and acts by saying, he also engages in coercive strategies such as power play and retaliation.

His insistence that others behave according to his criteria, and his success in both his personal and work life in enforcing his demands creates for 09 the sense that he is in control. He has become expert at imposing his will. He brings an "I can do that" attitude to two of the four episodes which reflect his personal background meaning, and he appraises these episodes in challenge terms.

In the one episode which did not involve stakes of evaluating and demanding certain behavior from others a friend of 09's had died. In this episode 09 was concerned about the death of his friend, and he was concerned about his own future

well-being, particularly the threat of being physically incapacitated. He copes with both aspects of threat through cognitive coping strategies of distancing and intellectualization, both of which reflect his meta-coping stance described above. He perceives his ability to put the sadness "in the back of my mind" as something he has learned over time, comparing his current grief to what he felt twenty years earlier over the death of a sister.

Implications for emotional life. 09 expresses anger in all episodes which involve stakes in which he evaluates and demands certain behavior in others. It is a righteous and an energizing anger. He feels sadness and concern for himself when his friend dies. On the whole 09 does not experience a wide range of negative or positive emotions. His meta-coping stance has led him to train himself to avoid or control emotional reactions. In this way he controls events by controlling their impact on him.

The only positive emotion he describes is enjoyment. He enjoys having his children visit at Christmas; he enjoys having friends visit, but most of all he enjoys playing golf. He particularly likes to try to unnerve his opponent by putting right up to him or by verbal insults he calls "kibbitzing."

Interpersonal Concern: The Other as a Presence to Affirm Self

09 has only one relationship which is close, and that is with his wife. He does not confide in her. He does not even

want to talk to her as much as she would like. He has control of their mutual life. She is important to him as a presence. Almost everything she does meets his high standards. She serves as a foil for him. She validates his power and authority.

Implications of this concern for emotional life. He gets angry at his wife the one time she balks at doing something he wants her to do. At Christmas 09's son calls to say he's bringing a girlfriend. 09's wife is afraid she won't "measure up," and says she cannot do the dinner. Given 09's nearly legendary high standards for performance, it is probably reasonable for her to be concerned about successfully pulling off the event.

Implications of this concern for appraisal and coping. On two occasions 09 is concerned for his wife. Once when she is ill and cannot get a medical appointment for several days. And once when he realizes he will be late getting home because of a car breakdown. In neither case is there any strong emotion attached to his concern for his wife. Rather, because his interpersonal concern views the other as a presence to affirm the self, any concern for his wife rebounds as an imperative for him to do something. In this way, episodes which involve concern for his wife are interpreted in terms of his personal background meaning, that is, as situations which must be brought under his direct control. For example, when his wife cannot get an early doctor's appointment, 09 calls the doctor's office and through a power-play, he not only gets an earlier appointment,

but he also gets the doctor to call her and prescribe medication over the phone. 09 is not relieved when his wife's health improves, but he is extremely gratified at the success of his strategem.

### Conclusion

09's personal background meaning is an overriding feature of his life. There does not appear to be a corner of his existence or a single transaction which is not understood in these meaning terms. He ended a twenty-five year marriage rather than continue in a situation which testified to his inability to control. The shape of his interpersonal concern is a mirror of his belief. His successful control over others bears testimony to the effectiveness of his coping, as does his dampened or absent negative and positive emotions. Not caring about, not counting on and not expecting certain events protects him in advance from stress episodes. Distancing, dampening and intellectualization protect him when negative events do occur.

"I FELT LIKE SCREAMING INWARDLY, 'WHY ME?' I CAN'T DO ANYTHING."

10 is a forty-seven year old never married woman who lives with her aging mother at the beginning of the interview year. She has a demanding job with which she is very involved. During the interview year, 10's mother becomes increasingly senile and is placed in a convalescent home. This event and its sequelae are very stressful for 10.

#### Family of Origin

10 grew up in the Bay Area. She has always lived with her parents except for three years when she was in her twenties. She has one younger brother and a large extended family of aunts, uncles and cousins. Her father died three years before the interview year began after a lingering illness.

#### Relationship to Mother

In some ways it is difficult to assess 10's relationship to her mother since her mother is already in decline at the beginning of the interview year. In the first interview, 10 says that her mother's memory is so bad that if she went out alone she would not be able to find her way back. At the time of the fourth interview she is hallucinating that there are people in the fireplace. A few weeks after this, the mother is hospitalized for a respiratory complaint while on a weekend visit with 10's brother. The doctor at this point diagnoses chronic brain syndrome, and the mother is placed in a convalescent home.

10 is always attentive toward her mother. She has taken on most of the domestic responsibilities, her mother's cooking dinner being her contribution to the running of the household. At one point, before her mother is hospitalized, she blames her mother for letting herself become senile.

Although putting their mother in a convalescent home is something 10 and her brother have discussed, it is not considered a serious option by 10. In the end, the decision to place her mother in a home is made by the physician who treats her mother when she is taken to the hospital by her brother because of a respiratory illness. 10's sister-in-law calls her and informs her of the decision.

The freedom from caring for her mother is not experienced as a relief by 10 (as was the death of her father after a long illness). In the following months she loses weight and experiences insomnia. She visits her mother three to four times a week. Her mother always asks her when she can go home, which upsets 10 a great deal and makes her feel both guilty and helpless.

Five months after her mother is placed in a home, 10 takes a three week vacation at a lake resort with members of her extended family. This seems to have a temporarily healing effect on her, and she returns rested and happy. After this time she seems to have developed not exactly a perspective on her mother, but a kind of protective emotional distance, so that she is not quite as distressed when she goes to visit her.

### Relationship to Brother

10 is close to her brother. She sees him frequently and they co-own property. Although he is younger than she, 10 sees her brother as tending to be "bossy." She attributes this to the fact that when they were children, she was ill with allergies and a heart murmur.

10 likes her brother to take care of her and only resents his telling her what to do when he tries to get her to do things on her own.

My brother wants me to be more a woman's libber, be more self-sufficient. Part of me rebels. I'd just as soon wait for him to come fix it. I don't want to be so much that way [i.e., independent].

### Work

10 supervises making bids and timing delivery of orders on accepted bids for a steel manufacturer. She started as a secretary and did not expect to reach this position. She says, "I'm very proud of what I've done."

It is a demanding job in that there is frequently work overload. Although the times of heaviest workload are predictable, because construction is seasonal, 10 does not feel she can control her workload. She almost always has too much to do.

Her boss expects her to get the work done, sometimes without consideration for how much there is to do. She gets angry about this, but never directly to her boss. She describes how she will say "god damn" and hang up the phone hard after

talking with her boss on the phone. She does not have the help she needs to get the work done when there is overload, and she does not ask for it. She does intervene on behalf of those who work for her, however, when their workload is too heavy or when they are unfairly asked to do someone else's work.

She has risen as far as she wants in her work. She is clear that she wants to stay in her present position. There is some implication that she has even sabotaged efforts to promote her. She likes her work; it is the most satisfying aspect of her life.

#### Other Social Relationships

10 says she never married because she never found the right man. "I've always wished I'd been married. I regret it. I can hope for the future. It's far out hope, but I hope."

She says she wishes she were more outgoing, and that it is hard for her to make friends. The bulk of her social life centers around her cousins and aunts who live in the area.

#### Interpersonal Concern: Dependent Care--Care for Others Made Possible by Sense of Being Taken Care Of

10's interpersonal concern takes the form of dependent care. In her relationship with her mother, brother and cousins she understands herself as being cared for when she can rely on them for support, even when that support is only minimally material support. Dependent care is not a stance taken by a helpless or incompetent person. 10 can cook, but her mother cooking dinner for her is understood by 10 as being taken care of.



When her mother starts to see people in the fireplace and 10 knows she has to take her to the doctor for evaluation, she clings to this normal function.

I hardly know what to do except get her to a doctor.  
But she can talk to you, even if she repeats herself.  
She can fix dinner.

When 10 goes to a lake resort for a family vacation five months after her mother is placed in a convalescent home, one of the first things 10 tells the interviewer about the vacation is, "I ate well, others fixed my dinner."

Implications for appraisal and coping. When 10's mother begins her decline, coping episodes which give rise to stakes concerning her mother's well-being also involve stakes concerning her own physical well-being. When her mother is placed in a home, 10 suffers from insomnia, weight loss and extreme fatigue. She appraises these symptoms in terms of physical harm.

In one coping episode, she is angry because her brother tries to make her be more independent. This coping encounter also gives rise to concern over physical self-care. Her relationship with her brother is built on a past history of her physical vulnerability as a child and his physical hardiness which became the basis for his having authority over, and hence, responsibility for her. This sense of vulnerability persists and is visible as stakes in coping transactions which involve relational stakes, even though she is obviously competent and independent in her life.

Implications for emotional life. It is impossible in this case to sort out the negative emotions that are connected to appraisals concerning physical self-care from those that are connected to appraisals involving her care for others. First, the stakes concerning physical self-care are always paired with stakes involving other care, and second, the stress episodes are for the most part major, involving very strong, persistent negative emotions. Except for the argument with her brother, these episodes all involve her mother's rapid decline and subsequent removal to a convalescent home. During this time 10 experiences dread, sadness, frustration, sorrow, anger, and depression.

One of her few experiences of positive emotion during the interview year occurs when she vacations with her family at a lake resort for three weeks. She does not do anything. She is taken care of the entire time. Others cook the dinners. And her sister-in-law is emotionally supportive letting 10 know she realizes the strain 10 has been under. She says, "I felt glorious the whole time." She also says she felt happy, calm, and rested.

Personal Background Meaning: She Cannot Handle Alone What Happens in Life, But She Must Handle it Alone

10 is very competent in her job, but she does not experience herself as competent. Seen from the outside she looks like a person who feels she is out of control. From the perspective of her own understanding, one sees that the issue of

control never occurs to her. It does not occur to her that she could say something to her boss to change her own workload. Neither has she developed a sense of control over her work from her long experience at doing it. She has never developed a cushion of experience (Benner, 1984), that is, an understanding of a current situation based on similar experience in the past which allows the person to view the situation without stress and as do-able. 10 is always overwhelmed by her work, even though she gets it done and does it well. Likewise she is overwhelmed by her mother's health problems and placement in a rest home.

Implications for appraisal and coping. 10's personal background meaning does not make itself apparent in her primary appraisal, that is, in the psychological and physical stakes that are of concern in a stress episode. This personal background meaning is visible in her secondary appraisals, that is, in her evaluation of resources available to her to cope with the appraised threat or harm (Lazarus, 1966). Secondary appraisal is an elusive element to interpret in a stress episode because a person's sense of resources available or not available for coping is usually so implicitly taken-for-granted by the individual that it is not consciously considered or mentioned. But in 10's case, four out of the eight reported coping episodes explicitly include a secondary appraisal of resources which are either limited, lacking or unexpectedly absent.

There are two kinds of coping strategies which are stylistic for 10 which reflect her personal background meaning.

She decries fate and she vents anger. In the situation involving her senile mother, 10 repeatedly decries fate, which she describes as "screaming inwardly, 'why me?'" This is not for her a philosophical question as is frequently asked by people in tragic or unhappy situations. For 10, inwardly screaming "why me?" serves as an emotional release.

At work, 10 vents her anger when too much is demanded of her, or when a co-worker makes extra work for her. But she never expresses her anger to the person. For example, if she is on the phone to her boss, she will slam the phone hard, and swear. As mentioned above, this only occurs in relation to her own work. In cases which involve people working for her, she speaks up to her boss or the offending party. She will get help for the overloaded person, or see to it that her worker is not unfairly made to do someone else's work.

Decrying fate and venting anger to herself are affirmations of her personal background meaning. One might vent anger to an unreasonable boss if that individual expected her anger to change the situation. 10 does not see any difference between the situation with her mother and her overload situation at work. In her view, she must deal with whatever is handed her, even though she feels she cannot, and so coping strategies which permit emotional release are helpful.

Implications for emotional life. This personal background meaning affects her experience of positive emotions in that revenge for her is an uplift. She is powerless to control

what is dumped on her, but she can get even when she perceives that she has been treated with gross unfairness. She twice describes revenge incidents. A work episode she describes as follows:

Remember the guy who didn't help me before New Year's? Well, a new specification and bid came in over the wire and I saw it and my boss was standing there and I said "Let [co-worker] do it, I don't have the time." I felt real good about that. That I could pawn something off on him. It felt so good!

In the ninth interview she describes another revenge incident involving an aunt who had been unkind to her mother. She gets an uplift from getting even with the aunt, too.

### Conclusion

There is a match between 10's interpersonal concern and her personal background meaning. Her sense of vulnerability unless she understands herself as being taken care of is mirrored in her understanding that she cannot handle alone what happens in life, but she must handle it alone. In her home life this means that she does not take her mother to a physician even when she is aware of the severity of her mother's mental condition. Instead, she asks her brother and sister-in-law to take care of her mother for a weekend because she, 10, is worn out. Her dependent care relation to her brother allows her to seek temporary respite for herself, but her personal background meaning does not let her see any solution for her mother's situation other than continued care in her home.

In her work life, this match of concern and personal

background meaning leads her into a situation of perennial work overload. She needs the other to recognize her overload and limit it. Otherwise her only course of action is to continue to struggle on her own. Her only recourse here is to vent anger to herself, or to use a low-power strategy of revenge, neither of which changes the situation, but does make her feel better.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL CONTROL IN MEANING TERMS

Introduction

The past chapters have shown that personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns are meaning terms which are transactional. They take into account both the person and the context. As transactional concepts they cannot be understood as the sum of person and situation variables. Nor can they be understood as structural terms, because they have content and can only be understood as they are lived. The case studies demonstrate how these lived understandings, that is, personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns are lived out in coping episodes, and how appraisal and coping are themselves meaning terms which express the coherence of the person's self-interpretation. The case studies demonstrate how what is at stake for a person and what is understood by the person as coping possibilities relate to that person's personal background meaning and interpersonal concern. The aim of this chapter is to show how these personal meanings also shed light on an issue that has been of considerable interest in social science for three decades, that of personal control. The discussion of personal control in meaning terms will further demonstrate the relationship between meaning and coping.

For many years the notion of personal control has been of concern to the social sciences. In psychology, work in this area has followed the ideas Rotter and his colleagues introduced

in the 1950's. More recently, researchers have pursued the relation between personal control and stress and coping. They have not yet uncovered exactly what the relationship is between beliefs about personal control and stress experiences. Some researchers are beginning to conclude that understanding meaning must be central to an understanding of the relationship.

It is evident that no simple relationship exists between personal control and stress. About the only general statement which can be made with confidence is that the stress-inducing or stress-reducing properties of personal control depend upon the meaning of the control response to the individual; and what lends a response meaning is largely the context in which it is embedded (Averill, 1973, p. 301).

Context in the present study does not refer to the situation described in variables, but to the interpreted situation as it is understood by the individual. Meaning herein always refers to the meaning to the individual, and so meaning always has content, a point Brim made in 1974.

In studying belief system components of personality we have distinguished the content of the belief from the process of its formation. ... influences on perceptions of causality are different from what in fact is perceived and concluded about causality, and the sense of personal control over one's life is content, not process (p. 3).

In this chapter three approaches will be taken towards understanding personal control in meaning terms and the relevance of those meanings to stress appraisals and coping processes. First, personal control and meta-coping will be discussed. Second, various meanings of personal control as they are expressed in personal background meanings and



interpersonal concerns and as they are experienced in stress appraisals and coping processes. Last, the personal control meanings of the sample of ten cases will be compared with their scores on Rotter's Locus of Control Measure.

#### Personal Control and Meta-Coping

A major question that the notion of personal control raises is to what extent do people control their experiences so as to avoid, evade or mitigate stress encounters? In this study four of the participants were seen to engage in meta-coping. That is, they assumed a stance in advance of any encounter to limit or nullify the possibility of that encounter being stressful. These meta-coping stances were shown to be consistent with the participants' personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns.

04--The Anticipatory Planner. 04 has a personal background meaning that the unknown is threatening but manageable and an interpersonal concern of engaged care. Her meta-coping stance of planful anticipation relates to both her personal background meaning and her interpersonal concern. In interview after interview 04 is seen to engage in planful anticipation so that situations which might be stressful to her are not because their demand features are known and managed in advance. She knows that anything that seems overwhelming to begin with can be broken down into manageable steps, and she has become expert at this kind of management. In situations in which she is not experienced, she seeks information and advice

from experts. She tells the interviewer she could not have reared her children successfully without the advice of her pastor. And, she describes the process of finding a place for her senile mother as involving consulting a counsellor who specialized in such placements. The motivation for this is not simply her fear of the unknown, although that fear seems to contribute to a certain amount of her planfulness (i.e., packing bags two weeks before a vacation to a new place). Situations which evoke planning usually involve an interpersonal relationship, husband, mother or friends, and her planfulness frees her from situational demands so she can enjoy her relationships.

04 is also an example of the limits of personal control, since no matter how much she tries she cannot manage the demands her senile mother makes on her. These demands are not amenable to management because they cannot be anticipated. She never knows what her mother will do next.

06--The Advance Manager. 06 has a personal background meaning that she must live up to her own and others' expectations and an interpersonal concern of self-care in balance with care for others. Her meta-coping stance of advance management allows her to organize events and perform her roles at the ideal level required of her by her husband and herself. Advance management also permits her to maintain the equilibrium between self-care and care for others. With careful planning and organization she can do the things she wants and deal with

interpersonal concerns. This meta-coping stance is particularly crucial in her relations with her husband who not only has high performance expectations of her, but also is very jealous of the time she spends away from him.

The limits of advance management are encountered by 06 a number of times in the interview year. It does not protect her from her husband's attacks on her parenting when he voices his disappointment in their children's career choices. It cannot meet the challenge of the unexpected when her daughter is stranded by a car-breakdown, or when her friend falls ill with cancer.

07--The Avoider. 07 has a personal background meaning that the loss of self-control is dangerous, and, like 04, an interpersonal concern of engaged care. He routinely avoids situations that make him feel uncomfortable, like standing in line. He practices self-control in a self-disciplinary sense during the interview year by giving up drinking and smoking. The most significant way in which he copes in advance of an encounter is by avoiding confrontations with his grown daughter who is emotionally very volatile. He says that "I've never had big arguments, screaming fits with anyone except my daughter." She challenges his self-control, and his approach to her now is to stay away from her. He purposely avoids conversations that might lead to confrontation. He does this so that he can maintain a caring relationship with her. His wife maintains the social contact, the discussions, the long phone calls, and he

gives her money, material things and performs handyman jobs for her.

This form of meta-coping also has its limitations since he really cannot avoid all disturbing contact with his daughter. This would only be possible if he did not see her at all, and since his interpersonal concern connects him with her, this he cannot do. On one occasion he left the house and went to a movie by himself, a very unusual thing for him to do, because he could not bear the commotion that his daughter was causing running in and out of the house.

09--The Limiter/Dampener. 09 has a personal background meaning that situations in which he is not in direct control are threatening, and an interpersonal concern of the other as a presence to affirm the self. His personal background meaning is an overriding feature of his life. There does not appear to be a corner of his existence or a single transaction which is not understood in these meaning terms. His interpersonal concern does nothing to undermine this understanding because his concern for his wife is that she be a mirror, an affirmation of him. His meta-coping takes two directions, one outward and one inward.

Outwardly he limits the impact that others might have on his own sphere. For example, he does not tell his wife their itinerary when they go on vacation. Inwardly he dampens his own reaction to events by refusing to have expectations or to count on things happening. As with the others, 09's meta-coping does

not always protect him from stressful encounters. For example, because he usually is successful in controlling every aspect of their mutual life, he counts on his wife's agreeing to prepare Christmas dinner for his son and son's girlfriend. When she balks, they have a tremendous fight.

### Conclusion

Four of the ten people presented in this study manifested a meta-coping stance, a stance which allowed them to deal with potentially stressful encounters in advance of their occurrence. The meta-coping of these four people encompassed strategies of anticipation, planning, management, avoidance, limitation and dampening. The issue illustrated herein, however, is not an elaboration of the range of behaviors with which one might cope in advance, but a demonstration that these behaviors are meaningfully related to the personal meanings of each individual. Meta-coping provides an example of how personal meanings are lived and how these lived meanings relate to processes of appraisal and coping.

The meta-coping stance was seen not always to be a successful approach. All four people came up against the limits of their kind of control. Furthermore, in the case of 04, her anticipatory stance was finally seen to be stress-inducing in her relations with her senile and unpredictable mother. The best 04 was able to achieve in that relationship was to expect something to happen every month. This is hardly a life-smoothing or anxiety-reducing kind of anticipation since she

never knew exactly what was going to happen or when. She only knew it would involve a demand that she do something. But meta-coping cannot be abandoned simply because it is not effective. For 04, a stance of planful anticipation is her lived experience of her personal background meaning that the unknown is threatening but manageable. And her continued response to her mother is the lived experience of her interpersonal concern of engaged care. Only by divesting herself of these personal meanings could she free herself from the stressful relationship. But, of course, people are not free to choose whatever meanings they want (cf. discussion of radical freedom, Chapter Seven). Furthermore, the loss of meaning would be far more stressful to 04 than the stresses she lives with now.

#### Personal Control, Personal Background Meaning and Interpersonal Concerns

In studies on the relation between personal control and stress and coping, researchers have reached a number of diverse findings--believing one is in control is not always stress-reducing, believing that an event is uncontrollable is not always stress-inducing, giving a number of responses even when one is in control can itself be stress producing, individuals differ in their understanding of what they are controlling (Averill, 1973; Thompson, 1981)--to name a few. The ten cases in this study provide a basis for another view of personal control, that is, personal control in terms of its meaning to the person. Using the personal background meanings and

interpersonal concerns of the ten participants it is possible to describe the different meanings of personal control and show how these meanings operate in stress encounters.

Personal control as domination. Personal control is a very literal description of 09's stance. (Personal background meaning: Situations in which the self is not in direct control are threatening; Interpersonal concern: The other as a presence to affirm the self.) He must always be in personal, direct and active control of every endeavor. He controls every aspect of his mutual life with his wife to the extent of not telling her their itinerary when they go on vacation. At work he prides himself on being a "strict taskmaster", and will readily fire anyone who does not do his job correctly. His stress encounters predictably occur when anyone interferes with his sense of control--his wife refusing to prepare a holiday dinner according to his dictates, an office nurse not giving his wife an appointment as soon as she'd like, a garage mechanic failing to adequately repair his car. He copes in these situations always with direct action, but he does not limit himself to saying and acting directly at the time, he also uses coercive strategies such as power play and retribution.

Such an overriding sense of self-efficacy is striking, but even more impressive is his ability to pull it off. The maintenance of this kind of direct control is made possible by his balance of control of himself and control of others. He limits the impact others can have on his life by refusing to have

expectations or hopes about events that are outside his direct control. In coping with negative events that are totally outside his sphere of control, for example, the death of a friend, he uses strategies of distancing and intellectualization. In short, in situations in which he cannot control the outcome, he controls his feelings and emotional responses to decrease the impact on himself.

Personal control through one's being. Personal control through attaining an ideal state of being describes 05's stance. (Personal background meaning: Stress encounters are controlled not by what he does, but by what he is; Interpersonal concern: Interpersonal disengagement as a sought for ideal.) He believes that he can control the actions of others by being a disinterested humanitarian who appears strong, manly and invulnerable to others. In his view, only through attaining his ideal state of being can he take on the attributes of masculine power, and so it is not an option for him to do something in an active, overt sense. Thus, when he encounters a situation in which he feels exposed as being less than his ideal (such as when teenagers on his bus are unruly, or a drunken neighbor verbally abuses him) he can do nothing to stop, counter or mitigate the event. That people act a certain way toward him reveals that he has not attained his ideal. These coping episodes cause him to feel a sick rage, and there is no antidote to these feelings. They sweep over him every time he thinks of the incidents for as long as two months later.



At home every night his wife and older daughter quarrel. He feels that if he were a better husband and father his family life would proceed tranquilly. But being a better husband and father is an internal condition in his view, and so again there is nothing he can do overtly to create domestic harmony. In his home life O5 copes by withdrawing emotionally, as he tries to tune out what is going on. And he blames the others, usually his wife. In this way he shifts some of his own sense of failure onto her.

Personal control as a way of guarding against shame.

Personal control in O1's world is a way of guarding against shame and embarrassment. (Personal background meaning: Every encounter holds the possibility of revealing him as inadequate or worthy; Interpersonal concern: Owning the other.) Central to O1 is his understanding that every meaningful encounter holds the possibility of revealing him as inadequate or achieving, making him feel ashamed or proud. His interpersonal concern fits with this personal background meaning in that it puts in his hands the power of his wife's success or failure in battling her drinking problem.

O1 is a man on a tightrope at all times--one misstep and he will fail to meet his own high expectations of himself and be revealed to others as inadequate. Past successes do not count to O1. Each encounter is an occasion to prove his worth anew. Even a positive conversation with his wife becomes a coping encounter for O1. His wife feels remorse about her drinking and

tells him that she wants to try to do better. O1 feels that the successful outcome of this talk rests solely on his shoulders. He weighs every word before he says it.

Personal control to O1 is both a kind of self-control and a control of others. This is self-control not in the sense of controlling his emotions or controlling his impulsive behavior, but rather controlling his actions so he never makes a mistake. And control of his wife's drinking is in part self-control for him. He tries to guard against setting her off on a drinking binge. He also tries to control her drinking directly by confronting her and by looking for hidden bottles. During the course of the interview year he tries a new tactic on the advice of a psychiatrist, that of ignoring her drinking. He embraces this new approach willingly, but it is extremely difficult for him to do. His personal background meaning and interpersonal concern combine to create his understanding of his wife's drinking as something that is his to control. The coping strategy of ignoring her drinking means he must act as if it is not his to control, and as if he does not care if she drinks. In short, he must act completely contrary to his personal meanings. As a result, his coping strategy becomes something he has to cope with. He describes how he gets "white knuckles" gripping the chair holding back from saying something. He reads, watches T.V. and even drinks himself in order to distract himself and soothe his negative feelings. This is an example of the relation between coping and meaning. No matter how effective a

coping strategy might be in changing the situation, if it does not fit with personal meanings, it can itself cause distress to the person.

Personal control as an emotional state. Personal control for 03 is a feeling of invulnerability that he experiences when he is righteously angry. (Personal background meaning: The world is threatening and dangerous; Interpersonal concern: The other completes the incomplete self.) 03 must be on guard at all times lest someone try to take advantage of him, place blame on him or harm him in some way. He wishes to appear to be in control of himself and events. In fact, bad things do happen to 03 during the interview year, few of which he could have prevented, avoided or in some other way controlled. He appraises all of these situations as someone having malicious intent against him.

03 sees himself as a fighter who engages in direct action and acts aggressively when he feels threatened. In actual coping episodes his direct action is primarily emotion-focused, that is, it is aimed at making himself feel better and only incidentally does it affect the situation. In fact, in a number of coping episodes his direct action coping is inappropriate and ineffective in relation to the situation. For example, he buys two handguns after his house is robbed, even though it was robbed when no one was home. He does not change the locks or otherwise try to improve his home security.

His other two stylistic forms of coping, feeling and

acting angry and avoidance, also achieve the same effect of creating an emotional experience of being strong, effective and invulnerable, and are equally ineffective in ameliorating the situation. But these coping strategies make him feel in control or at least less threatened.

Personal control as planful anticipation. As discussed in the section on meta-coping, 04 understands control to be planful anticipation of negative or positive events, which renders the negative less unpleasant and the positive more fun. (Personal background meaning: The unknown is threatening but manageable; Interpersonal concern: Engaged care.) By anticipating and planning 04 is able to view demands (even pleasant ones like a party or a vacation) in terms of manageable chunks. Thus she keeps events from becoming too demanding or overwhelming, and enhances her opportunities for pleasure.

Control in this sense is neither a sense of power over the course of events or a feeling one must just take what comes. It is a notion of active involvement with events and people, and through the process of involvement, being able to shape interactions to mutually desirable ends. Thus, not only is 04 capable in organizing and planning, she is also adept at dealing with people--an inexperienced supervisor at work, a condescending bank manager, a grieving friend.

Personal control as self-control. 07 understands personal control to be self-control. (Personal background meaning: Loss of self-control is dangerous; Interpersonal concern: Engaged care.) Self-control for 07 is a form of

protection. He protects his body from physical harm by exercising and by giving up smoking and drinking. (He does this during the interview year after filling out the Health Status Questionnaire.) He protects his sense of self by acting calmly and coolly and by thinking before he speaks. He protects his personal relationships by controlling his responses. He has a close, loving relationship with his wife and an often tumultuous and argumentative relationship with his daughter. He uses self-control to protect his wife. For example, he shields his wife from his own disappointment when he comes home one night after a hard day and finds her caring for a fussy infant grandchild. He also uses self-control to reduce the friction between himself and his daughter and to prevent a rupture in their relationship. In order to maintain self-control around his daughter he has to avoid conversations and confrontations. Once, he even had to leave the house altogether. Avoidance describes 07's meta-coping stance as well as a stylistic coping strategy in situations in which his self-control is threatened.

Personal control as a requirement to cope by oneself. 10 does not think in control terms. (Personal background meaning: She cannot handle alone what happens in life, but she must handle it alone; Interpersonal concern: Dependent care--care for others made possible by sense of being taken care of.) It does not occur to her that she might take control in some of the senses outlined above, that is by managing, anticipating, limiting, avoiding, or dominating.

10 feels that she cannot handle by herself the demands and events that happen in her life, but that even so she must handle them by herself. As a result, she lives in a constant state of feeling overwhelmed. She is competent. She accomplishes her work ably, runs the household she shares with her mother, and competently manages business investments with her brother. But nevertheless, 10 always feels overwhelmed. She never experiences a sense of being in control because her understanding places her in a world in which she must manage, unwillingly, by herself.

Her appraisals reflect her sense of being alone and without resources external to herself with which to cope. Her coping episodes frequently include secondary appraisals of resources which are either limited, lacking, or unexpectedly absent. Her coping is stylistically emotion-focused; she decries fate and vents her anger.

Personal control as a freedom earned through past behavior. Control for 02 is understood as the control she exerts over the demands others make on her, and this control is something that she has earned through her past selfless and giving behavior. (Personal background meaning: Doing for others versus doing for self; Interpersonal concern: Self-protective concern--interpersonal connection without interpersonal engagement.) Essentially, 02 lives with conflicting personal meanings. Her interpersonal concern shapes her understanding that actions done for others drain personal

resources she wants to spend on herself. But her personal background meaning shows her a world in which she is supposed to give selflessly to others until she has earned the right to stop. The signal that she now deserves to spend her energies only on her own wants would be the cessation of demands from others, who recognize virtue and reward it. Control in this view is seen as the freedom to do what she wants for herself and not have to do things for others. But since this freedom is an earned condition, based on her past good behavior, it cannot be taken by her, it has to be given to her. This forms the basis of most of 02's coping transactions. Other people will not recognize that she has earned the right not to have demands placed on her. These other people include her husband, daughter, sisters, cousins, people at work, and even the neighbor down the street.

02's view of personal control is revealed by one kind of stylistic coping she uses, indirect power strategies. 02 uses two kinds of indirect power strategies, martyr manipulation and getting someone else to intervene. The martyr manipulation is designed to induce guilt in others while simultaneously avoiding the occasion for guilt in oneself. For example, 02's husband interrupts her Saturday routine by asking her to make a hardware store purchase and bring it to him at their daughter's house. She does as he asks, although it makes her angry. Not to do it would make her feel guilty, an intolerable emotion to 02. But later she tells him how inconvenient it was for her and how inconsiderate he was. In another interview she re-enacts this

kind of scene for the interviewer, who notes down her physical deameanor-pursed lips, hunched shoulder, furrowed brow. It is the image of the martyred look, known colloquially as looking "put upon."

Personal control as advance management. For 06 personal control means making advance plans in order to maintain comfortably the equilibrium of her interpersonal concern and to meet the demand implicit in her personal background meaning. (Personal background meaning: Must live up to own and others' expectations; Interpersonal concern: Self-care in balance with care for others.) Only careful advance management allows her to be interpersonally engaged and self-engaged at the same time. Coping episodes which involve stakes concerning care for others usually elicit stakes which involve self-care too. For example, her husband has to cancel a business trip because of ill health. She is concerned for him, but she is also concerned that she has to give up plans she had made for the time he would be gone. Part of her coping in this episode is the reorganizing of her planned schedule in such a way as not to have to give up all her plans for herself.

Advance management is also a stance which permits 06 to live comfortably with her personal background meaning. Only with beforehand planning and organization can she match the ideal of perfection she and her husband share.

06's understanding of control as advance management differs from 04's anticipatory planning stance in basic ways.



For 04 anticipation is an emotional as well as practical activity. It enhances and adds to her pleasure in positive events, but also increases her discomfort in negative ones. For 06 advance management does not increase pleasure; it serves to decrease or eliminate the possibility of stress episodes.

Personal control as facilitation. For 08 personal control is a way of facilitating situations to their own inherent good or best end. (Personal background meaning: There is order and meaning in the world; Interpersonal concern: Non-reciprocal engaged care.) For 08 the situation itself has its own seeds of coherence and meaning. In her understanding, meaning and order reside in the situation, and so her role in relation to any situation is to facilitate making the meaning visible. This is a flexible stance in that different approaches can be used in different situations. For example, sometimes mastery is appropriate, sometimes presencing, sometimes management, and so on. But whatever approach is used it is never used in a technological sense (Palmer, 1969). The technological stance assumes that there is no inherent order in the world, and that all meaning and order must be imposed by the self.

08's notion of personal control as facilitation appears repeatedly in her coping. Stylistically, she uses perspective. This means that in her work situation she is able to listen to all views. She believes that "everyone has a piece of the truth." And so the best outcome or decision will result from a

convergence of these different views. In interpersonal situations she uses purposeful empathy which involves not only seeing the situation from the other person's point of view, but letting the other person see that she understands.

Conclusion. This description of the meanings of personal control illustrates that there is a wide range of ways of understanding control that people can take up in this culture. And yet, even within the diversity, none of these meanings is unfamiliar, because all do come from the same shared culture.

Using the ten cases to demonstrate various meanings of personal control also illuminates the relationship between meaning and coping. Coping strategies are seen as options only to the extent that they fit with personal meanings. For example, 05, who views control as the result of attaining an ideal state of being, would never choose a coping strategy of acting or saying something directly in a coping encounter. When he does reply in anger to the taunts of a drunken neighbor, it only increases for him the stressfulness of the episode. That someone could treat him in that manner is already evidence to 05 that he has not attained his ideal state of being, but for him to respond with ineffective rage makes him feel exposed to everyone else as impotent and vulnerable.

It was also shown that the taking on of coping strategies that do not fit with personal meanings can create its own coping episode. For example, 01 takes on a coping strategy of ignoring his wife's drinking on the advice of a psychiatrist. This

strategy would never have occurred to him as an option on his own. His concern for his wife makes him open to possibility and he gives it a serious try, but all the while he has to cope with his coping strategy, because ignoring his wife's drinking runs counter to his personal meanings.

Finally, this discussion of meanings of personal control has shown that some meanings are in themselves stressful, some meanings are in themselves limiting, and some meanings in themselves open possibilities. For example, control as a requirement to cope by oneself (10) is inherently stressful, since every demand triggers the sense that one cannot cope alone, but that one has no choice but to cope alone. Control as domination (09) is in itself limiting because the only way it can work is by restriction of activities and level of interpersonal engagement to those that will permit domination. Control as facilitation (08) opens possibilities, because it is based on the understanding that the self is not the originator of all order in the world, but that each situation contains the seeds of its own coherence. Thus, rather than imposing an order on the situation, this person looks for what possibilities a situation might offer.

#### Personal Control Meanings and Locus of Control

A further illumination of the value of understanding personal control in meaning terms is found in a comparison of the ten cases on the basis of personal control meanings and their scores on Rotter's (1966) Internal-External Locus of Control

Scale. Drawing on social learning theory, Rotter proposed that people are reinforced through their life experiences to believe that what happens in life is either the result of chance, fate, or the workings of powerful others (external control) or the result of their own actions or attributes (internal control). Rotter hypothesized that locus of control was a personality variable which would show consistent individual differences across situations. People with extreme scores at either end of the dimension were most likely to be considered maladjusted, but nevertheless, it was thought that to tend in the direction of the internal locus of control was better than a tendency in the opposite direction.

The personal control meanings of each case are shown with the I-E scores in Table I on the following page. A low score signifies greater internal locus of control, a high score signifies greater external locus of control. This group contains neither the lowest nor the highest scorers from the subject pool of 100 participants.

Internal Locus of Control. The three people with the lowest scores, that is, the three with the greatest internal locus of control, provide a diverse of expression of what it means to be an "internal." 09 who understands personal control as domination is representative of the usual notion of what it is to feel in the extreme that one has an internal loss of control. For 09 outcomes are dependent upon his actions, and he sees to it that this is the case. This stance can only work by limiting his

TABLE I

<u>Case Number</u>	<u>Meaning of Personal Control</u>	<u>I-E Score*</u>
05	Personal Control Through One's Being	3
09	Personal Control as Domination	4
10	Personal Control as a Requirement to Cope by Oneself	4
01	Personal Control as a Way of Guarding Against Shame	6
07	Personal Control as Self-Control	7
08	Personal Control as Facilitation	7
02	Personal Control as a Freedom Earned Through Past Behavior	10
06	Personal Control as Advance Management	11
04	Personal Control as Playful Anticipation	12
03	Personal Control as an Emotional State	13

\* The lower the number the greater the internal locus of control, the higher the number the greater the external locus of control. The mean for the subject pool of 100 from which this sample was drawn was 8.11, and the standard deviation was .404.

life arena of activity and interpersonal involvement. He is not interpersonally involved in such a way that events that affect his cared for others will cause him distress. When his wife is ill, his stress episode does not involve stakes concerning his wife's well-being, it involves stakes concerning his ability to make others do as he wants, namely give his wife an early doctor's appointment. Although he lives within an arena restricted to things that he can personally control through his own actions, he is not unhappy. In fact, he is almost always very cheerful and feels good about his life. He knows himself the only possibility that could shatter the effectiveness of his stance, and that would be any kind of physical incapacitation. This is his only fear.

05, who understands that personal control emanates through his being, scores as being even more internal than 09. Like 09, 05 understands personal control as centering within himself, but the source of that control lies not within his actions, but within his very being. Thus, 05 feels that he will have complete control over how others treat him when he attains his ideal state of disinterested humanitarian. The evidence that he has not yet attained his ideal state of being is found in the fact that others continue to treat him badly, abuse him, and disregard his authority (as when teenagers are unruly on his bus). Because of 05's understanding of personal control, direct action to force people to act in a certain way is not viewed as a possibility. He is appalled when his interviewer

casually asks him if he says anything to his wife and daughter when they begin their nightly bickering that so angers him. He could not possibly say anything. Saying or acting in any direct way only reveals to others his impotence and failure, which increases his distress. This is a personal meaning which is innately stressful, and 05's life reveals the costs of this meaning in unhappiness and depression.

10, who understands personal control as a requirement to cope by oneself, and whose thematic cry during the interview year is "Why me? I can't do anything," shares with the two men just discussed a strong internal locus of control. It is in this case somewhat misleading even to use the word control when discussing 10, because she does not understand herself as causally affecting the external world, or that it is in any way an option to do so. Because of her personal background meaning, events bear in on her and she feels she must deal with them by herself even though she feels she cannot deal with them alone. This meaning is central for her, and so when she fills out the locus of control scale, she interprets the items from her understanding; outcomes are not due to luck or chance, but are dependent on one's own efforts. Thus it is that a person whose case reflects all the elements that are said to define someone with an external locus of control, i.e., no sense of efficacy, overwhelmed by events which bear in on her, this person rates as internal as a person who understands control as domination.

External Locus of Control. The two cases with the

highest scores for external locus of control also form a contrast. 03 experiences personal control as an emotional state, and holds meanings that the world is threatening and dangerous. And since the world is dangerous, a certain number of things happen which are the result of luck or happenstance. For 03 the challenge is to develop a stance which will fend off those things that might occur as a result of someone else's malicious intent. For 03 it is sufficient to feel effective, he does not also have to be effective.

04 understands personal control as planful anticipation. Her meaning seems at first to be akin to that of 03 in that she understands the unknown as threatening but manageable. Both share an understanding of something external to the self as threatening. However, 04 also feels she can deal with whatever comes along, even though she cannot prevent or forestall its occurrence. In many ways she looks like a person with an internal locus of control in the directness of her planning and management strategies, and the effectiveness of her efforts. The cost of 04's stance, as has been pointed out above, is that while her planning is effective to the extent that she can anticipate what will happen, her emotional anticipation of negative events increases their stressfulness for her. On the other hand, her same stance of anticipation enriches her emotional life in relation to positive events. In further contrast to 03, 04's personal meanings in themselves open possibilities. She has learned the lesson that experience is a



good teacher in more than just a superficial way. And what she has learned from experience not only provides her with ways of coping, but gives her another understanding of her context which smooths her way through life, at the same time deepening her appreciation of her life.

Conclusion. These people, three with a strong internal locus of control, two with an external locus, demonstrate the usefulness of approaching the study of coping processes in meaning terms. Each person's appraisal and coping is interpretable when viewed from the perspective of their personal meanings. From the perspective of their personal meanings their scores on the I-E Scale make sense too. But without a grasp of those personal meanings there could be no comprehensible relationship between locus of control and coping. To reiterate the introduction of this chapter, understanding personal control depends on understanding meaning. The meaning of personal control is forged in the context in which it is embedded, context referring to the interpreted situation as it is understood by the individual. And because it is the meaning for an individual it must always have content. Once the meanings are reduced into contentless categories, the relationship between personal control and coping processes disappears.

## CHAPTER SIX

## PERSONAL MEANINGS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

For a time social support was viewed as an aspect of social networks, that is, as an environmental feature. Studies conducted on social network size have shown that small networks were associated with negative outcomes such as complications of pregnancy (Nuckolls, et al., 1972) or mortality from all causes (Berkman & Syme, 1979). But, although the stress-buffering effects of social supports have been hypothesized, how this actually works has not been demonstrated.

One change in theoretical approach, and likewise in research strategy, has been to view social support not simply in terms of network size, but rather in terms of how social support is viewed by the individual. In an attempt to unravel what is supportive about social supports, the Stress and Coping Project defined three areas of support--emotional, tangible and informational (Schaefer, et al., 1982). And a Social Supports Questionnaire was developed in order to begin an assessment of what each participant thought was supportive in his/her own network.

The Lazarus coping paradigm views perceived social support as a resource of the person, and hence the use of social support of whatever kind is seen as coping. This approach enabled us to analyze the use of social support within coping episodes. Not only were various social support coping strategies uncovered, but their role in the coping process was

also assessed.

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the role of personal meanings in the presence or absence, and the use or non-use of social support. Using the perspective of personal meanings allows a transactional view of social support in which both the person and the situation can be accounted for. Meanings influence what is understood to be social support both in the range and kind of network and in the range and kind of coping that draws on social support.

In the following pages first how personal meanings are expressed in a social support stance will be discussed using the ten cases as illustration. Then how this stance operates in actual coping episodes will be examined, focusing on the use of coping strategies centered around social support.

#### Personal Meanings and a Social Support Stance

Personal meanings (personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns) find expression in a social support stance. A stance is more than just an attitude; it describes how meanings find expression in daily living experiences. One expression of this stance is found in the way people use or do not use social support, regardless of its availability. Another expression is found in the way people facilitate or inhibit the availability of social support in their lives. This is not to say that the availability of social support depends entirely on the social support stance. The situation makes its own contribution to the transaction. However, an examination of

the ten cases presented here reveals the degree of influence personal meanings have on what is socially supportive.

A range of expressions of the social support stance is found in the ten cases presented in this study, but they can usefully be categorized in one of four ways: open, selectively open, receptive and closed. The table on the following page groups the cases by stance and personal meanings.

The Open Stance. Open describes the stance taken by 04, 07 and 08 all of whom have an interpersonal concern of engaged care. Having an open stance means that social support is a cardinal feature of their lives, and that they experience a diversity of support both in kind and in source. They are receptive to it when it is given. They also seek it, use it and find it helpful. They have and maintain relationships in which support is an inherent feature.

An interpersonal concern of engaged care is the dominant meaning expressed in the open stance. In each case, the individual's personal background meaning operates to enhance the open stance. 04 uses her anticipatory planning meta-coping to make sure her social times are hassle-free. 07 uses self-control to maintain a caring relationship with his daughter. And 08 uses her ability to see the other's side with both her husband and her children.

Family is a central feature of all three's support networks, with the spouse being at the center. They all have work-related friendships which seem to operate mainly within the

TABLE II  
SOCIAL SUPPORT STANCE AND PERSONAL MEANINGS

<u>Case</u>	<u>Stance</u>	<u>Personal Background Meaning</u>	<u>Interpersonal Concern</u>
04	Open	The unknown is threatening but manageable.	Engaged Care.
07	Open	Loss of self-control is dangerous.	Engaged Care.
08	Open	There is order and meaning in the world.	Non-reciprocal engaged care.
03	Selectively open	The world is dangerous.	The other completes the incomplete self.
06	Selectively open	Must live up to own and others' expectations.	Self-care in balance with care for others.
01	Receptive	Every encounter holds the possibility of revealing him as inadequate or worthy.	Owning the other.
05	Receptive	Stress encounters are controlled not by what he does but by what he is.	Interpersonal disengagement as sought for ideal.
10	Receptive	She cannot handle alone what happens in life, but she must handle it alone.	Dependent care--care for others made possible by sense of being taken care of.
02	Closed	Doing for self in conflict with doing for others.	Self-protective concern.
09	Closed	Situations in which the self is not in direct control are threatening.	The other as presence to affirm the self.

work context. 04 and 08 also have a group of friends who are important sources of support, advice and pleasure. 07 has fewer friends. This might be attributable to the cultural difference between men and women. Women it has been found maintain a network of confidants in addition to the spouse, while men tend to make the wife the sole confidant. But it seems more likely that the explanation lies in the fact that 07's children, although grown, take up most of his non-work hours. His son works nights and has dinner at his parents' home four nights a week because his own home is too far away. His daughter is a single parent with two small children and requires a lot of support and babysitting from her parents. 07 does not consider this schedule a problem (except insofar as his daughter may make too many demands upon his wife). He enjoys the time spent with his son and his grandchildren. But it necessarily limits the amount of time left over for socializing with non-family members.

One quality which the marital relationships for 04 and 07 have in common is an abiding quality of concern for one another which provides a constant sense of being cared for. They both refer to the unspoken communication between them and their spouses, and the certain knowledge of understanding and being understood when the other is distressed. 08 has this to a lesser degree. She knows that her husband is there for her, but he does not always know when she is distressed. She is open about asking for support from him, and feels it is always very helpful.

Another feature that describes the open stance is the ability to receive support from sources one does not usually draw on, or which are not usually available. When 04 goes for jury duty (a stressful episode for her), she does not realize that she'll be there all day waiting, so she has nothing to divert herself with. She strikes up a conversation with a woman who apparently is quite unlike her in lifestyle and circumstances, and finds the conversation very interesting, and usefully diverting. 07's daughter is usually a source of stress, but on one occasion, when he feels he cannot go all the way up a ladder to a second-story roof to put up a television antennae for her, she is very understanding and tries to make him feel better about his "failure." One of 08's relatives is almost always critical towards her and her family, but on one occasion she praises her children in a formal way in front of the entire family. 08 takes the praise at face value, and does not discount it because of past slights. She remembers it on later occasions and it gives her an uplift.

The open stance also expresses what must be one of the more invisible aspects of social support, that is, the role of positive emotional relationships in determining the quality of everyday life. All three of these people are open to the uplifting and satisfying contributions to well-being that close relationships provide.

The flip side of this coin is that such close relationships make one vulnerable to distress when either the

relationship or the cared for other is threatened. 04 experiences chronic stress because of her mother's senility. Part, though not all of her distress, arises from the grief she experiences constantly over the loss of the mother she once knew. 07 is frequently stressed by his daughter's behavior and the way that her behavior threatens his caring relationship with her. 08 also has a troubled relationship with her daughter. Additionally she has to live with a constant possible threat to her husband's health. But this is not to say that the people with an open stance understand their social relationships in cost-benefit terms. Looking from the outside-in and assessing vulnerability does not provide an accurate basis for such a judgement. Looking from the inside-out, that is, from the perspective of the meaning of the open stance, it is clear that the people just described do not experience their relationships as vulnerabilities, but as strengths and strengtheners.

To sum up, an open social support stance is characterized in terms of personal meaning by an interpersonal concern of engaged care. Social support is a feature of everyday life, and not simply a resource to be drawn upon in the occasion of distress. Upon such stressful occasions however, the open stance is characterized by a diversity of both source and strategy. The person who assumes this stance is able to receive support even from sources which are not usually supportive when support is made available. But such close personal relationships can also make one vulnerable stress, if



the cared for other threatens the relationship or is threatened in any way.

The Selectively Open Stance. 03 and 06 are selectively open which means that they are open to and receive support from certain sources only, from certain parts of their overall social network. 03's personal background meaning that the world is dangerous makes him suspicious of everyone but his wife, who viewed through the lens of his interpersonal concern is seen as completing his incomplete self. 03's wife is his entire social network, and the source of every kind of social support for him. She provides emotional, tangible and informational support. She provides the things that make his life pleasant ("the cigs and the booze"). She tells him what a wonderful man he is, listens to his complaints, and acts at his behest writing letters and seeing a lawyer. 03 could not trust anyone else enough to be socially supported by them. His sense of distress arises not from his small social network, but from the reason for such a small network--the suspicion he feels about others' intentions toward him.

06's selectively open stance is the result of a combination of both her personal meanings and her life situation. Her husband is not a source of support for her when she is distressed. She cannot turn to him with various problems because he will not offer support, but might in fact criticize her, or demand that she give up a pursuit that he believes may detract from her care of him. Her husband is experienced by her

as supportive, however, when he reflects satisfaction with her performance as his wife. This satisfies the vision of herself provided by her personal background meaning that she must live up to her own and others' expectations.

06 has an interpersonal concern of self-care in balance with care for others and so she cannot be completely open to all or her concern for herself would be threatened. 06 has a group of friends all of whom have similar values and life situations and with whom she can share her problems and get support. the group does not offer solutions or advice. It is the sharing with understanding others that is supportive. However, friends are not experienced as an unmixed blessing by 06. When a friend falls ill (and eventually dies), 06 is distressed, not just because of the threat to her friend, but also because the episode involves stakes involving her own health and mortality. Because of this conflict, she is not able to be immediately supportive of her friend; she puts off visiting her. And when she does go to visit her, she apparently puts her friend in the position of being the supportive and cheery one. The friend succeeds in buoying 06's spirits.

To sum up, the selectively open stance derives from personal meanings in combination with life circumstances. The selectively open stance means that one can seek and receive support only from certain persons in the social network. The stress that arises from social connections arises comes not from the threatened relationship or threat to the cared for other, but

threat to the self that is understood from the perspective of personal meanings. In the case of 03 this involves his sense of suspiciousness of others' motives; for 06, it involves her divided interpersonal concern which causes her to be as concerned for self-care as for care for others.

The Receptive Stance. 01, 05 and 10 all hold personal background meanings which make it impossible for them to seek support. And all three have life situations which are the result of the interplay of meaning and circumstance, and which provide little sustained support. The essence of the receptive stance is that they cannot ask for support, but they can use it if it is given.

01 cannot ask for sympathy, approval or other forms of emotional support from others, because in his understanding this is bestowed as a sign of his worthiness. Whenever such support is offered, however, he is completely open to feeling supported. For example, when he (among many others) is awarded certification at a big company dinner, he feels completely on top of the world. These occasions are very rare for 01. For the most part, his personal background meaning interacts with his life circumstance (marriage to an alcoholic) to keep him isolated from contact with others and from the easy give and take of co-workers, neighbors and friends.

05's sense of reality is that he controls stress situations through his being. He too understands that support must be awarded, that it is evidence of having attained his ideal

state. He receives even less emotional support than 01, but the circumstances of receiving such support are similar. He is praised by other parents for his coaching of a soccer game. He is elated by their approval. It is the only episode of positive emotion he reports during the entire interview year.

10's personal background meaning is that she cannot cope alone, but that nevertheless, she must cope alone. She too is open to any emotional support she can get, but like the other two cases described above, she cannot seek it. She does seek other kinds of support. She seeks tangible support in finding a rest home for her mother, and informational support from her mother's doctor. But receiving this support does not make her feel better, in fact, it makes her feel more desperate. It is as if what she receives is so little in comparison to what she feels she needs, that it only emphasizes the lack. In one coping episode she does receive emotional support. She goes to pay the rent after her mother is placed in a rest home, and the landlady gives her a drink and listens to her tell about her mother. This is felt to be supportive to her. But the most supportive occasion was her vacation at a lake resort with members of her extended family. Here she was taken care of physically (her meals were prepared by others), and she felt that her relatives, especially her sister-in-law, understood what she had been going through. This experience was not only felt to be supportive, but appeared to have a healing effect on her. Her health, which had suffered during the past months, improved.

All three of these people are in chronically stressful situations during the interview year, 01 with an alcoholic wife, 05 with an unhappy home life and unsatisfactory work, 10 with a senile mother who has to be placed in a rest home. All three cannot have access to support from the person they are closest to because that person is the source of the distress. And all three have personal background meanings which make it impossible for them to seek support. They all describe periods of depression during the interview year, and 05 and 10 also frequently describe physical symptoms associated with depression (fatigue, insomnia, weight loss). Emotional support on the few occasions on which it is received is experienced by all three as uplifting, elating or healing. Other forms of social support are not relevant in their understanding. And in the case of 10, the tangible and informational support she seeks and receives appears to increase her distress.

The Closed Stance. 02 and 09 have personal background meanings which not only cut them off from social support for the most part, but which make them happier to be so cut off. On the whole they neither want nor need social support.

02 cannot bear to be under obligation to anyone. If someone does something helpful for her, she then feels obliged to repay. That sense of obligation weighs on her because she wants to be free and unencumbered to do what she wants for herself. She is happiest at those moments when she experiences that sense of freedom. 02 is the only case in the sample of ten who acts to

limit available social support. She purposely does not tell anyone that her husband is having surgery.

09's sense of reality is that situations in which the self is not in direct control are threatening. He cannot seek support because it would be an admission that he was not fully in control. He has a circle of friends and business associates. He likes to entertain, and is happy with his current wife who can hostess parties for him. He is apparently a popular speaker at retirement dinners; he acts as emcee or guest speaker on three occasions during the interview year. On only one occasion does he report using emotional support. After a friend dies he spends the evening talking with his wife about it. This is a very unusual occasion, because when not distressed, he would prefer reading or some other solitary activity to talking with his wife. The death of the friend which followed a course of illness and debilitation engaged stakes concerning his own well-being (his greatest fear being incapacitation). The one evening's conversation was adequate for him, and he quickly disengaged from his grief through distancing and intellectualization. His wife considered him hard-hearted, but he thought he was simply realistic. Emotional support in this one instance was felt to be helpful. Tangible and informational support, which he never seeks, would not be so considered. His sense of need to control prevents him from allowing even his wife to be helpful in an ordinary sharing way. She performs according to his directions. Other than that she

keeps to her own territory (literally speaking, since he has divided up the garden into their separate areas).

In the closed stance, then, not only does the person not want social support, but he or she would find most situations more stressful if emotional, tangible or informational support were given. In fact, one way O2 copes with her husband's surgery is by limiting the available social support by not telling anyone her husband is having surgery.

Conclusion. The four stances represented in the ten cases described above provide a diversity of the meanings of perceived social support. Each stance represents an interplay of personal meanings and life circumstances. And each stance provides its own combination of strengths and vulnerabilities. The richest in sources and kinds of support is clearly the open stance. The vulnerability of this stance is found in the nature of the deep attachments that are at its center. Threat to the attachment or to the cared for other is threatening to the person. But of all the stances described, the open stance is the optimal one for dealing with its own vulnerabilities. Attachments were important to all three people and they were skillful (or had developed skills) in promoting and maintaining those attachments. The open stance includes an openness to all kinds of help from others, and so when coping with the threatened attachment escaped their skills, all three were willing to accept advice and/or help from others.

The most vulnerable are clearly those with a receptive

stance. All three have chronically very stressful life circumstances, and all three are in need of support without being able to ask for support. Their life circumstances make them needy, and their meanings make them vulnerable, mainly in that they understand social support as having to come unsolicited. When it does come they are able to use it, mainly to raise spirits and self-esteem. But unsolicited social support for people who do not cultivate a close circle of family and friends is very hard to come by.

The least vulnerable during the interview year are those with a closed stance. The people with this stance find it stressful to be offered or given social support of any kind. 09 is more successful at maintaining this stance than 02 who has a large number of social connections who expect her to be involved in the give and take of social gift and social obligation. A social network analysis of 02 could never reveal the degree of stress that network brings to her. Essentially, these people have no community. Their personal meanings make them social isolates who exist within a social network. They live lives of extreme individualism which might not bode well for them in their aging (Bellah, et al., 1985). Although this rigid stance works for them during the interview year, it is brittle and will only continue to work if everything goes smoothly. A serious illness for 09, or a serious physical setback for 02's husband could quite possibly provide an unbearable and unmanageable stress.

It is difficult to assess the vulnerability of the



selectively open stance. It is a stance which results from a very unique combination of life circumstance and personal meanings. 03's personal meanings of suspiciousness and dependence are in themselves stressful. 06's life circumstance of marriage to a cold and domineering husband seems to make her vulnerable. But both's stance of selective openness is a highly adaptive position which makes the most of both meaning and circumstance.

#### Social Support in the Coping Episode

The preceding discussion demonstrated the role of personal meanings and life circumstances in the development of a social support stance. It has been shown that the use of social support depends upon a combination of the availability of social support and the ability to avail oneself of social support.

The discussion of social support stance encompassed the entire life experience of each person as reported in the twelve interviews. Now the discussion turns to a consideration of the use of social support within coping episodes. First, the issue of the availability of social support within a coping episode will be examined. Then the actual strategies used within a coping episode will be discussed, including their effectiveness.

The Availability of Social Support. A number of factors affect the availability of support in actual coping episodes. When the behavior of a cared for other is itself the source of stress appraisals, that person is necessarily

unavailable as a source of support. This is nowhere more poignantly illustrated than in the lives of 01 and his alcoholic wife, 05 and his unhappy home life, and 10 and her senile mother. In these cases, the stress is chronic; the same appraisals occur episode after episode.

Even in cases in which the cared for other is usually seen as supportive, episodes can occur in which the other becomes the focus, directly or indirectly of a stress appraisal. For example, 03's wife is devoted to him and tries to fulfill his every need and wish. But when their house is burgled, 03 blames his wife because she was out visiting a friend. She cannot be viewed as a source of support to cope with the extreme distress the burglary causes him, because, in his view, she was to some degree responsible for the robbery occurring in the first place.

Sometimes being a very caring relationship can hinder the helpfulness the other can offer. 04's husband is very concerned about the stress her senile mother causes her. The mother senses his attitude and is hostile towards him. As a result, 04 has to keep her husband and her mother apart. He is emotionally supportive, but he cannot help with her mother in tangible ways that would alleviate some of the burden to 04. People in close caring relationships sometimes choose not to share a worry or concern in order to protect the other. This shielding or buffering strategy was largely situational in this sample. Its use depended on the other's current state of health or what other concern the person had.

The situation can sometimes make support available that ordinarily is not available. 01 does not bring work concerns home very often, his main focus being on keeping his wife from drinking, he would not ordinarily think to burden her with his worries. But on the occasion when his boss asks him to award a contract illegally, and he refuses, he comes home thinking that he has put his job in jeopardy. He tells his wife, and she is very supportive of him. A similar happening occurs for 07, when his daughter, usually a source of stress appraisals for him, is emotionally supportive when he cannot put up the television antennae.

Thus, regardless of a person's social support stance or usual life circumstances, situations arise in which support which might usually have been there, is not available, or cannot be seen as available (as in the case of 03), or cannot be used because the person does not want to tax the resources of the other at that time. On the other hand, situations can arise in which sources of support which are not usually available, become available. However, all of these various kinds of situational availability or non-availability of social support are understood and interpreted in terms of each person's personal meanings.

Social Support Coping Strategies. By far the most common coping strategy was labelled by the interview analysis committee "uses available emotional support." This was used by a total of seven cases for a total of sixteen times. Using

available emotional support means that the person in the coping episode did not have to make a special effort to garner emotional support beyond verbally relating the stressful incident to another person. On certain occasions, when the supportive other was present during the stressful incident it was not even necessary to describe the incident in order to be given emotional support. The support given usually consisted of listening sympathetically, but sometimes it included providing special treats, or creating a particularly caring atmosphere through physical affection.

The next most common strategy was labelled "seeks active assistance/emotional support." This strategy was used by a total of five cases for a total of ten times. This strategy requires effort on the part of the person to secure emotional tangible or informational support. Although it is not always possible to separate out the strands that separate what one seeks and what one gets, there was adequate information in these interviews to make the distinction. In five out of the ten times this strategy was used, the person sought tangible help. In two out of the five times the person received the help he/she sought, and understood it as supportive both tangibly and emotionally. The remaining three times the strategy was used, tangible and informational help was sought and received, but it was not experienced as emotionally supportive. All three of these times the strategy was used by 10, whose personal meanings make it impossible for her to seek emotional support even though she

feels in great need of emotional support. In her case, she got what she sought, tangible and informational support, but since she cannot seek emotional support she could not understand the help she got as being emotionally supportive. In fact, in all three cases, the ostensible success of this strategy seemed to increase her distress.

An infrequently used strategy, but one which requires careful note, is "gives emotional support." Giving emotional support is a coping strategy which is used in situations in which a cared for other is distressed because it makes the giver feel he/she is doing something to alleviate the distress. This strategy is used once by two people, 04 and 07, both of whom have an interpersonal concern of engaged care. It does seem that it takes the perspective this meaning gives to appraise another's concern as a coping demand to give support, and that the giving of support would be felt a successful strategy in relieving one's own distress.

The one remaining strategy which 02 uses in one coping episode, but which she also describes in other interviews outside of reported coping episodes, is "gets another to intervene." 02, as has been pointed out several times, is loathe to ask anyone to do anything for her, since that would put her under an obligation to do something in return. She is very involved trying to reduce the number of demands made on her without purposely going out and creating more. And so she has developed an indirect strategy in which she gets her husband to

intervene on her behalf to reduce the number of demands on her without asking him directly to do it. On this occasion, her husband "forbids" her to continue to do their grown daughter's laundry. This is the only social support strategy that she reports in her coping episodes. 02 is also the only person who employs a negative social support strategy; she limits the support she could be given by not telling anyone her husband is having surgery.

Table III on the following page summarizes the social support strategies just discussed. They are listed according to case and stance, and are presented in order of greatest number of strategies per number of reported coping episodes.

Coping Effectiveness. For the most part, the social support coping strategies used by this sample seem to work to ease distress within the coping episode. There is one notable exception, and that is 10 whose seeking strategies were discussed above. If the failure of her coping effectiveness were taken into account in Table III, she would be tied for ninth place with 01, in which instance all the cases with the receptive stance would be last in the rankings. It may be that 10 provides us with a portrait of the person for whom increased coping effort is correlated with increased stress (Weiss, 1968).

However, the coping effectiveness of social support strategies cannot be predicted from either the increased or decreased number of strategies used, or from kind of strategy. What makes sense of Table III is the understanding of the

TABLE III  
SOCIAL SUPPORT COPING STRATEGIES

<u>RANK*</u>	<u>CASE</u>	<u>STANCE</u>	<u>USES AVAILABLE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT</u>	<u>SEEKS ACTIVE ASSISTANCE/ EMOTIONAL SUPPORT</u>	<u>GIVES OTHER</u>	<u>TOTAL REPORTED EPISODES</u>	<u>TOTAL NO. COPING STRATEGIES</u>
1	04	Open	6	1	1	6	8
2	08	Open	2	3		6	5
3	06	Selectively Open	4			7	4
4	10	Receptive	1	3		8	4
5	07	Open	2	1	1	10	4
6/7	03	Selectively Open		1		5	1
6/7	09	Closed	1			5	1
8	02	Closed			1	7	1
9	01	Receptive	1			8	1
10	05	Receptive				12	0

\*Number of reported social support strategies/total coping episodes.

personal meanings which guide peoples' choices and self-interpretations of success or failure. For 02 and 09, a low ratio of social support coping strategies to coping episode reflects an effective social support stance. A higher number of strategies would suggest a world gone seriously awry, because for either of them to need or use social support is stressful in itself.

A low ratio of strategies to episodes has the opposite meaning for 01, 05, and 10 (assuming an adjusted ratio for coping ineffectiveness). The low ratio does not begin to hint at the desperate need they all have for emotional support, or the remarkable receptiveness they have to its power when it is occasionally bestowed. 05 neither uses nor seeks (not to mention gives) emotional support in any of his reported coping episodes. But on one occasion he does receive approval and warm praise (after coaching his daughter's soccer team). His spirits are buoyed by this for days.

The effective element in all the coping strategies used by this sample was the emotional component of feeling supported. Being given tangible support was felt to be supportive when it was experienced as an act of special caring. It was not felt to be helpful when it served to highlight the lack of emotional support (e.g., 10).

#### Social Support in Meaning Terms and Emotional Support

#### Questionnaire Scores

The Stress and Coping Project approached the issue of



social support and coping not only through the interview material, but also by means of questionnaires. One such questionnaire was the Emotional Support Scale developed by Dr. Frances Cohen at the University of California, San Francisco. In this scale, participants were asked to rate their spouses, close friends and relatives, neighbors, coworkers and supervisors on a one-to-five scale according to how much each person made the participant feel cared about, boosted his/her spirits, was reliable, and made it possible for the participant to confide in him or her during the last month. Schaefer (1983) reports that ratings on these four dimensions were highly related to one another; the average correlation among them was .93. Table IV summarizes the scores on the scale by listing the mean support and the network density for the ten cases in this study.

One feature of the scaled results is the small variation among the mean scores. It is not possible to distinguish among the four social support stances using these mean scores. The scores do seem to distinguish between men and women, however, with women having higher mean scores than men (women's lowest scores is 3.3, men's highest score is 3.4) and greater network density (mean density is 10.6 for women, 6.1 for men). This is consistent with reports in the social support literature of male/female differences. Differences in network density, for example, seem to relate to the tendency of men in this culture to use the wife as confidant, while women more often use friends as confidants. What the statistical distinction between the sexes

TABLE IV  
 SOCIAL SUPPORT STANCE AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT SCORES

<u>Case</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Stance</u>	<u>Mean Support*</u>	<u>Network Density**</u>
04	F	Open	3.4	14
07	M	Open	3.1	11
08	F	Open	3.9	10
03	M	Selectively Open	3.4	10
06	F	Selectively Open	3.5	9
01	M	Receptive	3.0	10
05	M	Receptive	3.6	2
10	F	Receptive	3.4	4
02	F	Closed	3.3	16
09	M	Closed	2.5	4

\*Mean of a 1 to 5 rating of spouse, supervisor, co-workers, friends, relatives and neighbors on dimensions of emotional support.

\*\*Total number of people rated. The questionnaire provides room for sixteen total.

cannot reveal is the way in which men and women share meanings concerning social support. Both sexes are represented in each one of the social support stances described here. While this sample is not large enough to make any statistical generalizations, nor is the intent of the study to so generalize, this does raise the question of what the distribution might be among the larger population. While some cultural meanings relate to what it is to be a man and what it is to be a woman, other ways of Being-in-the-World are shared by both sexes.

The central difference between the scales and the stances is that one is based on what the participants said they usually did and the other is based on reports of actual events. In the view of this study, the discrepancy is not due to lack of candor on the part of the participants when filling out the scale, but to the fact that meanings are expressed through lived encounters and are not objects of reflection.

Some meanings are expressed in the scoring of the scale, but they are not interpretable from the scale alone. 02, who has a closed stance, lists a network of sixteen people and rates many of them very high. However, a glance at Table III shows that of seven reported coping episodes, only one coping strategy reflected social support. And, that one strategy was unique to 02 out of the sample of ten--getting someone else to intervene on her behalf. Furthermore, 02 was the only participant of the ten who actively prevented people from providing emotional support during a time of stress. Her answers on the scale make complete

sense, though, in light of her personal meanings. What social scientists call a "socially desirable response set" is for 02 part of a personal background meaning. As her interviewer records in the first interview she says that "she aims to please."

### Conclusion

Understanding of social support has been usefully and importantly served by survey research which has shown correlational relationships between social networks, or social supports, and health outcomes. It is a premise of this study, though, that explanations of these relationships will be found in research which aims to uncover the personal meanings which guide people in their social relationships. Personal meanings determine under what circumstances what kind of help helps.

The open stance is the only stance in which personal background meanings operate in the service of interpersonal concern. In all the others the personal background meanings either dominate or compete with the interpersonal concerns. The people with an open stance epitomize what is usually meant by social support. They have social connections at different levels. Their lives are set up to facilitate the give and take of social support. They can seek and use social support in different forms. They seem to live in an atmosphere of generous caring.

But approaching social support from the perspective of meaning reveals that the open stance is not for everybody.

Different meanings combined with different circumstances produce different stances. The selectively open stance is another such one. Meanings and circumstance rule out certain sources of support, but the people with this stance still find, in a highly adaptive way, sources they can be open to and which provide support they can use.

Those with a receptive stance were seen to be the most distressed and the most vulnerable. They were the most in need of support and the least likely to receive it. Understanding the personal meanings that contribute to the receptive stance could facilitate intervention in this emotionally and physically symptomatic group. Particularly important is an understanding that for these people being in need of help denotes failure and increases depression, but unsolicited emotional support (especially in the form of praise and approval) even the smallest amount can buoy spirits and counter depression.

The closed stance gives a new slant on the term social isolate. These people are isolates in the midst of fairly wide social networks. Although it is an effortful stance, it did work fairly well for them in the interview year. 09 seemed especially content and untroubled.

The analysis of social support in meaning terms emphasizes the coping aspects of social support. Social support or the lack of it colors the daily lives of people and contributes to a generalized sense of being cared for or not being cared for. But it also is clearly a coping strategy which,

depending on the meanings involved, can make either a positive or negative contribution to the outcome of a coping episode. Furthermore, for some people, giving social support can be as important a coping strategy as getting it. Caring for another as a way of helping oneself cope is a strategy which deserves further study.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
MEANING AND PROCESS

A goal of this study has been to explore an interpretation of the person-context relation which views people as embedded in a matrix of personal meanings in such a way that they are seen both to constitute and to be constituted by their world. The research aim is to show how this relationship is expressed in stress and coping processes in order to further understanding of the links between these processes. Numerous examples have been presented, both from the perspective of the individual (case studies) and from the perspective of concepts that are of current interest in social science (personal control and social support). To sum up and conclude, this chapter returns to the basic terms of the study--meaning and process. It is proposed that the approach to meaning and process presented in this study offers useful possibilities for research in and understanding of the processes of coping, the links between those processes, and the outcomes of coping encounters. The following discussion offers definitions of meaning and process, and discusses their inextricable linkage. Four examples of coping episodes, described in terms of their process, are presented as illustrative of the relationship of meaning and process and as additional evidence for the usefulness of this approach. Finally, some further implications of this approach for the study and understanding of coping are discussed.

### Meaning and Process

Meaning. In the view presented here, meaning is a lived understanding, and as such it is not itself an object of reflection. It is what permits people to see and understand things as objects and thus, whatever the person sees (not simply in the visual sense) is already interpreted. It is possible to uncover meanings by means of hermeneutics, an interpretive approach which recognizes the way meanings work and does not try to identify them as the final ground or as definitive traits which operate as structures to direct people's behavior. Meanings themselves are transactional, neither describing the person or the context, or even the relation between the two, but rather the way the person is in the context. In this way meanings have content which has reference to context. This is the opposite of the structural approach in which contextual content is disregarded in favor of identifying abstract traits by which people may be seen to share commonalities.

Process. Since meaning is lived understanding, in order to interpret it one must give an account of how it is lived out, and that means describing process. Process is how meaning works. The basis of this study has been an examination of the relation between personal meanings and coping processes. The approach taken here and voiced in the Lazarus coping paradigm is that all aspects of the coping process are expressions of personal meaning as defined above. Appraisal reflects the specific meanings or stakes which are engaged in the situation.



Certain aspects are salient to begin with, and as the situation unfolds, the person's understanding shifts as other saliencies are highlighted. The person's actions (internal and external), or coping strategies as they are called here, also reflect the person's understanding of the situation.

In this approach, coping strategies cannot be accounted for as discrete efforts to solve a problem. Coping is intrinsically tied to all the meanings at work in an episode, which are themselves manifestations of personal meanings. Just as people do not have the freedom to choose all their meanings or change them at will, so people are not free to choose just any coping strategy. It has been shown in this study that when someone takes on a coping strategy that runs counter to personal meanings, the act of coping itself will become a coping episode.

Below are four coping episodes, two each from two cases, which are described in terms of their process, that is, the unfolding episode as stakes emerge, emotions are felt, and coping undertaken. They illustrate the relation between meaning and process and demonstrate the usefulness of this approach for understanding coping. Stakes (the meaning aspect of appraisal), coping strategies, emotions and outcomes of coping are underlined to clarify the unfolding relation of meaning and process.

#### The Role of the Larger Context in a Stress Episode.

01 experiences frustration at work when others do not observe the

proper procedures for purchasing (he is in charge of purchasing), and bypass his department in getting estimates and work done. Timing is crucial in this episode which occurs during one of his wife's drinking bouts. Being bypassed is a common occurrence in his job. It usually does not bother him deeply, but this time it does. The problem as he defines it in this episode is not that this particular event has happened, but that it can happen.

At stake is his concern over self-esteem:

No one felt it was important enough. It is extremely frustrating. My usurped authority is still usurped. Nothing has changed. No one considers my job as important as I do. I'm misused, hurt, underpaid, and overworked ... Sometimes it hurts ... I feel used.

He feels emotions of hurt and frustration. And, in terms of resources, his low status negatively affects his access to support.

I went to my boss to tell him. I told him to make a memo with all the information on it to be sent around and I said I hoped that it didn't happen again. Nothing happened. No information was sent out.

The first thing he does (coping) when he discovers that the wrong procedure has been followed is to act directly by saying something to the people who made the mistake. This has the effect of easing his feelings through release. The second strategy is to anticipate and prepare to prevent the event from happening again. He does this by trying to get his boss to send out a memo which he has written up. This coping effort fails, and its failure has the effect of increasing his negative

feelings. At this point he tries the strategy of retaliation (low power version). He lets his own work go. This hinders others somewhat, but since he still has to do the work, he mainly affects himself. This coping strategy has the effect of easing his negative emotion temporarily.

In terms of appraised outcome, the episode is not resolved. But although this is a recurring episode in his work life, it is not appraised as a threat every time it occurs. Apparently, it is threatening this time mainly because of the coincidence in timing with his wife's drinking bout, a situation which also engages the stake of concern over self-esteem.

This episode nicely illustrates a conclusion drawn by Eckenrode (1984) when he tries to account for the greater predictive power of hassles and daily stressors over life events for outcomes of psychological symptoms, physical health and mood. He suggests that the stressfulness of life events is found in the way they find expression in daily life. This episode is an example of that kind of relationship. Against the background of his wife's starting a drinking bout, a chronically recurring event in his life, which raises for him concern over self-esteem, this daily work hassle is understood by O1 in terms of self-esteem and becomes a coping episode. Note, however, that the relationship between his wife's drinking and a work hassle becoming a coping episode is found in the meaning of the events for O1, and the highlighting of the work context by the timing of the episode.

Meaning Shifts within the Episode. O1's wife is an

alcoholic, and one of his central concerns is to control her drinking. Their relationship to their fifteen year old daughter is distanced. In this coping episode, Ol and his wife have just returned from a happy four-day weekend. The daughter stayed home and had an older girl friend stay with her. When Ol and his wife return to a messy house (the daughter is out), the wife becomes very angry. Ol sits down to watch a football game. He has mentioned in other interviews that his wife does not like him to watch football games and has implied that it drives her to drink. Then the daughter returns home.

The house was not in the condition that it was when we left. [Wife] is persnickety about this. Her anger was building. I'd been watching the football game. [Wife] came on heavy. She used harsh words. She became extremely angry, almost on the verge of violence.

At this point, his concern over keeping his wife calm is at stake. And since his interpersonal concern for his wife is owning the other, he takes on his wife's concern about their daughter's behavior. So now evaluating and demanding certain behavior is at stake. He copes with this appraised situation by saying something directly to his daughter. This has the negative effect of not changing the external situation. This makes him very angry.

This, in turn, raises in him a concern over being effective. "I tried to punish and it didn't work. I gave the punishment in anger, but more anger at me that why didn't I make it work?" At this point, he is angry both at himself and at his

daughter. He copes with this situation by going over the situation in his mind and blaming himself. Going over the situation in his mind maintains his emotional arousal (anger), and his understanding that he has failed to influence his daughter's behavior and attitude. He copes with this anger by self-blame. The anger dissipates with time. The outcome, that is, the effect of the coping episode, is a lowering of his self-esteem. Now, concern over self-esteem is at stake for him.

The situation hits and hits quickly, and you make your move--if you're wrong, you're standing all by yourself--there's embarrassment. You want to shrink off and not be in it anymore.

He copes in this situation by means of post-mortem. [Day after the episode] "as I was driving her home, I brought it up again, calmly, that I was disappointed at the way she'd reacted." This strategy has no effect on the external situation or on his internal experience of lowered self-esteem.

This episode demonstrates how meanings shift as the episode unfolds over time. Initially his daughter's behavior is not a concern. Concern over keeping his wife calm (and averting a drinking bout), a stake which relates directly to his interpersonal concern of owning the other (see case study for full explication) leads him to take on her anger at their daughter. Then his own inability to control his daughter's behavior leads to a concern over his own effectiveness in dealing with her, and finally, a concern over his own self-esteem. These last two stakes are manifestations of his personal

background meaning that every encounter holds the possibility of revealing him as inadequate or worthy.

Coping with Simultaneous Stakes and Meanings

Contributed by Another. 06's husband comes home one evening and reports that the doctor has ordered him to lose weight because of high blood pressure. He acknowledges that work might be a contributing factor, but he also blames his wife.

Work is a reason, and he says I might be a cause. I irritate him at times, but he doesn't like someone to have a different opinion.

Two stakes are engaged at this point: concern over the health of her spouse and concern about her own future well-being. The two stakes are clearly related, in that threat to her husband's health immediately becomes a threat to her future social life. Her interpersonal concern is self-care in balance with care for others. Thus, in her understanding of the coping demand, dealing with the threat to her husband's health will simultaneously deal with the threat to her future social well-being.

She engages in a number of coping strategies. Since her husband holds her culpable for his high blood pressure, 06 needs to absolve herself of blame so that she can take on the problem of helping him lose weight and lower his blood pressure. She also bolsters herself by defending her own competence to deal with his health problem.

[Husband] feels women don't know things but I read a lot. I've had a latent interest in medicine all my life. My sister is the mother of two doctors.

Then she takes responsibility for her husband's problem. She does this mainly through managing his diet. Once she has taken on his problem as her own, however, she then proceeds to do other problem-focused coping--information search, and asking another family member to modify her own behavior.

So here I go down to the library to get a whole rack of books so that he can find out what he should be doing but he won't read them so I have to.

I told [daughter] we've got to be careful. She's so open. I've told her to hold it back when Daddy is here. He wants everyone in their niche.

The episode causes her to worry. The coping strategies of defending her own competence and comforting cognitions (telling herself it will all work out all right) help to alleviate the worry. In the course of later interviews, 06 reports that her husband is losing weight and is adhering to a diet they have worked out. His blood pressure goes down. The striking feature of this episode is the contribution to the context her husband makes by his interpretation of his wife's part in his illness. 06 has to cope with his meanings, and then also cope with her own dual stakes.

Coping with Conflicting Stakes. In the last episode, coping with her husband's illness provided a way for her to cope with her concern over her own future well-being. In this episode, 06's dual stakes are in conflict. Her husband is about to take a planned business trip. 06 has been looking forward to having the free time and has plans for herself. When her husband

has to cancel his plans at the last minute because of illness, 06 is caught between conflicting stakes--concern over the health of her husband and concern over the infringement on her own time. She experiences different emotions. She is worried about her husband's health, and she is shocked about the change in plans. In her first assessment of the demand of the situation, she tries to find a way to deal with her husband's health and also keep his travel plans intact. She copes by seeking professional advice (i.e., calling the doctor). She looks to the doctor to reassure her that her husband will be all right (it is not in fact a serious ailment), and to convince her husband that he can still travel. The effect of calling the doctor relieves her worry about her husband's health. But it also makes clear that his trip will definitely be cancelled. At this point, she assesses the problem as how to deal with the disruption to her schedule, because not only will she not have her evenings free, but her days will be spent caring for her husband. She experiences frustration. She copes by accepting the situation and by compromise, that is, she rearranges plans so she does not have to give up all she had hoped to do. The effect of the coping is that it manages the situation but it does not relieve her frustration.

This episode is an example of how her personal meanings (interpersonal concern: self-care in balance with care for others; personal background meaning: she must live up to her own and others' expectations) not only determine what counts as a



stress, but complicates the coping episode by creating conflicting stakes. However, as seen from the previous example, it is not inevitable that these meanings will create situations with conflicting stakes. An understanding of the process, that is, how the meanings are lived out in particular situations, reveals how the meanings unfold.

Conclusion. Personal background meanings and interpersonal concerns are personal meanings which have been uncovered in this study as they exist in the daily practices of ten people's lives. By the way they involve the individual in his or her world these personal meanings determine what counts as stress and what counts as coping for each person. Although the personal meanings have been identified and named, they must not be thought of as cognitive structures. The names only reflect the content of the meanings, and do not describe structural elements. They exist and are only visible in the whole person's involvement in his/her world.

The above four examples of coping episodes described in terms of their process show the dangers inherent in trying to interpret these meanings except as they are lived. The lived meanings, that is, meanings manifest in process, reveal the importance of taking context into account. For example, timing was a crucial feature of one stress episode, and another's meanings were important in another. Timing and another's meanings as contextual features provide a view of context not as a setting which is populated by people to whom one has a certain

role relation, but as an interpreted habitation. The shift in meanings, the emergence of new stakes, and the conflicting stakes in the other two episodes demonstrate the lived quality of meaning and the extent to which understanding coping outcomes depends upon seeing meaning in process.

Thus, personal meanings, as they are defined in this study, are understood as an expression of an involvement of the person in his/her world. The interpretation of meaning in process terms, that is, as it is lived, affords an understanding of the role of personal meanings as constitutive for the person. In this transactional view, people are seen as constituting and being constituted by personal meanings. This is illustrated in the case studies, and in the process descriptions above.

In this study, the process of coping has provided the focus and the terms of analysis for interpreting lived experience. The study has shown that coping processes (i.e., stress appraisals and coping strategies) are determined by personal meanings, and that this view can account in a useful way for the observed phenomenon that people do not predictably respond according to cognitive traits in particular situations. Character traits afford a way of grouping different people. In theory, a trait or category reflects an essential element shared by the group which is more basic than ways in which the members of the group differ. But it was shown in this study that a common characterological judgement, namely internal/external locus of control, did not account for different personal qualities in

members of the group, the different kinds of stress events they encountered, the different thoughts, actions and feelings they undertook and experienced, or the different outcomes of their thoughts and actions, as well as their personal meanings did. In addition, the interpretation of personal control in meaning terms allowed an equally clear view of the relation between personal control, stress appraisals, coping processes and outcomes in those cases which were neither clearly internals or externals. If being extremely internal or external is associated with poor adjustment or some other negative outcome, while being in the middle range is associated with positive outcomes, then it is useful to know in what ways other than an I-E score) the middle range people differ from the extremes.

Finally, the interpretation of people according to their personal meanings and the examination of how those personal meanings are lived out in coping processes entails a view not only of what the person copes with and how the person copes, but also of what ensues from these transactions. By definition personal meanings differ from character traits. In application in this study, the use of personal meanings as a research tool also differs from the usual use of character traits. Most often character traits have a positive or a negative association linked to them. In the approach taken in this study, it is shown that having negative character traits, using (what is generally thought of as) "bad" ways of appraising and coping is not a guarantee of negative outcomes in an

individual's life.

### Meaning and Process: Some Further Implications

The approach to meaning and process offered in this study has some further implications for the study of people's coping. First, the understanding of meaning and process presented here provides an alternative to the accepted dichotomy of objective/subjective reality and thus also to the limitations placed on the researcher by this view. Second, the approach presented here runs counter to the notion of radical freedom which holds that people can change by intentionally and rationally selecting their own meanings. Finally, how meanings can and do change and how this might provide a useful base for research is briefly discussed.

The Issue of Objective Reality. The persistence of Cartesian dualism is responsible for a continuing concern about objective reality. Some coping theories base their assessment of the appropriateness, rightness or healthfulness of coping on the degree to which the coping matches veridical or objective reality (e.g., Haan, 1977; Vaillant, 1977). Objective reality is a problem as long as one assumes the epistemological position that people cannot have direct access to the world but represent it in their minds, and that these representations, because they are representations and not the real thing, are only approximations of reality and must all deviate to a greater or lesser degree from what is really out there. Furthermore, this epistemological position also posits that all of these

representations are private, because minds cannot have direct access to one another.

This problem disappears when one takes the position that mind and body, sharing the role of knower, apprehend directly, and that what is apprehended is meaning, that is, already interpreted reality. In this view there is an objective reality, but it is not of particular interest to social scientists (although it is to natural scientists) because objective reality is not the world in which people live, or inhabit, to use the Heideggerian term more descriptive of involvement. This inhabited reality of meanings is not subjective and private, but shared and public, because even though personal background meanings are taken up in individual ways, the meanings themselves come out of the larger cultural or sub-cultural context.

Radical Freedom. Radical freedom (Sartre, 1948; 1957; Follesdal, 1981) is a phrase which describes a mistaken understanding of the nature of background meaning. Radical freedom presupposes that people are free to select whatever meanings they want, and that when one meaning does not work, it can be tossed out and replaced with one that produces a more agreeable result. Radical freedom is an underpinning of many popularized psychological help theories and do-it-yourself therapies. Most recently it has found expression in the numerous proposed approaches to stress management.

In the view presented here, people do not have radical freedom because, first, they are never in a position totally to

choose their meanings. People are socialized into a culture from birth, from before the development of reflective thought (cf. Caudill & Weinstein, 1969, for example in Chapter Two). Because of this, and because a person is always involved in a context, meanings choose people as much as people choose meanings. Of course, the term choose is too rational and intentional; it is more that people are solicited by meanings through their involvement.

Second, people are never in a position to choose their meanings because meanings that are reflected upon cannot work smoothly. Meanings must remain the background against which things stand out as significant.

Third, meaning, because it exists within the involvement of person and context, is not a property of an individual like a trait. And because it exists over time, in history as it were, it is always changing. So meaning is not a neatly limited package whose beginning, end, and ramifications can all be identified. The personal background meanings described in this study are only part of the background meanings of the ten people studied.

Meaning Changes: Growth and Breakdown. Although people cannot simply divest themselves of meaning and select one they think they will like better, meanings do change. The process of living exposes people to new meanings. Development occurs across the lifespan and changes can occur at any point. Some people in this sample spoke of their own development,

sometimes commenting, "I don't know how I learned that," or "I used to have a very bad temper, but that seems to go as you get older." Such people hold meanings which make them open to experience in such a way that experience is transforming for them (e.g., 04 and 07, both of whom have developed a cushion of experience in their work lives). Others hold meanings which close them to possibility. In these cases, either a cushion of experience was not developed, so past experience did not serve to ease the stress of new (e.g., 10), or else all experience was interpreted in the same rigid way, so possibility was not allowed to emerge (e.g., 09).

At times of crisis, meanings can begin to break down. In breakdown, they may become more visible to the individual as objects of reflection. At this point, background meanings contribute to stress because they no longer contribute to smooth functioning. Thus, at times of breakdown, people may change. 04 and 01 both have kinds of crises of meaning during the interview year. 01's difficulties in living with an alcoholic lead him to ask the existential question "what's it all for?" As his sense of meaning falls away, he succumbs to despair. His coping at this point is devoted to restoring meaning in his life. 04's crisis is brought about by the changes senility creates in her mother and the difficulty she has in maintaining her concern of engaged care when the cared for other has become a different person.

The study of personal meanings and coping processes in

adult lives gives credence to a theory of adult development. Within this sample of ten people, it was shown that some personal meanings leave one open to possibility and others do not. Thus, for some people, personal meanings allow experience to be transforming. But clearly for others no such transformation takes place. The possibilities for change and hence for adaptation as one ages is an important feature in adult development. Understanding how personal meanings operating across the life course can open or close one to such adaptation could be an important step in understanding the process of adult development.



APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule and Interview Formats

Interview schedule for Year 01

Telephone contact  
(by HPL staff  
interviewer)

Make appointment  
for interviewer

Mail: Health Status Quest.\*  
Social Environment Quest.  
Hassles (Trait)\*  
Uplifts (Trait)\*

Interview

Tasks for the Interview

Materials to be left with  
participants

First  
Interview

Explain study  
Recent Life Events Quest. update  
Fill out Calendar of Anticipated  
Events\*  
Give Cantril Current Concerns  
Obtain consent  
Answer questions about mailed  
materials  
Explain and/or demonstrate:  
Hassles\*  
Uplifts\*  
Daily Log\*  
Bradburn-Beck Scales

Hassles Scale\*  
Uplifts Scale\*  
  
Bradburn-Beck Scales  
Daily Log\* (4 copies)

Second  
Interview

Review and answer questions about  
materials left with participant  
previous month  
Conduct Coping Interview\*  
Explain and/or demonstrate:  
Coping Questionnaire\*  
Heimler Scale of Social  
Functioning  
Symptom checklist

Hassle Scale\*  
Uplifts Scale\*  
Daily Log (4)\*  
Bradburn-Beck Scales  
Coping Questionnaire\*  
Heimler Scale of Social  
Functioning  
Symptom checklist

Third  
Interview

Review and answer questions about  
materials left with participant  
the previous month  
Administer Social Support Quest.\*  
Conduct Family Relations Interview\*  
Explain:  
Jenkins Activity Survey

Hassles Scale\*  
Uplifts Scale\*  
Daily Log (4)\*  
Bradburn-Beck Scales  
Coping Questionnaire\*  
Jenkins Activity Survey

\* Developed by Stress and Coping Project

Lazarus, Richard S.

090-14-5030

Materials to be left with participantsInterviewTasks for the Interview

## Fourth Interview

Review and answer questions about materials left with participant previous month  
 Conduct first Emotion Interview\*  
 Administer Ways of Coping\*

Hassles Scale\*  
 Uplifts Scale\*  
 Daily Log (4)\*  
 Bradburn-Beck Scales

## Fifth Interview

Review and answer questions about materials left with participant previous month  
 Conduct second Emotion Interview\*  
 Administer Ways of Coping\*

Hassles Scale\*  
 Uplifts Scale\*  
 Daily Log (4)\*  
 Bradburn-Beck Scales  
 Fe scale from California Psychological Inventory  
 Personal Attributes Scale  
 Coping Questionnaire\*

## Sixth Interview

Review and answer questions about materials left with participant previous month  
 Conduct third Emotion Interview\*  
 Administer Ways of Coping\*

Hassles Scale\*  
 Uplifts Scale\*  
 Daily Log (4)\*  
 Bradburn-Beck Scales  
 Coping Questionnaire\*

## Seventh Interview

Review and answer questions about material left with participant previous month  
 Conduct fourth Emotion Interview\*  
 Administer Ways of Coping\*

Hassles Scale\*  
 Uplifts Scale\*  
 Daily Log (4)\*  
 Bradburn-Beck Scales  
 Coping Questionnaire\*

## Eighth Interview

Review and answer questions about materials left with participant previous month  
 Conduct fifth Emotion Interview\*  
 Administer Ways of Coping\*

Hassles Scale\*  
 Uplifts Scale\*  
 Daily Log (4)\*  
 Bradburn-Beck Scales  
 Coping Questionnaire\*

## Ninth Interview

Review and answer questions about materials left with participant previous month  
 Conduct Sixth Emotion Interview\*  
 Administer Ways of Coping\*

Hassles Scale\*  
 Uplifts Scale\*  
 Daily Log (4)\*  
 Bradburn-Beck Scales  
 Coping Questionnaire\*

\* Developed by Stress and Coping Project

<u>Interview</u>	<u>Tasks for the Interview</u>	<u>Materials to be left with participant</u>
Tenth Interview	Review and answer questions about materials left with participant previous month Administer Buhler Life Goals Inventory Conduct Aging and Life Review Interview*	Social Environment Questionnaire* Symptom checklist Health Status Questionnaire Recent Life Events Quest. Heimler Scale of Social Functioning
Eleventh Interview	Review and answer questions about materials left with participant the previous month Conduct Developmental Interview* Administer Intelligence Scale (Ammons and Ammons) <i>Adapted from...</i>	Hassles Scales* Uplifts Scale* Bradburn-Beck Scales Daily Log (4)* Coping Questionnaire*
Twelfth Interview	Administer Social Supports Quest.* Year-in-review: Pick up loose ends, review earlier themes, persistent failures and major successes, emotions not apparently experienced. Prepare for participant follow-ups	

\* Developed by the Stress and Coping Project

INITIAL INTERVIEW

## Initial Interview

I. Materials

- A. Interview schedule
- B. Consent letter
- C. HPL Life Events Questionnaire
- D. Calendar Questionnaire
- E. Cantril Current Concerns Questionnaire
- F. Daily Log (5 copies)
- G. Hassles scale
- H. Uplifts scale
- I. Bradburn-Beck
- J. Check request form
- K. Appointment card

II. Purposes

- A. Introduction
  - 1. Explain nature of study
  - 2. Explain nature of participant's involvement
- B. Questionnaires
  - 1. HPL Recent Life Events Questionnaire
  - 2. Calendar
  - 3. Cantril Current Concerns
- C. Informed consent
  - 1. Answer participant's questions
  - 2. Go over consent agreement
  - 3. Get signature
- D. Explain and/or demonstrate instruments to be used during following month
  - 1. Daily Log
  - 2. Hassles scale
  - 3. Daily uplifts scale
  - 4. Bradburn-Beck
- E. Conclusion
  - 1. Wrap up any loose ends and answer questions
  - 2. Leave questionnaires
  - 3. Leave check request form
  - 4. Appointment

\* Discussion about the consent form should take place whenever it seems most appropriate during the interview. It would be nice to have the participant sign the consent before you leave. If, however, the person is reluctant, do not press but suggest he/she may want to read it carefully at his/her convenience and sign it later.

III. Introduction

There are several major points about the nature of the study and the nature of the participant's involvement that must be discussed with the participant in order to gain informed consent. **One approach for presenting these major points** is presented below. After you have read the "scripts" we have written and you are familiar with the major points we want communicated in this interview, we expect that you will present them in your own style.

-2-

"The primary purpose of today's meeting is for me to tell you about the University of California Stress and Coping project. We want you to know just what this study is all about.

"You know how everyone talks about stress. You read about it in the papers, in magazines, and you hear about it in TV and on the radio. But, scientists really don't know enough about the kinds of problems people have in their day to day lives. They don't know very much about what people do to manage these problems--about what works and what doesn't work. But we have good reason to believe that the way in which people do manage their problems makes a difference in how well they feel and in how effective they are in getting along in life. This is where you come in. As you know from our letter, we can only study these things by working closely with people like yourself.

"You might ask, 'Why me?' We want particularly to study people in mid life because people of this age have many responsibilities and demands to face. You also have had a lot of experience in dealing with life's problems. We want to learn from you. We believe that what we learn can be used to help other people manage their lives.

"Now, you've already learned something about what we will be asking of you from the things we mailed you earlier. You know that we plan on interviewing you once a month for the next year. I will be your interviewer. We will meet each month and talk about things that you have been feeling good about and things that you have been feeling bad about. We'll also go over some of the questionnaires that you will have filled out during the month and talk about ones that you will be filling out in the coming month.

"We want you to know that everything you say in an interview and everything that you write in your questionnaires will be held in the strictest of confidence. Only you and I and my research associates will ever know what is said in our sessions together. What I can promise you is that all the tapes, notes, and things I have learned from you will be safe-guarded. Much later, when we have gained a lot of information from others, too, we will publish our findings in scientific journals. But even then we will only be reporting averages and general findings. We will never publish anything that can identify an individual, you or anybody else. Our files in our offices will be locked, and only those working on this project will ever have access to these files. You will appear as merely a number in those files.

"Do you have any questions, any questions at all, about what the study is about, what we will be asking of you, and about the 'protection of your privacy'?"

"What I'd like to do now is give you some sense of the kinds of materials we'll be dealing with, and what the interviews will be like. So, with your permission, I'd like to go over a few questionnaires now so that you can get some feel for this.

A. Life Events Questionnaire

In 1973 you filled out this questionnaire for the Health and Ways of Living Study. We'd like to go over it again, and update it for the last few years. (Go over Life Events questionnaire with respondent/participant.)

B. Calendar

Now, as we talked about a few moments ago, we are interested in the everyday events of your life and how you deal with them. To help us get started with this, we would like to make a calendar of events that you expect to happen during the next year.

For example, let's start with:

- a. birthdays -- yours (your husband's, wife's, children's). Are any of these "big" birthdays? If so, why?
- b. weddings
- c. graduations
- d. anniversaries (What of? Which one?)
- e. births
- f. holiday celebrations
- g. vacations
- h. retirement

What other events stand out for you in the coming year?





C. Cantril Current Concerns

Now let's talk about some of your hopes and some of your worries about the future.

Interview on Current Concerns

1. Wants, wishes and hopes for the future.

All of us want certain things out of life. When you think about what really matters in your own life, what are your wishes and hopes for the future? In other words, if you imagine your future in the best possible light, what would your life look like then, if you are to be happy? Take your time in answering: such things aren't easy to put into words.

Permissible Probes: What are your hopes for the future? What would your life have to be like for you to be completely happy? What is missing for you to be happy? [Use also, if necessary, the words "dreams" and "desires."]

Obligatory Probe: Anything else?

2. Fear and worries about the future.

Now, taking the other side of the picture, what are your fears and worries about the future? In other words, if you imagine your future in the worst possible light, what would your life look like then? Again, take your time in answering.

Permissible Probe: What would make you unhappy? [Stress the words "fears" and "worries."]

Obligatory Probe: Anything else?

V. Going over consent form

Now, before we can go on, I need to have your consent to be a participant in this study. Let me go over this form with you...Any questions? Okay. Then if you'll just sign here we can go on and look over some of the things that I'd like you to do at home during the next month. (If person is reluctant, don't press but suggest he/she may want to read it carefully later on and sign it later.)

VI. Explain and/or demonstrate instruments to be left with participant

- A. Daily Log: To be filled out during 4 consecutive days  
Demonstrate on extra Log
- B. Hassles
- C. Daily Uplift
- D. Bradburn-Beck

VII. Conclusion

- A. Wrap up any loose ends and make sure all questions are answered.
- B. Also leave questionnaires for the month.
- C. Leave check request form.
- D. Set appointment for next time and leave appointment card.

## SUMMARY OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE STRESS AND COPING PROJECT

Your participation in this study on stress and coping will involve a series of interviews and short questionnaires. Once a month for the next year an interviewer will sit down with you for a talk that will last about an hour and a half. After that, there will be some follow-up interviews, two in the second and one in the third year. On every occasion the interviewer will treat you with respect, as one human to another. Your approval and cooperation are crucial to make our study a success and in return we want to make your participation as rewarding as possible.

Each month you and your interviewer will arrange a time and place to have the interview. This could be at your home or at the University. In some of the interviews we will ask you to talk about your general life situation, both the good and the bad. That is, we will want to know how things are going for you, in your work, with your family, and in other areas of life that are important to you. In other meetings we will be interested in particular emotional or stressful experiences in your daily life. We want to know how you manage stresses, what things you handle well and what things are most difficult for you to deal with or that keep coming up again and again.

To help round out the picture, we have also prepared some short questions for you to answer. These will also be done on a monthly basis. The questions will cover more completely how frequent and troubling various stresses and strains are in your life, your negative emotional experiences such as depression, anger, boredom, guilt and anxiety, as well as positive emotions. Answering these written questions will be like keeping a diary or log of some of the important events in your life. There will also be some questions about what you're like, your physical health, and your life goals. We will work closely with you on how to answer these questions so that you will easily know what to do. Also, with your permission, we will be looking at some of the information you previously provided the Health and Ways of Living Study at the California State Department of Health. Regrettably, we are unable to pay you fully for all the time you will be contributing, but as a gesture of our appreciation for your assistance in this study, you will receive \$8 after each monthly interview session.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may decline to answer any question or questions or, indeed, may withdraw entirely from the study at any time.

We will of course keep the information you provide confidential; this information will be used for scientific research purposes only, and will be published only in a form in which you can never be identified as an individual.

And always we want to be open to any questions you might have, to any suggestions you have, and to any way we can make our working together on this research project as convenient and as positive for you as we can. If you have any questions, please phone Joyce Somerwill, Research Secretary, at 642-7079, and a member of the research staff will return your call as soon as possible.

I have read and understand the conditions of my participation in this research, and agree to take part.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

C O P I N G   I N T E R V I E W

Parts I and II

(Part III under separate cover.)



## TO THE INTERVIEWER:

### Instructions for Coping Interview

#### Contents

There are three parts to the Coping Interview. Part I is a structured interview in which a series of reasons people can be troubled or bothered in their day-to-day lives is presented. These reasons are to serve as stimuli for the participant; we want him/her to recollect troubling experiences from recent months or from the present. Part I is to be read by you to the participant. If a stimulus does evoke a positive response, check the appropriate boxes but do not get into a lengthy description of the situation. That will come in Part II.

Part II is a semi-structured interview of three events which the participant indicated in Part I applied to him/her. The participant ranks the three most important events in order of importance, and you interview him/her about each of the events. The interview is designed to elicit a description of what happened and how the participant dealt with it.

Part III has a section for both the participant and you. The participant's section is an objective questionnaire called "Ways of Coping" which is filled out by the participant for each of the events described in Part II. While the participant is doing that, you are to write your observations about what the participant has just described. (Guides for these observations are included at the end of Part II.)

#### The Order for the Interview

Part I

Part II for event ranked most important  
Part III for event ranked most important

Part II for event ranked as second most important  
Part III for event ranked as second most important

Part II for event ranked as third most important  
Part III for event ranked as third most important

If the participant indicates that only one or two of the situations in Part I apply, then the procedure is, of course, followed for only those events.

#### Materials Needed

One copy of Part I and II  
Paper for notes  
Three copies of Part III

I.D. # \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

COPING INTERVIEW

Part I

We are interested in the kinds of stressful things that happen to people, and what people do and think about them. We've made a list of some of the reasons people can be troubled or stressed in their day-to-day lives. I'll read these to you, and I want you to tell me which ones remind you of situations that have happened to you during the last few months, or that are going on now. Take your time and think about each one.

1. FRUSTRATION - For example, not getting something you need or deserve.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

50 | 15

No  1

Yes  2 → How much did this situation matter to you?

16

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

\_\_\_\_\_

3  quite a bit

\_\_\_\_\_

4  a great deal

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Is this happening to you now?

17

No  1

Yes  2 → How much does this situation matter to you?

18

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

\_\_\_\_\_

3  quite a bit

\_\_\_\_\_

4  a great deal

\_\_\_\_\_

50 |

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14

2. CONCERN ABOUT DOING WELL - For example, you face an event and you are concerned about how you will do. It could be a meeting with someone, a dinner party, or an examination.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

50 | 19

No

Yes  → How much did this situation matter to you?

20

1| | not at all      Briefly describe the situation:

2|  somewhat

3|  quite a bit

4|  a great deal

b. Is this happening to you now?

21

No

Yes  → How much does this situation matter to you?

22

1| | not at all      Briefly describe the situation:

2| | somewhat

3| | quite a bit

4|  a great deal

3. DISAPPOINTMENT WITH A PERSON - For example, you depended on someone who let you down when it counted.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

23

No

Yes  → How much did this situation matter to you?

24

1|  not at all      Briefly describe the situation:

2|  somewhat

3|  quite a bit

4|  a great deal

b. Is this happening to you now?

25

No

Yes  → How much does this situation matter to you?

26

1|  not at all      Briefly describe the situation:

2|  somewhat

3|  quite a bit

4|  a great deal



4. BEING CPITICIZED OR REJECTED - For example, someone important to you criticizes you or shows displeasure with you.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No 1

50 | 27

Yes 2 → How much did this situation matter to you?

1 [ ] not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

28

2 [ ] somewhat

3 [ ] quite a bit

4 [ ] a great deal

---



---



---

b. Is this happening to you now?

No 1

29

Yes 2 → How much does this situation matter to you?

1 [ ] not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

30

2 [ ] somewhat

3 [ ] quite a bit

4 [ ] a great deal

---



---



---

5. FIGHTING OR ARGUING - For example, you have a fight or argument with someone close to you, or someone blames you for something that's not your fault.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No 1

31

Yes 2 → How much did this situation matter to you?

32

1 [ ] not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2 [ ] somewhat

3 [ ] quite a bit

4 [ ] a great deal

---



---



---

b. Is this happening to you now?

No 1

33

Yes 2 → How much does this situation matter to you?

34

1 [ ] not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2 [ ] somewhat

3 [ ] quite a bit

4 [ ] a great deal

---



---



---

6. DEALING WITH A DIFFICULT PERSON - For example, there is a person who is difficult to get along with, but you have to continue to deal with him or her anyway.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No <sup>1</sup>

50 | 35

Yes <sup>2</sup> → How much did this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

36

b. Is this happening to you now?

No <sup>1</sup>

37

Yes <sup>2</sup> → How much does this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

38

7. CONSCIENCE BOTHERING YOU - For example, something you are thinking, something you did or want to do makes your conscience bother you or causes you to have regrets.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No <sup>1</sup>

39

Yes <sup>2</sup> → How much did this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

40

b. Is this happening to you now?

No <sup>1</sup>

41

Yes <sup>2</sup> → How much does this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

42

8. TOO MUCH TO DO - For example, someone or some people are making too many demands on you.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No  1

Yes  2 → How much did this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

Briefly describe the situation:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

50 | 43  
44

b. Is this happening to you now?

No  1

Yes  2 → How much does this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

Briefly describe the situation:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

45  
46

9. LOSING SOMETHING OR SOMEONE - For example, something or someone is gone that was important to you.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No  1

Yes  2 → How much did this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

Briefly describe the situation:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

47  
48

b. Is this happening to you now?

No  1

Yes  2 → How much does this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

Briefly describe the situation:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

49  
50

10. PREPARING FOR A BIG CHANGE - For example, something is happening soon which will make a big change in the way you live.

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No <sub>1</sub>

Yes <sub>2</sub> → How much did this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

50 | 51

52

b. Is this happening to you now?

No <sub>1</sub>

Yes <sub>2</sub> → How much does this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

53

54

11. OTHER - \_\_\_\_\_

a. Has this happened to you during the last 3 or 4 months?

No <sub>1</sub>

Yes <sub>2</sub> → How much did this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

55

56

b. Is this happening to you now?

No <sub>1</sub>

Yes <sub>2</sub> → How much does this situation matter to you?

1  not at all

Briefly describe the situation:

2  somewhat

3  quite a bit

4  a great deal

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

57

58

COPING INTERVIEW

Part II

Let's look back over the situations which you have indicated apply to you. Which of these situations is most important to you? Which is next most important? And which is third most important?

- Most important: Situation # \_\_\_\_\_
- Second most important: Situation # \_\_\_\_\_
- Third most important: Situation # \_\_\_\_\_

50 | 59-60  
 61-62  
 63-64

Now, I would like to get a fuller description of each of these situations. Let's start with the one you ranked as most important.

(THESE QUESTIONS ARE TO GUIDE THE INTERVIEW. THEY DO NOT HAVE TO BE PRESENTED IN THE ORDER BELOW, AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THEY WILL NOT ALL BE APPROPRIATE FOR A GIVEN SITUATION.)

1. In general, tell me what happened. (Get story of situation. Probe until you have a good feeling for what happened.)
2. How did it make you feel?
3. What led up to this situation?
4. What did you do?
5. How did what you did change the situation?
6. What else did you consider doing?
7. Looking back on it now, would you have done anything differently? If so, what?
8. Is there anything else about this situation that you think I should know about, something that my questions haven't covered?

GO ON TO PART III

(INSTRUCTIONS TO INTERVIEWER: After you have explored the situation ranked as most important, and the participant has filled out the "Ways of Coping" questionnaire, repeat for the second and third most important situations.)

Instructions for Part III

The "Ways of Coping" questionnaire is to be self-administered by the participant. While he/she is doing this, we would like you to give us the following information. Do this immediately.

1. Situation # \_\_\_\_\_

What were your impressions about the ways in which the participant appraised the situation just described?

Was it a situation that the participant felt he/she

- |   | 2                            | 1                           |         |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| a. could change or do something about?                                | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 50   65 |
| b. that he/she had to accept or get used to?                          | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 66      |
| c. that he/she needed to know more about before acting?               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 67      |
| d. in which he/she had to hold back from doing what he/she wanted to? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 68      |

In general, what were your impressions of this individual's coping style? (Use separate paper.)

2. Situation # \_\_\_\_\_

Was it a situation that the participant felt he/she

- |   | 2                            | 1                           |    |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----|
| a. could change or do something about?                                | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 69 |
| b. that he/she had to accept or get used to?                          | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 70 |
| c. that he/she needed to know more about before acting?               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 71 |
| d. in which he/she had to hold back from doing what he/she wanted to? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 72 |

In general, what were your impressions of this individual's coping style? (Use separate paper.)

3. Situation # \_\_\_\_\_

Was it a situation that the participant felt he/she

- |   | 2                            | 1                           |    |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|----|
| a. could change or do something about?                                | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 73 |
| b. that he/she had to accept or get used to?                          | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 74 |
| c. that he/she needed to know more about before acting?               | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 75 |
| d. in which he/she had to hold back from doing what he/she wanted to? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | 76 |

In general, what were your impressions of this individual's coping style? (Use separate paper.)

I.D. No. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Ways of Coping

Thinking about the situation you have just described, put a check in the "Yes" or "No" column for each item, depending on whether that item applied to you.

(To help keep the situation in mind): I am talking about the situation in which \_\_\_\_\_

---



---

	<u>YES</u> 2	<u>NO</u> 1	
1. Just concentrated on what you had to do next -- the next step.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	48   21
2. You went over the problem again and again in your mind to try to understand it.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	22
3. Turned to work or substitute activity to take your mind off things.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	23
4. You felt that time would make a difference, the only thing to do was to wait.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	24
5. Bargained or compromised to get something positive from the situation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	25
6. Did something which you thought wouldn't work, but at least you were doing something.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	26
7. Got the person responsible to change his or her mind.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	27
8. Talked to someone to find out more about the situation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	28
9. Blamed yourself.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	29
10. Concentrated on something good that could come out of the whole thing.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	30

GO ON TO THE NEXT PAGE

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20

	<u>YES</u> 2	<u>NO</u> 1	339
11. Criticized or lectured yourself.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	31
12. Tried not to burn your bridges behind you, but leave things open somewhat.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	32
13. Hoped a miracle would happen.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	33
14. Went along with fate; sometimes you just have bad luck.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	34
15. Went on as if nothing had happened.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	35
16. Felt bad that you couldn't avoid the problem.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	36
17. Kept your feelings to yourself.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	37
18. Looked for the "silver lining", so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	38
19. Slept more than usual.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	39
20. Got mad at the people or things that caused the problem.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	40
21. Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	41
22. Told yourself things that helped you to feel better.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	42
23. You were inspired to do something creative.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	43
24. Tried to forget the whole thing.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	44
25. Got professional help and did what they recommended.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	45
26. Changed or grew as a person in a good way.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	46
27. Waited to see what would happen.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	47
28. Did something totally new that you never would have done if this hadn't happened.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	48
29. Tried to make up to someone for the bad thing that happened .....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	49
30. Made a plan of action and followed it.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	50
31. Accepted the next best thing to what you wanted.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	51
32. Let your feelings out somehow.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	52
33. Realized you brought the problem on yourself.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	53



	<u>YES</u> 2	<u>NO</u> 1	340
34. Came out of the experience better than when you went in.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	48/54
35. Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	55
36. Got away from it for a while; tried to rest or take a vacation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	56
37. Tried to make yourself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking, taking medication, etc.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	57
38. Took a big chance or did something very risky.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	58
39. Found new faith or some important truth about life...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	59
40. Tried not to act too hastily or follow your first hunch.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	60
41. Joked about it.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	61
42. Maintained your pride and kept a stiff upper lip.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	62
43. Rediscovered what is important in life.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	63
44. Changed something so things would turn out all right.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	64
45. Avoided being with people in general.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	65
46. Didn't let it get to you; refused to think too much about it.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	66
47. Asked someone you respected for advice and followed it.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	67
48. Kept others from knowing how bad things were.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	68
49. Made light out of the situation; refused to get too serious about it.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	69
50. Talked to someone about how you were feeling.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	70
51. Stood your ground and fought for what you wanted.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	71
52. Took it out on other people.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	72
53. Drew on your past experiences; you were in a similar situation before.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	73
54. Just took things one step at a time.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	74
55. You knew what had to be done, so you doubled your efforts and tried harder to make things work.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	75

	<u>YES</u> 2	<u>NO</u> 1	
56. Refused to believe that it had happened.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	49   21
57. Made a promise to yourself that things would be different next time.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	22
58. Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	23
59. Accepted it, since nothing could be done.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	24
60. Wished you were a stronger person -- more optimistic and forceful.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	25
61. Accepted your strong feelings, but didn't let them interfere with other things too much.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	26
62. Wished that you could change what had happened.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	27
63. Wished that you could change the way you felt.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	28
64. Changed something about yourself so that you could deal with the situation better.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	29
65. Daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one you were in.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	30
66. Had fantasies or wishes about how things might turn out.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	31
67. Thought about fantastic or unreal things (like the perfect revenge or finding a million dollars) that made you feel better.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	32
68. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	33
69. Did something different from any of the above.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	36

---



---



---

In general, is this situation one

- a. that you could change or do something about?..... Yes  No  35
- b. that must be accepted or gotten used to?..... Yes  No  36
- c. that you needed to know more about before you could act?..... Yes  No  37
- d. in which you had to hold yourself back from doing what you wanted to do?..... Yes  No  49 | 38

If you checked "Yes" more than once, underline the statement which best describes the situation.

## FAMILY RELATIONS INTERVIEW

### DEVELOPMENT OF THIS INTERVIEW

This interview is designed to tap the role and importance of the family in an individual's life, be it a source of great demands, powerful support, both or neither. The following persons were primarily responsible for its development: Pat Benner, Margaret Boyd, Susan Folkman, Allen Kanner, and Judith Wrubel, with the assistance of David Buss, Catherine Schaefer, David Frey, Alan Shonkoff and Bernice VanDort.

### USE OF THIS INTERVIEW

Permission to use this scale in other research projects can be obtained from either principal investigator, provided that feedback of any additional information about the scale's psychometric characteristics, utility and correlates, and acknowledgement of its source, is promised.

FAMILY RELATIONS INTERVIEW - PART I (Written)

**NOTE:** For the following five questions, please circle the ONE best response only:

- (4) How often do you spend evenings at home with your immediate family when no outsiders are present? 58 | 15
  1. Six or seven evenings a week.
  2. Three to five evenings a week.
  3. One or two evenings a week.
  4. Less than one evening a week.
  
- (5) How much of the average day during the work week do you spend with one or more members of your immediate family? (EXCLUDING CHILDREN UP TO SCHOOL AGE) 16
  1. One-half or more of the average day.
  2. One-fourth to one-half of the average day.
  3. Less than one-fourth.
  
- (6) How often do you engage in activities besides work away from your home without a family member with you? 17
  1. Less than once a month.
  2. One time a month but not once a week.
  3. At least once a week.
  
- (7) How often does your spouse engage in activities, besides work, outside your home without a family member? 18
  1. Less than once a month.
  2. One time a month but not once a week.
  3. At least once a week.
  
- (8) Does your family celebrate birthdays? 19
  1. Always.
  2. Sometimes.
  3. Never.

Please do not write in this space.

58   1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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FAMILY RELATIONS INTERVIEW

Stress and Coping Project

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FAMILY RELATIONS INTERVIEW

Note to Interviewers: Code words for write-ups are placed above each number.

CURRENT FAMILY

1. Today we are going to talk about your family. Both the one you're a part of now, and a little about the one you grew up in. To start, tell me once again who lives in the house with you.

Who are they?  
 Relationship?  
 Age?  
 Occupation?  
 If spouse, how long married?  
 First marriage?  
 If second, how long was first?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: This information should be looked up beforehand. Check for discrepancies. Use information to guide and probe.)

CHILDREN

2. Do you have children who aren't living at home?

Who?  
 Where do they live?  
 Occupation?  
 Age?  
 When do you see them?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Include sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, if applicable.)

GRANDCHILDREN

3. Are there any grandchildren?

Ages?  
 How often do you see them?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Probe to see if grandchildren are a source of pleasure, a basis for conflict, or source of demand.)

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Continue Interview here.)

|SATISFIED|

9. What are you most satisfied with in your daily family life?

*What kids like to do together*

*Angie's ok  
Companionship -*

|DISSATISFIED|

10. What are you least satisfied with?

(NOTE: Probe to refer back to family participation items as well as daily family life questions.)

IF PARTICIPANT HAS FAMILY OTHER THAN SPOUSE LIVING WITH HIM/HER, MENTION THAT THE FOLLOWING FEW QUESTIONS WILL DEAL WITH THE SPOUSE AND NOT THE WHOLE FAMILY.

(NOTE: For questions 11-16. We want to know how many contacts of what quality there are. We want to have some sense of the balance of power (control-compliance-intimidation). And finally, we want to know how the participants feel about both issues. Questions may be paraphrased or combined as long as the person provides the above information.)

|SPOUSE ACTIVITIES|

11. What are some of the activities that you do with your spouse?

|SEPARATE ACTIVITIES|

12. What activities do you and your spouse do separately?

|OWN ACTIVITIES NOT ENJOYED|

13. What are the things you do with your spouse that you don't particularly enjoy?

Probe: What is it about the activities that you don't like?  
(NOTE: Allow and attend to justifications.)

|SPOUSE ACTIVITIES NOT ENJOYED|

14. What does your spouse do with you that she/he doesn't enjoy?

|LIKE TO DO|

15. What are the things that you would like to do, but don't do because your spouse doesn't like to?

|SPOUSE LIKE TO DO|

16. What are the things that your spouse would like to do, but doesn't do because you don't like to?

|TALK|

17. What are some of the things you and your spouse typically talk about?

|NOT TALK|

18. What have you found out it's better just not to talk about with your spouse?



CONTINUE INTERVIEW HERE.

27. (NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: IF THIS IS PARTICIPANT'S FIRST MARRIAGE, ASK "A", IF THIS IS THE SECOND OR THIRD MARRIAGE, ASK "B".)

MARRIAGE CHANGED

- A. In what ways has your marriage changed over the years?

MARRIAGE DIFFERENT

- B. How is this marriage different from your other marriage(s)?  
Probe: What's disappointing in your marriage? What's rewarding?

ORIGINAL FAMILY

28. You've just told me a number of things about your present family, now I'd like to ask you some questions about the family you grew up in.

Were both parents alive when you were growing up?

Were there remarriages?

What were your parents' level of education?

Where did you live?

What was their religion?

How many other children were there in your family?

(NOTE: Where is participant in birth order?) Were you the first, second....or youngest child?)

ORIGINAL FAMILY SIMILAR

29. Would you briefly describe some of the ways your original family was similar to your present family?

ORIGINAL FAMILY DIFFERENT

30. Would you briefly describe some of the ways your original family was different from your present family?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS FOR QUESTIONS 30 and 31): The following are suggestions to help in comparison if participant requires guides:

1. Values such as

patterns of authority (who's boss?)  
religion  
education  
money

2. Behaviors such as

how decisions are made  
displays of affection  
use of leisure time  
ways of dealing with a problem

Also, try to capture appraisal wherever possible. How pleased and/or satisfied is the participant with these similarities and differences?

AFFECTION

31. What is your favorite way of expressing affection in your family?

CONFLICTS

32. Can you describe for me a recent situation in which any of the things which are important to you conflicted? For example: (Restate some of the goals and roles mentioned by the participant earlier.) Briefly describe the situation. What happened?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Look for individual's priorities, which role dominated? Look for expectations of self, i.e., is the self concept that of a super-person? Are there any clues about the family's role expectations of the participant?)

(NOTE: May take cue from Coping Interview. Elaborate descriptions of situation not necessary.)

SPOUSE DISTRESS

33. Can you think for a minute about some recent situation in which your spouse was distressed? (Briefly describe it for me.) Would you tell me how you reacted to your spouse's distress? What did you do or say? Is this your usual way of helping your spouse when she/he is distressed?

(NOTE: What kind of help given? Directive, reflective, avoidant?)

OWN DISTRESS

34. What about some recent situation in which you were distressed? (Would you briefly describe it for me?) How did your spouse react? In what ways were these reactions helpful? In what ways were they helpful?

INFLUENCE

35. If you want to influence your spouse in some way, or get him/her to do something, what do you usually do?

DISAGREE SPOUSE

36. When you disagree with your spouse, what do you do about it?

NATURE OF DISAGREEMENT

37. Which of these statements best describes the nature of your disagreements when they do occur?
1. You tend to disagree on the same issues over and over again.
  2. The reasons for the disagreement seem to change all the time.

END DISAGREEMENT

38. How does a disagreement usually end? (NOTE: Is it resolved? What are the feelings?)

CLIMATE

39. Over all, how would you describe the atmosphere of your family life? (e.g., calm, active, fluctuating, emotional.)

FAMILY RELATIONS INTERVIEW

NOT MARRIED

Stress and Coping Study

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FAMILY RELATIONS INTERVIEW  
Not Married

(NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: We are interested in the family of origin, the daily life, and if applicable, what the family life was like in most recent situation. We are also interested in descriptions of significant others in the person's life. IF THE PERSON IS LIVING WITH SOMEONE ON A LONG-TERM INTIMATE BASIS, USE THE "MARRIED" VERSION OF THE FAMILY RELATIONS INTERVIEW.)

|CURRENT FAMILY|

1. Today we are going to talk about your family. Both the one you're a part of now, and a little about the one you grew up in. To start with, tell me once again who lives in the house with you? Do you live alone here? (If someone else lives in the house, ask:)

Who are they?  
Relationship?  
Age?  
Occupation?

If formerly married, how long were you married?

If married more than once, find out: When were you married, and when did the marriages(s) end?

|CHILDREN|

2. If formerly married, ask:

Do you have children who aren't living at home? Who?  
Where do they live?  
Occupation?  
Age?  
When do you see them?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Include sons-in-law and daughters-in-law, if applicable.)

|RELATIVES|

- 2a. If participant has never been married, ask:

Are there any living relatives?

--relationship?  
--Where do they live?  
--Occupation?  
--Age?  
--When do you see them?

GRANDCHILDREN

3. Are there any grandchildren?

Ages?

How often do you see them?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Probe to see if grandchildren are a source of pleasure, basis for conflict, or source of demand.)

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: Administer "Part I Written - Not Married.")

PART I: Written - Not Married

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read each of the questions below and circle the answer that best applies to you.

4. How often do you spend evenings at home alone?
1. Six or seven evenings a week.
  2. Three to five evenings a week.
  3. One or two evenings a week.
  4. Less than one evening a week.
5. How much of the average day during the workweek do you spend with friends or family? (EXCLUDING CHILDREN UP TO SCHOOL AGE.)
1. One-half or more of the average day.
  2. One-fourth to one-half of the average day.
  3. Less than one-fourth.
6. How often do you engage in activities besides work outside your home?
1. Less than once a month.
  2. One time a month but not once a week.
  3. At least once a week.
7. Does your family celebrate birthdays?
1. Always?
  2. Sometimes?
  3. Never?

|SATISFIED|

8. What are you most satisfied with in your daily life?

|DISSATISFIED|

9. What are you least satisfied with?

(NOTE: For Questions 10-14. We want to know how many contacts of what quality there are. We want to have some sense of the balance of power (control-compliance-intimidation). And finally, we want to know how the participant feels about both issues. Questions may be paraphrased or combined as long as the person provides the above information.)

|ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER|

10. What are some of the activities that you do with someone else? Who?

|ACTIVITIES DON'T LIKE|

11. What are the things you do with other people that you don't particularly enjoy?

Probe: What is it about the activities that participant doesn't like?  
(Allow and attend to self-justification.)

|ACTIVITIES DON'T DO|

12. What are the things that you would like to do but don't do because you don't have someone to do them with?

|TALK|

13. What are some of the things you and your closest friend(s) typically talk about?

|NOT TALK|

14. What have you found out it's better just not to talk about with your close friends?

|NOT MARRIED|

24. (If participant has never been married, ask:)

How was it that you never got married?

Do you have any regrets about having never been married? Knowing what you know now about life and yourself, and if you had it to do over again, would you get married?

|ADVANTAGES|

What are the advantages of not being married?

|MARRY?|

Would you get married if the opportunity presented itself?

|MARRIED|

25. (If participant has ever been married, ask:)

|DIFFERENT/MARRIED|

In what ways is your life different now than it was when you were married?

|BETTER|

(Note: Check for appraisal.) Is your life better or worse now?

|ADVANTAGES|

What are the advantages of not being married?

|OPPORTUNITY|

Would you get married again if the opportunity presented itself?



|ORIGINAL FAMILY|

26. Now I'd like to ask you some questions about the family you grew up in.

Were both parents alive when you were growing up?

Were there remarriages?

What was your parents' education?

Parents' religion: How important was religion in your parents' life?

Where did you live?

How many other children were there in your family?

(NOTE: Where is participant in birth order? Were you the first, second, or youngest child?)

|ORIGINAL FAMILY SIMILAR|

27. Would you briefly describe some of the ways of your original family that you continue to follow?

|ORIGINAL FAMILY DIFFERENT|

28. Would you briefly describe some of the ways of your original family that you have sought to change in your life?

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS FOR QUESTIONS 27 and 28:

Following are suggestions to help in comparison if participant requires guides:

1. Values such as

--patterns of authority (who's boss?)

--religion

--education

--money

2. Behaviors such as

--how decisions are made

--displays of affection

--use of leisure time

--ways of dealing with problems

Also, try to capture appraisal wherever possible. How pleased and/or satisfied is participant with these similarities and differences?)

|AFFECTION|

29. What are your favorite ways of expressing affection to your family or friends?

CONFLICTS

30. Can you describe for me a recent situation in which any of the things which are important to you conflicted? For example: (Restate some of the goals and roles the participant mentioned earlier.)

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Look for individual's priorities, which role dominated? Look for expectations of self, i.e., is the self concept that of a super-person? Are there any clues about the family's role expectations of the participant?)

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: Have the person choose a close friend or close family member in answering the following questions. We are looking for the person(s) who are most important.)

DISTRESS May take cue from Coping Interview; descriptions should be brief.

31. Can you think for a minute about some recent situation in which a close friend or family member was distressed. (Briefly describe it for me.) Would you tell me how you reacted to your friend's distress? What did you do or say? Is this your usual way of helping your friend when she/he is distressed?

(NOTE: What kind of help given? Directive, reflective, avoidant?)

FRIEND'S DISTRESS

32. What about some recent situation in which you were distressed? (Would you briefly describe it for me?) How did your friend react? In what ways were these reactions helpful? In what ways were they unhelpful?

INFLUENCE

33. If you want to influence your friend in some way, or get him/her to do something, what do you usually do?

DISAGREEMENTS

34. When you disagree with your friend(s), (family members), what do you do about it?

NATURE OF DISAGREEMENT

35. Which of these statements best describes the nature of your disagreements when they do occur?
1. You tend to disagree on the same issues over and over again.
  2. The reasons for the disagreement seems to change all the time.

|END OF DISAGREEMENT|

36. How does a disagreement usually end? (NOTE: Is it resolved? What are the feelings?)

|CLIMATE|

37. Over all, how would you describe the atmosphere of your home life? (e.g., calm, active, fluctuating, emotional.)

(NOTE: Interested here in appraisal. Pay attention to the tone in which statements are made.)

May 1977

EMOTION INTERVIEW

## EMOTION INTERVIEW

### DEVELOPMENT OF THIS INTERVIEW

An episode of emotion signals an important transaction between an individual and his/her environment. To gain a good understanding of how an individual appraises and deals with an important transaction, we need to describe both the emotional and behavioral aspects of the episode. This open-ended interview was developed to permit just such a description. Major responsibility for the development of this interview was shared by Patricia Benner, Susan Folkman, Allen Kanner, Raymond Launier, Catherine Schaefer, and Judith Wrubel, with the assistance of Peggy Boyd, David Buss, Frances Cohen, David Frey, Robert Hiatt, Shoshana Nevo, Trudy Solomon, and Bernice VanDort.

### USE OF THIS INTERVIEW

Permission to use this interview by other research projects can be obtained from either Principal Investigator provided that feedback of any additional information about the scale's psychometric characteristics, utility and correlates, and acknowledgement of its source, is promised.

## EMOTION INTERVIEWS: STRESS AND COPING PROJECT

Instructions

One of the ongoing concerns of the Stress and Coping Project is to learn how people appraise and deal with events that are significant in their day-to-day lives. In the "Emotion Interview" the entrance to the participant's recollection of a significant event is through the individual's recollection of an episode of a specific emotion. For example, the interviewer may ask the participant to remember a time recently when she/he felt angry. When the participant remembers an episode of the feeling, the interviewer will ask about the event associated with that feeling. The interview guides the participant so that we get a description of the participant's process of appraisal, coping, and reappraisal in the subject event.

The Emotion Interview is to be given six times, in sessions 4-9. We want to cover two emotional episodes in each interview session. In order to assure systematic coverage of events associated with a variety of emotions, we have selected a set of target emotions that characterize both stressful and benign/positive events. Ultimately, we want every participant to describe two events associated with each stress emotion, i.e., two episodes associated with anger, two associated with sadness, two associated with guilt, and two associated with anxiety. We are more flexible in the domain of positive emotions; we want the participant to describe four episodes from among the positive emotions of love, joy, exhilaration or pride. We ask only that there not be more than two episodes associated with any one of the positive benign emotions.

There is no fixed order in which the emotions are to be selected. The participant may wish to select the emotion from the list for the first episode of the interview, and the interviewer can select the second emotion. It should be kept in mind, however, that the goal for the six sessions is two events associated with each stress emotion (8 events) and four events associated with positive emotions -- 12 events all together. Interviewer judgment will have to be used as to when to shift the participant's focus from one emotion to another.

The questions for this interview move back and forth from the situation to the emotional experience of the participant in the situation. The order in which the questions are written does not have to be followed in the interview. What is important, however, is that at the conclusion of the episode all the questions that are appropriate for that episode be answered. This requires the interviewer to be completely familiar with the interview schedule before beginning the first session.

## EMOTION INTERVIEW

We all find ourselves in situations where we have strong feelings. Sometimes situations evoke happy feelings such as joy, pride, love or exhilaration, and sometimes the situations are ones in which we experience feelings such as anger, guilt, anxiety or sadness. In this interview, we want to talk about a situation in which you felt one of the following strongly: Anger, sadness, anxiety, guilt, love, joy, pride, exhilaration.

Name of Emotion

1. In general, tell me what happened.

(Get story of episode. Probe until you have good feeling for what happened.)

2. What did you say or do to express your feeling of \_\_\_\_\_ ?

(Here, we are especially interested in (1) whether the emotion is expressed; (2) if so, how; (3) in just what way the expression of the emotion, or lack thereof, is a part of the way in which the person copes.)

3. How do you think you would have appeared to others who know you well? Would they have known you were feeling \_\_\_\_\_ ? How?

(Some people may have trouble describing how they express their feelings. This question may facilitate their description.)

(The next questions are directed towards the interplay between the event and the person's feelings. Anytime there is a change in the situation, check for a change in emotions; and anytime there is a change in emotions, check for a change in the situation. If other emotions appear in conjunction with the focus emotion, note them, but do not follow them up. Instead, return to the main episode.)

4. What led up to this situation?

5. How did the feeling of \_\_\_\_\_ differ from the way you had been feeling about (this situation, person, problem, place -- whatever is relevant)?

(The following question applies only to positive emotions which do not seem to be attached to specific situations demanding coping, i.e., a feeling of happiness when looking at a sunset, listening to music, etc. We are looking for the overall context in which this episode occurred, i.e., had it been a period of hard work, worry, general good feelings?)

6. How had you been feeling during the day or days before this episode of \_\_\_\_\_?

(The following questions apply only to those situations in which the individual was engaged in coping. Did the person engage in direct action, information gathering, palliation, intra-psychic activity or inhibition of action? Was there a combination? Did the person avoid? How? These are modes of coping to keep in mind as you ask the following questions.)

7. What did you do?

(Most likely this question will have been answered earlier. In that case, summarize what they reported doing and go on with the next questions.)



8. How did \_\_\_\_\_ (restate what the person did) change the situation?

9. What else did you consider doing?

(We're looking for: (1) whether the person generated any alternatives, and if so, what they were and why they weren't used; (2) further information on the individual's appraisal of the situation.)

(Here, we are interested in: (1) whether there was concern about regulating emotional responses; (2) whether the emotional response stimulated coping, and (3) how acceptable the emotion was to the individual.)

10. We are talking about a time when you felt \_\_\_\_\_. Did you want to change the way you felt?

If "No", why not?

If "Yes", what did you do to make yourself feel better?

(The next questions bring the interview to a conclusion. They also permit the participant to add relevant information that our questions may not have elicited.)

11. Looking back on it now, would you have done anything differently? If so, what?

12. Is there anything else about this feeling or the situation that you think I should know about, something that my questions haven't covered?

13. Coping questionnaire (strategy checklist only).

While this event is still fresh in your mind, would you please fill out this questionnaire. Indicate what you did in connection with the event we just talked about.

LIFE CYCLE INTERVIEW

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Stress and Coping Project  
University of California, Berkeley

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LIFE CYCLE INTERVIEW

This interview will deal with central issues and predictable life events during adulthood. The first section has to do with menopause.

Menopause

Menopause is one of the changes experienced in mid-life by women. By menopause is meant the changes in hormones and menstrual cycle over time, or for some women, abrupt changes.

/IN MENOPAUSE/

1. Have you completed or begun to experience menopause?

How long ago?

If you have not yet entered menopause, when do you think you will?

Why?

(NOTE: If the woman has experienced surgical menopause, ask about hormone replacement. Get her appraisal of whether or not she has experienced menopause. If participant is not yet in menopause, omit Questions 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 20.)

/EXPECT CHANGE/

2. Do you (did you) expect to be different -- to change in any important way as a result of going through menopause?

PROBE: In what ways -- physical changes, emotional changes?

/FINISHED MENOPAUSE/

3. Would you say that you have come through menopause, or are you still experiencing menopause?

/INFO SOURCES/

4. What are all the ways you have learned what you know about menopause?

PROBE: friends, mother, media, doctor

/DESCRIBE/

5. How would you describe your experience with menopause?

/ANTICIPATE OR REGRET/

6. In general, would you say you were looking forward to or regretful about menopause?

/SYMPTOMS/

7. Did you (do you) have physical symptoms? (hot flashes, excessive perspiration, etc.)

Life Cycle Interview, p. 2

/NERVOUS/

8. Did you (do you) experience nervousness?

/MUCH BOTHERED/

9. How bothersome were (are) these symptoms?

/MEDICATION/

10. Do you (did you) take any medication -- for example, estrogen, or hormones -- for any of these symptoms?

/WHAT TROUBLING/

11. If menopause was (is) troubling you, what was most troubling about it?

POSSIBLE PROBES: physical change, physical symptoms, the meaning in terms of no longer being able to have children

/OTHERS' ATTITUDES/

12. You hear a lot about menopause, in magazines and newspaper articles, and even on TV. From your experience, do you think people make more or less of it than they should?

/SURPRISED/

13. Were you surprised when you found out that you were in menopause?

These are some common beliefs about menopause which you may or may not agree with. Would you tell me whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.

14. In truth, just about every woman is depressed about the change of life.
15. After the change of life, a woman feels freer to do things for herself.
16. Going through the menopause really does not change a woman in any important way.
17. Women who have trouble in the menopause are those who are expecting it.
18. Menopause is a mysterious thing which most women don't understand.

(from Neugarten, B. L., Wood, V., Kraines, R. J., and Loomis, B. "Women's Attitudes toward the Menopause," in B. L. Neugarten (Ed.), Middle Age and Aging: A Reader in Social Psychology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968)

/OWN THOUGHTS/

19. These are commonly held views; your own opinion may line up with some of these statements or fall somewhere in between or outside. Would you tell me briefly your thoughts about menopause?

Life Cycle Interview, p. 3

/OTHER THINGS GOING ON/

20. Can you tell me what other kinds of things were going on in your life when you experienced menopause?

Children Leaving Home

/CHILDREN/

21. Do you have children?

/NUMBER/

22. How many children do you have?

/ALIVE/

23. Are they all living?

/LEFT HOME/

24. How many of your children have left home?

/IF NO CHILDREN/

25. If participant has NO children, ask: What difference do you think it has made in your life not to have children?

PROBE: Did you want to have children?  
If you had it to do over again, would you choose to have children?

(NOTE: If participant has no children, skip to next section, Question #40.)

/CHANGES EXPECTED/

26. If none has left, ask: What changes do you expect in your life when your children leave home?

/CONCERNS/

27. Do you have concerns about your children leaving home?

/LOOK FORWARD TO/

28. Are there things about your children leaving that you look forward to?

/HOW FELT/

29. If one or all have left, ask: I would like for you to think back to when your first (last) child left home. What words would describe how you felt?

(NOTE: If all have not left, then ask FIRST CHILD; if all have left, then ask LAST CHILD.)

Review and clarify the number of children the participant has, and whether or how many have left home.

Life Cycle Interview, p. 4

/HOW LONG AGO/

30. How long ago was that?

/PLANNED/

31. When this child left, had you planned it long in advance, or was it rather sudden and unplanned?

PROBE: Did you know the approximate date your child would leave very far in advance?

/TALK WITH/

32. Did you talk about the leave-taking with anyone? Who?

/PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY/

33. Ideally, what do you think is a parent's responsibility for their children after they leave home?

/HOW WORKED OUT/

34. How has it worked out for you?

(NOTE: Intent of question is to find out how their ideal plans have worked out.)

/WHAT LIKE WITHOUT CHILDREN/

35. What is it like not to have children around the house?

PROBE: Can you describe some of the ways your life is different?

/AS EXPECTED/

36. Is it like what you thought it was going to be like?

/SURPRISES/

37. Were there any surprises -- any unexpected changes -- in your life after your children left home?

PROBE: Is it better or worse than you thought it would be?

/MARRIAGE CHANGE/

38. Relationships between husbands and wives sometimes change with the children leaving home. Can you describe some ways your relationship has changed?

/DO IT AGAIN/

39. If you had it to do over again, would you still choose to have children?

If Ever Divorced

Of all the changes that can happen in a person's life, divorce is a major change. It requires a great deal of adjustment.

/DIVORCE -- HOW HAPPEN/

40. How did your divorce come about?

PROBE: Who initiated it?

/HOW LONG/

41. For how long did you consider the possibility of divorce before you or your spouse began taking the steps towards divorce?  
(CLARIFY: Did it seem sudden or was it something you came to gradually?)

/WHEN/

42. When did your divorce occur?

/FACTORS/

43. What would you say were the contributing factors to your divorce?

/MUTUAL DECISION/

44. Was it a mutual decision or not?

/HELP TO ADJUST/

45. What helped you the most to adjust to the changes brought about by divorce?

/HOW LONG TAKE/

46. How long was it between the time you consulted the lawyer and the time you signed the decree? Was this timing about right, too quick, too slow?

/PLANNING/

47. In terms of anticipation and planning, would you say you had  
planned adequately or realistically?  
about as well as you could have?  
less than you could have?

/DEMANDS DIFFERENT AFTER/

48. What kinds of pressures and demands did you experience after the divorce that were different from the demands and pressures of the marriage?

/FEEL DIFFERENT NOW/

49. What differences are there between the way you felt about the divorce at the time it occurred and the way you feel now?



Life Cycle Interview, p. 6

/CHANGED/

50. In what ways do you think you have changed as a result of your divorce?

/HAPPY WITH CHANGE/

51. Are these changes you are pleased with?

/GOOD AND BAD SURPRISES/

52. What were the unexpected good things and bad things that happened to you as a result of your divorce?

/RECOMMENDATIONS/

53. If you were to recommend ways to help people deal with a divorce, what would you recommend?

#### Widowhood

Of all the changes that can happen in a person's life, the death of a partner is almost always the most major change. It requires a great deal of adjustment.

IF NOT WIDOWED:

/WIDOWHOOD -- THOUGHT ABOUT/

54. Have you thought about what you might do if your husband/wife died?

/TALKED ABOUT/

55. Have you talked about it with your husband/wife?

/PLANS/

56. Have you or your husband/wife made any arrangements, for example, estate planning, wills, burial arrangements, etc.?

/WHO/

57. Which one of you has played the major role in making these plans?

PROBE: Would you say that making such plans was more important to you or to your husband/wife?

IF HAS EVER BEEN WIDOWED:

/IF WIDOWED -- WHAT HAPPENED/

58. How did your spouse die?

PROBE: When was that?  
Was the death anticipated?

Life Cycle Interview, p. 7

/THOUGHT ABOUT BEFORE/

59. Had you thought about what you would do if your spouse died?

PROBE: Did you discuss it with him/her?

/DEMANDS AFTER/

60. What kinds of pressures and demands did you experience after the death that were different from the demands and pressures of the marriage?

/ADEQUATE PLANNING/

61. Would you say, in terms of anticipation and planning, that you had planned adequately? (ALTERNATIVE WORDING: realistically, or about as well as you could have or less than you could have?)

/WHAT PLANS/

62. What kinds of plans did you make?

/WHAT HELPED/

63. What helped you the most in dealing with the loss of your husband/wife?

/HOW CHANGED/

64. In what ways do you think this major loss has changed you?

PROBE: changed the way you think about yourself?  
changed the activities you do?

/RECOMMENDATIONS/

65. If you were to recommend ways to help people deal with the death of a husband or wife, what would you recommend?

Sexual Relationships

/SEX -- DIFFERENT/

66. How is your sexual life different now than it was when you were 30 to 35?

/IMPORTANCE/

67. How important is your sexual life to you relative to other aspects of your life?

/WHAT WOULD CHANGE/

68. If you could change anything about your sex life, what would you change?

/SATISFACTION/

69. Describe ways in which you or your spouse might be more satisfied with your sexual relationship. In what ways?

/EVER DISSATISFIED/

70. Have you ever been dissatisfied with your sexual relationship?

/FUTURE CHANGE/

71. How do you anticipate that your sex life might change as you grow older?

(NOTE: How does the person appraise the change?)

FOLLOW-UP: Do you anticipate that the change will be a source of difficulty or require adjustment?

Friends

/FRIENDS -- IMPORTANT/

72. How important are friends in your life?

/HOW/

73. In what ways are they important?

/CHANGE/

74. How has the role your friends play changed over the years?

Turning Point

/TURNING POINT/

75. Some people talk about a mid-life crisis or turning point in their life where they changed in some important ways. Have you experienced what you would consider a major turning point during your adult years?

WORK, LIFE REVIEW, AND AGING

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Stress and Coping Project  
University of California, Berkeley

WORK, LIFE REVIEW, AND AGINGWork

(NOTE TO THE INTERVIEWER: For the retired person, please ask the "Work Section" questions using past tense.)

HOW FEEL

1. In general, how would you describe the way you think and feel about your work?

PROBE: Is it a calling?  
 A means to an end?  
 A way to earn a living?

CHALLENGE VS. FRUSTRATION

2. Overall would you say that your work is more challenging or more frustrating?

WORK STRESS

3. What are the things about your work environment which cause you stress, tension, or fatigue?

- noise
- crowded work space
- demanding, unreasonable boss
- threat of physical harm
- dust or other kinds of inhalants that might cause you discomfort
- not enough responsibility
- not enough independence
- troubles with coworkers
- difficult subordinates
- difficult customers
- travel and parking
- overload
- not enough to do
- other

HELP WITH WORK

4. To what extent can you get additional help with your work when you are overloaded, when you have too much to do?

- 2 -

**REWARDS**

5. Are you adequately rewarded or recognized for the amount of effort and skill you bring to your work?

PROBE: In what ways?  
If not, tell me more.

**TOO DEMANDING**

6. How often would you say that your job is too demanding?

_____ once a day .	_____ 2-3 times a week
_____ 2-3 times a day	_____ once a month
_____ once a week	

**CHOOSE TO CHANGE**

7. If money were no object, would you work? What would you do?

PROBE: Change jobs?  
Retire early to do what?

**GOOD THINGS**

8. What are the things about a day which would make you say "today was a good day at work"?

**GOOD IMPACT ON HOME LIFE**

9. How does a good day at work influence you at home?

**BAD THINGS**

10. Now, describe a "bad day at work."

**BAD IMPACT ON HOME LIFE**

11. How does a bad day at work influence you at home?

**CHANGE IN SELF**

12. In what ways has your present (past) work influenced or changed the kind of person you are?

**PREDICT**

13. Can you predict when your job is going to be very demanding?

- 3 -

ALTER PRESSURES

14. How much can you alter or influence the pressures or demands you experience at work?

MATCH EXPECTATIONS

15. How does your job match the expectations you had?

PROBE: If so, why?  
If not, why not?

CHANGES BEFORE RETIRE

16. What kinds of changes do you see happening in your work between now and the time you retire?

PROBE: Do you expect changes in the nature of your work?  
Are there possible advancements or raises?

DECISION TO RETIRE

17. What are you doing or thinking about retirement? When will it be?

PROBE: What do you take into consideration?

(If it is compulsory -- set by the company -- ask: What is it that you like or don't like about retirement policy as it relates to you?)

SATISFIED

18. Are you satisfied with the plans you have made?

CHANGES EXPECTED

19. What kinds of changes do you expect retirement will bring into your life?

PROBE: Are there dreams or opportunities you have in mind for retirement?  
What are the hard things you expect retirement to bring?

WHAT DO

20. How do you think you will occupy your time in retirement?

WORK HISTORY

21. Would you describe your work career or history for me, in the following four areas:

(I will read off four and ask you to comment on each one separately.)

the difficult adjustments you've had  
the surprise turns  
any disappointments  
the major rewards and satisfactions of your working life

- 4 -

EASY TO GIVE UP

22. What about your work is (was) easy for you to give up?

HARD TO GIVE UP

23. What is it about your work that is (was) hard to give up?

PROBE: What do you miss the most? (or will miss the most?)

FOR THE RETIRED:HOW CHANGED

24. In what ways if any has retirement changed the kind of person you are?

Housewife Work Questions

(NOTE: Interviewer should have participant who works outside the home appraise how demanding work at home is in the context of the outside work.)

OUTSIDE

25. Have you ever worked outside the home?

LENGTH

26. How long ago did you work and for how long?

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: If has worked outside the home, go back to work section and ask relevant questions.

CHOOSE

27. How did you come to choose not to work outside the home?

TOO MUCH

28. How often would you say that the work you have to do becomes too demanding or more than you can do?

\_\_\_\_\_ once a day                      \_\_\_\_\_ once a week                      \_\_\_\_\_ once a month  
 \_\_\_\_\_ 2-3 times a day                      \_\_\_\_\_ 2-3 times a week

WHY

29. What makes the work you have to do too demanding?

PROBE: What kind of day could you predict would typically be too much for you?



- 5 -

PREDICT

30. Can you predict when your work is going to be too demanding?

ALTER HOME

31. How much can you alter or influence the pressures or demands you experience in your day?

REWARDS

32. Are you adequately rewarded or recognized for the amount of effort and skill you bring to your work at home? In what ways? If not, tell me more.

GOOD DAY

33. What are the things about a day which would make you say, "Today was a good day"?

BAD DAY

34. Can you think of a day when things just got to be too much for you... or a day that you would describe as a bad day?

PROBE: What happened?

Spouse's WorkSPOUSE'S WORK

35. What are the pressures you experience or share as a result of your spouse's work?

PLEASED

36. Has your spouse's work life gone as you would have liked?

WORK LIFE

37. If you could change anything about your spouse's work life, what would you change?

Spouse's RetirementSPOUSE RETIRE

38. What is your spouse doing and thinking about retirement? What is he/she taking into consideration?

WHEN RETIRE

39. When will he/she retire?

PROBE: Is retirement compulsory -- set by the company?

- 6 -

**POLICY**

40. What is it that you like or don't like about the retirement policy?

**CHANGES RETIRE**

41. What kinds of changes do you expect his/her retirement will bring into your life?

**DREAMS**

a. Are there dreams or opportunities you have in mind?

**DIFFICULTIES**

b. What are the difficult things that you expect it to bring?

Aging Parents

(NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: May begin by clarifying your present knowledge of parents and choose appropriate sections.)

**PARENTS**

42. Would you tell me about your parents? Are both parents living?

IF YES: Do they live close by?  
How old are they?  
How often do you see them?  
How is their health?

**SUPPORT PARENTS**

43. Do your parents require support from you?

Financial?  
Emotional?  
Activities of daily living (e.g., shopping, transportation,  
medical care)?  
Social?

**NEED**

44. Are you able to give them what they need?

**PARENTS' AGING**

45. How do you feel about your parents getting on in years?

**ADJUST**

46. How satisfied are you with the living arrangements and adjustments your parents have made?

- 7 -

FUTURE ADJUST

47. What kinds of adjustments or changes do you anticipate will have to be made in the future?

IN-LAWS

48. What's the case with your in-laws? How old are they? Are they both living?

SATISFIED IN-LAWS

49. Are you satisfied with your in-laws' living arrangements and adjustments?

SUPPORT IN-LAWS

50. Do your in-laws require support from you?

Financial?

Emotional?

Activities of daily living?

Social?

RESPONSIBILITIES

51. How do you feel about these responsibilities?

IF PARENTS NOT LIVING:PARENT'S DEATH

52. Would you tell me the circumstances of your parent's death?

Mother?

Father?

PROBE: How old were they? Was the death expected?

Was your mother/father ill for a long time?

Were there any circumstances or aspects of your parent's death that were particularly difficult for you?

RESPONSIBILITY:

53. How did the responsibility for your (surviving parent) change after your mother/father's death?

PROBE: What were things like before?

LOSS

54. What kinds of changes did the loss of your mother/father make in your life?

PROBE: Self-perception, the ways you thought about yourself?

Relationship changes?

Changes in duties and responsibilities?

Religious Beliefs**FAITH**

55. What is your religious faith?

**ACTIVE**

56. Are you active? In what ways?

**IMPORT**

57. What importance does your religion have in your everyday life? (e.g., guiding principles, active source of hope or intervention or change)  
Was this always so?

**IMPROVE**

58. What are some of the ways you would like to improve the way your faith or religious beliefs work in your life?

**DIFFERENT**

59. Please describe for me how your life might be different if you practiced your faith more? less?

**OFTEN**

60. How often do you pray, go to church or participate in some other aspect of your faith?

**COPE**

61. Does your religion play an important role in the way you deal with life and cope with difficulty? (e.g., prevents it, alters experience of it, etc.)

**HELP**

62. Please describe ways which your minister (priest), or other church members might be helpful to you in time of need.

Aging and Death**CIRCLES**

63a. Now we are interested in what you think about time. Draw 3 circles -- one to represent the past, one the present, and one the future. Arrange these circles in any way you want that best shows how you feel about the relationship of past, present, and future. You may use different size circles. Label each circle to show which time period it represents.

b. (When participant has finished) Why did you draw the circles in this way?

**FUTURE**

64. After the age of fifty, one has lived a good portion of their lifespan. We have been talking about some of the features of your life. What do you think of the future, the next fifty years?

**OLD AGE**

65. Would you like to get very old? How old is very old?

**WORRIES**

66. What worries you most about getting old?

PROBE: What are the essential capabilities and qualities of life you would not like to lose due to being very old?

**DEATH**

67. Do you worry about dying? (NOTE: Try to find out if this is a major concern.)

IF DOES NOT WORRY ABOUT DYING: FOLLOW UP WITH: We all occasionally think about death; what are your thoughts about dying?

Life Review**BEST TIME**

68. What do you consider the best time of your life? Why?

**ADVANTAGES/DRAWBACKS**

69. Considering just this present time of your life, what are the advantages? The drawbacks?

**GOOD THINGS**

- \*70. What do you think are some of the good things (the nice or pleasant things) about being \_\_\_\_\_ (R's age)?

**BAD THINGS**

- \*71. What are some of the bad things about being your age?

**PAST, BACK**

72. Do you ever wish the past could come back? What parts of it?

**LOOK FORWARD**

73. What are the things you are looking forward to?

- 10 -

**GOOD BREAKS**

- \*74. Have you had some good breaks in life? (When was that?) Or would you say you've got what you wanted in spite of some bad breaks?

**INFLUENCE**

75. Is there someone who was very important to you or influential in shaping your life? (e.g., a hero, someone you admired, someone who helped you learn an important lesson? Doesn't have to be someone they knew personally)

12TH INTERVIEW

## Part I. Summing up.

1. What would you particularly like to talk about in this summing up interview?
2. We've talked about many things in the past year. Is there anything we haven't talked about that you think should be talked about?
3. Of all the things we have talked about, what do you feel is most important in reflecting the kind of person you are?
4. Since we've been meeting together, what sort of things changed most in your life?
5. We've spent a lot of time talking about stress this year. What does the term "stress" mean to you? How do you recognize when you feel stress?

## Part II. These questions are oriented towards disengagement.

1. Looking back, what were you expecting when you came into the study? Has it been different than you expected? How?
2. Do you think being a part of this study has affected you in any way? How?
3. If you had to do it again, would you? Why?  
If answer is yes, follow up with questions seeking negatives.  
If answer is no, follow up with questions seeking positives.
4. How would you describe the relationship we have had?
5. How do you feel about the study ending? (What is participant thinking and feeling? Accept feelings.)

e're hoping to see you again in six months, but we're not sure if we'll have the  
unds. In any case, we will keep you informed about what we are learning. It will  
e a while, but you will hear from us. If there is anything you want to talk about,  
all us.

THANK YOU!

## STRESS AND COPING PROJECT

Character Sketch

## 13th Interview

In the course of your numerous interviews of each study participant, you have had the opportunity to take a series of mental snapshots of them in varying moods and situations. Now we should like to tap this knowledge to develop a final composite portrait of each participant to attach to the case record. What we would like to know is what makes this person most uniquely him or herself and different from all the other people in the sample. We are listing some points you might want to touch on in your summary. However, the aim is to capture the essence of an individual in a 1-2 page sketch, and you are free to tailor the description as you think it best.

- Physical characteristics, mannerisms, emotional expressiveness.  
How does he or she appear to others?
- Central themes and characteristic ways of coping with them.  
What are the issues that most concern this person (positive and negative) and how does he or she usually handle them?
- Stability as flux.  
How much richness and variety of relationships and experiences is in this person's life?  
Has the period of the study been one of much or little change for the participant and how does this relate to his or her usual life pattern?
- Unfinished business.  
What still puzzles you about the participant?



APPENDIX B

Examples of Coded Coping Episodes

CASE #01

2nd Interview, 2nd Episode (9/15/77)

SETTING: 04 = WORK  
 SOCIAL: 02 = WORK (FELLOW EMPLOYEES--SUPERVISOR)  
 CONTENT: 03 = WORK (CURRENT--OTHER PEOPLE)

PSYCHOLOGICAL STAKES:

CONCERN OVER  
 SELF-ESTEEM

"No one felt it was important enough. It is extremely frustrating. My usurped authority is still usurped. Nothing has changed. No one considers my job as important as I do."

"I'm misused, hurt, underpaid, and overworked ... Sometimes it hurts ... I feel used."

OTHER CONTENT:

TIMING

"It probably came about just about the time that I was having a little problem at home--in fact it did--during that three day week."

"It was the overall situation at the time. At a different time I probably wouldn't have done it."

"I could have solved it. I was frustrated by frustration."

SECONDARY APPRAISAL (RESOURCES):

LOW STATUS NEGATIVELY  
 AFFECTS ACCESS TO  
 RESOURCES

"I went to my boss to tell him. I told him to make a memo with all the information on it to be sent around and said I hoped it didn't happen again. Nothing happened. No information was sent out."

"The bad thing was that it never got high enough to get to the general manager." XDid you want it to?  
 "Deep down inside I wanted it to. It got squelched at the next step."

TYPE OF APPRAISAL:

HARM/THREAT

"I'm misused, hurt, underpaid and overworked."

NEGATIVELY TONED

"I feel used."

COPING:

ACTS DIRECTLY BY SAYING

"Told them they did everything wrong --explained to them that done wrong, and what should have done."

ANTICIPATION AND  
PREPARATION (PREPARING  
FOR NEXT TIME

"I went to my boss to tell him. I told him to make a memo with all the information on it to be sent around and said I hoped that it didn't happen again."

RETALIATION--LOW POWER  
VERSION

"I subconsciously retaliated by letting other things go by--it made me feel temporarily better. I will straighten them up later."

EMOTIONS:

HURT

FRUSTRATION

EFFECT OF COPING ON EMOTION:ACTING DIRECTLY BY  
SAYING EASES FEELINGS  
THROUGH RELEASEXLet your feelings out?  
"I did talk about it to them, by telling them where they'd gone wrong, that relieved the tension or the feeling that I had."RETALIATION EASES  
NEGATIVE FEELINGS  
TEMPORARILY

"And I subconsciously retaliated by letting other things go by--it made me feel temporarily better."

ANTICIPATORY COPING (MEMO  
WRITING) FAILS AND THIS  
INCREASES NEGATIVE FEELINGSEFFECT OF COPING ON IMMEDIATE EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

NO EFFECT

Nothing has changed. Everything is just as it was."

## CASE #06

## 2nd Interview, First Episode

SETTING: 01 = HOME  
 SOCIAL: 05 = FAMILY  
 CONTENT: 20 = TWO OR MORE OF THE ABOVE

STAKES--PSYCHOLOGICAL

CONCERN OVER THE HEALTH  
 OF A SPOUSE

"This whole episode was a shocker because first I was worried about my husband's health ..."

CONCERN OVER INFRINGE-  
 MENT ON OWN TIME

"...and then I began to think about my own personal routine that I'd so meticulously planned and now he was going to stay home.."

"...and I had something planned for that Monday ... and every day that week I did things for my husband even though I had things lined up for myself."

APPRAISAL

HARM--PSYCHOLOGICAL

THREAT--PSYCHOLOGICAL  
 NEGATIVELY TONED

COPING

SEEKS PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

"...I suggested we call the doctor and as it turned out the doctor was a back up for him with the boss."

ACCEPTS SITUATION

"When he talked to the doctor I realized that there was nothing I could do."

"I said O.K. to myself--I've got to do some shifting."

COMPROMISE  
 (REARRANGES PLANS)

"I did a lot of things, but not as much as I wanted."

"I just will have to do the basics and forgo a lot of other things I wanted to get done."

"I refused to wipe out my entire planned schedule."

"I refused to just sit home and babysit."

### EMOTIONS

SHOCK

"I was shocked."

FRUSTRATION

"...and every day that week I did things for my husband even though I had things lined up for myself. I guess you'd call that frustration."

WORRIED

"I was worried about my husband's health."

### EFFECT OF COPING ON EMOTION

SEEKING PROFESSIONAL ADVICE RELIEVES WORRY

COMPROMISE DOES NOT RELIEVE FRUSTRATION

### EFFECT OF COPING ON EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES

FOR HARM/LOSS SITUATIONS COPING MANAGES CIRCUMSTANCES WITHOUT CHANGING SITUATION

### OUTCOME

RESOLVED AS REAPPRAISED

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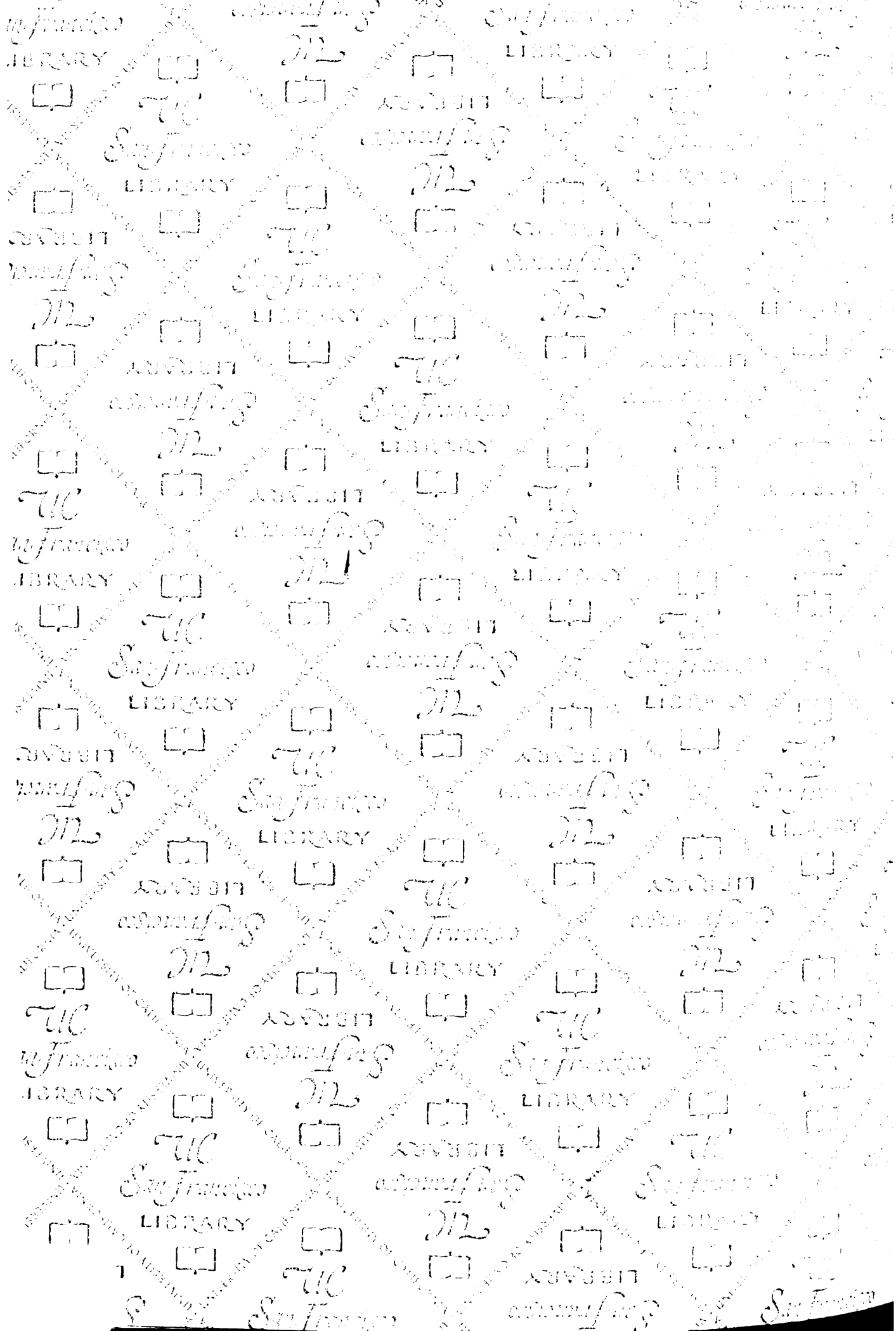
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