

PLATE 1.1

PHOTOGRAPH OF RESEARCHER AND EMPTY-NEST COUPLE



THE EMPTY-NEST STAGE OF LIFE
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN AND MEN FACING TRANSITION

by

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DEDICATION

To
Mom
Dad
Lawrence
Linda

Professor Patricia Krige, formerly of the University of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, who first introduced me to the concepts of empty-nest stage and postparental family during a honours course in developmental psychology, and served as a source of inspiration to me, in my desire to research and explore the empty-nest stage of life. Thank you for teaching me about family functioning.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis encompasses a study of the empty-nest stage of life. For the purposes of this study, the above-mentioned stage was defined as that period in the family when the youngest child matriculates. Thirty-five empty-nest couples were interviewed during 1984, in the city of Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The mean age of the subjects was 49.5, and the standard deviation was 4.9.

The couples were asked about their attitudes towards the empty-nest, using a structured questionnaire, the Family Attitude Survey (FAS). This survey consisted of nine-point attitude statements, which focused on theoretical issues pertinent to this stage, viz. children are on-time or off-time with regard to major life events, impact of children leaving home on the parents, degree of parental involvement with children, parent-child relationships, ageing, sexuality, menopause, work-career, and attitudes towards the past, future and death.

The general purpose of the present study was to determine the extent to which the empty-nest stage of life constitutes a negative crisis period, or a positive period of stability and growth for the empty-nest parents.

Overall, it was concluded that the empirical evidence depicting the empty-nest stage of life as a positive period of stability and growth rather than a negative crisis period, is persuasive for some

of the empty-nest parents in the present study, in view of the empirical findings regarding certain of the above-mentioned theoretical issues examined in the present thesis. Notwithstanding this, it was deemed essential to qualify the above conclusion, given the fact that the same and other respondents experienced difficulty with the following issues, viz. children being off-time with regard to major life events, the departure of children from the home, over-involvement with children, problematic relationships with them, perceptions of themselves as failures as parents, inability to accept their own ageing, problems with changing sexuality, diminishing enjoyment in their occupations, and lack of prospects for future career advancement, negative preoccupation with the past and future, anxiety about death, and an impoverished marital relationship. It was also demonstrated empirically that wives experience particular psychological problems at this time, viz., firstly, they are more adversely affected by their children's departure from the home than their husbands, secondly, they undergo a rehearsal for widowhood more frequently than them, and thirdly, a minority of them are unable to come to terms with the menopause.

Finally, the finding that the majority of wives experienced relief with the onset of the menopause when viewed from the perspectives of general emotional impact, children, and the spousal relationship, conflicts with existing theories in this area. However, it is supported by and large by the majority of empirical studies.

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ADDENDUM

A tape of the researcher's interview on the empty-nest, in 1983 on Audiomix - a programme produced by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), accompanies this thesis.

PREFACE

The great unmet challenge to gerontology lies in ...Middle Age. Many texts delineate middle age as those years between 30-60, but demographers prefer the years 45-64, since retirement at 65 is a good index for the end of middle age, as age 65 signifies entrance into old age. Textbooks in the field of gerontology concentrate on old age and its problems, but the basis of most problems probably originate during the middle years, or even before. It is due to this lack of academic interest that the middle years, 45-64 are the least understood phase of the life cycle (Vedder, 1965, pix).

We cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning, for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true, will at evening have become a lie. I have given psychological treatment to too many people of advancing years, and have looked too often into the secret chambers of their souls, not to be moved by this fundamental truth.. Carl Gustav Jung, (1933 cited in Chew, 1976, p.55).

CHAPTER ONE

THE EMPTY NEST1 Introduction

The challenges, crises and emotional issues confronting parents at the empty-nest stage of life, can be successfully dealt with, if heed is taken of some sound advice reflected in a quotation provided by Jung (1933 cited in Chew, 1976, p.55) (see preface), who states, "We cannot live the afternoon of life according to the program of life's morning, for what was great in the morning will be little at evening, and what in the morning was true, will at evening have become a lie."

In this chapter, the origins of the term empty nest stage are outlined. The first reference to this stage was made in 1937. It was described in negative terms. It is also shown how demographic changes have contributed to this stage. Finally, a number of theoretical issues vis-a-vis this stage are discussed. These are the following: the impact of children leaving home on the middle-aged spouses and parents, the extent of over-involvement of some empty-nest parents with their children, the differential impact of the attainment of adulthood by children and their departure from the home on mothers and fathers, the nature of the relationship between empty-nest parents and their children, the nature of the sexual relationship between empty-nest spouses, the psychological significance that the middle-aged woman attributes to the menopause, the

presence or absence of depression as a clinical entity at the menopause, the impact of the menopause on a woman's sexual functioning, the marital relationship and its hypothesized relationship with the menopause, the question whether women are adversely affected by the fact that they are no longer capable of childbearing at the menopause, the effect of ageing on middle-aged adults, the middle-aged individual's confrontation with mortality, the middle-aged respondent's changing time perspective, the impact of off-time events on middle-aged parents, i.e. when events and issues such as the empty nest, occupational adjustment, marriage of children, and grandparenthood occur at unexpected times during the life cycle, i.e. too early or too late, the middle-aged subject's perception of the past and future, and finally, the impact of jobs or careers on middle-aged respondents.

1.1 Origin of the term empty nest

In this section, the origins of term empty nest are traced. Mention is also made of the fact that the empty nest stage has frequently been conceptualized in negative terms.

Although there was a virtual absence of research about the post-parental phase of the family cycle before the mid-1950's (Deutscher, 1964), already in 1937, a reference was made to this phase. It was provided by McIver (1937) who called this period "the empty nest stage" (cited in McCullough, 1980, p.174). Thus this period has often been viewed in terms of loss, when the middle-aged parents, after focusing their lives around their children, now are alone and therefore find life dismal and empty (Duvall, 1971).

1.1.1 Demographic changes

Various demographic changes have contributed to the origin of the empty-nest stage, viz. parents are having fewer children and spacing them earlier in their marriage, and this gives them an early release from childbearing and rearing. The period of active parenthood has become shorter because children are leaving home at a younger age. Medical progress has improved the life expectancy of husbands and wives. So nowadays most spouses can expect an interval between the active years of child-rearing and the ageing years when retirement, decreased physical energy, reduced social life, and finally, the death of the first spouse and then the other one must be anticipated (Neugarten, 1970; Duvall, 1971).

The average life expectancy at the turn of the century was approximately 45 years of age. By 1970, life expectancy had increased to approximately 71 years of age in the United States (Glick, 1977). Comparative life expectancy figures for White South African males for the period 1979-1981 was 66,59 years, while for females, it was 74,24 years. (Central Statistical Services, Pretoria, 1986). According to Glick, at the time the last child was married, women in 1900 were 55.4 years of age. By 1970, the average age had declined to 52.3 years of age. The median age of the death of the spouse is 65.2. With increased longevity, the average couple in 1970 could expect to live alone without their children for approximately 13 years after the last child left home permanently. The increased length of the so-called post-parental period is one of the most dramatic changes to have occurred in the life cycle pattern in this century.

1.1.2 Marital relationship

The impact of children leaving home on the marital relationship, i.e. whether this event has a positive or negative effect on the latter, has been examined and described by theorists and researchers alike. This is discussed in this section. Also, the degree of marital satisfaction experienced by spouses at the middle-age stage of life, is examined and described.

Fried and Stern (1948), in their study of the middle-aged in the family, observed a pattern of decline in adjustment in middle-age marriages. In most cases they found where the spouses had few common interests at marriage, they have grown further apart with advancing age. In these cases they say further that the departure of children from the parental home increases the isolation of the parents because their chief common interest, the rearing of children, no longer exists and the parents now have more time for reflection on their marital relationship.

Cavan (1958) states that husbands and wives who have failed to make a good marital adjustment and have turned to their children for the love and encouragement that normally comes from the spouse, also face difficult adjustment with the independence of the children.

Bossard and Boll (1955) and Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) demonstrated that marital satisfaction over the marital career showed a linear decline over the first 10 years of marriage for husbands or wives or both, variously locating the lowest level of satisfaction

at the stage of the family life cycle associated with the empty nest.

Blood and Wolfe (1960) found that brides were only moderately satisfied with their marriage in the middle years, while uncomplaining acceptance characterized an increasingly large minority of those married more than twenty years.

They found that after twenty years of marriage only 6 percent of wives were still very satisfied, while 21 percent were notably dissatisfied. These figures suggest that a majority of wives become significantly less satisfied in later marriage than they were at the start.

Satisfaction with the husband's companionship declines to its lowest ebb in families who still have children living at home (these are technically called unlaunched families). To some extent, this is a consequence of long-term trends: familiarization with one another sometimes to the point of boredom, diminishing energy with the passing years, and acceptance of frustrated mobility aspirations which means that the wife is no longer a partner in helping the husband get ahead.

Axelson (1960) divided his subjects into two categories - those who still had one or more single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home and those respondents who had no single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home. Those individuals with single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home were called the quasi-postparental group, and the parents with no

single children under eighteen remaining at home were referred to as the true postparental group.

The mothers and fathers in the study were asked to indicate their current degree of satisfaction with their marital relationship.

Differences in the satisfaction between the two postparental groups for both men and women were statistically nonsignificant.

The second aspect of this inquiry attempted to discover longitudinal differences in the area of relationship to spouse. This was achieved by asking the subjects to recall the time when their child was of high school age and to note if changes had occurred.

Women in both stages of the postparental period indicated important increases in satisfaction with their marital adjustment.

When viewing their lives in retrospect, the fathers indicated that a significant positive change in the area of marital adjustment had occurred since the child was in high school.

Pineo (1961) refined the initial findings of a gradual decrease in "happiness" in his analysis of the 20-year follow-up of the longitudinal study begun by Burgess and Wallin (1953 cited in Pineo, 1961, p.46). These couples were studied first during engagement, again after four or five years of marriage, and a third time after twenty years of marriage. His data indicated that there was a general decline in marital satisfaction and adjustment, which he

conceptualized as a process of disenchantment. He delineated satisfaction as a general term including such phenomena as love, permanence, etc. The greatest decline was noted in the following areas: companionship, demonstrations of affection, common interests, consensus, belief in the permanence of the union and marital adjustment scores.

Since the personal adjustment of the individual husbands and wives was not related to their marital maladjustment, he concluded that what was happening was a progressive loss of fit between them as partners. When they got married - since American marriage is by personal choice - they had been particularly well-matched. As each partner changed and developed over the years however, they may not have developed in the same way or in the same direction. After 20 years, their matching would be no better than if they had been joined by chance.

Deutscher (1964) defined postparental couple as a husband and wife who were both alive and living together, both between the ages of 40 and 65, and having had from one to four children all of whom had been launched.

The respondents who gave a positive assessment of the postparental period spoke of improved relationships with each other. However, there were some couples in the study, who had remained married "for the sake of the children" or some other such rationale for as long as 25 years.

Cuber and Harroff (1965), in a study of 437 upper middle-class Americans between the ages of thirty-five and fifty, found widespread disillusionment and cynicism among his respondents. Many continue in marriage relationships which are described as "conflict - habituated," "devitalized," or "passive - congenital." Husbands tend to describe such arrangements as workable or convenient while some wives tend to be more vocal in describing these patterns as a disappointing and deadening mode of existence.

Lidz (1968) states that the middle years can present a severe test to a marriage with the children no longer a major focus of attention, the spouses are on their own again, largely dependent upon one another to keep their marriage alive and their lives meaningful after a lapse of twenty or thirty years. The children no longer provide diversion or activity, or serve as scapegoats for the conflict between the spouses. The couple have more time together, which can prove to be a burden. Boredom comes easily after all these years together.

Burr (1970) and Rollins and Feldman (1970) found that marital satisfaction starts out relatively high among newly married couples and declines through the preschool stage. It remains at this level to the launching stage. At the launched stage it increases and continues to increase through the retired stage.

Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) focused on the thesis that the departure or impending departure of children may activate latent problems between spouses. They found that men spoke positively of their wives

in the ratio of two to one, whereas women were twice as likely to describe their husbands in negative terms as to give positive evaluations.

Le Shan (1973) states that merely ridding the house of the children does not always bring the magic back into a marriage. She sees this event as a challenge to the marriage: When the children leave, marriage faces a moment of truth, is there strength enough to sustain it without the excuse of parenthood? (cited in Kerckhoff, 1976, p.8).

Neugarten and Datan (1974) found that both men and women perceived a difference in the marriage relationship that occurs after the departure of children, some describing it in positive, others in negative terms, but all realizing a new marital adjustment to be made.

Lurie (1974) states that empty-nest men and women were most likely to say that negative changes have occurred in their marriages.

Masters and Johnson (1974) comment upon the emotional poverty of middle-age marriage relationships which "diminishes the quality of life itself."

Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) asked their middle-aged subjects to envisage changes in their marriage after the children had left home. Middle-aged women were much less optimistic about the future than the middle-aged men. They were mainly pessimistic, with neutral or ambivalent expectations greatly outnumbering positive ones, unlike the middle-aged men who tended to give neutral

responses as often as positive ones.

Glenn (1975) found that a higher percentage of postparental women stated that they had "very happy" marriages than parental women in the 40-49 age range. He noted this same trend in the 50-59 age range. The direction of differences was the same for males as for females, but the magnitude was substantially smaller for ages 40-49 and 50-59 respectively.

Thurnher (1976) found that couples frequently express the desire that their marriages will improve and that they will develop greater intimacy and companionship after the children leave.

Pincus and Dare (1977) write that there are couples whose only investment in their marriage has been their children and who feel they have nothing else in common without their children, the marriage has become flat, the couple frustrate each other, and their sagging vitality is likely to affect all other areas of their lives. Conflicts which were hidden while the children were at home may now become unmanageable or lead to illness.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the above-mentioned theories and empirical studies: firstly, there appears to be a deterioration in some middle-age marriage relationships, which follows after the departure of children from the home (see Fried & Stern, 1948; Cavan 1958; Bossard & Boll, 1955; Gurin, Veroff & Feld, 1960; Deutscher, 1964; Lidz, 1968; Le Shan, 1973; Neugar-ten & Datan, 1974; Lurie, 1974; Pincus & Dare, 1977). The general

theme evident in these theories and studies, is that the spouses in the above-mentioned marital relationships often have nothing else in common other than the rearing of their children, and once their children leave home, conflicts which were hidden while they were still at home, may now become unmanageable or lead to illness. In these cases, they have used their children as substitutes for the gratifications that normally comes from their partners.

Secondly, a number of researchers have associated the lowest levels of marital satisfaction with two stages of the family life cycle, viz. the unlaunched stage and the empty-nest stage (see Bossard & Boll, 1955; Gurin, Veroff & Feld, 1960; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Burr, 1970; Rollins & Feldman, 1970). Thirdly, a number of studies have shown that wives are more critical of their husbands and less satisfied with their marriages than vice-versa, when faced with the departure of their children from the home (see Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Cuber & Harroff, 1965; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975). Fourthly, a number of studies have indicated that the departure of children from the home has a positive effect on the degree of marital satisfaction experienced by the parents (see Axelson, 1960; Deutscher, 1964; Le Shan, 1973; Neugarten & Datan, 1974; Glenn, 1975 & Thurnher, 1976).

Finally, two researchers have described the negative aspects of the middle-age marital relationship, using terms such as "conflict - habituated," "devitalized" and "passive - congenital" (see Cuber & Harroff, 1965). Two researchers have also commented on the emotional poverty of middle-age marriage relationships (see Pineo, 1961; Masters & Johnson, 1974).

1.1.3 The empty nest as turning point, frustration or satisfaction

The impact of children leaving home on middle-aged parents has been examined and described by researchers and theorists alike. The primary focus of attention in this section, is on the extent to which this event constitutes a positive or negative experience for the parents.

In Deutscher's (1964) study, some subjects showed an inability to fill the gap - the empty place in the family which arose as a consequence of the departure of their children. There were both men and women in his sample who described the best time of life as that period when the children were teenagers or even younger.

The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1973) advance that probably the deepest strains on the parents of middle age are psychological. When a child leaves home to further his education, to serve in the Armed Forces, to assume a job in a distant place, or to get married - it is a loss that leaves a definite empty place in the family circle. This separation is in a more final, less reversible way, and it rekindles the conflicts that so many parents experience about relinquishing their authority and control. Once more they have to "spiral around" and work out past conflicts and hopes. But now they have to do it knowing that the children are no longer in the home and there is little chance to correct mistakes of the past.

Anderson et al. (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176) focused on 100 normal families through self-reports. One of the questions

tapped parent's anticipated reactions when their children, now in adolescence would eventually leave home. They discovered that "although 33% expected a loss of a sense of family, 51% expected new challenges and 21% even anticipated a sense of relief at having finished this stage. For the last two groups, "the often cited empty nest syndrome did not appear to pose major problems".

In the Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) study, the present period, i.e. the period just prior to the respondent's last child graduating from high school, included the lowest points in the life charts for only five middle-aged parents (three women and two men). For none of them did the reasons for these low ratings have anything to do with the impending departure of the youngest child from home.

As they reviewed their lives, these parents were also asked, to describe periods of major changes or turning points.

For very few was the present (for most, a few months before the youngest child was to leave high school) singled out as a turning point. The exceptions were three of the five persons described earlier for whom the present period included the lowest point on their life chart for reasons quite unconnected to the empty nest.

Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of mothers had children who had already left home, only one spoke of such an event as a turning point.

Also, no man or woman cited the past or impending departure of a child as frustrating.

Furthermore, with the exception of one subject, neither men nor women singled out the impending departure of the youngest child as a current problem.

While some of the above studies and theories suggest that the departure of children from the home constitutes a loss for the middle-aged parents (see Deutscher, 1964; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1973; Anderson et al. (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176), another study suggests that this event is not viewed as a turning point, frustration or a current problem by the parents (see Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972). In fact, some parents express relief that this event has taken place and even welcome the new challenges that it poses (see Anderson et al., (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176).

1.1.4 The clinging parent

Children? But children can't be a centre of life and a reason for being. They can be a thousand things that are delightful, interesting; satisfying, but they can't be a well spring to live from (Lessing, 1963 cited in Somerville, 1972, p.492).

In this section, a theoretical examination is made of the degree of over-involvement of some empty-nest parents with their children.

Over-involved mothers are unable to relinquish their motherhood role when their children reach adulthood. This has adverse psychological effects for them.

Curlee (1969) found that for 21 of the women in her study, the advent of excessive drinking appeared to be related to difficulties connected with the "empty nest syndrome". For each of these women, the "trauma" which caused their alcoholism was in some way related to a change in, or a threat to their role as mothers.

They all clearly were overly reliant on their children for their identity and their sense of value or purpose. Their lives revolved around their families even more than was usual for their social group, and a challenge to their role as "Sally's mother" apparently caused stress which they tried to meet with alcohol.

In each of these 21 instances the adjustment which the woman had made to life was mainly defined in terms of her role as mother, and a threat to this role was catastrophic.

The above findings show that an "identity crisis" is not something which one undergoes in adolescence and then has solved for all time. It can happen at many stages of life and, for women, may often be connected with their children's leaving home. These women, appeared to have formed an identity which was adequate as long as the external reference point, i.e. their children remained relatively intact. But when this external reference point was in some way disturbed, their identity was not strong enough to survive. None of the women in this group seemed clearly defined as a person in her own right. None appeared to have ever thought of themselves except in relation to their children. The question, "Who am I?" is difficult at age 15; it is painful at age 50.

Bart (1971) found maternal role loss to be a significant factor in causing depression among hospitalized middle-aged women. Those with overprotective or overinvolved relationships to their children were especially prone to depression with Jewish women being the most probable candidates. When they were asked what they were most proud of, none mentioned any achievement of their own - rather they were proud of their children.

Oliver (1977) states that the post-mothering conflict related to depression, is generally experienced not primarily as a loss of persons, but as a loss of control - a discontinuation of a defining and "natural" role which the over-involved mother is unable to give up. She may, in fact, experience her over-involvement as normal mothering, a continuation of a previously acceptable mode of behaviour.

Fathers also are sometimes reluctant to relinquish the role of protector and adult model to their children (Cavan, 1958). The increasing involvement of men with their children is very evident at the empty nest stage of life (Grunebaum, 1979). He believes that for many men, the empty nest may present more of a loss than for their wives, who may well find the departure of the children not an unwelcome opportunity to turn to something new.

Some parents continue to direct, supervise and make decisions for adolescent and older sons and daughters. They also rely heavily on their grown children for emotional satisfaction. For some of them there is an excessive wish to protect their children. They are usually unhappy with their mates or their immediate environment.

Parents aged 50 to 64 have not yet weaned themselves from their children. This role often becomes accentuated and is overplayed as son or daughter disobeys the parental instructions or openly rebels. Parents who play an outdated parental role underestimate the abilities of their children to fend for themselves and therefore are filled with fears and insecurities. They also see their only path for ego-satisfaction and status closing before them. Thus, the departure of a child for college or the marriage of a son or daughter is viewed as a bereavement, with parents mourning for the loss of the child's dependency as they might mourn over the physical death of a child (Burgess & Locke, 1945; Fried & Stern, 1948; Cavan, 1958).

Nonpatient respondents displayed a lower ranking of concern about children than patient respondents in the later years, i.e. (44-50 and 51-60), in the Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles (1978) study. This suggests a loosening of ties to children. Implicit in Erickson's idea of generativity is the ability of the adult to allow separation and individuation of his or her children. Their patient group did not experience this trend in their later years, which suggests that the ability of the patients to allow their children to separate was impaired.

The above studies and theories indicate the following: Firstly, these parents' ability to allow their children to separate is impaired (see Burgess & Locke, 1945; Fried & Stern, 1948; Oliver, 1977; Stein, Holzman, Karasu & Charles, 1978). Secondly, they view their children's departure from the home as a loss and experience depression as a result (see Cavan, 1958; Oliver, 1977). Thirdly,

mothers who have overprotective and overinvolved relationships with their children and rely on them for their identity and sense of worth and purpose, may be prone to depression and even alcoholism at the time their children depart from the home (see Curlee, 1969; Bart, 1971). Finally, there appears to be an increasing involvement of men with their children at the empty nest stage of life (see Grunebaum, 1979).

1.1.5 Problems of empty nest women

They call me Grace
 Yesterday I went to the grocery store
 I had filled up the cart
 and was half way through the check
 stand before I realized I had shopped
 for the whole family
 The last child left two years ago.
 I don't know what got into me.

I was too embarrassed to take things
 back so I spent the week cooking
 casseroles. I feel like one of those
 eternal motion machines designed for
 an obsolete task that just keeps on
 running.

From Voices
 A play by Susan Griffin (cited in Bart &
 Grossman, 1978, p.337).

In this section, the differential impact of the attainment of adulthood by children and their departure from the home on mothers and fathers, is examined from a number of different theoretical perspectives.

The attainment of adulthood by children and their departure from the home, appears to have a more adverse impact on mothers than fathers. Cavan (1958) states that when children withdraw from the family, the father is less affected than the mother. Proud though he may be of his children, he is not so dependent upon them for status as is their mother.

Lidz (1968) states that the termination of the children's dependency, which has been seen as one of the significant indications of the onset of middle age in the parents, influences a mother more than a father. The maternal functions, which have constituted her central interest and molded her activity for two or more decades, come to an end. Concerns for her children may remain a dominant interest, but they are in the form of thoughts and feelings and no longer take up much of her time and effort. She feels that her major life function has been completed. Though she may be pleased and even relieved at the release from so much work and responsibility, she usually also has regrets and feels an emptiness in her life.

Marmor (1968) writes that in middle age, the functional role of a woman as a mother assumes less importance, with children becoming less attentive. Consequently, many middle-aged women are apt to feel as though they are being discarded and retired to a cultural ash heap, while men are still able to feel relatively needed and involved in the outside world.

Duvall (1971) states that some of the developmental tasks of the middle years are particularly difficult for the middle-aged woman,

partly because she does not relish them. It is an unusual woman who really enjoys relinquishing her active role as mother, to see her children whom she loved and cared for for twenty years, pack their suitcases and leave home. A woman's children represent for her more than they do for her husband, not only her emotional investment of adulthood until now, but also the main reason for her existence. Throughout her life as a wife and mother, her children have been her job. Now when they leave, she feels that they take with them her very reason for being. Unless, she has prepared herself through the years beyond her children, helping them become independent adults is apt to be a highly unpleasant and difficult job for her.

The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1973) advance that women are more seriously affected by loss of the children from the home than men because the day-to-day care of their children has been an important part of their lives and therefore their emotional investment is heavier. Often the children are leaving home at about the same time the mother has to deal with the physical and emotional stresses of the menopause.

Troll (1975) states that the ending of direct child-rearing with the departure of the last child from the home (the empty nest) has more important consequences for the wife than for the husband.

In conclusion, the above theorists (see Cavan, 1958; Lidz, 1968; Marmor, 1968; Duvall, 1971; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1973; Troll, 1975) point out that the advent of children lea-

ving home has a more detrimental influence on mothers than fathers because their emotional investment in the rearing of their children has been greater. For mothers unlike fathers, children sometimes represent their main reason for her existence until now.

1.1.6 Parent-child relationships

The nature of the relationship between empty-nest parents and their teenage children has been examined and described by researchers and theorists alike. This is discussed in this section. A second focus is on the theories and studies concerning the extent of the conflict between these parents and their children. In addition, the manner in which parents perceive their parental role at the empty-nest stage of life, is described. Finally, a study is made of the perceptions that these parents have about their children.

Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) found that more parents between forty-five and fifty-four report satisfying relationships with their children than at any other age group.

Peterson (1968) and Vincent (1972) focused on the intergenerational conflict between middle-aged parents and their adolescent children and young adult children about the values and attitudes of the latter.

Lurie (1974) found that empty-nest men are likely to say that their relationships with their children in comparison with the past are

worse now. Women at this stage seldom report lack of change, they are equally likely to report things have gotten better or worse now. Empty-nest men are likely to expect no changes/or positive changes with their adolescent children, while empty-nest women anticipate positive changes.

She also states that empty-nest parents experiencing their adolescent children (who are going through a transitional stage) are most likely to say that being a parent is most difficult at the present time. They also report that the best time for being a parent was in the past.

The fact that some parents find parenting difficult at this stage, is eloquently reflected by Vincent (1972), who describes the more psychological behavioural aspects of the uncomfortable position of what he calls the "caught generation".

If you are between 35 and 55 years old, you may belong to the caught generation - caught in between the demands of youth and the expectations of the elderly. The respect you were taught to give your parents may have been denied you by your children... The threat of 'love withdrawal', used by your parents to keep you in line as a child, may now be used by your children to keep you in line as a parent. As a child, you were to be seen and not heard, now as a parent you may feel that you are to be neither seen or heard (p.143).

Some postparental couples believe that they have been failures as parents. Deutscher (1964) writes that one problem of some of the respondents in his study was connected to the final recognition and

definition in retrospect of oneself as a "failure", in terms of the child-rearing process. These couples considered themselves failures because their hopes and ambitions for their children had not been realized.

It seems like life spaces itself. You look forward to finishing up one space, but then something else - another space - always pops up. Things hurt you a little deeper when you get older (Q: What kind of things?) Oh, if you have traits - you can never tell about traits because they don't show up sometimes for three or four generations, and by that time grandpa is dead and gone and everyone has forgotten that he had those traits - so it is a surprise when they show up in your children (Q: What do you mean by traits?) Maybe you've been religious and gone to church and sent the kids to Sunday School regularly and, you know, put yourself out. Well, sometimes it ends up that the kids won't go near a church. They just say, "I had all the church I need." And Education - well, you can't help but feel that they are foolish there. You have to know their personality. You can't make them over; you have to find out the hard way... (pause)... He had a voice like Nelson Eddy. Just beautiful. I tried to encourage him, but it didn't do any good. He would never do anything with it (p.51).

Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) noted that about three-fourths of the middle-aged parents reported some conflict with the children. For the most part these conflicts could best be termed "mild" or "moderate" and only occasionally amounted to resentment or rejection of the child. The reasons for conflict included problems of tidiness, lackadaisical attitudes toward studies, difficulties in communication and troublesome personality traits. The presence of conflict did not detract from the positive descriptions and evaluations of children.

Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) observed that parental descriptions of children, including teenage youngsters, were predominantly benign. Only about one-tenth of the middle-aged men and women made strong negative comments. The remaining descriptions can be most accurately described as "mixed indulgent" recognising weaknesses or irritating idiosyncracies often viewed as temporary but emphasizing the overall likeableness of the child.

Notman (1979) advances that adolescent children may be sexually and aggressively provocative, challenging or disappointing.

Thus there are conflicting findings regarding parent-child relationships and the empty-nest stage of life, viz. while one study by Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) found that more middle-aged parents experienced satisfying relationships with their offspring than at any other age group, other studies by Peterson (1968), Vincent (1972) and Lurie (1974) noted a negative relationship prevalent between these parents and their children. Lurie also noted that these parents perceive their parental role negatively at the empty-nest stage of life. In addition, some empty-nest couples regard themselves as failures as parents when their expectations for their children have not been achieved (see Deutscher, 1964). It can also be seen from the Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) study that the majority of middle-aged parents experienced minimal conflict with their children and only very rarely extreme conflict. In addition, it can be noted from the Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) study that the majority of the middle-aged parent's descriptions of their teenage children were mainly positive or ambivalent and seldom extremely negative. Finally, Notman (1979)

comments on the negative behaviour displayed by some adolescent children.

2 Sexual behaviour in middle age

2.1 Sex in marriage: At 40 and beyond

The importance attributed to sex in ageing marriages, is discussed in this section. The nature of the sexual problems encountered by older married couples, is also described. Finally, the importance that our culture attaches to sex in ageing marriages, is examined.

A number of researchers have concluded that the sexual dimension of marriage becomes relatively unimportant to later life marital adjustment (Dentler 1960; Brayshaw, 1962; Feldman, 1964; Westley & Epstein, 1960; Pineo, 1968; Troll, 1970 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233). Such a conclusion is more a result of interpretation rather than fact. Sex is, or could be, an extremely important factor in later life marriages (Cleveland, 1976).

There are two main points to be made: (a) The conclusion that sex is unimportant in later marriage because many young people come to marriage counselors with problems of sexual adjustment and older people come with other presenting problems may be fallacious (Cleveland, 1976). For example, Brayshaw (1962 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233) reported evidence based on 25,000 cases seen by marriage counselors in England. For those married under 3 years, sex problems constituted 40% of the presenting complaints, with living conditions and ill health second and third. For those married over 18 years,

ill health was the main problem in 29% of the cases. But, in 2nd place was infidelity, in 3rd, incompatibility, followed by sex in 4th place at 15%. Numbers 2, 3, and 4 are obviously sex related problems, and ill health, no.1, may have a strong interaction with sexual activity. Actually, in this English sample the older group may have presented a greater percentage of sexual problems than the young. Troll, (1970 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233) overview of research isolates three themes which seem to dominate interactions of aging couples, viz. decrease in passion, increase in conventionality, and concern with health. From this, conclusions are drawn that sex becomes relatively unimportant in aging marriages. This is a problem of cultural evaluation. Somehow "decrease in passion" (and possibly "increase in conventionality") leads to a lessening importance of sex. The conclusion is a reflection of our cultural evaluation of sexual interaction as unconventional behaviour, controlled by passion, and the implication is that as sex becomes physiologically and affectively less insistent, it is less valuable and therefore less important (Cleveland, 1976).

In conclusion, Cleveland (1976) observes that there has been a tendency by the following researchers (see Dentler, 1960; Brayshaw, 1962; Feldman, 1964; Westley & Epstein, 1960; Pineo, 1968; Troll, 1970) to underestimate the importance of sex in older marriages. Research also shows that older married couples may actually present with more sexual problems than young couples (see Brayshaw, 1962 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233). Finally, it is shown that our culture underestimates the importance of sex in aging marriages (Troll, 1970 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233).

2.1.1 Human sexual response: the aging female and the aging male

In this section, a number of theoretical issues about sexuality at middle age are discussed, viz. the mean frequencies of intercourse among middle-aged married men, the incidence of orgasm and frequency of sexual activity among middle-aged women, the extent of sexual activity and sexual satisfaction among men and women at the postparental stage, the degree of current sexual interest among men and women in the following age brackets, viz. (46-50, 51-55, 51-60), attitudes of middle-aged men and women towards questions of sexual intimacy and optimal sexual adjustment, differences in attitudes between middle-aged men and women about retrospective changes in the quality of their sexual experiences, i.e. from the time they were newlywed until the present time, i.e. the empty-nest stage, differences between males and females at middle age, in the incidence of sexual dysfunction, and finally, the importance attributed to sex among patient and nonpatient respondents at ages 51-60.

Although a number of small-scale studies have appeared recently, the data are inadequate concerning the sexual behaviour of middle-aged subjects. It would seem that sexual activity remains higher than earlier stereotypes would indicate and that sexual activity in middle age tends to be consistent with the individual's past behaviour, but at the same time there is a gradual decrease in most persons and the incidence of sexual inadequacy shows a sharp increase in males after age 50 (Christenson & Gagnon, (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.599); Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

The Kinsey studies (Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin & Gebhard, 1953) show that the mean frequencies of intercourse among married men continues to decline at a constant rate from the youngest to the oldest ages, with men at sixty having an average frequency of about once a week. Middle-aged married women have as high or higher incidence of orgasm in their forties and fifties as they experience in their early twenties. Active incidences of married women reaching orgasm during ages forty-one to forty-five is 93%; and ages fifty-one to fifty-five it is 89%. Clinical evidence appears to show that by middle age many women have overcome the repressions that limited their sex lives early in marriage, and with the advent of the menopause, with its removal of the fear of pregnancy, enjoy sex experience more in the middle years than ever before in the marriage (Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

In this regard, Masters and Johnson (1966) concluded that:

A significant increase in sexual activity marks the sex drive of the middle-aged woman. There is no time limit drawn by the advancing years of female sexuality (cited in Pfeiffer, Verwoerd & Davis, 1972, p.87).

Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1953) stated:

It must be emphasized that the decline in the incidence and frequency of marital coitus ...do not provide any evidence that the female ages in her sexual capacity. It is (the male's) aging (and loss of capacity) rather than the female's loss of interest or capacity which is reflected in her decline (cited in Pfeiffer, Verwoerd & Davis, 1972, p.87).

Masters and Johnson (1966 cited in Neugarten, 1968, p.275) report that after age 50, the incidence of sexual inadequacy increases dramatically in men. Impotence in middle-aged men seems to be caused largely by social and psychological factors. They listed six major factors in male impotence:

- 1) monotony of a repetitious sexual relationship,
- 2) concern with career or economic pursuits,
- 3) mental or physical exhaustion,
- 4) excessive consumption of food or drink,
- 5) physical and mental infirmities of the individual or his spouse, and
- 6) fear of performance resulting from one or a combination of other categories.

Soddy (1967) writes that for men, the perception of decline in sexual prowess is considered a serious crisis.

Strickler (1975) states that a man often experiences a loss when he becomes concerned about the emotional issue of declining sexual potency. This is often related to adolescent-type conflicts about sexual identity. If he cannot successfully continue to repress these feelings, symptoms of depression and anxiety can emerge, as well as acting-out behaviour in order to prove his virility. The loss of potency can be generalized to many areas of his life. Disturbances in sexual identity affect the individual's total sense of identity, so that a man needs to reevaluate who he is, a situation similar to the identity crisis of adolescence. In cases where the person has not established a clear sense of his masculine and

general adult identity, there is a higher degree of vulnerability to a sense of loss in these areas. A crisis can ensue when his various means of intrapsychic and interpersonal coping are no longer sufficient to handle this threat.

In contrast to the previously-mentioned findings, Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) present the responses of males who predominantly reported increased sexual activity and increased sexual satisfaction in the postparental stage. The females generally report a decline in sexual frequency and/or sexual satisfaction.

In the Pfeiffer, Verwoerdt and Davis (1972) study, the subjects were 261 white men and 251 white women aged 45 to 69.

Only six percent of the men in the sample said they no longer had any sexual feelings. On the other hand, strong current sexual interest was indicated by 12 percent. There was a decline in current interest in each of the age brackets from 45 to 60 years of age, viz. (46-50, 51-55, 56-60). Only the age brackets of relevance to this thesis are discussed here.

Among the women, a similar pattern of declining sexual interest was shown. However, the percentage of women indicating no sexual interest was higher than that among men in all the age categories, the percentage indicating strong sexual interest was lower than that among men in all age categories.

Overall, however, the data clearly indicate a pattern of decline in

sexual interest from the younger to the older age categories for both men and women.

In the youngest age group, i.e. (46-50), 51 percent of the men reported no decline in sexual activity or interest up to that time. But this percentage dwindled in a stepwise fashion for each succeeding age group. The sharpest drop in the proportion reporting no awareness of decline occurred between the group aged 46-50 and that aged 51-55.

Among the women, a somewhat lower proportion reported no decline in sexual interest or activity. In the youngest age group this proportion was 42 percent, declining again in a stepwise manner to 4 percent in the oldest age group, i.e. (56-60). As with the men, the sharpest drop in the proportion reporting no awareness of decline occurred in the 46-50 and the 51-55 age groups.

Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) focused on the changes in the quality of sexual experiences, i.e. (retrospective change from the time their subjects were newlywed until the present time, i.e. the empty nest stage. For the older groups, i.e. (middle-aged men and women and pre-retired men and women), questions of sexual intimacy and optimal sexual adjustment had been supplanted by other existential concerns, and changes were no longer as consistently positive. In general, middle-aged men tended to be more positive, the older men less positive, than women in these groups, who were roughly similar to each other. Middle-aged men were most likely to state that no change had occurred (almost one half), while

the men facing retirement tended to report a decline in satisfaction (one half).

Approximately one third of the older people reported increasing sexual satisfaction. Men spoke of heightened "enjoyment" and "appreciation" deriving from growing emotional involvement and compatibility. Women spoke of "better understanding of one another," of becoming more "honest and comfortable," and made explicit references to early inhibitions. Accounts of negative change were considerably more varied. Here women tended to focus on change in attitudes and feelings, while men focused on decline in interest in and frequency of intercourse. Women blamed their husbands, explicitly or implicitly, for shortcomings in satisfactions: husbands were "not considerate," or their "critical behaviour during the day made it difficult to feel affectionate at night." While some women regretted the absence of earlier passion and "excitement," "others occasionally welcomed the decline in wifely duties: "I'm happy about it. I'm not a sexy person and never have been."

Middle-aged men, the group most likely to perceive no change (or to deny change), tended to stress waning interest rather than declining potency when reporting negatively: "The thrill is gone I just don't look at girls the way I used to. You look at a woman just like a person."

Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles (1978) found that nonpatients ranked sex at a low point at ages 51-60. There was an increase in the ranking of sex primarily among the neurotic group at ages 51-60.

In addition to the lessening of the component of biological drive in mid - and late adulthood, they hypothesized that in the context of growing intimacy, with increasingly stable relationships, the importance of sex as an isolated activity diminishes. This is reflected in the nonpatients' lower rankings of importance of sex at higher ages.

There is conflicting evidence concerning the sexual behaviour of middle-aged males and females. A number of studies show that the mean frequencies of intercourse among married men continues to decrease at a constant rate from the youngest to the oldest ages, while married women have as high or higher incidence of orgasm in middle adulthood than in young adulthood. In fact, there is a significant increase in sexual activity among middle-aged women (see Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin & Gebhard, 1953; Masters & Johnson, (1966 cited in Pfeiffer, Verwoerdt & Davis, 1972, p.87); Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, (1953 cited in Pfeiffer, Verwoerdt & Davis, 1972, p.87)). Notwithstanding these empirical findings, a number of self-report studies indicate the following opposite findings: Firstly, in the Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) study, males reported increased sexual activity and increased sexual satisfaction in the postparental stage, while females indicated decreased sexual frequency and/or sexual satisfaction. Secondly, in the Pfeiffer, Verwoerdt and Davis (1972) study, the following findings were obtained, viz. firstly, there was a pattern of decline in sexual interest from the younger to the older age categories, i.e. (46-50, 51-55, 56-60) for both men and women. Secondly, more females than males stated they no longer had sexual feelings in the

age range 46-60, males expressed a stronger current sexual interest than females in the age range 46-60, and finally, females indicated a greater awareness of a decline in sexual activity or interest in the same age range. Thirdly, in the Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates' (1975) study, for the older groups, i.e. (middle-aged men and women and pre-retired men and women), questions of sexual intimacy and optimal adjustment had been supplanted by other existential concerns, and changes were no longer as consistently positive. Also, in the same study, middle-aged men tended to be more positive about retrospective changes in the quality of their sexual experiences, i.e. from the time they were newlywed until the present time, i.e. the empty nest stage than middle-aged women.

Approximately one third of the older people (empty-nest subjects, pre-retirees) reported increasing sexual satisfaction.

It also appears that the incidence of sexual dysfunction is higher in males than females at middle age (Soddy, 1967; Masters & Johnson, (1966 cited in Neugarten, 1968, p.275); Strickler, 1975).

Finally, it seems that sex diminishes in importance among nonpatient respondents at ages 51-60 (Stein, Holzman, Karasu & Charles, 1978).

3 The menopause

3.1 Female attitudes to menopause

The emphasis in this section, is on the psychological significance that the middle-aged woman accords to the menopause, i.e. whether she regards it as a positive or negative event.

Neugarten and her associates (Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963) sampled attitudes toward menopause from 100 women between the ages of 45 and 55. A variety of attitudes were discerned. Some women were scared, especially of having mental breakdowns or of losing their sexual attractiveness. Some women seemed to be worried about the menopause but were actively defending against their anxiety. They would repeat advice like: "If you keep busy, you won't think about it, and you'll be all right...". A third group, especially at the upper middle-class level felt that menopause had no social or psychological importance for them.

Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.602) studied 100 working-class and middle-class women aged 43 to 53, all of them in good health, all with children of high school age and they obtained data on a large number of psychological and social variables, including both overt and covert measures of anxiety, life satisfaction and self-concept. It was found that these women negated the importance of the menopause, regarding it as unlikely to cause much anxiety or stress. Among the aspects disliked most about middle age, only one woman of the 100 mentioned menopause, and even after

much time was allocated to the topic on two different interview occasions, only one third could think of a way that a woman's physical or emotional health was likely to be negatively affected. Many welcomed menopause as a relief from menstruation and fear of unwanted pregnancies. A majority contended that any changes in health, sexuality, or emotional status during the climacteric period were a consequence of idiosyncratic factors or individual differences in general ability to endure stress.

There are contradictory findings regarding women's attitudes towards the menopause, i.e. while some studies (see Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963; Kraines & Wood, (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.602) suggest that women have negative and defensive attitudes about the menopause, other studies (see Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963; Kraines & Wood, (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.602) suggest that the menopause has no psychological significance for them.

3.1.1 Depression and the menopause

In this section, the first focus is on the relative contribution of endocrine changes and psychosocial variables to depression at the menopause. In this section, the second focus is on whether depression exists as a clinical entity at the menopause.

Winokur (1973) states that depression has been associated with the menopause but seems to be more clearly connected to psychosocial variables than to endocrine changes, although depression does constitute an important clinical syndrome.

Weisman and Klerman (1977) review the evidence for the relationship between depression and female endocrine status and state that the pattern of relationship of endocrine to clinical status is inconclusive. They believe that there is good evidence statistically that the menopause does not increase rates of depression.

The above studies (see Winokur, 1973; Weisman & Klerman, 1977) indicate that psychosocial variables rather than endocrine changes are primarily responsible for depression at the menopause.

3.1.2 Social-psychological literature on the menopause

Mothers who are over-involved with their children often experience depression at the menopause. This occurs because they have devoted their entire lives to their children and then feel useless when they are gone, and also as the result of a loss of a personally and societally valued role and position (Notman, 1978; Bart & Grossman, 1978).

Thus it appears that the hormonal events of menopause are not as important as the woman's interpretation of her role and the extent of her reliance on her children to fulfill that role. For over-involved women, menopause may merely indicate the finality of the end of motherhood and in that manner, may cause pervasive feelings of depression. Women who are already disorientated and depressed by the dissolution of a salient life role will be likely to find the decline in estrogen production an aggravation to their condition.

Here is an example of the interaction between a psychological condition and a physiological change. The reduced production of estrogen which has been demonstrated to be linked with negative emotions (Bardwick, 1971) together with a tendency toward depression as a consequence of loss of role meaning, leads to a more serious psychological depression.

In conclusion, it seems that endocrine changes such as decline in estrogen production (see Bardwick, 1971) interact with psychosocial variables like loss of maternal role (see Notman, 1978; Bart & Grossman, 1978) to cause depression among menopausal women.

3.1.3 Sexuality and the menopause

In this section, the focus is on the impact of the menopause on a woman's sexual functioning. A variety of attitudes about the influence of the menopause on sexuality were revealed by the middle-aged women in the empirical studies below. The views of two theorists about sexuality and the menopause are also given.

Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963) asked the women in their study who were aged between 43 and 53 about the manner in which the menopause influences their sexuality. Sixty-five percent contended that there was no effect and that any change in a woman's sexual life during the climacterium must be a consequence of her attitudes before the menopause. (Of the 35 women who thought there was a change in sexual activity connected with the climacteric, half

thought sexual activity became less important and half thought sexual relations became more enjoyable because menstruation and fear of pregnancy were removed).

Neugarten (1976) reviews one of her studies about the menopause where she selected a group of 100 white women aged 45 to 55. Eleven percent of these women stated that the best thing about the menopause was that it brought about a better relationship with their husbands, while three percent said that they experienced greater enjoyment of their sex lives. On the other hand, four percent of them stated that the worst thing about the menopause was a loss of enjoyment in their sexual relations.

Two theorists Chilman (1968) and Lidz (1968) advance that both men and women believe that the woman loses her sexual responsiveness and ability to enjoy sex with the menopause and this may cause a woman to feel that she will become an unattractive old girl whose husband may properly seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere. Lidz contends that such concepts have no basis in fact. Indeed, there is now ample evidence that, in general, the woman's potential for sexual responsiveness throughout middle age is greater than the man's. Chilman speculates further that along with the physiological changes associated with the start (or middle or end) of the menopause, she also may feel disturbed lest she may no longer be sexually attractive as a woman.

The above studies (see Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963; Neugarten, 1976) show that the majority of women believe that the

menopause has no impact on their sexuality. However, a minority of women expressed a number of differing attitudes about the manner in which the menopause influences it. Some of them stated that sexual activity became less important with the advent of the menopause, while others contended that sexual relations became more enjoyable. A few also advanced that sexual relations became less enjoyable. Finally, a number of theorists (see Chilman, 1968; Lidz, 1968) contend that some middle-aged men and women believe that the menopause does have a detrimental effect on a woman's sexual functioning. According to Lidz, this has no substance in fact, however. Chilman speculates that some women feel that they become less sexually attractive with the onset of the menopause.

3.1.4 Menopause and marriage

In this section, the emphasis is on the marital relationship and its hypothesized relationship with the menopause.

Crawford and Hooper (1973) asked forty-three postparental women a series of questions in order to discover their perceptions of their marital relationship and its hypothesized relationship to the menopause. These included questions about their tendency to moodiness, the kind of qualities and abilities they value most highly in their husbands, the extent of problem-solving with husbands, the relative degree of compatibility in their own marriages and the chief value of marriage. None of these features of the marital relationship were related in any way to menopausal state or to the reporting or

type of symptoms. Thus, from this fairly limited data, it seemed that the reporting of the menopausal experience was independent of a woman's perceptions about her marital relationship.

Cavan (1958) comments on the relationship between the menopause and the marital relationship. She contends that a woman's reactions to the menopause that verge on the neurotic are perhaps more closely related to her relation to husband than to the physical changes. If her husband is nearing the peak of his occupational striving, he may seem to neglect her. She may easily misinterpret these situations, viewing them not as growing out of external social relationships but as proof that her physical changes make her unattractive and unappealing.

The above-mentioned empirical study (see Crawford & Hooper, 1973) shows that a postparental woman's perception of her marital relationship, is independent of her menopausal status and symptoms. Also, one theorist (see Cavan, 1958) contends that some women may misinterpret their husband's neglect of them, as a consequence of his occupational striving, as an indication that the physical changes that they undergo as a result of the menopause, makes them unattractive and unappealing to him.

3.1.5 The termination of a woman's reproductive capacity and the menopause

The question is whether women are adversely affected by the fact that they are no longer capable of childbearing at the menopause.

A variety of attitudes were revealed in the theories and empirical studies about this issue.

A number of theorists (Cavan, 1958; Chilman, 1968; Lidz, 1968; Notman, 1978) contend that the middle-aged mother is likely to regret, become depressed, or at least be ambivalent about, her declining, or terminated reproductive capacity. According to Chilman, her forebodings of increasing decline may be intensified by her awareness that her adolescent daughter (if she has one) is, sexually and reproductively, on the upgrade. Cavan suggests that the actual inability to reproduce is felt more as a sign of loss of youthfulness and vitality than because it prevents women from having more children, while Lidz advances an opposite view, namely, that a woman's self-esteem is often closely related to her capacities to bear children. The woman feels the loss of this badge of womanhood - an indicator of her capacity to reproduce - that has provided feelings of worth. In contrast to the situation in childhood, viz. where she has the prospects of the onset of the menstrual cycle, she now has no prospects of a future flowering to offset her feelings of emptiness and deprivation. Unless her self-esteem as a woman and a mother, has become ingrained with her, she suffers with the loss of the physical tokens of her femininity. Notman contends that women who have invested heavily in childbearing and rearing are those most likely to experience depression, which accompanies the loss of a personally and societally valued role and position. As well, depression is a response to a loss of reproductive capacity.

However, Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974,

p.603) observed that their data did not support the contention that the termination of fertility is considered a major loss among working-class and middle-class women who were aged between 43 and 53. Among the 100 American women they interviewed, no regret over lost fertility was voiced: on the contrary, many women said they were happy to have completed childrearing. Neugarten (1976) reviews one of her studies where she selected a group of a 100 white women aged 45 to 55. Thirty percent of the women stated that the best thing about the menopause was not having to worry about getting pregnant. On the other hand, only four percent of the women stated that the worst thing about the menopause was not being able to have more children.

Thus there are conflicting findings regarding the termination of a woman's reproductive capacity and the menopause. While some theorists (see Cavan, 1958; Chilman, 1968; Lidz, 1968; Notman, 1978) point out that menopausal women are negatively affected by their inability to reproduce, two studies, one by Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.603), and the other study by Neugarten (1976) found that the majority of menopausal women were relieved to have completed childbearing, and only a minority of them expressed regret about not being able to bear more children.

4 The changing body

Middle-aged adults become aware that they are getting older because of physical signs of ageing. This awareness is especially evident

in our society and culture which places such a high value on youthfulness and attractiveness. Such signs as thinning and graying hair, wrinkling skin, and a tendency to put on weight, especially in the "potbelly" area make both men and women aware of the arrival of middle age (Peck, 1968; Marmor, 1968). These signs of ageing and bodily decline may evoke a major and painful crisis (Marmor, 1968; Collin, 1979). This is conceived in physical terms as a loss of health and vitality (Gutmann, 1976). Launching and launched couples, i.e. (the former term refers to middle-aged parents where some of their teenage and young adult children have left home, while some of them are still staying at home, and the latter term refers to middle-aged parents whose teenage and young adult children have all left home) express concern about their health during the 50s (Feldman, 1964). Concern with health increases during the 50s (Gould, 1972). Separation loss is a key psychological stress that recurs frequently during this period, for example, the loss of one's youthful self-image (Marmor, 1968).

Both middle-aged men and women become aware of a decrease in physical strength, stamina, a tendency to tire more easily, indigestive difficulties, insomnia, and "nervous headaches" (Peck, 1968).

The middle-aged individual must learn to accept these physical changes of ageing, and also illnesses or disabilities (Erickson, 1950; Gould, 1972; Neugarten, 1968 & Levinson, 1978 cited in Nadelson, Polonsky & Mathews, 1979, p.292). Middle-aged men are more preoccupied with their changing bodies and health than middle-aged women. Neugarten (1966, 1968), Gould (1972) and Neugarten and

Datan (1974) state that the most striking signs for a man are often biological. The increased attention given to his health, the decline in the efficiency of the body, the death of contemporaries - these are the indicators that cause many men to describe bodily changes as the most salient feature of middle age. In contrast, women who are confronted with the menopause and other signs of the climacterium during their late forties and early fifties, make fewer references to biological changes or to preoccupation with their health (Neugarten, 1966; Neugarten & Datan, 1974). Body-monitoring is the term used to describe many protective strategies for keeping the middle-aged body at set levels of performance and appearance, but while these concerns assume the form of a new sense of physical vulnerability in men, i.e. rehearsal for a heart-attack, they take the form of rehearsal for widowhood in women. Women are more concerned about the body-monitoring of their husbands than of themselves (Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963; Neugarten, 1966, 1970, 1979; Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

5 Confrontation with death

Elliott Jacques (1965) in his influential paper "Death and the Mid-Life Crisis" says:

Family and occupation have become established, parents have grown old, and children are at the threshold of adulthood. Youth and childhood are past and gone, and demand to be mourned. The achievement of mature and independent adulthood presents itself as the main psychological task. The paradox is that of entering the prime of life, the stage of fulfillment, but at the same time

the prime and fulfillment are dated. Death lies beyond... I believe, and shall try to demonstrate, that it is this fact of the entry upon the psychological scene of the reality and inevitability of one's own eventual death that is the central and crucial feature of the mid-life phase - the feature which precipitates the critical nature of the period. Death at the conscious level - instead of being a general conception, or an event experienced in terms of the loss of someone else, becomes a personal matter, one's own death, one's own real and actual mortality (cited in Brim, 1976, p.5).

Gutmann (1976) and Marmor (1968) state that the somatic changes of the aging process during middle age carry with them an inescapable confrontation with the fact of mortality. The defenses which have worked so well in youth - the illusion of immortality and the denial of one's own ultimate death can no longer be maintained. The result is a marked increase in what has come to be known as "existential anxiety," the anxiety that is derived from fully facing the limits of existence and our own ultimate nonexistence.

Becker (1973 cited in Chew, 1976, p.5) states: "The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity - activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man."

He argues brilliantly that man's horror of death, and of the "overwhelmingness" of a world that's beyond his comprehension, is the mainspring of his drive for success, his dreams of heroics, his everlasting busyness. Man's furious activity helps him forget that he's half god, half animal, that his fate is annihilation.

Lifton's (1973) analysis of 'death anxiety' contributes to the understanding of how the awareness of mortality can have devastating effects claimed for it in middle age. He writes that 'death anxiety' centres on fear of disintegration, stasis and separation. Though experienced throughout the life cycle, it is 'salient' in middle adulthood (cited in Collin, 1979, p.146).

Vaillant (1977) reporting on the longitudinal Grant Study offers an opposing view. He writes:

'Elliott Jacques...is, I believe wrong when he suggests that the angst of the forties is from a fear of death... Thus, if men in their forties are depressed, it is because they are confronted by instinctual re-awakening and because they are more honestly able to acknowledge their own pain. It is not because they fear death' (cited in Collin, 1979, p.145).

Brim (1976) believes that one of the major psychological tasks for middle age is resignation to death and a permutation, a reordering of life priorities. Similarly, Nadelson, Polonsky and Mathews (1979) contend that on an unconscious level, each person must find a way to accept his/her mortality and resolve the loss of fantasized hopes.

In conclusion, a number of theorists (Jacques, (1965 cited in Brim, 1976, p.5); Marmor, 1968 & Gutmann, 1976) contend that the individual is confronted with his own death at middle age. He is no longer able to deny his own mortality, and as a consequence, there is a marked increase in "existential anxiety," which centres on fear of disintegration, stasis and separation (Becker, (1973 cited in Chew, 1976, p.5); Lifton, 1973). This view has been contradicted

by Vaillant (1977), who advances that men in their forties are not depressed because they fear death, but because they are faced with instinctual re-awakening. Finally, a number of theorists (Brim, 1976; Nadelson, Polonsky & Mathews, 1979) conclude that the middle-aged individual must resign himself to his own death, reorder his life priorities, and resolve the loss of fantasized hopes.

6 Time and timing

6.1 The changing time perspective and death

An individual's perception of time changes during middle age, both in terms of the subjective experience of its passage and in terms of its availability. He becomes aware that time is limited and that he has to engage in a race against it (Collin, 1979). Time accordingly increases in value and this appears to influence its subjective speed (Wallach & Green, 1968 cited in Collin, 1979, p.146). This changing time perspective is also evident in the manner in which life is restructured in terms of time-left-to-live rather than time-since-birth by middle-aged adults (Neugarten, 1966, 1968, 1976, 1979).

Time is a two-edged sword. In some of my friends, it brings anxiety that there won't be time enough. To others, it adds a certain challenge in seeing how much pleasure can still be obtained. But all of us figure backward from the end...and estimate how much time we can expect. (Neugarten, 1976, p.18).

Such a change in time perspective is closely connected to the personalization of death because death in middle age becomes a definite possibility for the self, no longer the magical or unusual occurrence that it appears in youth (Neugarten, 1966, 1970, 1976; Neugarten & Datan, 1974). In the women there is the rehearsal for widowhood which becomes characteristic (one which seldom occurs in men), and in men there is a rehearsal for a heart-attack. Also, in men there is the "sponsoring" issue with regard to one's children, an issue known as the creation of biological and social heirs (Neugarten, 1966, 1970, 1979).

Death rates over the life span show a sudden and dramatic rise at middle age. The rate for men aged 45 to 64 is six times as high as it is in the preceding 20-year period, and for women it is three times as high. A second factor that may be equally significant is that from childhood through early adulthood the leading cause of death is accidents, but for the age range 45 to 64, for both men and women, malignant neoplasms and heart disease account for nearly two-thirds of all deaths. To put this another way, in early life death is exceptional and accidental; but in middle age not only does death strike frequently, but it strikes from within (Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

You hear so much about deaths that seem to be premature. That's one of the changes that comes over you over the years, whereas young fellows never give it a thought. (Neugarten, 1966, p.69).

The recognition that there is "only so much time left" was a fre-

quent theme in the interviews. In referring to the death of a contemporary, one man, aged 48, stated:

There is now the realization that death is very real. Those things don't quite penetrate when you're in your twenties and you think that life is all ahead of you. Now you realize that those years are gone and with each passing year you are getting closer to the end of your life (Neugarten, 1966, p.69).

6.1.1 Individual timetables: on-time and off-time events

Adults carry around in their heads, whether or not they can express it, a set of anticipations of the normal expectable life cycle. They internalize expectations about the consensually validated sequences of major life events - not only what those events should be but when they should occur (Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Butler & Lewis, (1977 cited in Rossi, 1980, p.12).

The predictable on-time events when they occur are not disruptive, the events are anticipated and rehearsed, the grief work completed, and the reconciliation achieved without breaking this sense of continuity of life. For example, women in their forties and fifties view the climacterium as inevitable; they know that all women survive it; and that most women therefore take it in their stride. Similarly, men and women expect their children to grow up and leave home just as they did themselves in their own youth, and their feelings of relief and pride are important components of their mixed emotions. It is the unexpected not the expected, which is likely to represent the traumatic event as when the empty nest, occupational

adjustment and grandparenthood occur at unexpected times during the life cycle, i.e. too early or too late, viz. this is theoretically called being off-time with regard to major life events (Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Datan, 1974; Rossi, 1980). Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) contend that a slower pacing in the development of marriage and career plans in their young - rather than any basic differences in values and aspirations is a source of stress for the parent generation. Bourque and Back (1977) advance that an event like children leaving home is perceived most strongly if it occurs at the wrong time; children leaving is least traumatic during the 50s - perhaps say the authors the "normal" age for such departures.

Being on-time or off-time is a compelling basis for self-evaluation. Men and women compare themselves with their friends, siblings, work colleagues or parents in deciding whether they have been successful, but it is always with a time schedule in mind. It is not the fact that one reaches 40 or 50 which is itself important but rather, "How am I doing for my age?" (Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Neugarten, 1979).

In conclusion, adults anticipate that major life events like marriage will occur at specific times during the life cycle (see Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Butler & Lewis, (1977 cited in Rossi, 1980, p.12). Consequently, they do not experience stress when these events take place at the expected times, however when these do not occur at the appropriate time, i.e. early or late in the life cycle, this causes distress for them (see Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Datan, 1974; Rossi, 1980; Thurnher, Spence &

Lowenthal, 1974; Bourque & Back, 1977). They also use the criteria of being on-time or off-time with regard to significant life events, to evaluate their performance for their age in comparison with others (see Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Neugarten, 1979).

7 Perspectives on the life course

7.1 Introduction

In this section, the middle-aged individual's perception of the past and the future are described.

Individuals who are socially and psychologically maladjusted have a particular view of the past and the future. Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) found that individuals who are in some social or psychological sense less "healthy" dwell more on the past and have a more limited perspective on the future.

7.1.1 Attitudes towards the past

In this section, an empirical study shows that empty-nest parents and newlyweds were more preoccupied with the past than high school seniors and pre-retirees. It is also indicated that the former groups were both facing two major life transitions, viz. postparental phase and retirement, and marriage and parenthood. Reasons for the middle-aged respondent's active reconstruction of the past are

also provided, viz. prospects of the last child leaving home, the limited career options of middle-aged men and their eventual retirement. Finally, it is pointed out that the middle-aged women's preoccupations with the past were more diffuse than those of the middle-aged men. The former were more concerned with the present and the future.

In the Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) study, active reconstruction of the past, characterized by a concern with "rehashing" specific past decisions or behaviour, shifted by stage, peaking at middle age: 14 percent of the students, 33 percent of the newlyweds, 44 percent of the middle-aged parents, and 12 percent of those facing retirement manifested such concerns.

Of the two groups with the highest level of reconstruction, the newlyweds and the middle-aged, the former were facing the consequences of one major life transition (marriage) and preparing for another (parenthood), while the latter were concerned both with the imminent postparental phase and (the men, in particular) with eventual retirement, despite its relative remoteness.

Among the middle-aged, while the prospects of the last child's leaving home may have prompted a life-review process in both men and women, men seemed to focus rather more closely on their closing career options, reviewing past career choices and their implications for the present. One man, for example, not only had thought about the implications of past career choices but also was attempting to work through his doubts about the proper career path: "I think

about what would have happened if I had gone into another business, if I had worked strictly as an accountant or if I had gone into the real estate business with a friend of mine. I knew a great deal about real estate and he had a great deal of money. I'm sure we would have made a successful venture. I may still do that, of course. But I keep on wondering if I would have made more money at that type of work or feel happier. I don't think I would have been as happy: accountants die young and real estate is dreary." Middle-aged women were less specific in their reworkings of the past as one woman expressed it: "I think of the past quite a bit, I do. You think of what you did or if you could have done things differently. "I can't see many changes for us in the future." Often, for these women, a vague discontent with the present and perhaps the future reveals itself, as if they were wondering: "Where did I go wrong?"

7.1.2 Attitudes towards the future

In this section, two empirical studies about the middle-aged subjects' attitudes towards the future are reviewed, i.e. (Neugarten & Garron, 1959; Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975).

In the former study, the respondents who had negative attitudes towards the future expressed fears about becoming dependent on others as a consequence of aging. Dependency was conceived of as having two sources, viz. loss of income and loss of health.

In the latter study, the respondents' sense of time extension into

the future was examined. A number of them refused to project into the future. The empty-nest parents and pre-retirees refused more often to project into the future than the high school seniors and the newlyweds. The latter groups gave longer projections into the future than the former groups. The pre-retirees were found to be the most pessimistic about the future.

In the Neugarten and Garron (1959) study, the respondents, i.e. (625 men and women aged 40 to 70 residing in the metropolitan area of Kansas City) were asked what they thought life would be like when they grew older.

Attitudes toward the future were placed in one of four categories: positive, negative, neutral, or contingent.

Attitudes toward the future were positive in 14 percent, negative in 13 percent, contingent in 18 percent, and, again, neutral in 55 percent.

There was a striking consistency in the content of responses about the future. For those persons expressing negative or contingent attitudes toward the future, the fear of some form of dependency was paramount. They said: "Growing old is terrible because somebody has to take care of you," or "I don't mind growing old as long as I don't become a burden to others." Dependency in turn is always seen as having two sources - loss of income and loss of health.

Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) assessed their

subjects' sense of time extension by counting the number of years projected into the future on the Life Evaluation Chart. A sizeable minority of people approximately 16 percent refused to project at all on this instrument with those in the later stages, i.e. (empty-nest and pre-retirees) refusing more often than high school seniors and newlyweds. They found if they combined into a resisters category all men and women who either refused or who projected a maximum of only ten years into the future, that the resisters accounted for 14 percent of the high school seniors and newlyweds but for more than one third of those in the later two stages.

Newlyweds and high school seniors generally projected further into the future than did middle-aged and preretirement people. The shorter projections into the future evident among the middle-aged parents and preretirement men and women might be explained away simply on the basis of the sizeable age difference between those in the earlier and later stages. On the other hand, they found that if they studied only those whose projections extended either into the sixties and seventies or into the eighties and above, older respondents continued to be much more likely to make attenuated projections: three fourths of the younger subjects projected at least to the eighties, compared with somewhat more than half of the middle-aged and the preretirement men and women. Those in the preretirement stage, who on an actuarial basis were closest to death, were also the most pessimistic about their life extension: only 46 percent projected to the eighties or above, compared with 66 percent of the middle-aged.

In this regard, Collin (1979) states that time is sometimes experienced as 'deranged'. Fried (1976 cited in Collin, 1979, p.146) writes of boredom and depression which result and likens these feelings to the medieval sin of acedia, a paralysing mixture of despair and apathy in whose presence the future disappears.

7.1.3 Attitudes towards the past and future

In this section, it is shown that empty-nest parents and preretirees were past-orientated, while high school seniors and newlyweds were future-orientated. It is also indicated that the former groups dwelt more on the past than the latter groups.

Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) asked their respondents to allocate their best age either to the past or to the future. There was a marked stage difference among those informants who placed the best age either in the past or in the future. None of the middle-aged or pre-retirement groups were future-orientated, while over three quarters of the high school seniors and newlyweds saw the best time as yet to come.

In the same study, these researchers found no significant differences in the frequency of past versus future time orientations among younger and older respondents, i.e. (high school seniors, newlyweds, middle-aged subjects and pre-retirees), but a somewhat larger proportion of the older (32 percent) than the younger (22 percent) respondents did think more about the past.

7.1.4 Time perspective and adaptation

In the Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) study, the following areas were examined, viz. past or future orientations and projections into the future, the relationship between future orientation and death, the relationship between physical health status, projections into the future and general time orientation, the relationship between a psychiatrist's rating of psychiatric impairment and projections of the life course, the relationship between future-orientation and optimism about the future and past orientation and pessimism about the future, and finally, the relationship between time projections and orientations with affect balance scores, which measure recent emotional states, and Bradburn's (1969 cited in Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975, p.137) overall happiness measure, which reflects the individual's prevailing mood.

Direction (represented by orientation to the past or future) and projections of one's life span proved to be significantly related for a select segment of respondents.

Among the older respondents, i.e. (empty nest and pre-retirees), those with a future orientation expected to die at a later date.

Because of its obvious connection with expectations concerning length of time remaining, physical health status might be expected to exhibit a strong relationship with projections of the life span, and perhaps time orientation in general: They found one difference

between the older and younger groups. Looking just at those subjects who saw their health status as good to poor (as opposed to very good), the younger people tended to be future-orientated, while the older were split approximately equally, with 52 percent being past-orientated. An obvious interpretation of this trend is that the young are more likely to anticipate improvement in their general health status.

Perhaps the most common finding in the literature is that individuals with a disturbed time perspective (usually limited extensionality), i.e. (this term refers to the number of further years respondents predicted they would live on measuring devices such as the Life Evaluation Chart (see Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975) - their current age was used as the baseline for these studies), are psychologically maladjusted. They first looked at the relationships between a psychiatrist's rating of psychiatric impairment (based on evaluation of symptom lists) and projections of the life course. Among the older, however, nearly two thirds of those rated as considerably impaired had a limited time extension. A trend in this direction was found among women. Psychiatric impairment was not associated with directionality; that is, with whether the subject was mainly preoccupied with the past or with the future.

It seems reasonable to expect that a future-oriented individual will be hopeful or optimistic about the future, whereas a past-oriented person will see the future more pessimistically. Their findings generally supported this common-sense conjecture, but only among

informants in the two later stages. Among these older individuals, especially the women, more than two thirds who were past-oriented felt hopeless about the future, whereas most of the future-oriented ranked moderate to high on hopefulness.

They next compared time projections and orientations with affect balance scores, which measure recent emotional states, and Bradburn's (1969 cited in Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975, p.137) overall happiness measure, which reflects the individual's prevailing mood. Projected duration of the life course had bearing on affect balance or happiness among the two older groups, i.e. (empty-nest and pre-retirees). Two thirds of the older subjects who had relatively long life-course projections scored high on affect balance, while nearly half of those with limited projections scored low. Among those in their older stages, longer projections were associated with greater happiness. Time orientation, as reflected by a focus primarily on the past or future, was also significantly related to affect balance among only older subjects. Over two thirds of the happier older people were future-oriented, while over half of the less happy were past-oriented. Overall, then, their results suggested that time projections and orientations have a greater significance for the sense of emotional well-being among older people.

Finally, the above study indicates that those respondents who had a future-orientation rather than past-orientation were more psychologically "healthy" and envisaged a longer life expectancy for themselves than those who had a past-orientation.

8 The work career

In middle age (the years between 40 and 60), most men are still working at the job or career that they began as young men (Grunebaum, 1979). For some of them, middle age is regarded as the "prime of life," the point when youthful drive is not yet noticeably diminished, experience is great, and the combination of the two carries the man to his peak of success (Cavan, 1958). According to Lidz (1968), for men, particularly in executive circles, the period between forty and fifty, or even fifty-five, may involve intense striving to capture the elusive top positions or properly to climax a career by amassing the wealth or prestige that has come within grasp. In addition, Neugarten, Moore and Lowe (1965), Peterson (1968) and Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) see middle age in positive terms, i.e. as a period in one's life characterized by an increasing intellectual ability to make decisions, holding of high status jobs, earning a maximum income, and enjoying relatively good physical and mental health which allows one to work regularly. Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates found that job satisfaction increases with age.

Notwithstanding the above, many of them are confronted with increased job demands, reduced opportunity to find better employment, job boredom, and the feeling of being stuck in a rut that is to be found among the successful as well as the unsuccessful (Farrell et al. (1975 cited in Gutmann, 1976, p.42); Neugarten, 1979; Grunebaum, 1979). They express concerns about moving up, moving down, reaching a plateau or hanging on (Neugarten, 1966; 1979; Peterson, 1968;

Strickler, 1975; Collin, 1979).

Some men at middle age express a fear about youthful colleagues moving up the job ladder (Peterson, 1968; Collin, 1979).

The effect of jobs or careers on middle-aged women has also been examined in the literature. The increasing labour force participation by women generally, and specifically in the forty-five to sixty-four age range, represents another factor that is changing the situation of couples in the post-childrearing period. The proportion of married women workers aged 45 to 64 doubled in just the 20-year period from 1950 to 1970. Fifty-five percent of all women forty-five to fifty-four and 41.1% of all women fifty-five to sixty-four were in the labour force in 1976 (Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Keyserling, 1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.174).

One theorist noted that employment has a beneficial effect on post-parental women. Cavan (1958) states that it has the advantage of giving the woman a future which to look forward to, a future of success in her job, and perhaps added security for old age. The middle-aged woman who does not find activities to compensate for the lost maternal functions tends to look backward, to long for and relive in fantasy, the past when her children were small, and to feel the future holds little for her. Her useful period is over, and life comes to be a matter of waiting without enthusiasm for the end.

It appears that employed women experience greater enjoyment of their jobs or careers at middle age than employed men. Lowenthal and

Chiriboga (1972) point out that among the subjects in their study who did report current satisfaction in instrumental or material areas, there were more women than men. Few women were found to be dissatisfied with their achievements in paid occupations (half of the women in this sample worked).

The reason why most of the above women enjoy their jobs or careers at middle age, can perhaps be explained in terms of the fact, that for many of them, the most conspicuous characteristic of middle age is the sense of increased freedom. Not only is there increased time and energy available for the self, but also a satisfying change in self-concept takes place. The typical theme is that middle age marks the beginning of a period in which latent talents and capacities can be put to use in new directions (Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

Some of these women described this sense of freedom coming at the same time that their husbands were reporting increased job pressures or something equally troublesome job boredom.

In conclusion, firstly, it appears that there are contradictory findings regarding the degree of enjoyment, success, and opportunity for future career advancement men and women obtain from their jobs or careers at middle age, i.e., some of them experience increasing enjoyment, success, and opportunity for future career advancement (see Cavan, 1958; Neugarten, Moore & Lowe, 1965; Lidz, 1968; Peterson, 1968; Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975), while others experience diminishing enjoyment, a lack of success, and lack of opportunity for future career advancement (see Farrell

et al. (1975 cited in Gutmann, 1976, p.42); Neugarten, 1966; 1979; Grunebaum, 1979; Peterson, 1968; Strickler, 1975; Collin, 1979). Secondly, it seems that women derive increasing enjoyment from their jobs or careers (see Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Neugarten & Datan, 1974). Thirdly, it appears that an increasing number of women are entering the labour force at middle age (see Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Keyserling, (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.174). Finally, it seems that employment may have a positive effect on postparental women (see Cavan, 1958).

8.1 Aspiration-achievement gap

Men are often unhappy in the middle years because of their occupational frustrations, concerns and problems (Bossard & Boll, 1955; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972).

This unhappiness is often a consequence of failure to realize early 'Dreams' of career success because it is suggested that in mid-life the individual becomes conscious of the disparity between these early aspirations and actual achievements and recognizes that not enough time is left to close it completely (Deutscher, 1964; Gould, 1972; Farrell et al. (1975 cited in Gutmann, 1976, p.42); Strickler, 1975; Brim, 1976; Collin, 1979; Grunebaum, 1979). He may start to think about those early goals which he had previously forgotten, repressed or abandoned, and which Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McKee (1976) describe as the 'Dream' - the vision of his future that the individual had in adolescence. If in middle

age he feels that he has betrayed or compromised his 'Dream' he may experience distress. 'There is a pervading sense of sadness in these mid-life men of unfulfilled dreams...'

This disparity between early aspirations and actual achievements - that is, whether one is "on-time" or "late" in attaining career goals leads to a heightened awareness of age (Neugarten & Datan, 1974; Medinger & Varghese, 1981).

9 General conclusions

Overall, it can be seen from this chapter that there are a number of issues which are pertinent to the empty-nest stage of life. These are the following: the deterioration or improvement in the marital relationship after the departure of children from the home, the loss or relief felt by parents after the same event, the inability of some parents to allow their children to separate from them, the greater distress experienced by mothers than fathers once their children leave home, the positive or negative relationships experienced by parents with their children at this stage, the importance of sex in ageing marriages, the conflicting evidence concerning the sexual behaviour of middle-aged respondents with regard to sexual interest and enjoyment, the extent of sexual dysfunction, the extent of positive and negative attitudes attributed by middle-aged women to the menopause, the "existential anxiety" experienced by some individuals when confronting death at middle age, and the need to come to terms with it, the distress that parents experience when their

children are "off-time" with regard to major life events, i.e. these events occur too early or late in the life cycle, for example leaving home, vocational adjustment, marriage and grandparenthood, the realization that one has failed to achieve early 'Dreams' of career success at middle age, an ageing crisis as a consequence of the physical signs of ageing, the realization that time is getting shorter for middle-aged individuals, and the phenomenon of life being restructured in terms of time-left-to-live rather than time-since-birth by them, and finally, the fact that individuals with a future orientation rather than a past orientation are more socially and psychologically healthy than those who have a past orientation.

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY2.1 Sampling2.1.1 Introduction

In this section, the manner in which individual researchers obtained their respective empty nest samples are described. The variety of ways in which the empty nest stage of life has been defined, is also discussed. Finally, the composition of each empty nest sample is described.

2.1.2 Methods of locating empty nest samples

In Axelson's (1960) study, the population consisted of men and women who had a child under twenty-five years of age married between May 1, 1956, and April 30, 1958.

Wedding license applications made by persons residing in the medium sized communities located in the states of Washington and Idaho were checked for the names and addresses of their parents. A total of 696 individuals who gave their home addresses as one of these communities used wedding certificates. Intensive efforts to locate all parents produced a total useable population of 390 fathers and 461 mothers.

The data were collected by mailed questionnaire. A total return of 199 (51.0 percent) useable father's questionnaire's and 265 (57.7 percent) useable mother's questionnaires were obtained.

Axelson divided his respondents into two categories - those who still had one or more single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home and those respondents who had no single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home. Those individuals with single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home were referred to as the quasi-postparental group, and the parents with no single children under eighteen remaining at home were designated as the true postparental group.

Deutscher (1964) conducted a door-to-door survey in two socio-economic areas of Kansas City Missouri. One of these areas was considered to be upper-middle class and the other lower-middle class. A brief questioning at the door with anyone who answered enable him to determine whether or not the household met the operational criteria of postparental, i.e., husband and wife both alive and living together, both between the ages of 40 and 65, and having had from one to four children, all of whom had been launched.

This survey technique resulted in the identification of 33 postparental households. Efforts to obtain intensive interviews were successful in 31 of the households, with 49 of the spouses being interviewed.

Deykin, Jacobson, Klerman and Solomon (1966) studied 16 hospitalized

depressed patients who were mothers of adult children and who no longer had child-rearing functions.

Of the 16 patients studied, seven had overt conflict, seven had had latent conflict and only two depressed patients exhibited no conflict. Because of the small no conflict group, it was eliminated from this presentation and the study results were based only on the seven overt conflict patients and the seven latent conflict patients.

The 14 empty nest patients studied were middle-aged women with a median age of 59 years. They had all ceased child rearing in the past ten years. The sample was fairly evenly divided between Protestants, Catholics and Jews. The majority of the sample belonged to the lower middle class with a few patients in the lower socio-economic group.

In the Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) study, the data were obtained from depth interviews, averaging about nine hours, with 27 men and 27 women approaching the "empty nest" stage of parenthood; that is, their youngest child was about to graduate from high school. Average ages were 51 for men and 48 for women. They were primarily Anglo-Americans in the higher blue-collar and clerical occupations, with a few on the middle level of management; about half of the women were working or had worked much of their adult lives.

In the Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) study, 216 men and women were included in the sample. They included that segment of American society whose origins may have been that of a traditional blue-collar working class, and who indeed may themselves

occupy such positions, but whose life styles increasingly resembled those of the middle class.

A senior high school was their central source for locating people in four pretransitional stages. The geographical boundaries of this school defined the district from which all four groups were drawn. The senior class of the school constituted the universe for the youngest group. From school records, the researchers determined which of these students were the youngest members of their families and thereby identified a second group; parents who were facing the "postparental" or "empty-nest" stage of family life. The group representing a stage intermediate these two consisted of newlyweds who had been married less than twelve months and who had not yet started a family. The fourth stage was made up of older persons who were planning to retire within the next two to three years. These latter two groups were composed of friends or relatives of the subjects in the student and postparental groups, as well as persons whom they found by consulting marriage license records and local organizations which maintained records of the probable retirement status of their employees. All persons so selected resided or had resided within the boundaries of the sample district.

The high school seniors (twenty-five boys and twenty-seven girls) were sixteen to eighteen years old and were the only cohort to include non-whites. The newlyweds (twenty-five men and twenty-five women) ranged from twenty to thirty-eight years of age, with an average age of twenty-four (these were all first marriages). The mean ages of the two older groups were fifty for the middle-aged parents

(twenty-seven men and twenty-seven women) and sixty for the preretirees (thirty men and thirty women).

In Glenn's (1975) study, the data were from surveys of the noninstitutionalized civilian population of the United States conducted in 1963 (Gallup 675), 1966 (Gallup 735 and 736), 1971 Roper (524), and 1972 and 1973 (the General Social Surveys conducted by the National Opinion Research Centre).

Measures of psychological well-being were used to compare "parental" and "postparental" persons in the broad age ranges of 40-49 and 50-59 (35-49 and 50-64 in the case of the Roper survey, which does not have exact age codes).

None of the six surveys provided the information needed for precise separation of postparental persons from other respondents. For instance, the Gallup surveys gave information only on number of people in the household under age 21 and age 21 and older, so respondents could be operationally defined as "parental" or "postparental" only on the basis of whether or not anyone under age 21 was in the household. Therefore, the "postparental" category contained a few persons who had never had children. The Roper data suffered from the same defect except that only persons under age 17 in the household were reported, thus a good many of the "postparental" persons were really in the launching stage. The NORC data allowed exclusion of persons who never had children but did not allow separation of postparental persons from those who had children age 18 or older still living at home. The effect of these "contaminations" of the postparental cate-

gory should generally be to reduce observed differences between the parental and the postparental categories.

In Powell's (1977) study, subjects were women in their late fifties who had graduated from an Eastern woman's college 35 years before the study was initiated.

Graduates of the selected class listed in the most recent directory published by the alumnae office with mailing addresses in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, or Washington, D.C., were included in the sample. These 194 individuals represented approximately half of those listed in the directory for the class being studied.

Four weeks after the final (second wave) mailing, 94 questionnaires, or 49% had been returned. Of these, 14 were eliminated because of high scores (21 and above) on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale leaving a sample of 80. Since the objective of the study was to examine the empty-nest syndrome in married women, the nine widows, three divorcees, three never-married women, and three childless married women were eliminated from the sample. Of the remainder, a surprising 22 reported that they still had one or more "children" (many in their twenties and thirties) living at home. The final sample included 40 empty-nest women whose children had all left home.

Data for the Harkins (1978) study were collected in the winter of 1973-1974 from 318 women whose youngest child was in one of the five

school classes graduating between 1971 and 1975 from two schools graduating in Durham County, North Carolina. At the time of data collection, mothers of classes of 1972 and 1973 had experienced the event generally used to define the empty nest (graduation of the last child from high school) within 18 months; and mothers of the class of 1971 were over two and one-half years past this event and had potentially readjusted. All women whose youngest child was in one of the five graduating classes and who were white, married with spouse present, and had no more than three children were selected for the study.

A mail survey was conducted and a response rate of 67 percent was achieved using letter and telephone follow-ups.

The resulting study group of 318 women ranged in age from 37 to 63 years of age with a mean of 49 years and a standard deviation of 5 years. They had a range from 6 to 21 years of schooling with a mean of 13.2 years and a standard deviation of 2.2 years.

2.1.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions are drawn from the above-mentioned studies:

- 1 The samples were obtained in a variety of ways in these studies depending on the definition of empty nest employed, for example in Axelson's (1960) study, the population consisted of men and women who had a child under twenty-five years of age married between May 1, 1956, and April 30, 1958, while in the

Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) study, the data were obtained from 27 men and 27 women approaching the "empty nest" stage of parenthood, that is, their youngest child was about to graduate from high school.

- 2 The number of subjects included in the samples varied depending on the type of research methodology employed, viz. studies employing mailed questionnaires or census polls included more subjects in their samples than those utilizing face-to-face interviews, for example Axelson's (1960) study included 464 subjects, while the Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) study included 54 subjects.
- 3 Some studies included both mothers and fathers in their samples, viz. (Axelson, 1960; Deutscher, 1964; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975; Glenn, 1975), while other studies included only mothers, viz. (Deykin, Jacobson, Klerman & Solomon, 1966; Powell, 1977; Harkins, 1978).
- 4 It can be seen that all of the above samples are cross-sectional and not longitudinal.
- 5 The majority of the above studies, viz. (Axelson, 1960; Deutscher, 1964; Deykin, Jacobson, Klerman & Solomon, 1966; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972; Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975; Powell, 1977 & Harkins, 1978) used nonprobability purposive designs. Thus these samples cannot be considered representative of their respective populations.

In nonprobability sampling, there is no way of specifying the probability that each unit has of being included in the sample, and there is no assurance that every unit has some chance of being included in the sample, a restriction on the definition of the population is implied; that is, if the traits of this set of units are unknown, then the precise nature of the population also remains unknown (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981).

With purposive samples, occasionally referred to as judgement samples, the sampling units are selected subjectively by the researcher, who attempts to obtain a sample that appears to him or her to be representative of the population. The chance that a particular sampling unit will be selected for the sample depends upon the subjective judgement of the researcher. Because it is impossible to determine precisely why each different researcher judges each sampling unit he or she selects to contribute to the representativeness of the sample, it is impossible to determine the probability of any specific unit being included in the sample.

2.2 Mailed questionnaires

2.2.1 Introduction

In this section, it is shown that a number of researchers utilized mailed questionnaires in order to collect data about the empty nest stage of life. It is also pointed out that a mailed questionnaire has a number of advantages and disadvantages.

Axelson (1960), Powell (1977) and Harkins (1978) included mailed questionnaires in their research designs and this enabled them to do the following:

- 1 Sample a much wider area geographically, i.e., Axelson sampled postparental mothers and fathers in two states, viz. Washington and Idaho, while Powell sampled empty-nest mothers in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and Washington D.C.
- 2 Reduce their research costs because there was no need for trained interviewers.
- 3 Include more subjects in their samples, i.e., Axelson included 464 postparental mothers and fathers in his sample, while Harkins included 318 "pre-empty nest", "empty-nest" and "post-empty nest" women in her sample.

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1981), the mail questionnaire is an impersonal survey method and has the following advantages and disadvantages which are detailed below:

Advantages

- 1 Lower cost

It is cheaper than personal interviewing. The mail questionnaire does not require a trained staff of interviewers; all

it needs is the cost of planning, sampling, duplicating, mailing, and providing stamped, self-addressed envelopes for the returns. The processing and analysis are usually also simpler and cheaper than those of the personal interview. The lower cost in the administration of a mail questionnaire is particularly evident when the population under study is widely spread geographically. Under such circumstances the cost of interviewing could become prohibitive, and the mail questionnaire may be the only feasible instrument.

2 Reduction in biasing error

The second major advantage of the mail questionnaire is it reduces biasing errors that might result from the personal characteristics of interviewers and from variabilities in their skills. There are many possibilities for bias in a personal interview situation that may arise because of the nature of the personal interaction between the interviewer and the respondent. This can be completely avoided with a mail questionnaire.

3 Greater anonymity

The third advantage of the mail questionnaire, greater anonymity, is also associated with the absence of an interviewer. The assurance of anonymity with mail questionnaires is especially helpful when the survey deals with sensitive issues, such as questions about sexual behaviour or child abuse. With such

questions, a mail questionnaire elicits a higher response rate than a personal interview.

4 Considered answers and consultations

Mail questionnaires are also preferable when questions demand a considered (rather than an immediate) answer or if the answer requires consultations of personal documents or of other people.

5 Accessibility

Finally, the mail questionnaire permits wider geographic contact with minimal cost. For example, when a survey requires a wide coverage and addresses a population that is widely dispersed geographically, interviewing would involve expensive travel cost and time for interviewers.

Disadvantages

1 Requires simple questions

The mail questionnaire can be used as an instrument for data collection only when the questions are straight-forward to be comprehended solely with the help of printed instructions and definitions.

2 No opportunity for probe

The answers have to be accepted as final, there is no opportunity to probe beyond the given answer, to clarify ambiguous answers, or to appraise the nonverbal behaviour of respondents.

3 No control over who fills out the questionnaire

With a mail questionnaire, researchers have no control over the respondent's environment; thus they cannot be sure that the right person completes the questionnaire. An individual other than the intended respondent may complete it.

4 Low response rate

The final disadvantage of mail questionnaires and perhaps their most serious problem - is that they often fail to obtain an adequate response rate. For many mail surveys, the reported response rates are much lower than for personal interviews. The typical response rate for a personal interview is about 95 percent, whereas that for a mail survey is between 20 and 40 percent. Researchers who use mail questionnaires are almost always faced with the problem of how to estimate the effect the nonrespondents may have on their findings. The nonrespondents are usually quite different from those who answer the questionnaire. Often they are the poorly educated who may have problems understanding the questions, the elderly who are unable to respond, or those that are mobile and thus cannot be located.

2.3 Personal interview vs mail questionnaire

2.3.1 Introduction

In this section, it is pointed out that a number of researchers used personal interviews in order to collect data about the empty nest stage of life. A definition of this particular type of interview is also provided. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of these interviews are discussed.

The following researchers (Deutscher, 1964; Deykin, Jacobson, Klerman & Solomon, 1966; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972 & Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975) used personal interviews in order to obtain data about the empty nest stage.

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1981), the personal interview can be regarded as a face-to-face interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to obtain answers pertinent to the research hypotheses. It has the following advantages and disadvantages which are detailed below:

Advantages

1 Greater flexibility

The interview allows greater flexibility in the questioning process. To the degree that the flexibility increases, the less structured is the interview. The interview allows the

interviewer to determine the wording of the questions, to clarify terms that are unclear, to control the order in which the questions are presented, and to probe for additional and more detailed information.

2 Control of the interview situation

One major advantage of the interview is that it allows much greater control over the interviewing situation. An interviewer can ensure that the respondents answer the questions in the appropriate sequence or that they answer certain questions before they are asked subsequent questions. Moreover, in an interview situation, it is possible to standardize the environment in order to ensure that the interview is conducted in private; thus respondents would not have the opportunity to consult one another before giving their answers. It is also possible to record the exact time and place of the interview; this allows the researcher to interpret the answers more accurately, especially in cases in which an important event occurring at the time of the interview may have influenced the respondent's answers.

3 High response rate

The personal interview results in a higher response rate than the mail questionnaire. Respondents who normally would not respond to a mail questionnaire can easily be reached and interviewed. This includes persons who have difficulties in

reading or writing, or those who do not fully understand the language, or simply those not willing to take the time to write out their answers and mail the questionnaire.

4 Collection of supplementary information

An interviewer can collect supplementary information about the respondent. This may include background information about the respondents' personal characteristics and their environment that can aid the researcher in the interpretation of the results. Moreover, an interview situation often yields spontaneous reactions that the interviewer can record and that might be useful in the data analysis stage.

Disadvantages

1 Higher cost

The cost of interview studies is significantly higher than that of mail surveys. There are costs involved in the organization required for selecting, training, and supervising interviewers, in paying them, and in the travel time required to conduct interviews. In addition, when interviews follow a nonstructured schedule, the cost of recording and processing the information is very high.

2 Interviewer bias

The interview allows for greater flexibility, which is its chief advantage. However, sometimes this leaves room for personal influence and bias of the interviewer. This lack of standardization in the data-collection process makes interviewing highly vulnerable to the bias of the interviewer. Although interviewers are instructed to remain objective and avoid communicating their own personal views, some cues are often given and may influence the answers given by the respondents. Even when verbal cues can be avoided, there are forms of nonverbal communication over which the interviewer may not have full control. Sometimes even the interviewer's race or sex may influence respondents who try to please the interviewer by giving socially desirable answers.

3 Lack of anonymity

The interview lacks anonymity, which the mail questionnaire typically provides. Often the interviewer knows all or many of the potential respondents (or at least their name, address, and telephone number). Thus, the respondent may feel threatened or intimidated by the interviewer, especially when the topic or some of the questions are of a sensitive nature.

2.4 Interview formats

2.4.1 Introduction

In this section, two different types of questions are described viz. close and open-ended ones. Also, various types of question formats are discussed, viz. rating scales, for example, semantic differentials and attitude indexes (arbitrary scales).

2.4.2 Close-ended questions

2.4.2.1 Introduction

In this section, a definition of a close-ended question is provided. Also, the advantages and disadvantages of close-ended questions are discussed.

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1981), with close-ended questions, respondents are offered a set of answers from which they are asked to choose the one that most clearly represents their views. Examples of close-ended questions are the following, viz. rating scales, i.e., semantic differentials and attitude indexes (arbitrary scales) (see sections 2.5.2, 2.5.3 and 2.5.4). These have the following advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages

1 Close-ended questions are easy to ask and quick to be answered;

they require no writing by either respondent or interviewer, and their analysis is straightforward.

- 2 Close-ended questions are suitable when the researcher's objective is to lead the respondent to express agreement or disagreement with an explicit point of view.
- 3 The close-ended question requires less motivation to communicate on the part of the respondent and the response itself is usually less revealing to the respondent (and hence less threatening) than in the case of the open-ended question. The researcher who uses close-ended questions tends to encounter less frequent refusals to respond.

Disadvantages

- 1 Close-ended questions may introduce bias, either by forcing the respondent to choose from given alternatives or by making the respondent select alternatives that might not have otherwise occurred.
- 2 Close-ended questions do not provide opportunities for the interviewer to ascertain lack of information on the part of the respondent.
- 3 Close-ended questions cannot be used in situations where the respondents have not yet crystallized their opinions. The use of these questions in these situations involves a risk

that in accepting one of the alternatives offered, the respondent may make a choice that is quite different from an opinion that would have otherwise been expressed had he or she gone through the process of recall and evaluation of past experience.

2.4.3 Open-ended questions

2.4.3.1 Introduction

In this section, it is shown that a number of researchers used open-ended questions in order to collect data about the empty-nest stage of life. A description is given of the manner in which the responses to these questions are coded. A definition of an open-ended question is also provided. Finally, the advantages and disadvantages of the above questions are discussed.

In order to determine the manner in which postparental spouses evaluated their present situation, Deutscher (1964) ascertained the place they reserved for it in their discussion of the total life line. This place was revealed in their discussion of such questions as, "If you could divide your life into parts, which part was the best time?" and "which part was the worst time?" "How is your life different now from what it was when the children were at home?" "Now that the children have left; do you notice any difference in your husband (or wife)?" "How is your life different now than it was ten years ago?" He did not mention how he coded these open-ended questions.

In the Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) study, the middle-aged parents when reviewing their lives, were asked to describe periods of major change or turning points.

In this life review section of the interview, subjects were asked to pinpoint and describe periods and circumstances that they found particularly frustrating, and those they found especially satisfying.

Respondents were asked to focus only on the present and discuss their major current difficulties and satisfactions. These researchers did not provide information about how they coded these above-mentioned open-ended questions.

In a section of the protocol devoted to perceptions of close others and of social networks, respondents were asked to describe their spouses, their agreements and disagreements, and their sexual attitudes and expectations. Perceptions of the spouse were grouped into two categories: positive or indulgently ambivalent and negative.

In the Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) study, middle-aged respondents were asked how they thought their spouses would describe them. The answers to this question were rated on a three-point scale of positive-negative affect.

In the same study, they were asked to review changes since marriage, i.e., retrospective change and to anticipate changes after the children had left home, i.e., anticipated change. The answers to these two questions were rated on a four-point scale, viz. positive,

neutral/ambivalent, negative and no change.

Middle-aged spouses were asked about who they regarded as the "boss" in their family. The answer to this question was rated on a three-point scale, viz. male dominant, egalitarian and female dominant.

Finally, they were asked to describe their children and tell how they got along with him or her. The answers to these two questions were rated separately on a three-point scale of positive-negative affect, and the average of these two ratings was used as the affect score for the given family member.

Thus the above-mentioned studies used open-ended questions for a variety of purposes, viz. firstly, to ascertain the middle-aged respondent's position vis-a-vis his/her life line and, secondly, to obtain information from them about the following: the periods and circumstances that they found particularly frustrating, and those they found especially satisfying, the nature of their marital relationship and finally, the nature of their relationship to their children. The answers to these questions were coded using a variety of scales, viz. three and four-point scales coded respectively as follows: viz. positive, neutral-ambivalent and negative, and positive, neutral/ambivalent, negative and no change.

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1981), open-ended questions are not followed by any kind of specified choice, and the respondents' answers are recorded in full. These have the following advantages and disadvantages:

Advantages

- 1 Open-ended questions do not force the respondent to adapt to preconceived answers: having understood the intent of the question, one can express one's thoughts freely, spontaneously and in one's own language.
- 2 If the answers to open-ended questions are unclear, the interviewer may probe, that is, ask the respondent to explain further or to give a rationale for something stated earlier.
- 3 Open-ended questions are more appropriate when the researcher wishes to learn about the process by which the respondent arrived at a particular point of view.
- 4 Open-ended questions provide opportunities for the interviewer to ascertain lack of information on the part of the respondent, whereas close-ended questions do not. Obviously, it is futile to raise questions that are beyond the experiences of respondents.
- 5 Open-ended questions are preferable in situations where the respondent's have not yet crystallized their opinions.

In summary, open-ended questions, then, are flexible: they have possibilities of depth, they enable the interviewer to clear up misunderstandings, and they encourage rapport.

Disadvantages

- 1 Open-ended questions are difficult to answer and still more difficult to analyze. The researcher has to design a coding frame in order to classify the various answers; in this process, the details of the information provided by the respondent might get lost. In the coding of these questions, coders are required to exercise their own judgement in classifying responses according to the coding scheme. However, when given rules cannot be applied automatically, different coders may arrive at different coding. Sussman and Haug, (1967 cited in Nachmias and Nachmias, 1981, p.277) noted that "the largest component of processing error occurs in the coding phase of data analysis." In an independent double coding of 2,775 cases, they found an especially high coding variability in responses to open-ended questions.

Also, the researchers may be bogged down by the mass of details when they try to explain the data. Sometimes too little context is preserved for the coder to determine which details are trivial and can therefore be eliminated (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981).

2.4.4 General conclusions

In this section, some conclusions about close and open-ended questions are drawn.

A reference is made to some of the results from a small-scale

laboratory experiment carried out by Dohrenwend (1965). It appeared that the usefulness of the replies to open and to closed questions was not significantly different; the pertinence of the replies appeared to be somewhat higher in closed questions as to one's own feelings, motives, etc., as compared to those in open questions. The validity of the replies to factual questions was alike, while open questions did not yield more "depth" information than closed ones. Taking all evidence into account, Dohrenwend concluded, that the use of well-tested closed questions would be more advantageous to the investigator than open questions (cited in Dijkstra, & van der Zouwen, 1982, p.57).

2.5 Question format

2.5.1 Introduction

In this section, some of the techniques of structuring the response categories of close-ended questions are discussed (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981).

2.5.2 Rating

2.5.2.1 Introduction

In this section, it is shown that a number of researchers used various types of rating scales in order to collect data about the empty nest stage of life. The general use of rating scales is also discussed.

In Axelson's (1960) study, the mothers and fathers were asked to indicate their present degree of satisfaction in the seven basic life areas, three of which have relevance for the present thesis, viz. relationships to children, relationships to spouse and daily work. The individuals considered satisfied were those responding either entirely or generally satisfied, and the individuals considered dissatisfied were those responding either entirely or somewhat dissatisfied or fairly well satisfied.

In Glenn's (1975) study, measures of psychological well-being were used to compare "parental" and "postparental" persons in the broad age ranges of 40-49 and 50-59. The measures from the Gallup and NORC surveys were responses to questions on personal happiness, i.e. "In general, how happy would you say you are - very happy, fairly happy, or not happy?" and "Taken all together, how would you say things are these days - would you say that you are very happy, pretty happy, or not too happy?"

According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1981), one of the most common formats for questions asked in social science surveys is the rating scale. The rating scale is used whenever respondents are asked to make a judgement in terms of sets of ordered categories, such as "strongly agree," "favourable," or "very often."

The response categories of such questions are termed "quantifiers," they reflect the intensity of the particular judgement involved. The following response categories are quite common:

1	Strongly agree	1	Too little	1	More
2	Agree	2	About right	2	Same
3	Depends	3	Too much	3	Less
4	Disagree				
5	Strongly disagree				

The numerical codes that accompany these categories are usually interpreted to represent the intensity of the response categories, so that the higher the number, the more intense the response. Yet it should be emphasized that though we assume that the quantifiers involved are ordered by their intensity, it does not imply that the distance between them is equal. Indeed rating scales such as these are most often measured on ordinal levels of measurement (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981). However, it is possible to treat these rating scales as interval levels of measurement, and in the present study, these will be regarded as such. According to Coombs (1953 cited in Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner & Bent, 1975, p.6), this is sometimes called an ordered metric scale. Falling between ordinal and interval levels, an ordered metric consists of ordered categories where the relative ordering of the intercategory distances is known even though their absolute magnitude cannot be measured.

Abelson and Tukey (1959 cited in Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner & Bent, 1975, p.6) argue that the proper assignment of numeric values to the categories of an ordered metric scale will allow it to be treated as though it were measured at the interval level. Labovitz (1970 cited in Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner & Bent, 1975, p.6) goes further by arguing that, except for extreme situations, inter-

val statistics can be applied to any ordinal - level variable. He argues, "Although some small error may accompany the treatment of ordinal variables as interval, this is offset by the use of more powerful, more sensitive, better developed, and more clearly interpretable statistics with known sampling error."

2.5.3 The semantic differential

2.5.3.1 Introduction

In this section, a particular type of rating scale is described.

The semantic differential is another type of rating scale. It measures the respondent's reaction to some object or concept in terms of rating on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives at each end.

Good 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 Bad

The "0" marks the neutral position on the scale, and the positions 1-3 measure the intensities in either direction, with 1 being the slightest reaction and 3 the most intense.

2.5.4 Attitude indexes (arbitrary scales)

2.5.4.1 Introduction

In this section, a particular type of rating scale for measuring attitudes is discussed.

Attitude indexes, also referred to as arbitrary scales, involve a battery of questions that are selected on a a priori basis. Numerical values are assigned arbitrarily to the item or question responses, and these values are summed to obtain total scores. These scores are then interpreted as indicating the attitude of the respondent.

We could arbitrarily score responses in the following ways:

Strongly agree = 4; Agree = 3; Uncertain = 2; Disagree = 1; and Strongly disagree = 0.

The index is also termed an arbitrary scale because there was nothing about the procedure to guarantee that any one statement or item tapped the same attitude as the other items.

In the present study, the previously described semantic differentials in a modified form (see section 2.5.3) and the attitude indexes (arbitrary scales) (see above), in a modified form, were included in the Family Attitude Survey (FAS) (see Appendix pp.281-287). The reasons why the scores of the items in the above survey were not added together to form subscales, and to obtain total scores, are the following: firstly, despite the fact, that the items residing under each of the themes around which the survey was structured, were theoretically similar, in a broad sense, they were not similar enough in nature and content to lend themselves to the formation of scales, for example (see section 2.6.3.1 pp.123-129 - the menopausal items). Secondly, in most instances, the items included under the same theme, were purposely constructed to be diverse theoretically, in a sense, in order to measure the complexity of theoretical issues concerning the empty nest. Thus, the advantages

of using the attitude indexes (arbitrary scales) in the strict methodological sense, were outweighed by the disadvantages that this would create, because of the following, viz., it would oversimplify the analysis of variables included in the study, through the process of reduction, even though this was not feasible on theoretical grounds. Furthermore, in those instances, where the items were similar enough in nature and content to be added together, it was decided against doing this, for the following reasons: firstly, in most cases, the correlations between these items were low, and therefore, it was not feasible empirically to add them together to form scales. Secondly, the items in the survey, were not structured in a way, which was conducive to the formation of scales, i.e. for a scale to be valid, it should comprise a battery of items, and in this survey, where the items were similar enough in content to be added together, one was precluded from doing this, because of the lack of availability of multiple items, for example (see section 2.6.3.1 - the attitudes towards the past items comprised two items - pp.132-134). Thirdly, the items included in the survey consisted of modified bipolar opposites, and modified attitude index statements, and therefore, it would be incorrect to include items which had been constructed in essentially two different manners, under the same subscale.

Finally, the intention was to use the factor analysis as a means for identifying item clusters, which would have formed the basis of scales. However, it did not yield meaningful clusters, it was difficult to interpret, and that together with the fact that the items which had common themes, had rather low correlations, led to the decision not to attempt to concatenate the items into subscales.

2.6 The present study

2.6.1 Sampling

In the present study, the empty nest stage of life was defined as that period in the family when the youngest child matriculates, i.e. when the youngest child completes his final standard at high school (Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972). In other words, the parents were anticipating the empty nest stage of life because there was a strong likelihood that their youngest child would leave home for university, army, etc., the following year.

The above-mentioned definition was preferred to Deutscher's (1964) definition of postparental couple, (i.e. husband and wife were both alive and living together, both between the ages of 40 and 65, and having had from one to four children all of whom had been launched), for the following reasons:

- 1 The names of postparental couples could be obtained from high schools, which are usually relatively accessible locations for obtaining the names of research subjects;
- 2 It would also obviate conducting a door-to-door survey in order to locate postparental couples who complied with Deutscher's (1964) definition.

A decision was made to use matched husbands and wives in the sample, i.e., they were married to each other in comparison with the Lowen-

thal and Chiriboga (1972) study where the spouses included in their sample were not married to each other. This was done because Schram (1979) stated that a major methodological weakness in the overwhelming majority of research in this area has been the collection of data on individuals (males and females) with the subsequent inferences being made to the postparental family unit (husband and wife). When data is taken from individual responses without matching the pair, then one cannot validly infer to the dyad. It seems imperative that the responses for the dyadic family unit (husband and wife) are matched in order to comprehend the phenomenon being studied. Male/female variations provide incomplete information about the couple. Therefore this can be considered a methodological improvement on previous studies of the empty nest.

The headmasters and headmistresses of four high schools in the city of Port Elizabeth, South Africa, were approached for the names of those pupils who were the youngest in their families and were about to matriculate in 1983. The names of seventy 'white' postparental couples were obtained in this manner. This type of sampling is called nonprobability purposive sampling (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981; Thurnher, 1983) (see section 2.1.3). The major advantages of nonprobability samples are convenience and economy which under certain circumstances may outweigh the risks involved in not using probability sampling.

Port Elizabeth has a 'white' population of 144 450. It is the fifth largest city in South Africa. A letter was sent out to these couples in January 1984, explaining to them that a research project was

being conducted on attitudes towards middle age among married couples, and also inviting them to participate in this research study. The response to this appeal was very poor. In fact, only one couple replied to this letter. A copy of this letter is given in the Appendix (p.288).

A decision was taken to make telephonic contact with these families. They were told that a research project on attitudes towards middle age was being conducted among married couples, and were also given an explanation about what they would be required to do during the interviews should they agree to participate in this project. The response to this appeal was far more successful and thirty-five postparental couples agreed to participate in the study. Thirty-five couples refused to participate. Thus a fifty percent response rate was obtained. There were thirty-five males and thirty-five females in the sample. The mean age of the subjects was 49.5, and the standard deviation was 4.9.

2.6.2 Method

At the outset of this research investigation, a number of research methodological questions had to be faced. Decisions had to be made about the following issues, viz. whether to include close-ended or open-ended questions in the survey. A decision was taken to include the former, in preference to the latter in it, because the literature on middle age was very extensive and therefore it was possible to formulate hypotheses from existing theory, and also to derive preconstructed categories from it. In such a situation, close-ended

questions are more suitable than open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are more appropriate in exploratory research where concepts are not well defined, and the researcher is faced by a mass of raw data for which ready-made categories do not exist. In such a situation, open-ended questions are more suitable because they permit concrete categories to be adapted to the data (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1981).

2.6.3 Construction of the Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

In the construction of this survey, an extensive review of middle age research literature was undertaken and a pool of attitude items were generated. It was labelled 'Attitude Survey', which was conceived as a global term, in order to denote that the items included in it, measure the respondent's views about issues concerning the empty nest. It consisted of two parts. Part 1 was labelled Basic Information and Part 2 was called Attitude Questionnaire. The former required that the respondent provide personal particulars about himself/herself, i.e., sex, age, last standard passed at school, completed years of education after school and the first language of the respondent. In the interview the use of such questions aids in building rapport (Babbie, 1973 cited in Dijkstra & van der Zouwen, 1982 p.30). The latter consisted of two parts. The first part contained five open-ended questions about the respondent's family of origin, i.e., (the respondent's family before he/she was married), and family of procreation, i.e., (the respondent's family when he/she was married). These questions are not discussed in the thesis. The second part explored the respondent's attitudes towards middle age. This consisted of forty attitude statements organized around eight major themes. These were the following: empty nest, ageing, sexuality, menopause, the work career, attitudes to-

wards the past, future and death. These nine-point attitude statements were divided into two kinds, viz. modified semantic differentials, i.e., (the bipolar opposites were not adjectives but were phrases, for example:

11 Do you feel that what happens to your child/children in his/her/their future life/lives will for the most part depend largely on you?

Out of my hands * 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 * Depend on me

and attitude indexes (arbitrary scales) arranged on a continuum ranging from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree, for example:

30 It is difficult for me to accept that I am getting older.

Very strongly disagree * 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 * Very strongly agree

Key: 1 = Very strongly disagree 2 = Strongly disagree
 3 = Disagree 4 = Slightly disagree
 5 = Undecided 6 = Slightly agree
 7 = Agree 8 = Strongly agree
 9 = Very strongly agree

A decision was made to use nine-point modified semantic differentials and attitude indexes (arbitrary scales), because Bendig (1953) established experimentally that the reliability of the self-ratings begin to decrease markedly when the scales consisted of more than nine scale points (cited in Dijkstra & van der Zouwen, 1982, p.74).

A filter device was also included on the rating scales, i.e., 5 - undecided, because this would filter out a relatively large number of the uninformed (Dijkstra & van der Zouwen, 1982).

The above-mentioned statements appear on page 9 to page 15 of the Family Attitude Survey (FAS). A description of these statements is given below. A complete copy of the Family Attitude Survey (FAS) is given in the Appendix (pp.273-287).

2.6.3.1 Theoretical support for attitude statements in Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

In this section, theoretical validation is provided for the attitude statements contained in the Family Attitude Survey (FAS), using empirical findings and theories from previous empirical studies and theorists (see chapter 1 all sections).

6.1.1 Individual timetables: on-time and off-time events

In this section in chapter 1, it was shown that adults have expectations about sequences of major life events - not only what those events should be but when they should occur (Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976; Butler & Lewis, (1977 cited in Rossi, 1980, p.121).

The predictable on-time events when they occur are not disruptive, the events are anticipated and rehearsed, the grief work completed, and the reconciliation achieved without breaking this sense of

continuity of life. For example, men and women expect their children to grow up and leave home just as they did themselves in their own youth, and their feelings of relief and pride are important components of their mixed emotions. It is the unexpected not the expected, which is likely to represent the traumatic event as when marriage does not occur at its desired or appropriate time; when the empty nest, occupational achievement and grandparenthood occur off-time (Neugarten, 1970; Neugarten & Datan, 1974; Rossi, 1980). Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) contend that a slower pacing in the development of marriage and career plans in their young - rather than any basic differences in values and aspirations is a source of stress for the parent generation. Bourque and Back (1977) advance that an event like children leaving home is perceived most strongly if it occurs at the wrong time: children leaving is least traumatic during the 50s - perhaps say the authors the "normal" age for such departures.

Modified bipolar statements 8, 10 and 16 were asked in order to determine the extent to which middle-aged parents would express concern if they found themselves in the position where their children were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in their jobs, were still staying at home, or had not yet married.

- 8 How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in his/her/their job/s?

Still plenty of time for he/she/ them to do so	\cdot $\frac{\cdot}{1}$ $\frac{\cdot}{2}$ $\frac{\cdot}{3}$ $\frac{\cdot}{4}$ $\frac{\cdot}{5}$ $\frac{\cdot}{6}$ $\frac{\cdot}{7}$ $\frac{\cdot}{8}$ $\frac{\cdot}{9}$ \cdot	Worry he/ she/they cannot earn their own living
---	---	---

- 10 How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were in his/her/their middle to late twenties and was/were still staying at home?

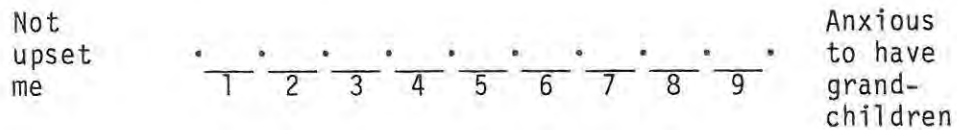
Not bother me	\cdot $\frac{\cdot}{1}$ $\frac{\cdot}{2}$ $\frac{\cdot}{3}$ $\frac{\cdot}{4}$ $\frac{\cdot}{5}$ $\frac{\cdot}{6}$ $\frac{\cdot}{7}$ $\frac{\cdot}{8}$ $\frac{\cdot}{9}$ \cdot	Worry he/ she/they cannot stand on their own two feet
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- 16 How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet married?

Not upset me	\cdot $\frac{\cdot}{1}$ $\frac{\cdot}{2}$ $\frac{\cdot}{3}$ $\frac{\cdot}{4}$ $\frac{\cdot}{5}$ $\frac{\cdot}{6}$ $\frac{\cdot}{7}$ $\frac{\cdot}{8}$ $\frac{\cdot}{9}$ \cdot	Fear he/ she/they will remain single
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Modified bipolar statement 13 focused on the extent to which they would feel upset if their children waited a long time after they were married before deciding to have children.

- 13 How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children waited a long time after he/she/they was/were married before deciding to have a child/children?



Thus in the above instances, their children may not have made their adjustments to these major life events at the appropriate times.

1.1.3 The empty nest as turning point, frustration or satisfaction

In this section in chapter 1, a number of studies and theories, viz. Deutscher (1964), the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1973) and Anderson et al. (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176) suggest that the departure of children from the home constitutes a loss for the middle-aged parents.

In Deutscher's study, some subjects showed an inability to fill the gap - the empty place in the family which arose as a consequence of the departure of the children.

The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry contend that when a child leaves home - to further his education, to serve in the Armed Forces, to assume a job in a distant place, or to get married - it is a loss that leaves a definite empty place in the family circle.

In Anderson's et al. study, one of the questions tapped parents' anticipated reactions when their children, now in adolescence would eventually leave home. They discovered that 33% expected a loss of a sense of family.

Nonpatient respondents displayed a lower ranking of concern about children than patient respondents in the later years, i.e., (44-50 and 51-60), in the Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles (1978) study.

Modified bipolar statements 11 and 14 and attitude index statements 29, 39, 42, 46 and 47 were asked in order to determine the extent to which parents were optimally-involved or over-involved with their children. Modified bipolar statement 11 focused on the extent to which middle-aged parents believed that the course of their children's future lives was out of their hands or depended on them.

11 Do you feel that what happens to your child/children in his/her/their future life/lives will for the most part depend largely on you?

Out of my hands • 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Depend on me

Modified bipolar statement 14 focused on the extent to which parents felt confident/not hopeful that their children would be able to manage on their own when they left home.

14 Do/did you feel hopeful that your child/children will/would be able to manage on his/her/their own when he/she/they leave/s home?

Confident he/she/ they can manage	* * * * * * * * * — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Not hope- ful he/she/ they can care for themselves
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Attitude index statement 20 focused on the extent to which parents felt they should not tell their grown-up children what to do now as much as they used to when they were younger.

29 Now that my child/children is/are grown-up, I feel that it is important that I do not tell him/her/them what to do now as much as I used to when he/she/they was/were younger.

Very strongly disagree	* * * * * * * * * — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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Attitude index statement 39 focused on the extent to which parents believed they were better judges of when their children should get married than them.

39 I feel that I am a better judge of when my child/children should get married than he/she/they is/are.

Very strongly disagree	* * * * * * * * * — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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Attitude index statement 42 focused on the extent to which parents found it difficult to accept that their children were grown-up now and could care for themselves without needing so much of their help

Very strongly disagree • 1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8 • 9 • Very strongly agree

1.1.5 Problems of empty nest women

In this section in chapter 1, a number of theorists, viz. (Cavan, 1958; Lidz, 1968; Marmor, 1968; Duvall, 1971; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1973; Troll, 1975) contend that the attainment of adulthood by children and their departure from the home appears to have a more detrimental impact on mothers than fathers.

Cavan states that when children withdraw from the family, the father is less affected than the mother. Proud though he may be of his children, he is not so dependent upon them for status as their mother.

Lidz advances that the maternal functions, which have constituted her central interest and molded her activity for two or more decades, come to an end. Concerns for her children may remain a dominant interest, but they are in the form of thoughts and feelings and no longer take up much of her time and effort. She feels that her major life function has been completed. Though she may be pleased and even relieved at the release from so much work and responsibility, she usually also has regrets and feels an emptiness in her life.

Marmor writes that in middle age, the functional role of a woman as a mother assumes less importance, with children becoming less atten-

tive. Consequently, many middle-aged women are apt to feel as though they are being discarded and retired to a cultural ash heap, while men are still able to feel relatively needed and involved in the outside world.

Duvall contends that it is an unusual woman who really enjoys relinquishing her active role as mother, to see her children whom she loved and cared for for twenty years, pack their suitcases and leave home. A woman's children represent for her more than they do for her husband, not only her emotional investment of adulthood until now, but also the main reason for her existence. Throughout her life as a wife and mother, her children have been her job. Now, when they leave, she feels that they take with them her very reason for being.

The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry advance that women are more seriously affected by loss of children from the home than men because the day-to-day care of their children has been an important part of their lives and therefore their emotional investment is heavier.

Troll states that the ending of direct child-rearing with the departure of the last child from the home (the empty nest) has more important consequences for the wife than for the husband.

Modified bipolar statement 12 was asked in order to determine whether mothers are more adversely affected by their children's departure from the home than fathers.

12 Who do you think will be more upset when all your child/children has/have left home to live on his/her/their own, you or your husband/wife?

I will feel more upset	· <u>1</u> · <u>2</u> · <u>3</u> · <u>4</u> · <u>5</u> · <u>6</u> · <u>7</u> · <u>8</u> · <u>9</u> ·	My husband/ wife will feel more upset
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1.1.6 Parent-child relationships

In this section in chapter 1, it is pointed out that there are conflicting findings and theories regarding parent-child relationships and the empty-nest stage of life, i.e., some studies and theories focused on the positive aspects of the parent-child relationship, viz. Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) and Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975), while other studies focused on the negative aspects of the parent-child relationship, viz. Peterson (1968), Vincent (1972), Lurie (1974), Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) and Notman (1979). In addition, one study by Deutscher (1964) described some empty-nest parents who perceived themselves to be failures as parents.

Gurin, Veroff and Feld found that more parents between forty-five and fifty-four report satisfying relationships with their children than at any other age group.

Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates observed that parental descriptions of children, including teenage children were predominantly benign.

Peterson and Vincent focused on the intergenerational conflict between middle-aged parents and their adolescent children and young adult children about the values and attitudes of the latter.

Lurie states that empty-nest parents experiencing their adolescent children (who are going through a transitional stage) are most likely to say that being a parent is most difficult at the present time.

Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal noted that about three-fourths of the middle-aged parents reported some conflict with the children. For the most part these conflicts could best be termed "mild" or "moderate" and only occasionally amounted to resentment or rejection of the child.

Notman advances that adolescent children may be sexually and aggressively provocative, challenging or disappointing.

Deutscher writes that one problem of some of the respondents in his study was connected to the final recognition and definition in retrospect of oneself as a "failure", in terms of the child-rearing process.

Modified bipolar statement 18 was asked in order to ascertain the extent to which parents find their children a pleasure or disappointment at the empty nest stage of life.

18 How do you feel about the way your child/children behave?

They make me feel proud	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Their behaviour does not please me
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Attitude index statement 44 was asked in order to determine the degree to which parents are disappointed in the relationship that they have with some of their children.

44 I feel disappointed because I have an unhappy relationship with some of my child/children.

Very strongly disagree	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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Modified bipolar statement 17 focused on the extent to which empty-nest parents believe that they have been successful parents or failures as parents.

17 How good a parent do you feel you have been to your child/children?

Good mother father	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Bad mother father
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4 The changing body

In this section in chapter 1, it is shown that middle-aged adults become aware that they are getting older because of physical signs of ageing. Such signs as thinning and graying hair, wrinkling skin and a tendency to put on weight, especially in the "potbelly" area make both men and women aware of the arrival of middle age (Peck, 1968; Marmor, 1968). These signs of ageing and bodily decline may evoke a major and painful crisis (Marmor, 1968; Collin, 1979).

Both middle-aged men and women become aware of a decrease in physical strength, stamina, a tendency to tire more easily, indigestive difficulties, insomnia, and "nervous headaches" (Peck, 1968). It is also indicated that middle-aged respondents express concern about their health during the middle years. According to Feldman (1964), launching and launched couples usually express concern about their health during the 50s (Gould, 1972).

Modified bipolar statement 19 was asked in order to ascertain how parents feel as they get older, i.e., stronger, happier, more lively/weaker, unhappier, more depressed. The purpose of this question was to determine the extent to which ageing evokes a physical and mental reappraisal in middle-aged subjects.

19 In general as you get older how do you find yourself feeling?

Stronger Happier More lively	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Weaker Unhappier More depressed
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Attitude index statement 30 was asked in order to determine the extent to which middle-aged subjects find it difficult to accept that they are getting older.

30 It is difficult for me to accept that I am getting older.

Very strongly disagree	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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Modified bipolar statement 20 was asked in order to determine the extent to which middle-aged respondents are pleased/dissatisfied with the condition of their bodies.

20 Do you feel pleased with the condition of your body?

My body is in good shape	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	My body is in bad shape
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Attitude index statement 36 was asked in order to determine the extent to which health means more to the respondents now than it used to.

36 My health means more to me now than it used to.

Very
strongly
disagree • 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 • Very
strongly
agree

2.1.1 Human sexual response: the aging female and the aging male

In this section in chapter 1, Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin (1953) state:

It must be emphasized that the decline in the incidence and frequency of marital coitus ... do not provide any evidence that the female ages in her sexual capacity. It is the male's aging (and loss of capacity) rather than the female's loss of interest or capacity which is reflected in her decline (cited in Pfeiffer, Verwoerd & Davis, 1972, p.87).

In contrast to the above-mentioned findings, Pfeiffer, Verwoerd and Davis (1972) found that there was a decline in current sexual interest among men in each of the age brackets from 45 to 60 years of age, viz. (46-50, 51-55, 56-60).

Among the women, a similar pattern of declining sexual interest was shown. Overall, the data clearly indicates a pattern of decline in sexual interest from the younger to the older age categories for both men and women.

In the youngest age group, i.e., (46-50), 51 percent of the men reported no decline in sexual interest up to that time. But this percentage dwindled in a stepwise fashion for each succeeding age group. The sharpest drop in the proportion reporting no awareness of decline occurred between the group aged 46-50 and that aged 51-55.

Among the women, a somewhat lower proportion reported no decline in sexual interest. In the youngest age group this proportion was 42 percent, declining again in a stepwise manner to 4 percent in the oldest age group, i.e. (56-60). As with the men, the sharpest drop in the proportion reporting no awareness of decline occurred in the 46-50 and the 51-55 age groups.

Modified bipolar statement 21 was asked in order to determine whether the spouse's current degree of sexual interest had lessened compared to ten years ago.

21 How interested are you in sex now compared to ten years ago?

Much more now	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 — same	Much less now
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2.1 Sex in marriage: At 40 and beyond

In this section in chapter 1, it is noted that there has been a tendency by the following researchers, viz. (Dentler, 1960; Brayshaw, 1962; Feldman, 1964; Westley & Epstein, 1960; Pineo, 1968 & Troll, (1970 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233) to underestimate the importance of sex in older marriages. Research by Brayshaw (1962 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233) shows that older married couples may actually present with more sexual problems than young couples. Finally, Cleveland (1976) contends that our culture underestimates the importance of sex in aging marriages.

2.1.1 Human sexual response: the aging female and the aging male

In this section in chapter 1, Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles (1978) found that nonpatients ranked sex at a low point at ages 51-60. There was an increase in the ranking of sex primarily among the neurotic group at ages 51-60. In addition to the lessening of the component of biological drive in mid - and late adulthood, they hypothesized that in the context of growing intimacy, with increasingly stable relationships, the importance of sex as an isolated activity diminishes. This is reflected in the nonpatients' lower rankings of importance of sex at higher ages.

Modified bipolar statement 22 focused on the current degree of importance that the spouse attached to his/her sexual relationship compared with the time when he/she was newly married, i.e., whether he/she regarded his/her sexual relationship as more important now or less important now.

22 How important is your sexual relationship with your husband/wife now compared with the time when you were a young married couple?

Much more important now	• • • • • • • • • ———— 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Much less important now
	same	

2.1.1 Human sexual response: the aging female and the aging male

In this section in chapter 1, clinical evidence appears to show that by middle age many women have overcome the repressions that limited their sex lives early in marriage, and with the advent of the menopause, with its removal of the fear of pregnancy, enjoy sex experience more in the middle years than ever before in the marriage (Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

In contrast to the above-mentioned clinical evidence, Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) present the responses of males who predominantly reported increased sexual activity and increased sexual satisfaction in the postparental stage. The postparental females generally report a decline in sexual frequency and/or sexual satisfaction.

Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) focused on changes in the quality of sexual experiences, i.e., retrospective change from the time their subjects were newlywed until the present time, i.e., the empty nest stage. For the older groups, i.e., (middle-aged men and women and pre-retired men and women), questions of sexual intimacy and optimal sexual adjustment had been supplanted by other existential concerns, and changes were no longer as consistently positive. In general, middle-aged men tended to be more positive, the pre-retirees less positive, than women in these groups, who were roughly similar to each other. Middle-aged men were most likely to state that no change in satisfaction had occurred (almost half).

Approximately one third of the older people, i.e., (empty-nest subjects and pre-retirees) reported increasing sexual satisfaction.

Modified bipolar statement 23 focused on the degree of current sexual satisfaction experienced by the spouse compared to ten years ago, i.e., whether he/she regarded it as more enjoyable now or less enjoyable now.

23 How enjoyable do you find your sexual relationship with your husband/wife now compared to ten years ago?

More enjoyable	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Less enjoyable
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
					same						

2.1.1 Human sexual response: the aging female and the aging male

In this section in chapter 1, Masters and Johnson (1966 cited in Neugarten, 1968, p.275) report that after age 50, the incidence of sexual inadequacy increases dramatically in men.

Soddy (1967) writes that for men, the perception of decline in sexual prowess is considered a serious crisis.

Strickler (1975) states that a man often experiences a loss when he becomes concerned about the emotional issue of declining sexual potency. This is often related to adolescent-type conflicts about sexual identity. If he cannot successfully continue to repress these feelings, symptoms of depression and anxiety can emerge.

Attitude index statement 33 focused on whether the male respondent worries about current decline in sexual functioning, or is not perturbed by current decline in sexual functioning compared to ten years ago.

33 I worry that I am not able to get as sexually excited now as I could five years ago.

Very strongly disagree	* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 *	Very strongly agree
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3.1 Female attitudes to the menopause

In this section in chapter 1, the emphasis is on the psychological significance that the middle-age woman accords to the menopause, i.e., whether she regards it as a positive or negative event.

Neugarten and her associates (Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963) sampled attitudes toward menopause from 100 women between the ages of 45 and 55. A variety of attitudes were discerned. Some women were scared of having mental breakdowns. Some women seemed to be worried about the menopause but were actively defending against their anxiety. They would repeat advice like: "If you keep busy, you won't think about it, and you'll be all right..." A third group, especially at the upper middle-class level felt that the menopause had no psychological importance for them.

Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.602)

studied 100 working-class and middle-class women aged between 43 and 53. They found that these women negated the importance of the menopause, regarding it as unlikely to cause much anxiety or stress. Among the aspects disliked most about middle age, only one woman of the 100 mentioned menopause, and even after much time was allocated to the topic on two different interview occasions, only one third could think of a way that a woman's emotional health was likely to be negatively affected. A majority contended that any changes in emotional status during the climacteric period were a consequence of idiosyncratic factors or individual differences in general ability to endure stress.

3.1.1 Depression and the menopause

In this section in chapter 1, the first focus is on the relative contribution of endocrine changes and psychosocial variables to depression at the menopause. The second focus is on whether depression exists as a clinical entity at the menopause.

Winokur (1973) states that depression has been associated with the menopause but seems to be more clearly connected to psychosocial variables than to endocrine changes, although depression does constitute an important clinical syndrome.

Weisman and Klerman (1977) review the evidence for the relationship between depression and female endocrine status and state that the pattern of relationship of endocrine to clinical status is inconclusive. They believe that there is good evidence statistically that

the menopause does not increase rates of depression.

Modified bipolar statement 24 was asked in order to determine the extent to which women are relieved or upset when their periods come to an end in later life.

24 How do women like you feel when your periods come to an end in later life? (Women only)

Relieved $\overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}} \overset{\cdot}{\text{---}}$ Upset

3.1.5 The termination of a woman's reproductive capacity and menopause

In this section in chapter 1, it is shown that there are conflicting findings about this issue. A number of theorists (Cavan, 1958; Chilman, 1968; Lidz, 1968; Notman, 1978) contend that the middle-aged mother is likely to regret, become depressed, or at least be ambivalent about, her declining, or terminated reproductive capacity. According to Chilman, her forebodings of increasing decline may be intensified by her awareness that her adolescent daughter (if she has one) is, sexually and reproductively on the upgrade. Cavan suggests that the actual inability to reproduce is felt more as a sign of loss of youthfulness and vitality than because it prevents women from having more children, while Lidz advances an opposite view, namely, that a woman's self-esteem is often closely related to her capacity to bear children. The woman feels the loss of this

badge of womanhood - an indicator of her capacity to reproduce - that has provided feelings of worth. Notman contends that depression is a response to a loss of reproductive capacity. However, Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.605) observed that their data did not support the contention that the termination of fertility is considered a major loss among working-class and middle-class women who were aged between 43 and 53. Among the 100 American women they interviewed, no regret over lost fertility was voiced; on the contrary, many women said they were happy to have completed childrearing. Neugarten (1976) reviews one of her studies of the menopause where she selected a group of a 100 white women aged 45 to 55.

Thirty percent of the women stated that the best thing about the menopause was not having to worry about getting pregnant. On the other hand, only four percent of the women stated that the worst thing about the menopause was not being able to have more children.

Modified bipolar statement 25 was asked in order to determine the extent to which women feel relieved or unhappy when they are no longer able to have children once their periods have stopped in later life.

25 How do women like you feel when you are no longer able to have a child/children once your periods have stopped in later life?
(Women only)

Relieved · · · · · · · · · · Unhappy
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3.1.4 Menopause and marriage

In this section in chapter 1, Crawford and Hooper (1973) asked forty-three postparental women a series of questions in order to discover their perceptions of their marital relationship and its hypothesized relationship to the menopause. None of these features of the marital relationship were related in any way to menopausal state or to the reporting or type of symptoms.

Also, Cavan (1958) contends that some women may misinterpret their husband's neglect of them, as a consequence of his occupational striving, as an indication that the physical changes that they undergo as a result of the menopause, makes them unattractive and unappealing.

Modified bipolar statement 26 was asked in order to determine the extent to which wives believe their husbands will feel more loving towards them or less loving towards them when they are no longer able to have their periods.

26 How loving will/did your husband feel towards you when you are/were no longer able to have your periods? (Women only)

Will/did feel more loving towards me	· · · · · · · · · ———— 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 same	Will/did feel less loving towards me
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3.1.3 Sexuality and the menopause

In this section in chapter 1, a number of studies (Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963; Neugarten, 1976) show that the majority of women believe that the menopause has no impact on their sexuality. However, a minority of women expressed a number of differing attitudes about the manner in which the menopause influences it. Some of them stated that sexual activity became less important with the advent of the menopause, while others contended that sexual relations became more enjoyable. Some also contended that the best thing about the menopause was that it brought about a better relationship with their husbands. A few also advanced that sexual relations became less enjoyable.

Finally, a number of theorists (Chilman, 1968; Lidz, 1968) contend that men and women believe that the menopause does have a detrimental effect on a woman's sexual responsiveness and ability to enjoy sex and this may cause a woman to feel that she will become an unattractive old woman whose husband may properly seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere. Lidz advances further that such concerns have no basis in fact. Indeed, there is now ample evidence that, in general, the woman's potential for sexual responsiveness throughout middle age is greater than the man's. Chilman speculates further that along with the physiological changes associated with the start (or middle

or end) of the menopause, she also may feel disturbed lest she may no longer be sexually attractive as a woman.

Modified bipolar statement 27i) was asked in order to determine the extent to which wives feel that their husbands will still find them sexually attractive or will be much less sexually interested in them when their periods come to an end in later life.

27i) Do/did wives like you feel that your husbands will/would not find you sexually attractive when you are/were no longer able to have your periods? (Women only)

Will/still find/ found me sexually attractive	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Will be/ was much less sexually interested in me
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Modified bipolar statement 27ii) was asked in order to determine the extent to which wives would be worried/not worried if their husbands were much less sexually interested in them when their periods came to an end in later life.

27ii) How do/did you feel about this?

Not worried	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Worried
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8 The work career

In this section in chapter 1, it is pointed out that for some men,

middle age is regarded as the "prime of life," the point when youthful drive is not yet noticeably diminished, experience is great, and the combination of the two carries the man to his peak of success (Cavan, 1958). Also, Neugarten, Moore and Lowe (1965) and Peterson (1968) see middle age in positive terms, i.e. as a period in one's life characterized by an increasing intellectual ability to make decisions, holding of high status jobs, earning a maximum income, and enjoying relatively good physical and mental health which allows one to work regularly. However, other men are confronted with increased job demands, reduced opportunity to find better employment, job boredom, and the feeling of being stuck in a rut that is to be found among the successful as well as the unsuccessful (Farrell et al., (1975 cited in Gutmann, 1976, p.42; Neugarten, 1979; Grunebaum, 1979).

They express concerns about moving up, moving down, reaching a plateau or hanging on (Neugarten, 1966, 1979; Peterson, 1968; Strickler, 1975; Collin, 1979).

8.1 The Aspiration-achievement gap

In this section in chapter 1, it is shown that men are often unhappy in the middle years because of their occupational frustrations, concerns and problems (Bossard & Boll, 1955; Lowenthal & Chiriboga, 1972).

This unhappiness is often a consequence of failure to realize early 'Dreams' of career success because it is suggested that in mid-life

the individual becomes conscious of the disparity between these early aspirations and actual achievements and recognizes that not enough time is left to close it completely (Deutscher, 1964; Gould, 1972; Farrell et al., (1975 cited in Gutmann, 1976, p.42); Strickler, 1975; Brim, 1976; Collin, 1979; Grunebaum, 1979). If in middle age he feels that he has betrayed or compromised his 'Dream' he may experience distress. There is a pervading sense of sadness in these mid-life men of unfulfilled dreams...

Attitude index statement 28 focused on the extent to which middle-aged men and women enjoy their job far more now compared with the time when they were younger men/women.

28 I enjoy my job far more now than I did when I was a younger man/woman (employed men and women only).

Very strongly disagree	* 1 * 2 * 3 * 4 * 5 * 6 * 7 * 8 * 9 *	Very strongly agree
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Attitude index statement 34 focused on the extent to which middle-aged men and women feel hopeless about the chances of improving their positions in their place of work in the future.

Very strongly disagree	* 1 * 2 * 3 * 4 * 5 * 6 * 7 * 8 * 9 *	Very strongly agree
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7.1 Introduction to perspectives on the life course

In this section in chapter 1, Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) found that individuals who are in some social or psychological sense less "healthy" dwell more on the past.

7.1.1 Attitudes towards the past

In this section in chapter 1, Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) found that empty-nest parents and newlyweds were more preoccupied with the past than high school seniors and pre-retirees. In this study, they found that active reconstruction of the past, characterized by a concern with "rehashing" specific past decisions and behaviour, shifted by stage, peaking at middle age: 44 percent of the middle-aged parents manifested such concerns.

7.1.2 Attitudes towards the past and future

In this section in chapter 1, Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) found that empty-nest parents and pre-retirees were past-oriented, while high school seniors and newlyweds were future-oriented. It is also indicated that the former groups dwelt more on the past than the latter groups.

7.1.4 Time perspective and adaptation

In this section in chapter 1, Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) looked at the relationships between a psychia-

trist's rating of impairment and directionality. Psychiatric impairment was not associated with directionality, that is, with whether the subject was mainly preoccupied with the past or with the future.

It seems reasonable to expect that a past-oriented person will see the future pessimistically. Their findings generally supported this common-sense conjecture, but only among informants in the two later stages, viz. empty-nest and pre-retirees. Among the older individuals, especially the women, more than two-thirds who were past-oriented felt hopeless about the future.

They next compared time orientations with affect balance scores, which measure recent emotional states, and Bradburn's (1969 cited in Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975, p.137) overall happiness measure, which reflects the individual's prevailing mood. Time orientation, as reflected by a focus primarily on the past or future, was also significantly related to affect balance among only older subjects. Over two-thirds of the happier older people were future-oriented, while over half of the less happy were past-oriented.

Attitude index statement 31 focused on the extent to which respondents were pleased with what they did with their lives when they were younger, i.e., they had a positive preoccupation with the past.

31 I am pleased with what I did with my life when I was younger.

Very strongly disagree	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Very strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		

Attitude index statement 40 focused on the extent to which respondents were concerned about the mistakes which they had made when they were younger, i.e., whether they had a negative preoccupation with the past.

40 I worry about the mistakes which I made when I was younger.

Very strongly disagree	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Very strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

7.1 Introduction to perspectives on the life course

In this section in chapter 1, Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) found that individuals who are in some social or psychological sense less "healthy" have a more limited perspective on the future.

7.1.2 Attitudes towards the future

In this section in chapter 1, two empirical studies about this issue are reviewed, i.e., (Neugarten & Garron, 1959; Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975). In the former study, the respondents, i.e., (625 men and women aged 40 to 70) were asked what they thought life would be like when they grew older.

Attitudes towards the future were positive in 14 percent, negative in 13 percent, contingent in 18 percent, and, again, neutral in 55 percent.

The respondents who had negative attitudes towards the future expressed fears about becoming dependent on others as a consequence of aging... Dependency was conceived of as having two sources, viz. loss of income and loss of health.

In the latter study, the subjects' sense of time extension was assessed by counting the number of years they projected into the future on the Life Evaluation Chart. A number of them (approximately 16 percent) refused to project into the future. The empty-nest parents and pre-retirees refused more often to project into the future than the high school seniors and newlyweds. More than one third of those in the later stages, viz. (empty-nest and pre-retirees) refused to project or gave an attenuated projection of ten years into the future. The high school seniors and newlyweds gave longer projections into the future than the empty-nest parents and the pre-retirees. The pre-retirees, who on an actuarial basis were closest to death, were found to be the most pessimistic about the future.

In this regard, Collin (1979) states that time is sometimes experienced as 'deranged'. Fried (1976 cited in Collin, 1979, p.146) writes of boredom and depression which result and likens these feelings to the medieval sign of acedia, a 'paralysing mixture of despair and apathy in whose presence the future disappears'.

7.1.4 Time perspective and adaptation

In this section in chapter 1, Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and

Associates (1975) found that direction (represented by orientation to the past or future) and projections of one's life span proved to be significantly related for a select segment of respondents.

Among the older respondents, i.e., (empty-nest and pre-retirees), those with a future orientation expected to die at a later date.

The above researchers looked at the relationships between a psychiatrist's rating of psychiatric impairment and projections of the life course. Among the older, however, nearly two thirds of those rated as considerably impaired had a limited time extension.

It seems reasonable to expect that a future-oriented individual will be hopeful or optimistic about the future. Their findings generally supported this common-sense conjecture, but only among informants in the two later stages. Among these older individuals, most of the future-oriented ranked moderate to high on hopefulness.

They next compared time projections with affect balance scores, which measure recent emotional states, and Bradburn's (1969 cited in Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates, 1975, p.137) overall happiness measure, which reflects the individual's prevailing mood. Projected duration of the life course had bearing on affect balance or happiness among the two older groups, i.e., (empty-nest and pre-retirees). Two thirds of the older subjects who had relatively long life-course projections scored high on affect balance, while nearly half of those with limited projections scored low. Among those in the older stages, longer projections were associated

with greater happiness. Time orientation as reflected by a focus primarily on the past or future, was also significantly related to affect balance among only older subjects. Over two-thirds of the happier older people were future-oriented while over half of the less happy were past-oriented.

Attitude index statement 37 was asked in order to determine the extent to which respondents were not as hopeful now as they used to be about their future.

37 I am not as hopeful now as I used to be about my future.

Very strongly disagree	· · · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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Attitude index statement 43 was asked in order to determine the extent to which respondents look forward with pleasure to the future.

43 I look forward with pleasure to my future.

Very strongly disagree	· · · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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5 Confrontation with death

In this section in chapter 1, a number of theorists, viz. (Jacques, (1965, cited in Brim, 1976, p.5); Marmor, 1968; & Gutmann, 1976)

contend that the individual is confronted with his own death at middle age. He is no longer able to deny his own mortality and as a consequence, there is a marked increase in "existential anxiety," which centres on fear of disintegration, stasis and separation (Lifton, (1973 cited in Collin, 1974, p.146). Becker (1973 cited in Chew, 1976, p.5) states, "The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is the mainspring of human activity - activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny of man." This view has been contradicted by Vaillant (1977 cited in Collin, 1979, p.145), who advances that men in their forties are not depressed because they fear death, but rather because they are faced with instinctual re-awakening. Finally, a number of theorists (Brim, 1976; Nadelson, Polonsky & Mathews, 1979) conclude that the middle-aged individual must resign himself to his own death, reorder his life priorities, and resolve the loss of fantasized hopes.

6.1 The changing time perspective and death

In this section in chapter 1, it is pointed out that an individual's perception of time changes during middle age, both in terms of the subjective experience of its passage and in terms of its availability. He becomes aware that time is limited and that he has to engage in a race against it. Time accordingly increases in value and this appears to influence its subjective speed (Wallach & Green, 1968 cited in Collin, 1979, p.146). This changing time perspective is also evident in the manner in which life is restructured in terms of time-left-to-live rather than time-since birth by middle-

aged adults (Neugarten, 1966, 1968, 1976, 1979).

Time is a two-edged sword. In some of my friends, it brings anxiety that there won't be time enough. To others, it adds a certain challenge in seeing how much pleasure can still be obtained. But all of us figure backward from the end...and estimate how much time we can expect (Neugarten, 1978, p.18).

Such a change in time perspective is closely connected to the personalization of death because death in middle age becomes a definite possibility for the self, no longer the magical or unusual occurrence that it appears in youth (Neugarten, 1966, 1970, 1976; Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

Attitude index statement 32 focused on the extent to which respondents find it easy to think about their own death.

32 It is easy for me to think about my own death.

Very strongly disagree	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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Attitude index statement 38 focused on the extent to which respondents feel anxious about the fact that the time which they still have left to live is shorter now than it was when they were younger.

38 I worry that the time which I still have left to live is shorter now than it was when I was younger.

Very strongly disagree	· · · · · · · · · — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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4 and 6.1 The changing body and the changing time perspective and death

In these sections in chapter 1, it is indicated that body-monitoring is the term used to describe many protective strategies for keeping the middle-aged body at set levels of performance and appearance, but while these concerns assume the form of a new sense of physical vulnerability in men, i.e., rehearsal for a heart-attack, they take the form of rehearsal for widowhood in women. Women are more concerned about the body-monitoring of their husbands than of themselves (Neugarten, Wood, Kraines & Loomis, 1963; Neugarten, 1966, 1970, 1979; Neugarten & Datan, 1974).

Attitude index statement 41 focused on the extent to which respondents think about what it will be like for them one day when their husband/wife is no longer living. The purpose of this question was to ascertain the extent to which middle-aged women undergo a rehearsal for widowhood more frequently than middle-aged men.

41 I sometimes think about what it will be like for me one day when my husband/wife is no longer living.

Very strongly disagree	• • • • • • • • • — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5 — 6 — 7 — 8 — 9 —	Very strongly agree
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1.1.2 Marital relationship

In this section in chapter 1, it is shown that there are contradic-

tory studies and theories regarding marital adjustment and the empty-nest stage of life. A number of studies and theories focus on the positive aspects of marital adjustment at this stage of life, viz. Axelson (1960), Deutscher (1964), Burr (1970), Rollins and Feldman (1970), Neugarten and Datan (1974) and Thurnher (1976), while other studies focus on the negative aspects of marital adjustment at the same stage of life, viz. Fried and Stern (1948), Cavan (1958), Bossard and Boll (1955), Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960), Pincus (1961), Deutscher (1964), Cuber and Harroff (1965), Lidz (1968), Neugarten and Datan (1974), Lurie (1974), Masters and Johnson (1974) and Pincus and Dare (1977).

Axelson divided his subjects into two categories - those who still had one or more single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home and those respondents who had no single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home.

An attempt was made to discover longitudinal differences in the area of relationship to spouse. This was achieved by asking the subjects to recall the time when their child was of high school age and to note if changes had occurred.

Women in both stages of the postparental period indicated important increases in satisfaction with their marital adjustment.

When viewing their lives in retrospect, the fathers indicated that a significant positive change in the area of marital adjustment had occurred since the child was in high school.

Deutscher defined a postparental couple as a husband and wife who were both alive and living together, both between the ages of 40 and 65, and having had from one to four children, all of whom had been launched.

The respondents who gave a positive assessment of the postparental period spoke of improved relationships with each other.

Burr and Rollins and Feldman found that marital satisfaction increases at the launched stage and continues to increase through the retired stage.

Neugarten and Datan found that some men and women in their study noted a positive change in their marital relationship after the departure of their children from the home.

Thurnher found that couples frequently express the desire that their marriages will improve and that they will develop greater intimacy and companionship after the children leave.

Fried and Stern state that the departure of children from the parental home increases the isolation of the parents because their chief common interest, the rearing of children, no longer exists and the parents now have more time for reflection on their marital relationship.

Cavan contends that husbands and wives who have turned to their children for the love and encouragement that normally comes from the

spouse, also face difficult adjustment with the independence of the children.

Bossard and Boll and Gurin, Veroff and Feld located the lowest level of marital satisfaction at the stage of the family life cycle associated with the empty-nest.

Pineo studied married couples after twenty years of marriage. His data indicated that there was a general decline in marital satisfaction and adjustment, which he conceptualized as a process of disenchantment. He concluded that what was happening was a progressive loss of fit between them as partners. After twenty years, their matching would be no better than if they had been joined by chance.

In Deutscher's study, there were some couples, who had remained married "for the sake of the children" or some other such rationale for as long as 25 years.

Cuber and Harroff found in their study of 437 upper middle-class Americans between the ages of thirty-five and fifty widespread disillusionment and cynicism among his respondents. Many continue in marriage arrangements which are described as "conflict - habituated," "devitalized," or "passive-congenital."

Lidz states that the middle years can present a severe test to a marriage. The children no longer provide diversion or activity, or serve as scapegoats for the conflicts between the spouses.

Neugarten and Datan noted that some men and women in their study perceived a negative change in their marital relationship after the departure of their children from the home.

Lurie states that empty-nest men and women were most likely to say that negative changes have occurred in their marriages.

Masters and Johnson comment upon the emotional poverty of middle-age marriage relationships which "diminishes the quality of life itself."

Pincus and Dare write that there are couples whose only investment in their marriage has been their children and who feel that they have nothing else in common without their children, the marriage has become flat, the couple frustrate each other, and their sagging vitality is likely to affect all other areas of their lives.

Attitude index statement 35 was asked in order to determine the extent to which spouses feel that they will get closer to one another than they are now when their children leave home to live on their own.

35 When my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own, my husband/wife and I will get closer to each other than we are now.

Very strongly disagree	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	Very strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			

Attitude index statement 45 was asked in order to determine the extent to which spouses feel that they will have little in common with one another when their children leave home to live on their own.

45 When my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own, my husband/wife and I will have little in common.

Very strongly disagree	•	1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5	•	6	•	7	•	8	•	9	•	Very strongly agree
------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---------------------------

The researcher made use of several items to measure the variables of interest in the Family Attitude Survey (FAS), because particular items may be ambiguous, subject to acquiescence bias and elicit concern with desirability of response. However, responses to several items worded in a variety of ways enables the researcher to construct an index which is less influenced by such factors (Dijkstra & van der Zouwen, 1982). For example, two items were used to measure whether the advent of children leaving home constitutes a positive or negative event for the middle-aged parents, viz.

9

Does a mother/father like you feel pleased when your child/children start leaving home to live on his/her/their own?

Pleased Relieved	•	1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5	•	6	•	7	•	8	•	9	•	Not pleased Not relieved
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-----------------------------

15

Does a mother/father like you feel sad when your child/children start leaving home to live on his/her/their own?

Not sad · 1 · 2 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 9 · Very sad

Because the ordering of questions within a set is thought to have the potential to affect responses, Babbie (1973) states that it is advisable to vary the order (cited in Dijkstra & van der Zouwen, 1982, p.30). Thus the researcher varied the order of the items in the Family Attitude Survey (FAS), for example, items 32 and 38 focused on acceptance of, or anxiety about death.

The point to note is that these items did not occur consecutively in the survey. The researcher inserted threatening items, i.e., items about sexuality towards the middle of his survey, because Goode and Hatt (1952) state that questions on threatening topics should not be placed at the beginning of the interview (cited in Dijkstra & van der Zouwen, 1982, p.30). For example, an item measuring degree of interest in sexuality was the 18th item in the survey.

2.6.4 Interviews

A mutually acceptable time and date for the interviews was agreed upon between the researcher and the participants. The interviews occurred between January and June, 1984. The duration of each

interview was between one and two hours.

Each of the postparental couples were visited individually at their homes. The husbands and wives were interviewed in separate rooms of their homes. The husbands were interviewed by the researcher, and the wives by one of two female interviewers employed for this purpose. A decision was made to employ female interviewers to interview the wives in this study, because the Family Attitude Survey (FAS) contained items about sexuality, and Sudman and Bradman (1974 cited in Dijkstra & van der Zouwen, 1982, p.33) found that gender appears to be associated with response effects only when the topic is related to sex. Thus, in surveys of sexual behaviour, sex of interviewer might make a difference.

The one matriculated female interviewer had extensive experience in market research (approximately five years), and the other female interviewer was a university graduate who had qualified as a primary school teacher. These interviewers were paid fourteen rand for each interview they conducted. They were given training by the researcher on how to use the Family Attitude Survey (FAS), constructed by him for the purposes of this research.

2.6.5 Method of scoring the Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

The respondents were presented with a perspex scale, which depicted the attitude index statements and the modified bipolar opposites (see photographs p.296 - Plates 2.1 and 2.2). This scale measured 30 x 16.2 cm. It consisted of the following parts, viz. a piece of

cardboard, measuring 29.7 x 13.2 cm, with the nine-point attitude index ratings and very strongly disagree, strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, undecided, slightly agree, agree, strongly agree, and very strongly agree, written on it, pieces of hardboard, measuring 31.4 x 4.9 cm, with the modified bipolar opposites typed on them, and a slide indicator. The pieces of hardboard were slotted into two perspex clips at the top of the scale. The modified bipolar and attitude index statements were read out to the respondent by the interviewer. The former then moved the slide indicator either up or down in the perspex channel in order to indicate the score, i.e., (1-9) that he assigned to these modified bipolar and attitude index statements. The interviewer then recorded each of these scores on the Family Attitude Survey (FAS).

The idea of the perspex scale was first conceived by Edwards (1984), in order to conduct his Political Attitude Survey among Blacks in South Africa.

2.6.6 Further description of sample

Thirty-three families spoke English as their first language, and the remaining two of them spoke Dutch.

Twenty-one of the husbands passed standard 10, two of them passed standard 9, ten of them passed standard 8, and two of them passed standard 7. The mean number of years of education that they completed after school is 2.7, and the standard deviation is 2.6. Twenty-one of the wives passed standard 10, four of them passed standard 9, and ten of them passed standard 8. The mean number of years of education that they completed after school is 1.0, and the

standard deviation is 1.2.

The socio-economic index, 1950 (cited in Bogue, 1963, p.315) was used to classify the occupations of the husbands in the present study. Using the above index as a criterion, these were classified into five broad categories. The number of husbands falling in each category, is indicated in parentheses. These were the following, viz. Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers (9), Managers, Officials, and Proprietors except Farm (15), Clerical and Kindred Workers (3), Sales Workers (2), and Craftsmen, Foremen, and Kindred Workers (6).

Fourteen of the wives were unemployed, nine of them worked either in the mornings or afternoons, and twelve of them worked a full day. Using the above-mentioned index as a criterion, their occupations were also classified into five broad categories. The number of wives falling in each category, is indicated in parentheses. These were the following, viz. Professional, Technical and Kindred Workers (4), Managers, Officials, and Proprietors except Farm (4), Clerical and Kindred Workers (9), Sales Workers (2), and Craftsmen, Foremen, and Kindred Workers (2).

The families were also classified socio-economically, using total vehicle ownership as a criterion, viz. 17 of them owned three or more motor vehicles, 16 of them possessed two motor vehicles, and the remaining two of them owned one motor vehicle. Thus this sample can be considered a lower to middle to upper-middle class one.

The mean number of children in each family was 2.8, and the standard deviation was .92.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION3.1 Statistical analysis of the forty-five variables included in the Family Attitude Survey (FAS)3.1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an analysis of the themes relevant to the empty nest stage of life, and a statistical analysis of the variables which reside under these themes, as contained in the Family Attitude Survey (FAS) (see Appendix pp.281-287), is presented according to the order in which these are described and discussed in chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1.

Simple descriptive statistics, viz. n's, means, standard deviations and the distribution of percentage responses were calculated for the above-mentioned variables. Independent samples t - tests and correlations were also calculated, where appropriate. In addition, a factor analysis (after varimax rotation) was performed in order to simplify the process of determining which variables cohere together, given the large number of variables examined in the present study (Norušis, 1985). It is not discussed in this chapter, however. The reason for this, is that it proved difficult to interpret and conceptualize the loadings of the variables on the factors, given the theoretical diversity of the variables included in the study. Finally, histograms of the frequency of responses to the same variables are also presented (Harvard graphics, 1988). The SPSSX and BMDP systems of programs on the Cyber computer at Rhodes was employed to perform the various analyses (SPSSX Basics, 1984; Dixon,

Brown, Engelman, Frane, Hill, Jennrich & Toporek, 1985).

3.1.2 Individual timetables : on-time and off-time events

In this section, items 8, 10, 13 and 16 focus on the theme of parental attitudes towards children being on-time or off-time with regard to major life events such as vocational adjustment, leaving home, having children, and marriage (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and the distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.1 below. The intercorrelations between the four items are presented in Table 3.2 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4 below.

TABLE 3.1 CHILDREN ARE ON-TIME OR OFF-TIME WITH REGARD TO MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	% 1-4 Still plenty of time for he/she/them to do so	% 5 Indecisive	% 6-9 Worry he/she/ they cannot earn their own living
8	70	7,6	1,7	5.7	5.7	88.5

How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in his/her/their job/s?

TABLE 3.1 CHILDREN ARE ON-TIME OR OFF-TIME WITH REGARD TO MAJOR LIFE EVENTS (CONT)

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	5	6-9
				Not bother me	Indecisive	Worry he/she/they cannot stand on their own two feet
10	70	4,8	3,1	48.5		51.5
How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were in his/her/their middle to late twenties and was/were still staying at home?						
				1-4	5	6-9
				Not upset me	Indecisive	Anxious to have grandchildren
13	70	3,10	2,7	52.8	18.6	28.5
How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children waited a long time after he/she/they was/were married before deciding to have a child/children?						
				1-4	5	6-9
				Not trouble me	Indecisive	Fear he/she/they will remain single
16	70	4,8	2,6	38.6	15.7	45.7
How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet married?						

TABLE 3.2 INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN ITEMS MEASURING ATTITUDES TOWARDS ON-TIME/OFF-TIME EVENTS

ITEM NO.	10	13	16
8	.14	.26	.20
10		.35	.22
13			.30

FIGURE 1 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 8- CHILDREN ARE ON-TIME OR OFF-TIME IN RELATIONSHIP TO VOCATIONAL ADJUSTMENT

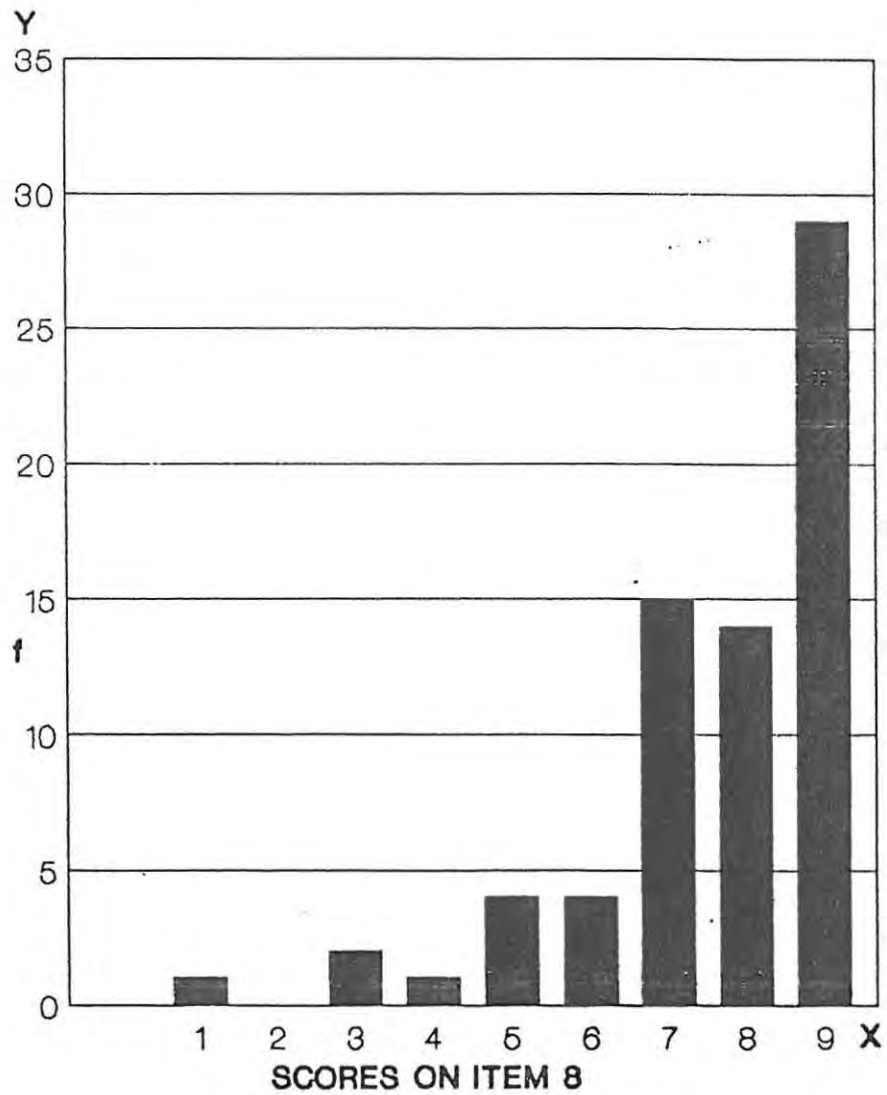


FIGURE 2 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 10- CHILDREN ARE ON-TIME OR OFF-TIME IN RELATIONSHIP TO LEAVING HOME

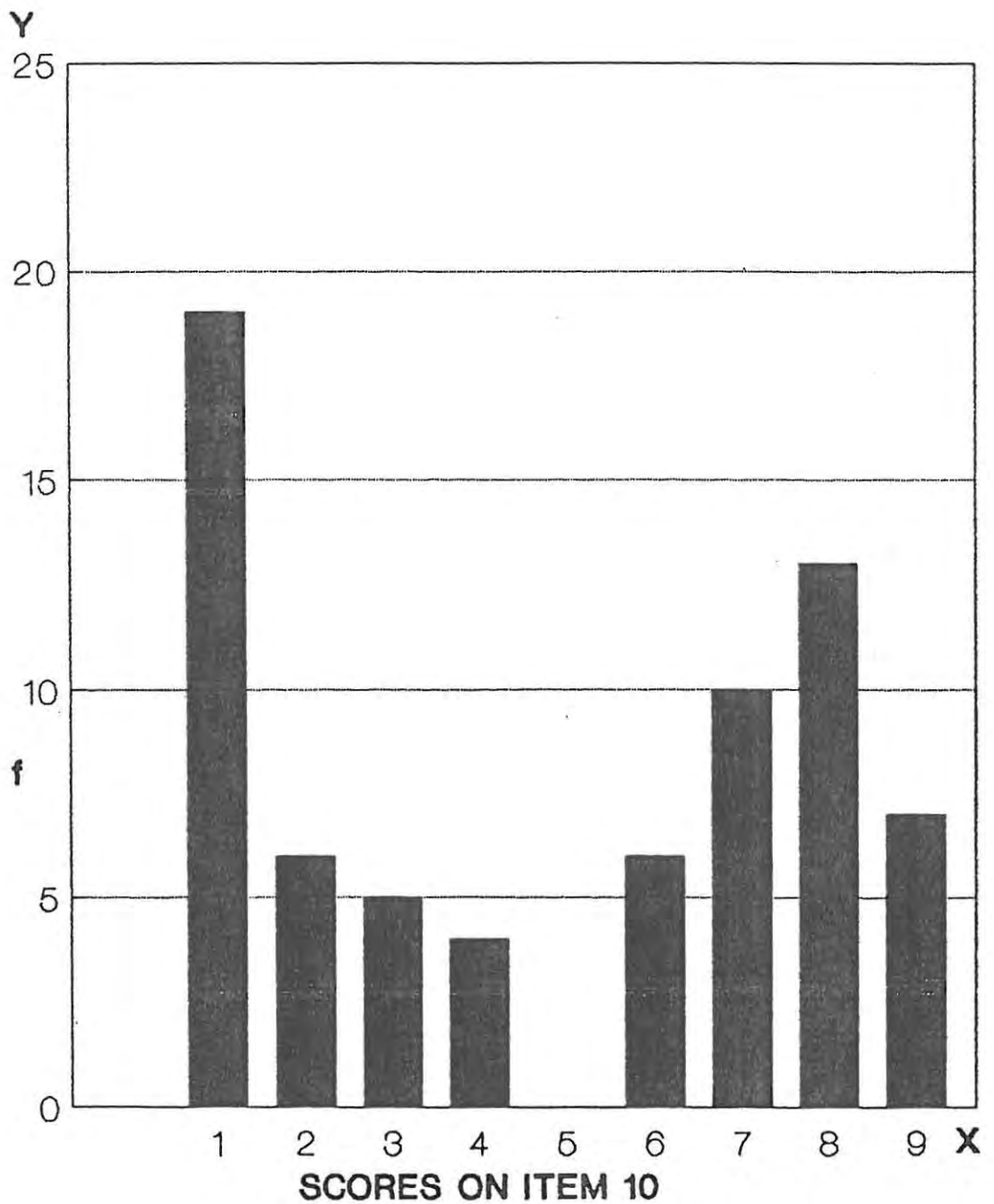


FIGURE 3 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 13- CHILDREN ARE ON-TIME OR OFF-TIME IN RELATIONSHIP TO GIVING THEIR MIDDLE-AGED PARENTS A GRANDCHILD/GRANDCHILDREN

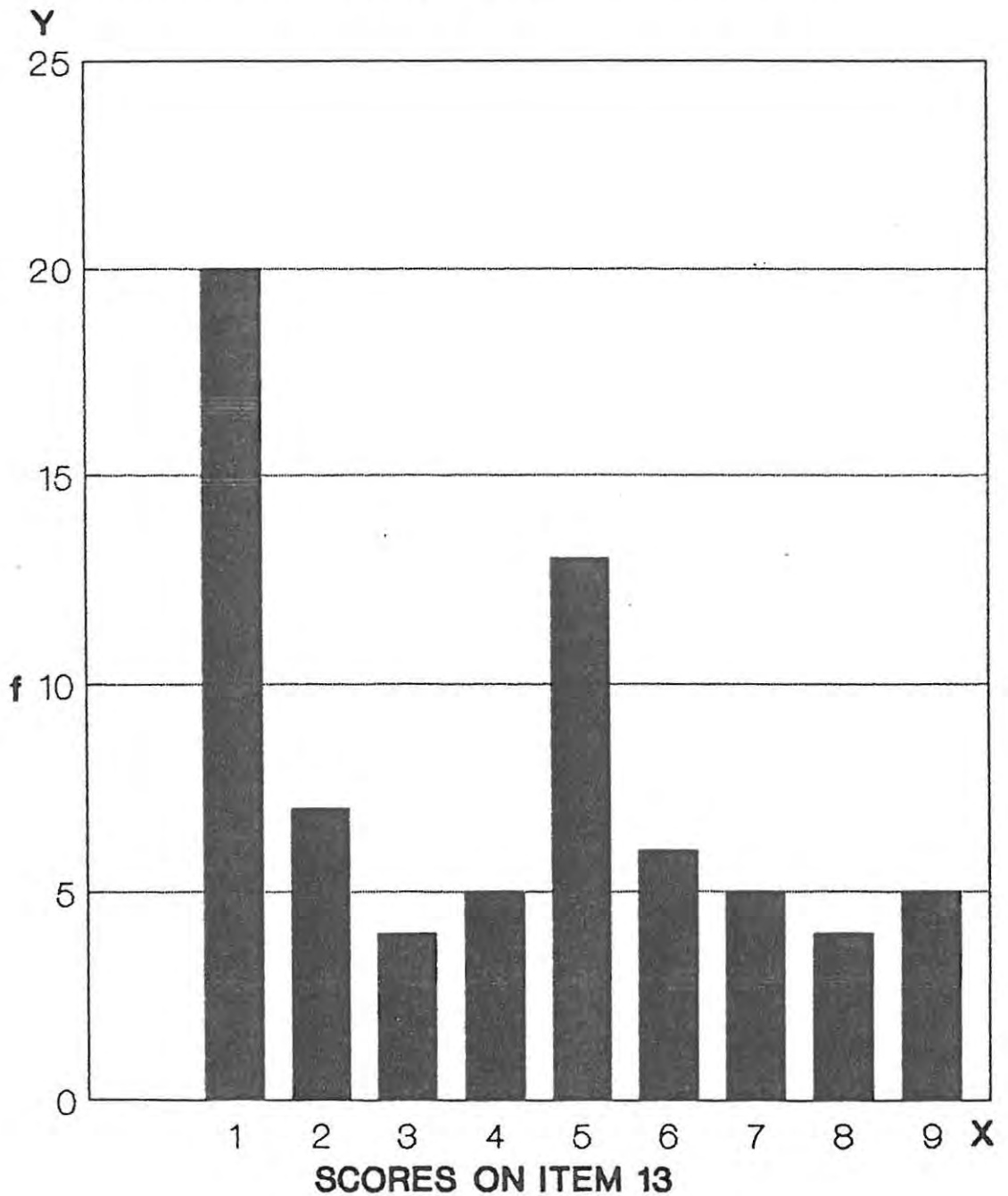
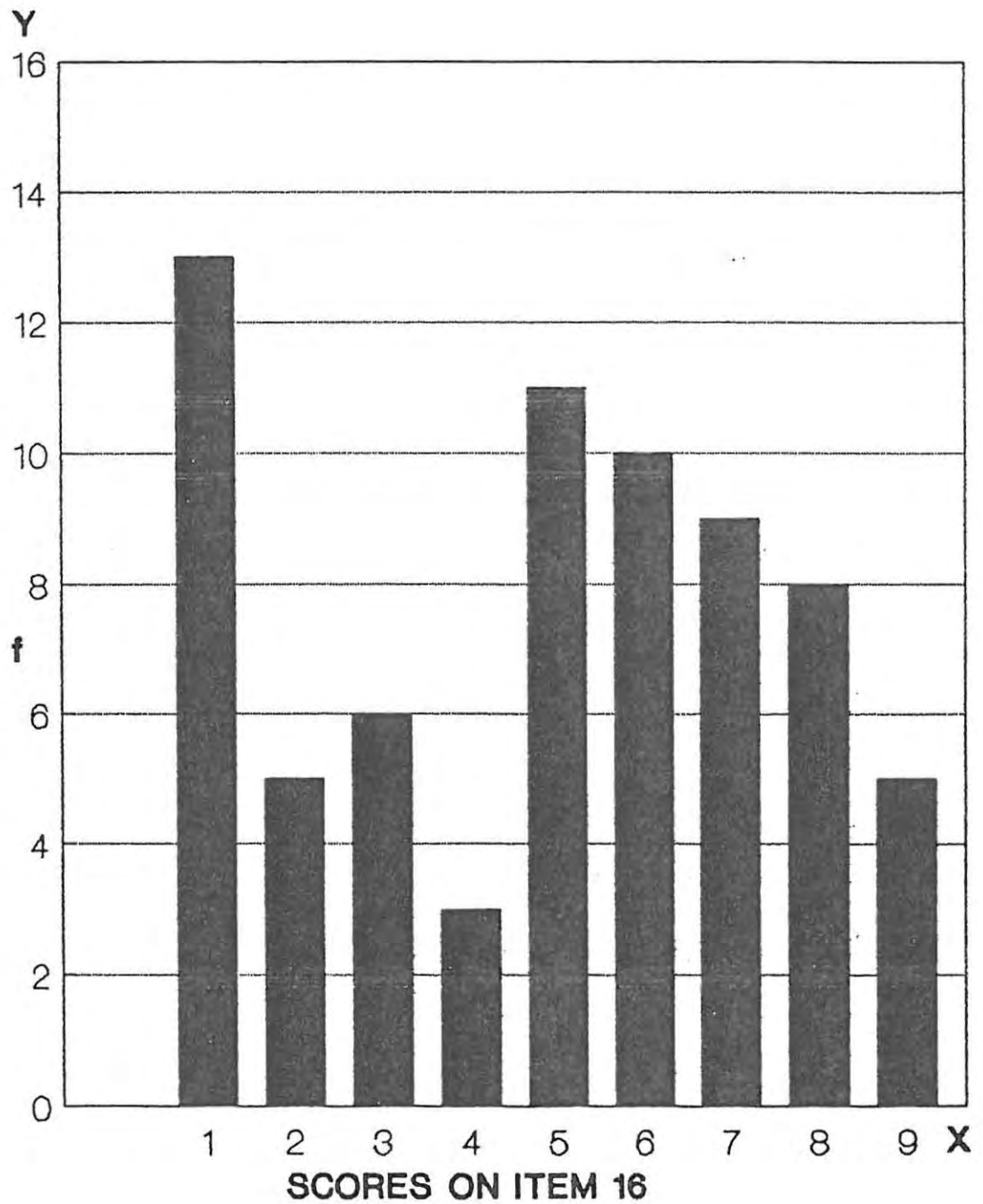


FIGURE 4 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 16- CHILDREN ARE ON-TIME OR OFF-TIME IN RELATIONSHIP TO MARRIAGE



It can be discerned from Table 3.2 that there are low positive correlations between the items measuring attitudes towards on-time/off-time events, i.e. these vary between .14 and .35.

It can be seen from Figure 1 that the scores on item 8 are positively skewed because the majority of parents would worry that their children cannot earn their own living if they were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in their jobs (see Table 3.1).

It is interesting to note that the group of parents who felt there was still plenty of time for their children to settle down properly in their jobs, consisted of three fathers and one mother. They were not married to each other.

It can be observed from Figure 2 that the scores on item 10 reflect a bimodal distribution because 51.5% of the parents would worry that their children cannot stand on their own two feet if they were in their middle to late twenties and were still staying at home, while 48.5% of them would not be bothered about this issue (see Table 3.1).

It can be noted from Figure 3 that the scores on item 13 are negatively skewed because the majority of parents would not be upset if their children waited a long time after they were married before deciding to have children (see Table 3.1).

It can be discerned from Figure 4 that the scores on item 16 reflect a bimodal distribution because 45.7% of the parents would fear that

their children would remain single if they were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet married, 38.6% of them would not be troubled by this fact, and 15.7% of them expressed indecisive attitudes (see Table 3.1).

The above findings show the following: firstly, some parents would worry if their children were off-time with regard to major life events such as vocational adjustment, leaving home, having children, and marriage. These findings can be understood in terms of the views of a number of theorists, viz. Neugarten (1970), Neugarten and Datan (1974), Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974), Bourque and Back (1977) and Rossi (1980) (see chapter 1 section 6.1.1). Neugarten, Neugarten and Datan and Rossi contend that it is the unanticipated not the anticipated, which is likely to constitute the traumatic event as when the empty nest, occupational adjustment and grandparenthood occur at unexpected times during the life cycle, i.e., too early or too late, viz. this is theoretically called being off-time with regard to major life events. Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal advance that a slower pacing in the development of marriage and career plans in their young is a source of stress for the parent generation. Bourque and Back advance that an event like children leaving home is perceived most strongly if it occurs at the wrong time.

Secondly, some parents would be unconcerned about the above-mentioned issues. This can be explained in terms of Hirschhorn's (1977 cited in Neugarten, 1979, p.899) concept of the "fluid" life cycle, which is marked by the disappearance of traditional time-

tables. It can also be understood in terms of new developmental theories that lives are becoming more varied and more fluid, that major life events and major role transitions are becoming more irregular, that age is becoming less relevant and age norms less limiting, and therefore it is of doubtful value to describe adulthood as an invariant sequence of stages, each occurring at a given chronological age (Neugarten, 1979).

It is noteworthy that the majority of parents would worry if their children were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in their jobs, whereas a small majority of them would not be upset if they waited a long time after they were married before deciding to have children. Also, they expressed divided attitudes on the issues of firstly, their children being in their middle to late twenties and still staying at home because some of them would not be bothered by it, while others would worry that they cannot stand on their own two feet, and secondly, some of them would not be troubled if they were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet married, while others would fear that they would remain single (see Table 3.1). It appears that most parents expect their children to make a vocational adjustment during their twenties, whereas the normative age for leaving home, getting married and having children, has been extended, and it has become acceptable to some of them that they make adjustments to these major life events at later ages during the human life cycle, unlike others who have set and inflexible views about the exact chronological ages during which they should make these adjustments.

Finally, the factor analysis and the correlation tables were examined, in order to determine whether other variables were meaningfully related to these on-time/off-time ones. This was not the case, however.

3.1.3 The empty nest as turning point, frustration or satisfaction

In this section, items 9 and 15 focus on the extent to which the departure of children from the home constitutes a loss or relief for the parents (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's means, standard deviations and the distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.3 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 5 and 6 below.

TABLE 3.3 CHILDREN LEAVING HOME A POSITIVE EVENT/A NEGATIVE EVENT

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	5	6-9
				Pleased Relieved	Indecisive	Not pleased Not relieved
9	70	6,6	2,5	18.6	14.3	67.1

Does a mother/father like you feel pleased when your child/children start leaving home to live on his/her/their own?

TABLE 3.3 CHILDREN LEAVING HOME A POSITIVE EVENT/A NEGATIVE EVENT (CONT)

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	5	6-9
				Not sad	Indecisive	Very sad
15	70	6,8	2,2	15.7	7.1	77.1

Does a mother/father like you feel sad when your child/children start leaving home to live on his/her/their own?

FIGURE 5 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 9- FEELINGS ABOUT CHILDREN LEAVING HOME- THE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE-AGED PARENTS- PLEASED/RELIEVED/NOT PLEASED/NOT RELIEVED

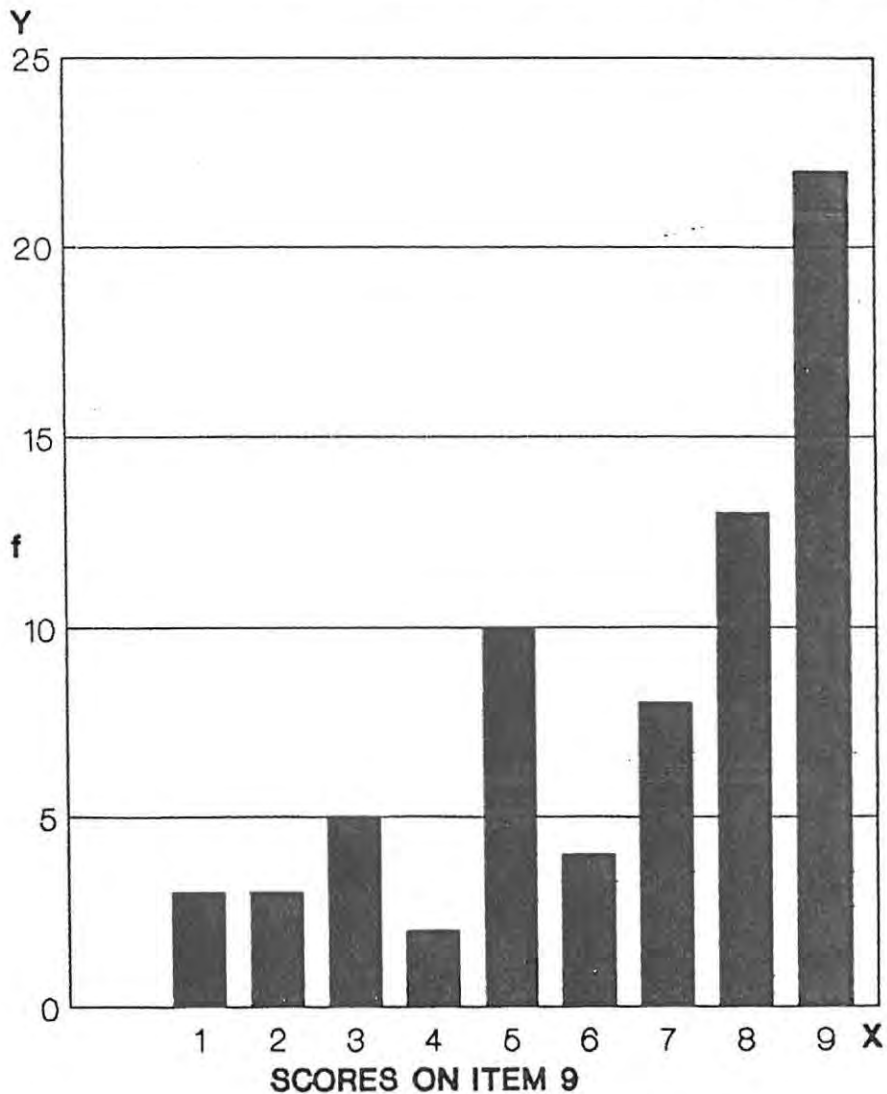
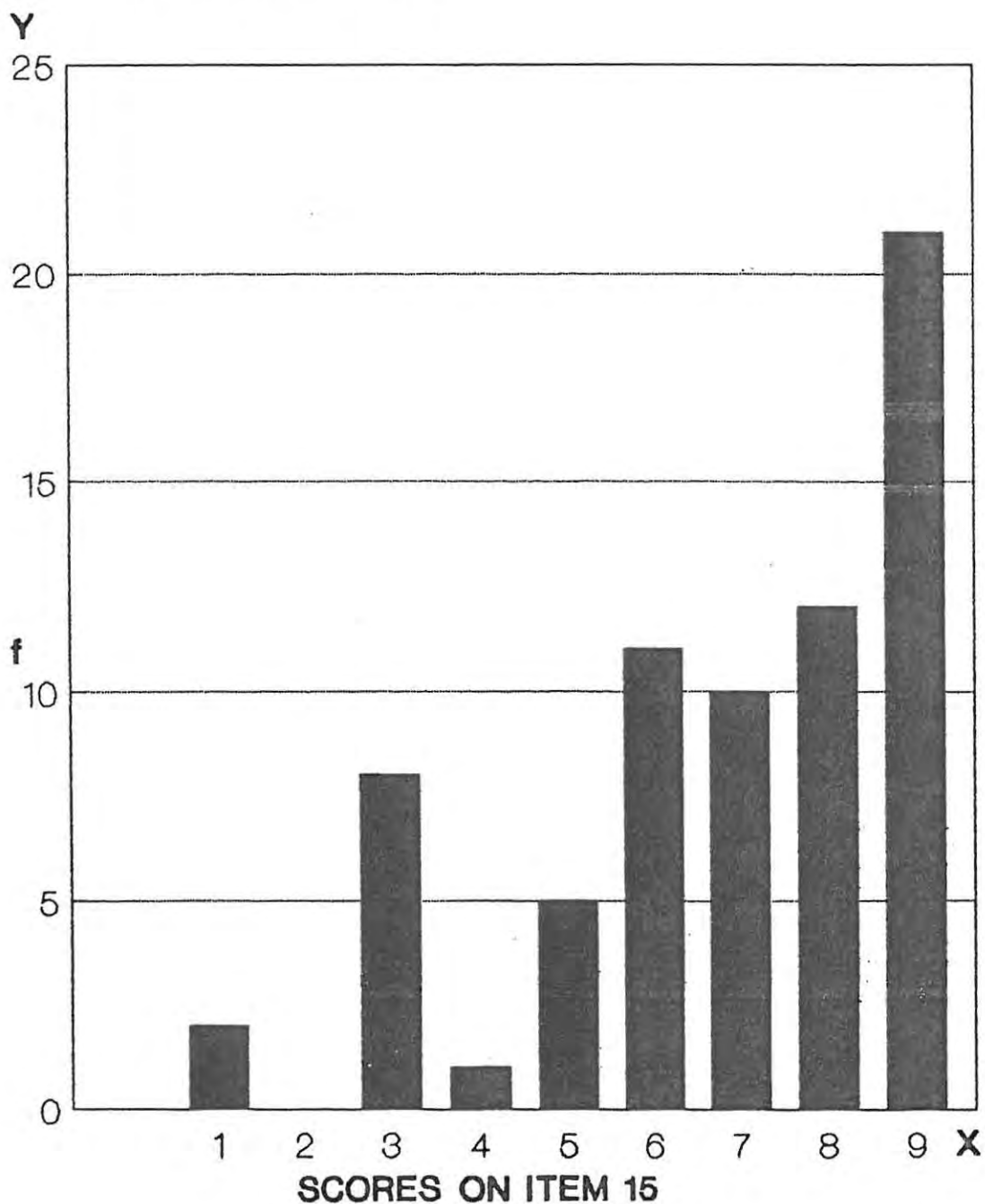


FIGURE 6 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 15- FEELINGS ABOUT CHILDREN LEAVING HOME- THE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE-AGED PARENTS NOT SAD/VERY SAD



It can be seen from Figures 5 and 6 that the scores on items 9 and 15 are positively skewed because the majority of parents felt not pleased/not relieved and very sad when their children started leaving home to live on their own (see Table 3.3). Also, there is a moderate positive correlation between the above-mentioned item and this one, viz. ($r = .52$).

It was expected that there would be moderate to high positive correlations between these items, viz. items 9 and 15 (see Table 3.3), and one of the items measuring parental over-involvement, for example item 47 - Although my child/children is/are grown-up, I will tell him/her/them what to do now as much as I used to when he/she/they was/were younger (see Table 3.4), because a number of theorists, viz. Burgess and Locke (1945), Fried and Stern (1948) and Cavan (1958) contend that parents who play an outdated parental role underestimate the abilities of their children to fend for themselves and therefore are filled with fears and insecurities. They also see their only path for ego - satisfaction and status closing before them. Thus, the departure of a child for college or the marriage of a son or daughter is viewed as a bereavement, with parents mourning for the loss of the child's dependency as they might mourn over the physical death of a child (see chapter 1 section 1.1.4). Also, the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1973) advance that this separation introduces conflicts for them about giving up their authority and control (see chapter 1 section 1.1.3). This assumption proved to be incorrect, because items 9 and 15 show low positive correlations with item 47, viz. ($r = .38$) and ($r = .27$), respectively. The former correlation is significant at the .01 level, and

the latter correlation is significant at the .05 level. Thus it appears that parental over-involvement is related to the loss or sadness experienced by the parents in the present study after the departure of their children from the home. It is pertinent to mention that only a minority of parents in the present study were over-involved with their children. This explains the low correlation. Finally, it is possible to speculate that in a clinical sample, there would be a high correlation between parental over-involvement and the loss sustained by the parents after the departure of their children from the home, in contrast to the present study, which is considered a "normal" sample.

The above findings indicate the following: firstly, some parents felt not pleased/not relieved and very sad with the advent of the departure of their children from the home. These findings are similar to the findings of previous studies and theories by a number of researchers and theorists about the emotional impact of children leaving home, viz. Deutscher (1964), Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1973) and Anderson *et al.* (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176) (see chapter 1 section 1.1.3). All of the above-mentioned researchers and theorists have commented on the loss or vacuum which is perceived by some parents after the departure of their children from the home for university, the army, obtaining a job in a distant place, or marriage, and is accentuated by the fact that this separation has a sense of finality about it.

Secondly, some parents felt pleased/relieved and not sad about this event. These findings are similar to the findings of two empirical

studies by Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) and Anderson et al. (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176), in one respect, viz. some parents in the present study and the above-mentioned studies did not perceive the advent of the departure of the children from the home as a negative event (see chapter 1 section 1.1.3). For instance, in the Lowenthal and Chiriboga study, neither men nor women cited the past or imminent departure of the youngest child as frustrating or as a current problem. Anderson et al. found that 51% of their respondents expected new challenges and 21% even anticipated a sense of relief at having finished the empty-nest stage. However, the present study differs from the Lowenthal and Chiriboga study in the following manner, viz. only a minority of parents in the present study felt pleased and relieved about this event, while none of them in the latter study cited the past or imminent departure of the youngest child as frustrating or as a current problem. Also, only a minority of parents in the present study felt this way, while a small majority of respondents in the Anderson et al. study expected new challenges. Notwithstanding this, the present study is similar to the above-mentioned study in one respect, viz. 18% of the parents in the present study felt pleased and relieved about this event, while 21% of them in the latter study anticipated a sense of relief at having finished the empty-nest stage.

3.1.4 The clinging parent

In this section, items 11, 14, 29, 39, 42, 46 and 47 focus on the extent to which empty-nest parents were optimally-involved or over-

involved with their teenage and young adult children (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and the distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.4 below. The intercorrelations between the seven items are presented in Table 3.5 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 below.

TABLE 3.4 UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	5	6-9
				Out of my hands	Indecisive	Depend on me
11	70	3,7	2,2	64.4	15.7	20.1
Do you feel that what happens to your child/children in his/her/their future life/lives will for the most part depend largely on you?						
				1-4	5	6-9
				Confident he/she/they can manage	Indecisive	Not hopeful he/she/they can care for themselves
14	70	3,1	1,7	94.3	2.9	8
Do/did you feel hopeful that your child/children will/would be able to manage on his/her/their own when he/she/they leave/s home?						
				1-4	5	6-9
				Disagree	Indecisive	Agree
29	70	6,6	1,6	15.7	1.4	82.9
Now that my child/children is/are grown-up, I feel that it is important that I do not tell him/her/them what to do now as much as I used to when he/she/they was/were younger.						

TABLE 3.4 UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT
(CONT)

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				6-9	5	1-4
				Agree	Indecisive	Disagree
39	70	3,2	1,9	15.7	2.9	81.4
I feel that I am a better judge of when my child/children should get married than he/she/they is/are.						
				6-9	5	1-4
				Agree	Indecisive	Disagree
42	70	3,4	1,8	18.5	1.4	80
I must say that it is hard for me to accept that my child/children is/are grown-up now and can care for himself/herself/themselves without needing so much of my help as he/she/they used to.						
				1-4	5	6-9
				Disagree	Indecisive	Agree
46	70	6,1	2,4	8.5		91.4
I feel proud that my child/children is/are grown-up now and he/she/they can care for himself/herself/themselves without me needing to give him/her/them so much help as I used to.						
				6-9	5	1-4
				Agree	Indecisive	Disagree
47	70	3,4	1,7	14.2	2.9	82.9
Although my child/children is/are grown-up, I will tell him/her/them what to do now as much as I used to when he/she/they was/were younger.						

TABLE 3.5 INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN ITEMS MEASURING DEGREE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT WITH CHILDREN

ITEM NO.	14	29	39	42	46	47
11	.11	-.13	.25	.13	-.07	.19
14		-.07	-.08	.08	-.37	.04
29			-.27	-.21	.30	.01
39				.24	.03	.18
42					-.17	.23
46						.10

FIGURE 7 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 11- HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

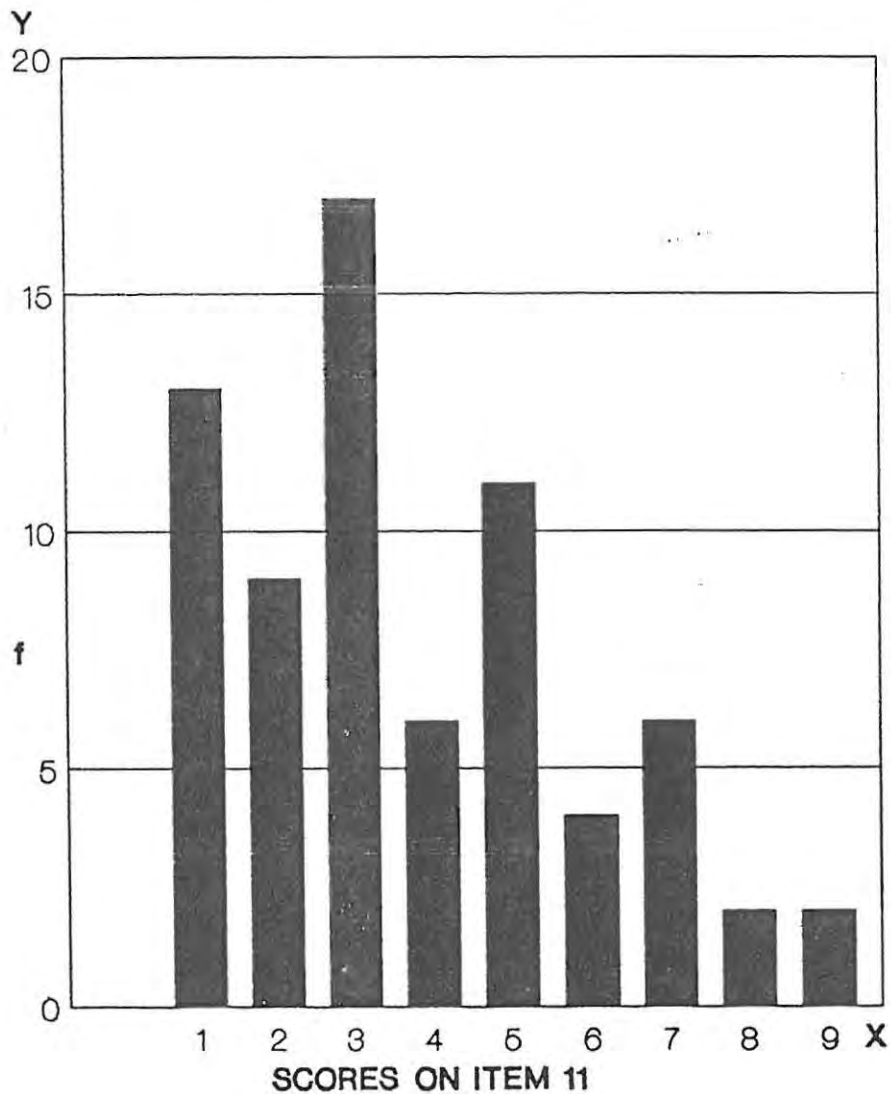


FIGURE 8 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 14- CHILDREN CAN MAINTAIN INDEPENDENCE FROM MOTHER/FATHER WITHOUT DIFFICULTY/ CHILDREN CANNOT MAINTAIN INDEPENDENCE FROM PARENTS/HOPEFUL CHILDREN CAN MANAGE/NOT HOPEFUL CHILDREN CAN MANAGE

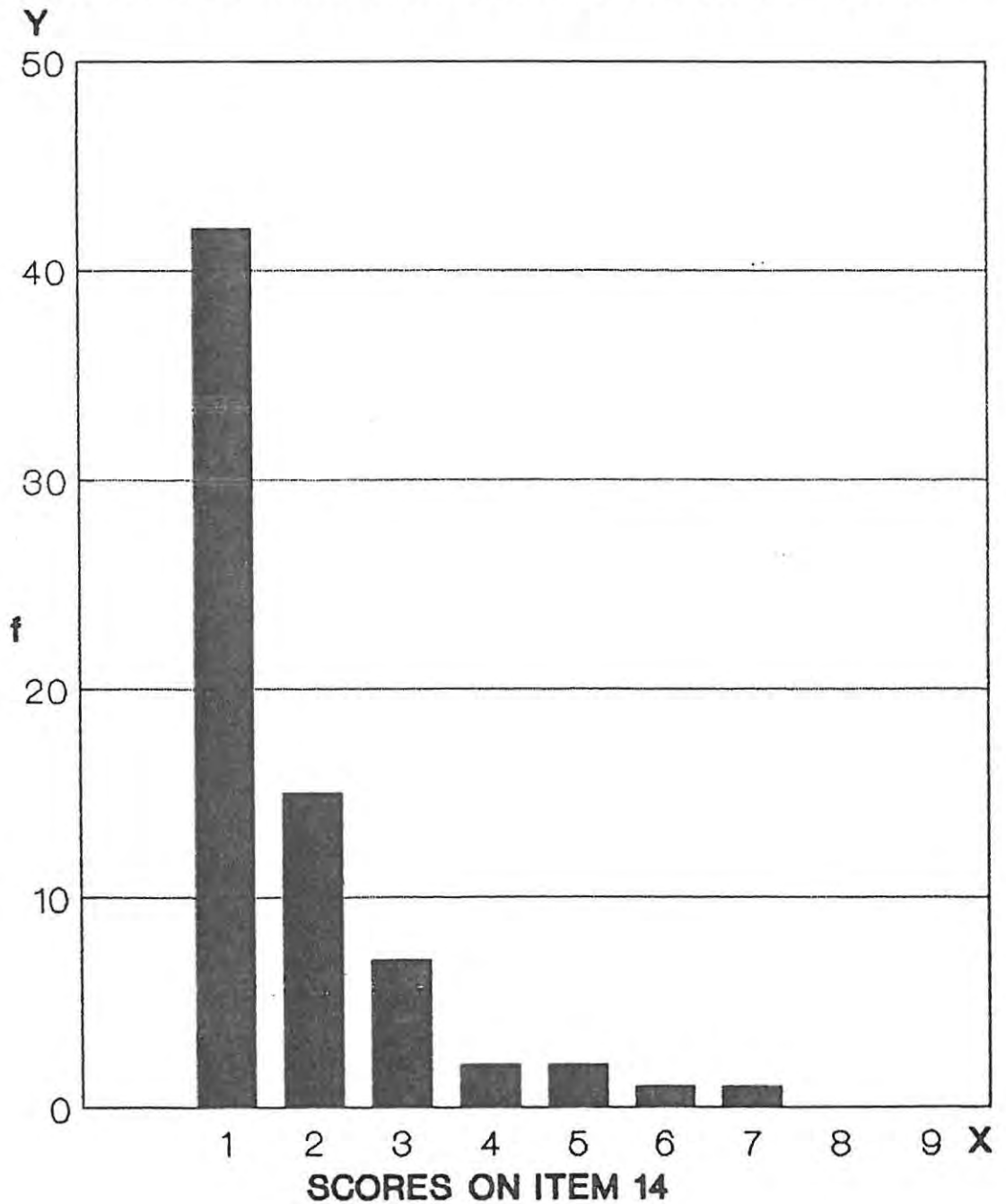


FIGURE 9 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 29- UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

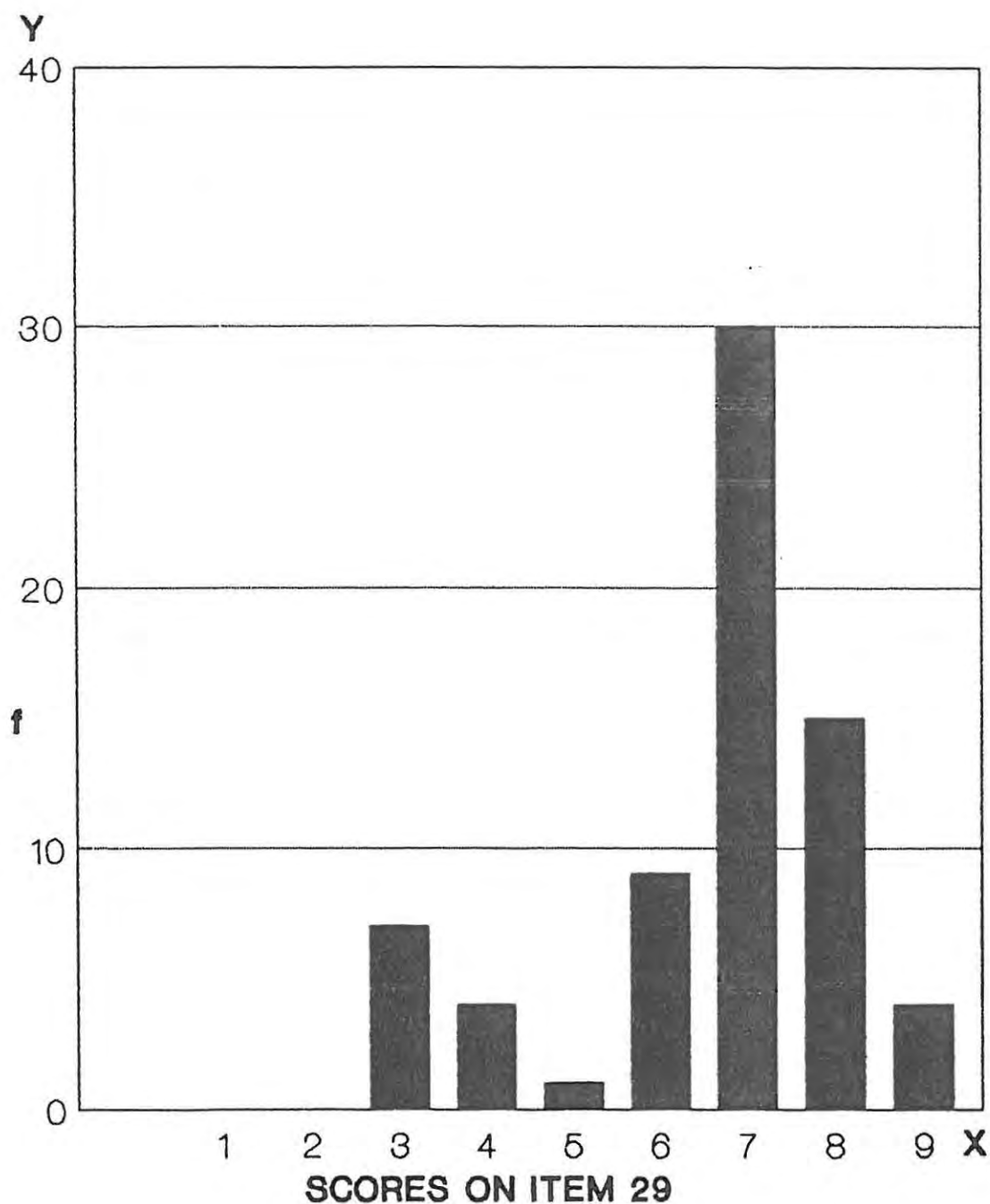


FIGURE 10 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 39- HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

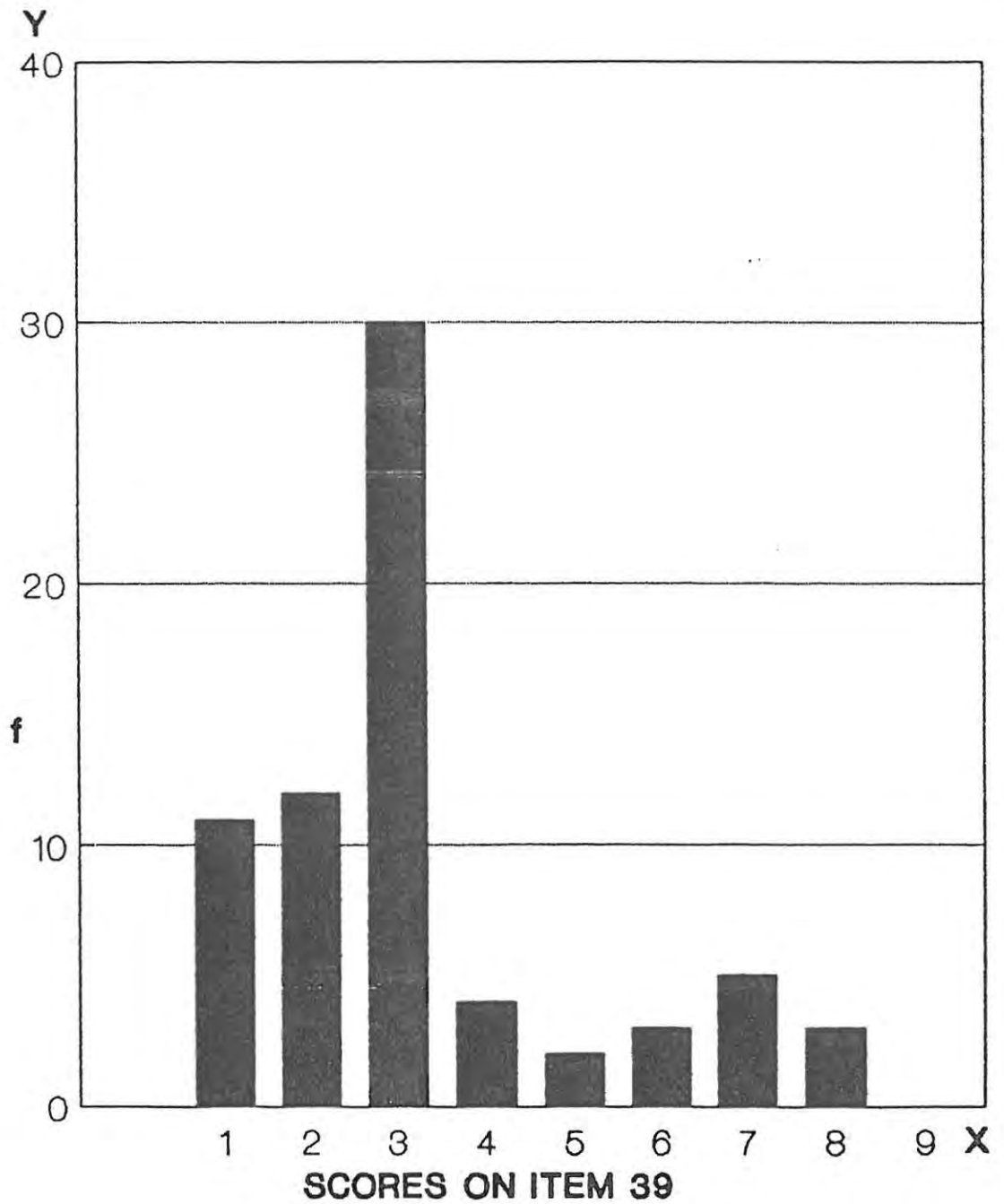


FIGURE 11 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 42- HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

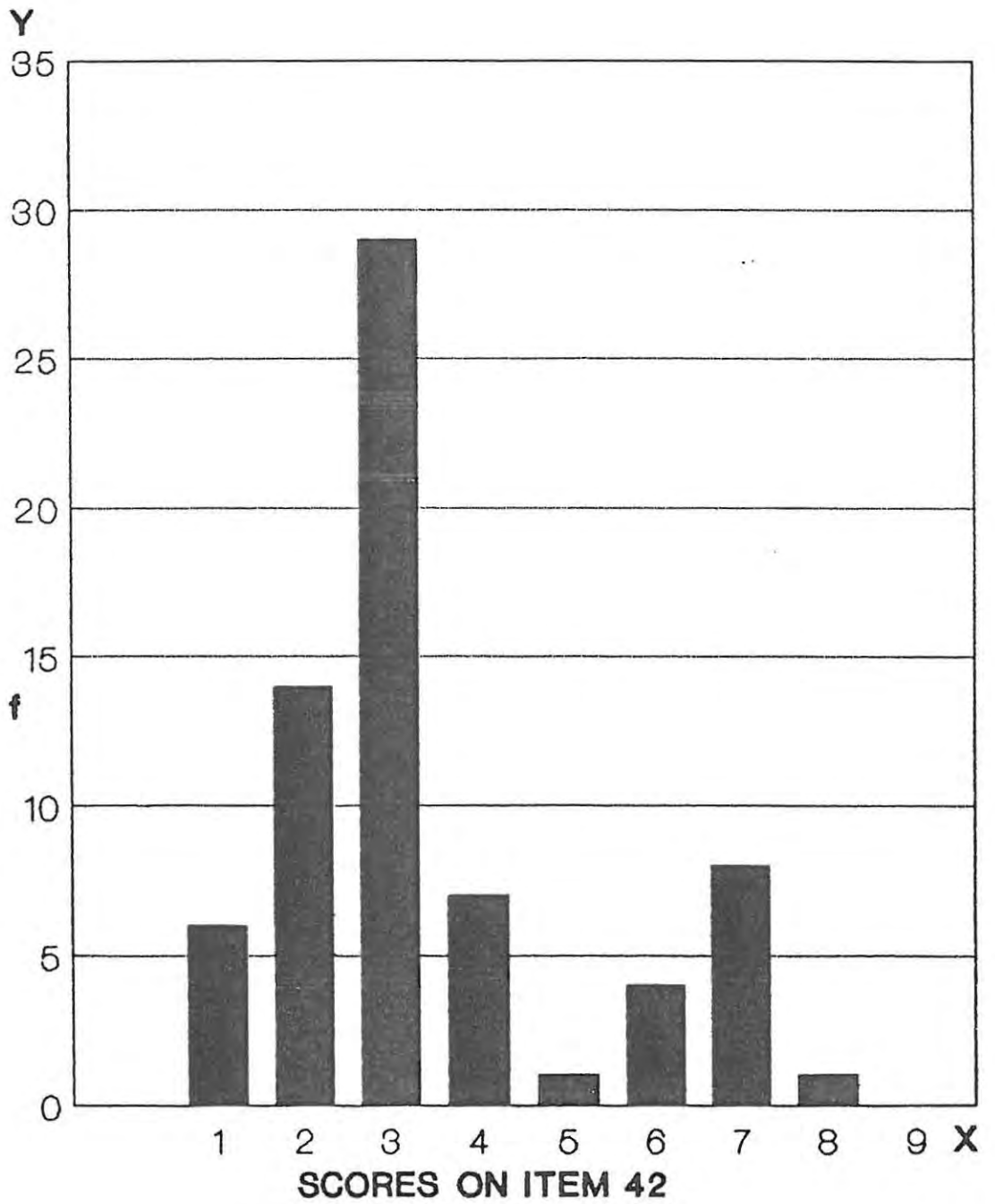


FIGURE 12 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 46- UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

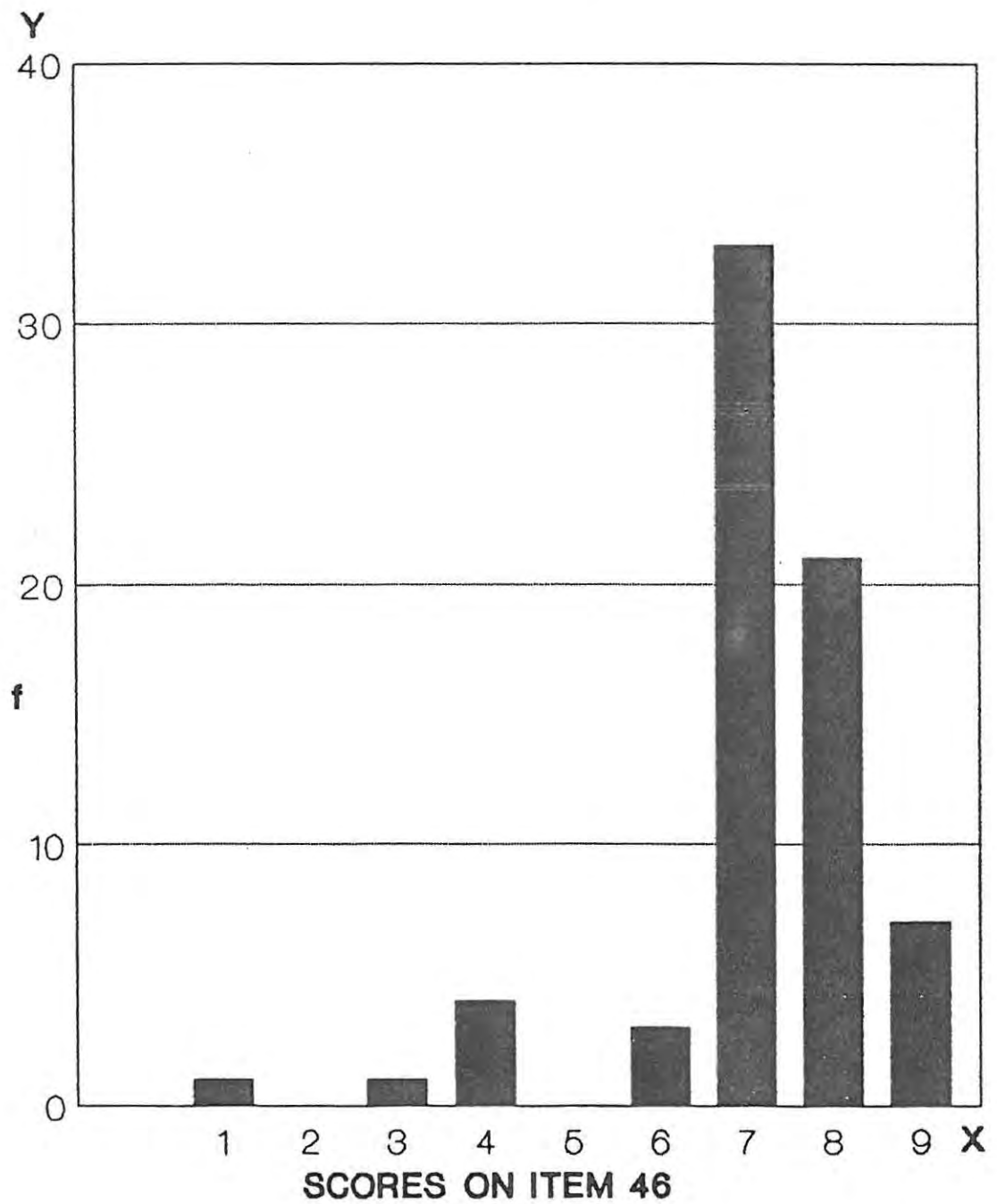
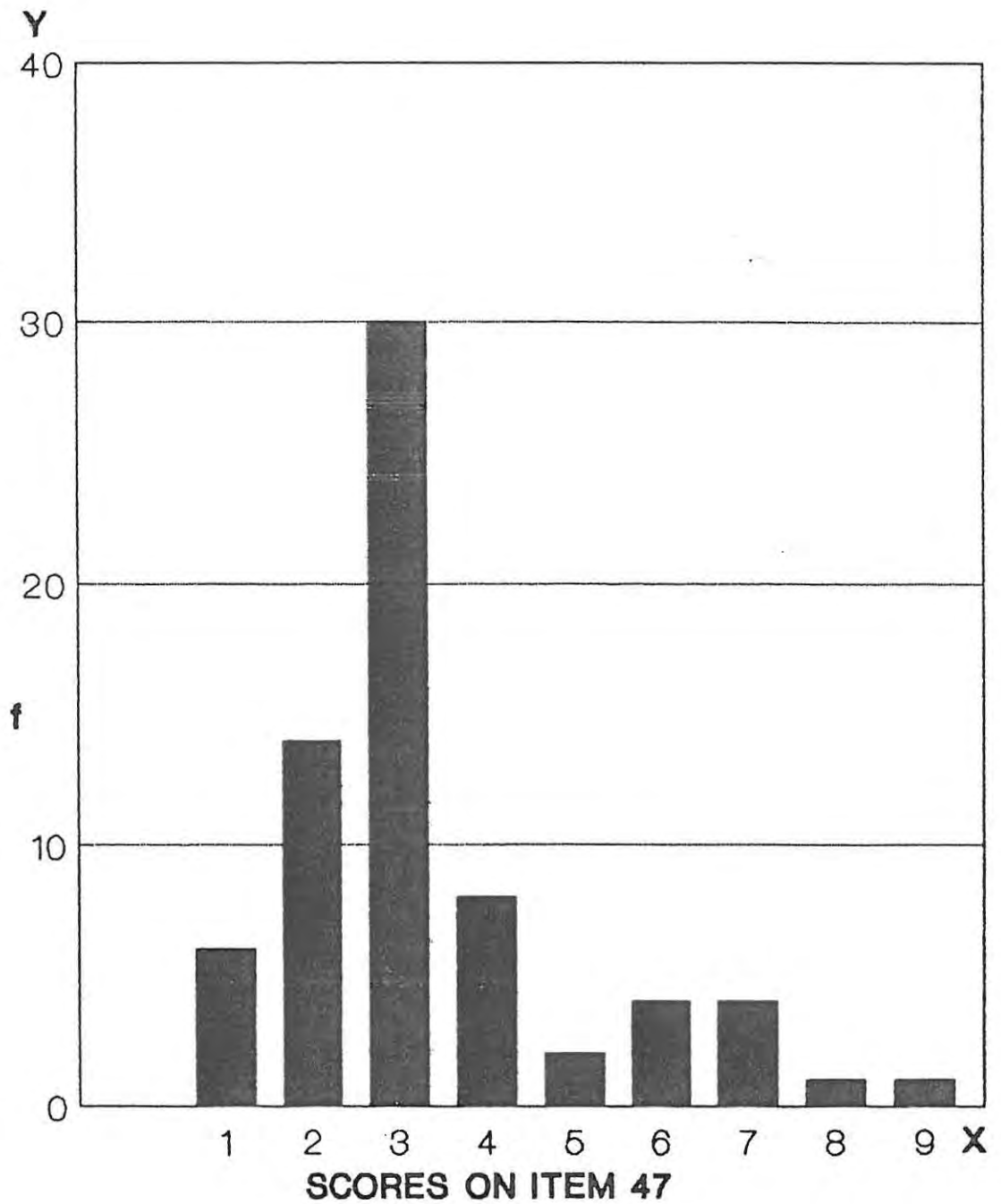


FIGURE 13 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 47- HEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT/UNHEALTHY PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT



It can be observed from Table 3.5 that the intercorrelations between the items measuring degree of parental involvement with children range between .30 and -.37. This indicates that there are low positive and negative correlations between these items.

It can be seen from Figures 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13 that the scores on items 11, 14, 39, 42 and 47 are negatively skewed. In addition, it can be noted from Figures 9 and 12 that the scores on items 29 and 46 are positively skewed (see Table 3.4). It is noteworthy that the correlations between the items are low, notwithstanding the fact that the respondents' responses to these items are similar.

Overall, the above findings demonstrate that the majority of parents in the present study are optimally-involved with their children. These parents have satisfied one of the prerequisites of Erickson's idea of generativity, which is the ability of the adult to allow separation and individuation of his or her children (see Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles, 1978 chapter 1 section 1.1.4). Thus, it appears that the question of over-involvement is not an important one among these parents.

3.1.5 Problems of empty-nest women

In this section, item 12 was asked in order to determine whether wives are more adversely affected by their children's departure from the home than husbands (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The t -test was used to determine whether there were significant diffe-

rences between males and females on this item (see Table 3.6 below). Histograms of the frequency of responses to the above item, for both females and males, are presented in Figures 14 and 15 below.

TABLE 3.6 WIVES MORE PERTURBED THAN HUSBANDS WHEN THE CHILD/CHILDREN HAVE DEPARTED FROM THE HOME OR VICE-VERSA

Item No.	Mean Female	N	Mean Male	N	<u>t</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>p</u>
12	4,0	35	6,6	35	-6.08	68	≤ ,000 one-tailed

Who do you think will be more upset when all your child/children has/have left home to live on his/her/their own, you or your husband/wife? I will feel more upset scale points (1-4)/ Undecided scale point (5)/My husband/wife will feel more upset scale points (6-9).

FIGURE 14 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 12- WIVES MORE PERTURBED THAN HUSBANDS WHEN CHILD/CHILDREN HAVE LEFT HOME- FEMALES

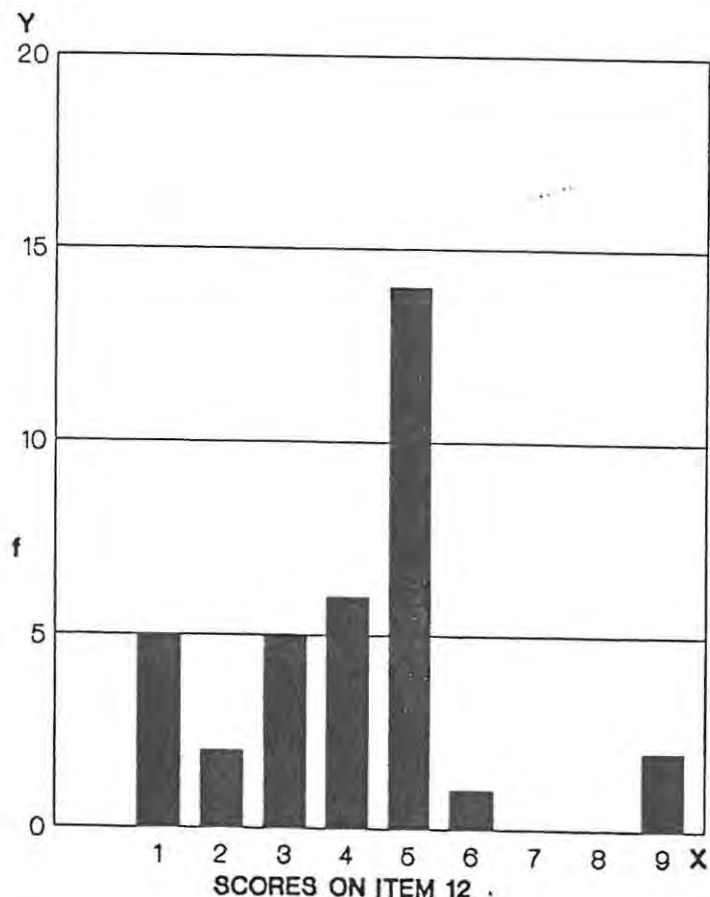
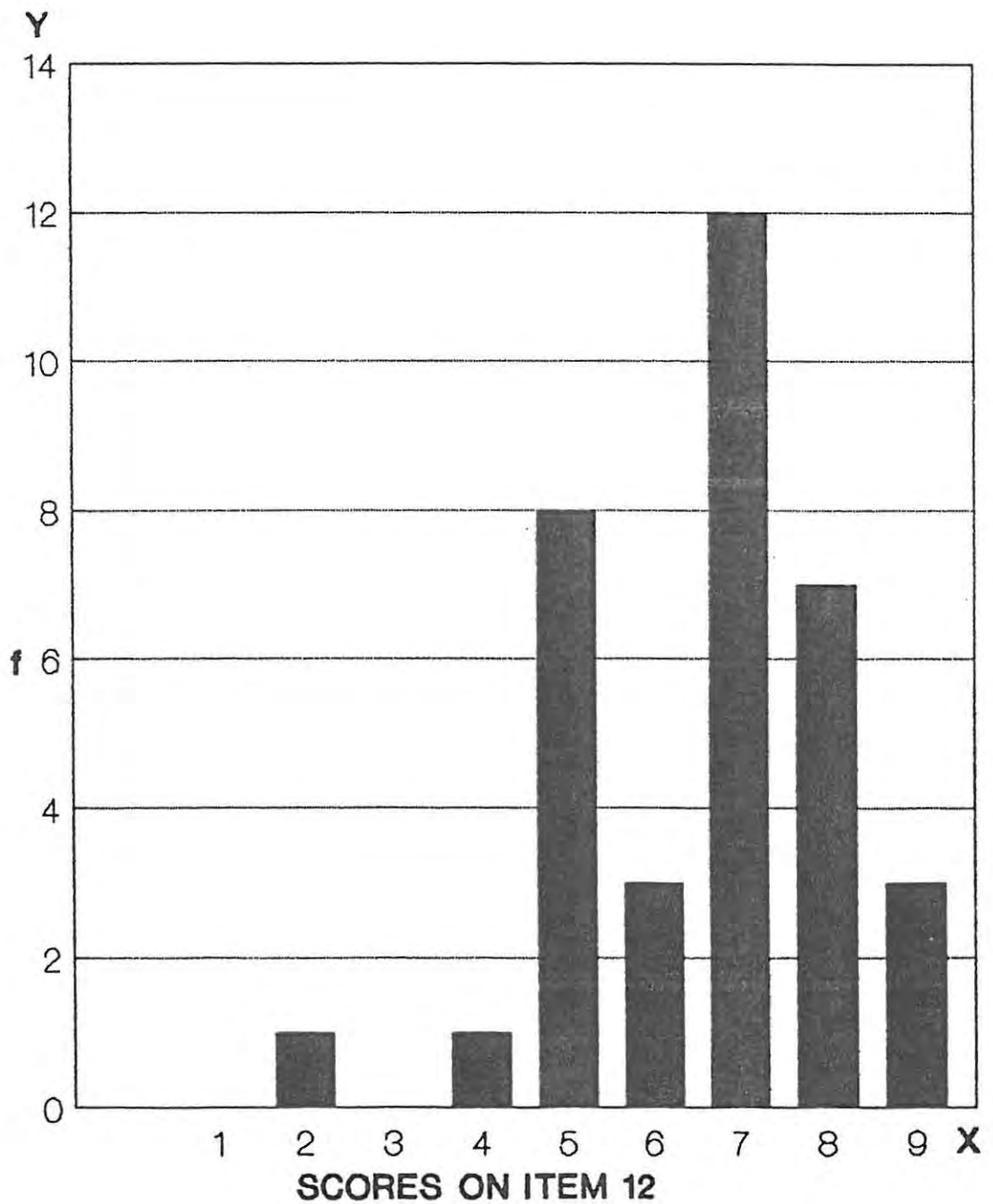


FIGURE 15 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 12- WIVES MORE PERTURBED THAN HUSBANDS WHEN CHILD/CHILDREN HAVE LEFT HOME-MALES



Wives are more upset than husbands when all the children have left home to live on their own (see Table 3.6 above). This result is supported by a number of theorists in the literature, viz. Cavan (1958), Lidz (1968), Marmor (1968), Duvall (1971), Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry (1973) and Troll (1975) (see chapter 1 section 1.1.5). It is important to note that these theorists speak of mothers and fathers, rather than husbands and wives. However, for the purposes of this discussion, these terms are treated synonymously. All these theorists contend that this occurs for the following reasons:

- 1 The father is not so dependent upon his children for status as is their mother.
- 2 The mother feels that her major life function has been completed. Though she may be pleased and even relieved at the release from so much work and responsibility, she usually also has regrets and feels an emptiness in her life. Consequently, many middle-aged women are apt to feel as though they are being relegated to a cultural ash heap, while men are still able to feel relatively needed and involved in the outside world.
- 3 A woman's children represent for her more than they do for her husband, not only her emotional investment of adulthood until now, but also the main reason for her existence. Throughout her life as a wife and mother, her children have been her job. Now when they leave, she feels that they take with them her very reason for being.

3.1.6 Parent-child relationships

In this section, items 18 and 44 focus on the extent to which empty-nest parents perceive their relationship with their teenage and young adult children to be a pleasure or disappointment. Item 17 focused on the extent to which parents consider themselves to be successful parents or failures as parents (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Tables 3.7 and 3.8 below. The intercorrelations between the three items are presented in Table 3.9 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 16, 17 and 18 below.

TABLE 3.7 GROWN-UP CHILDREN ARE PROBLEMATIC/GROWN-UP CHILDREN ARE A PLEASURE IN THE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE-AGED PARENTS

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%		
				1-4	5	6-9
18	70	1,7	1,1	97.1	2.9	
How do you feel about the way your children behave?						
				6-9	5	1-4
				Agree		Disagree
44	70	2,10	1,10	17.1		82.9
I feel disappointed because I have an unhappy relationship with some of my child/children.						

TABLE 3.8 BEEN A SUCCESSFUL PARENT/NOT BEEN A SUCCESSFUL PARENT

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	5	6-9
				Good mother/ father	Indecisive	Bad mother/ father
17	70	2,5	1,6	85.7	10	4.3
How good a parent do you feel you have been to your child/children?						

TABLE 3.9 INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN ITEMS MEASURING NATURE OF PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

Item No.	18	44
17	.38	.49
18		.38

FIGURE 16 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 18- GROWN-UP CHILDREN ARE A PLEASURE/GROWN-UP CHILDREN ARE PROBLEMATIC IN THE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE-AGED PARENTS

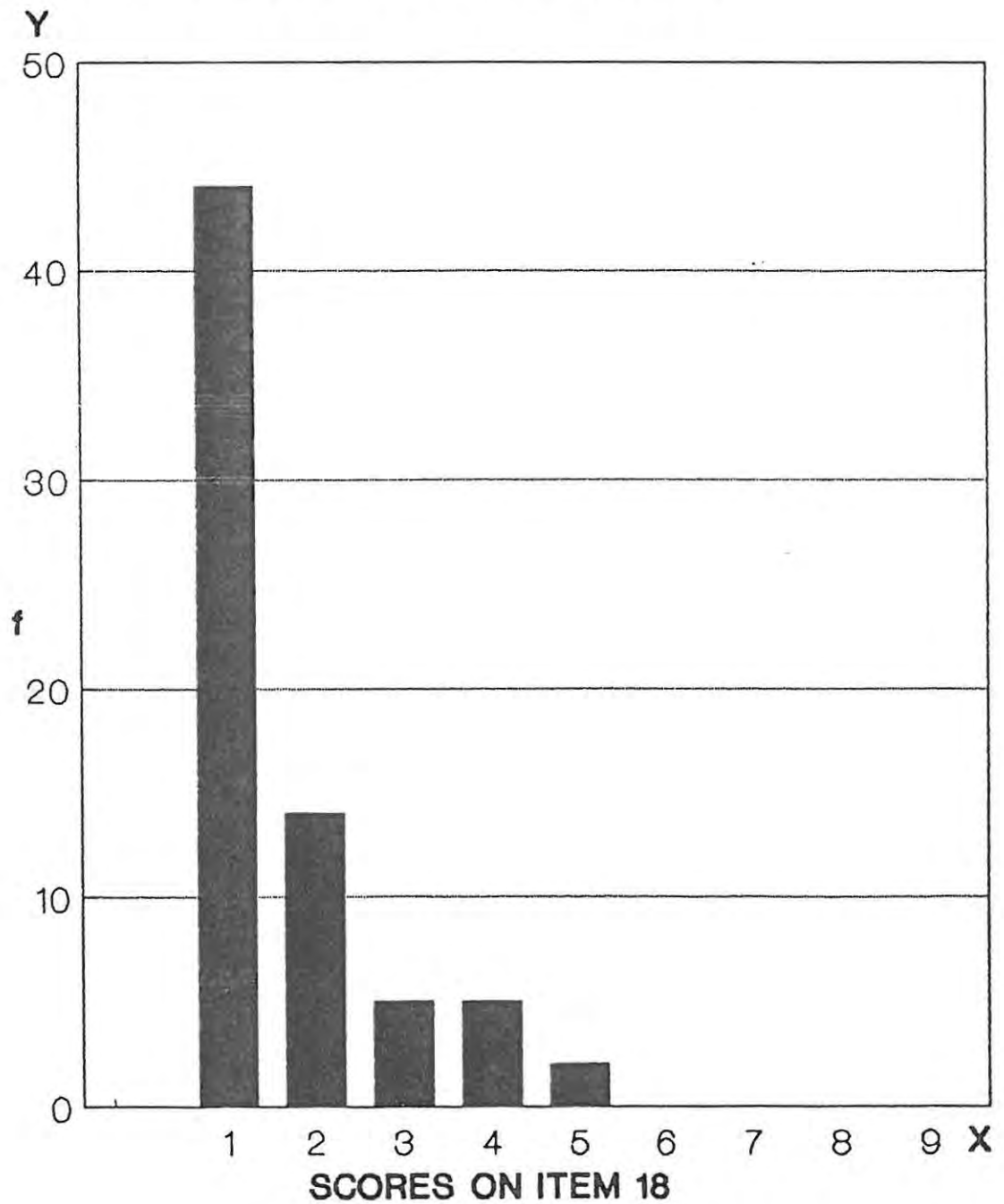


FIGURE 17 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 44- GROWN-UP CHILDREN ARE A PLEASURE/GROWN-UP CHILDREN ARE PROBLEMATIC IN THE VIEW OF THE MIDDLE-AGED PARENTS

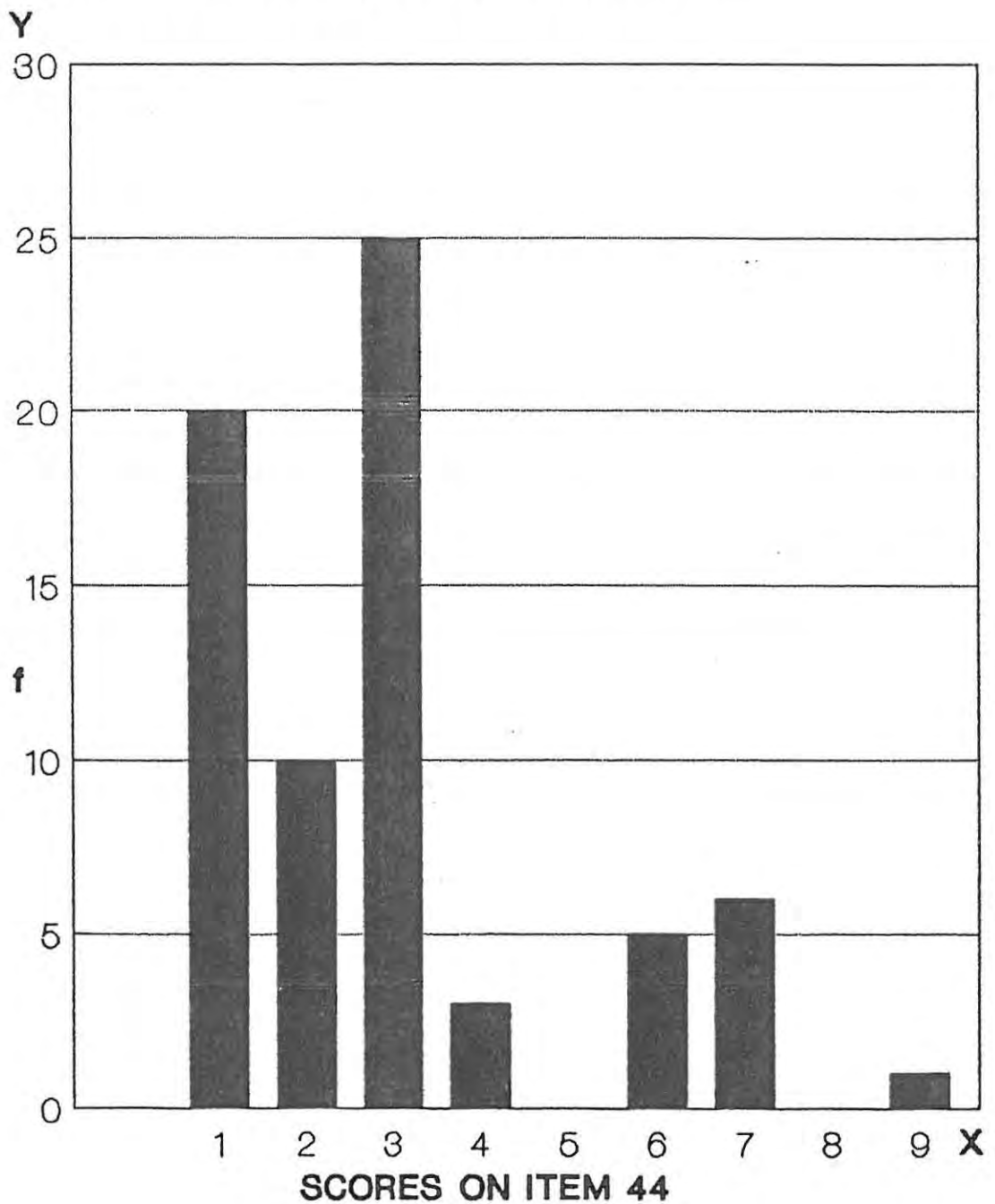
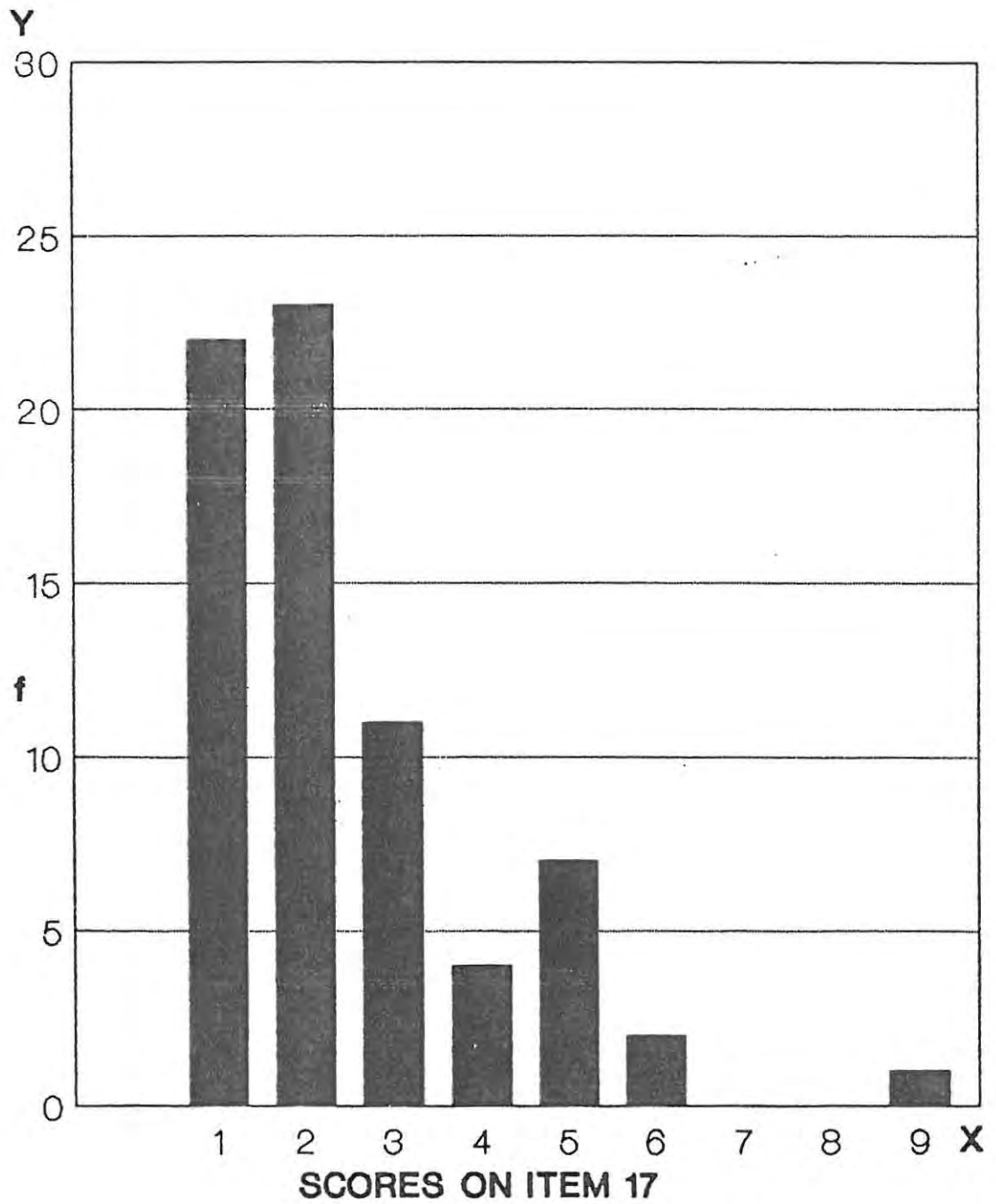


FIGURE 18 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 17- BEEN A SUCCESSFUL PARENT/NOT BEEN A SUCCESSFUL PARENT



It can be discerned from Table 3.9 that there are moderate to low positive correlations between the items measuring the nature of parent-child relationships, viz. these range between .38 and .49.

It can be seen from Figures 16, 17 and 18 that the scores on items 18, 44 and 17 are negatively skewed because the majority of parents felt proud of their children's behaviour, disagreed with the statement that they felt disappointed because they had an unhappy relationship with some of them, and felt that they had been good mothers/fathers to them (see Tables 3.7 and 3.8). The above findings show the following, viz. some parents were proud of their children's behaviour, did not have an unhappy relationship with them, and felt that they had been successful parents. These findings are similar to the findings of a number of researchers, viz. Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960), Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) and Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) (see chapter 1 section 1.1.6). These researchers found that more parents between forty-five and fifty-four report satisfying relationships with their children than at any other age group. They also noted that middle-aged parents provided positive descriptions and evaluations of children. Finally, they observed that the majority of parents emphasized the overall likeableness of their children.

The finding that some parents felt disappointed because they had an unhappy relationship with some of their children, and felt that they had been failures as parents, can be explained in terms of the theories and findings of a number of theorists and researchers, who have

focused on the negative relationship which sometimes prevails between middle-aged parents and their adolescent and young adult children, viz. Deutscher (1964), Peterson (1968), Vincent (1972), Lurie (1974), Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) and Notman (1979) (see chapter 1 section 1.1.6). The above theorists and researchers have commented on the intergenerational conflict between middle-aged parents and their adolescent children and young adult children. The nature of these conflicts is generally "mild" or "moderate" and rarely amounts to resentment or rejection of the child.

According to Deutscher (1964), one problem of some of the respondents in his study was connected to the final recognition and definition in retrospect of oneself as a "failure", in terms of the child-rearing process.

3.1.7 The changing body

In this section, items 19, 30, 20 and 36 were asked in order to determine the middle-aged respondents' attitudes towards ageing, their bodies, and their health (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's means, standard deviations and distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.10 below. The intercorrelations between the four items are presented in Table 3.11 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 19, 20, 21 and 22 below.

TABLE 3.10 AGEING AS A POSITIVE EVENT/AGEING AS A NEGATIVE EVENT

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	6-9	5
				Stronger Happier More lively	Weaker Unhappier More depressed	Indecisive
19	70	3,9	2,2	60.1	22.9	17.1
In general as you get older how do you find yourself feeling?						
				1-4	6-9	5
				Disagree	Agree	Undecided
30	70	4,6	2,3	52.9	42.9	4.3
It is difficult for me to accept that I am getting older.						
				1-4	6-9	5
				My body is in good shape	My body is in bad shape	Indecisive
20	70	4,2	2,3	57.2	32.9	10.0
Do you feel pleased with the condition of your body?						
				1-4	6-9	5
				Disagree	Agree	Undecided
36	70	6,6	1,7	14.2	81.4	4.3
My health means more to me now than it used to.						

TABLE 3.11 INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN ITEMS MEASURING ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGEING

Item No.	20	30	36
19	.37	.31	.08
20		.13	.05
30			.22

**FIGURE 19 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 19- AGEING AS A POSITIVE EVENT/
AGEING AS A NEGATIVE EVENT- PERCEPTION OF MENTAL HEALTH-
STRONGER/HAPPIER/MORE LIVELY/WEAKER/UNHAPPIER/MORE
DEPRESSED**

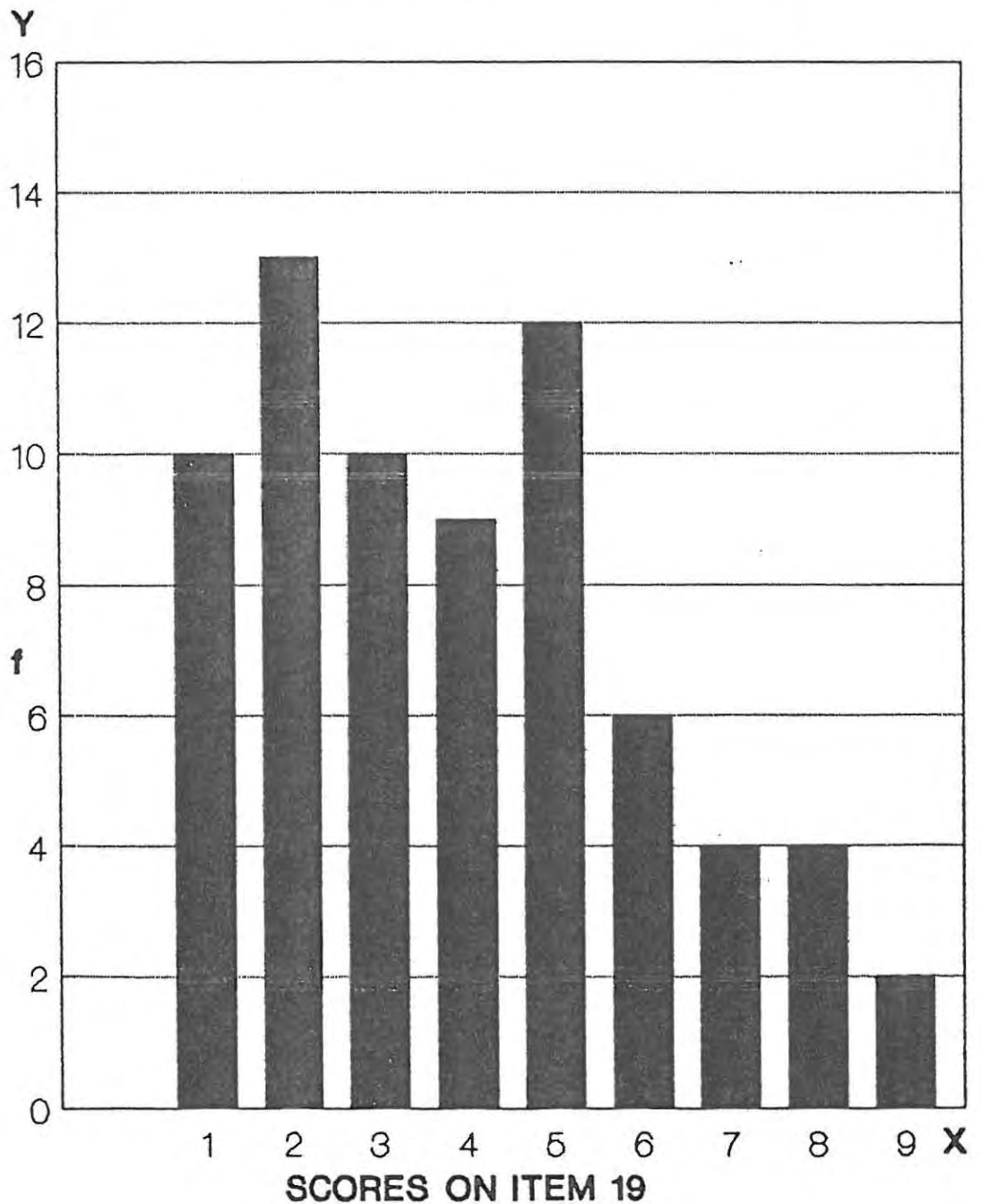


FIGURE 20 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 30- AGEING AS A POSITIVE EVENT/AGEING AS A NEGATIVE EVENT/GETTING OLDER HOLDS NO FEARS/DOES NOT WANT TO AGE FURTHER

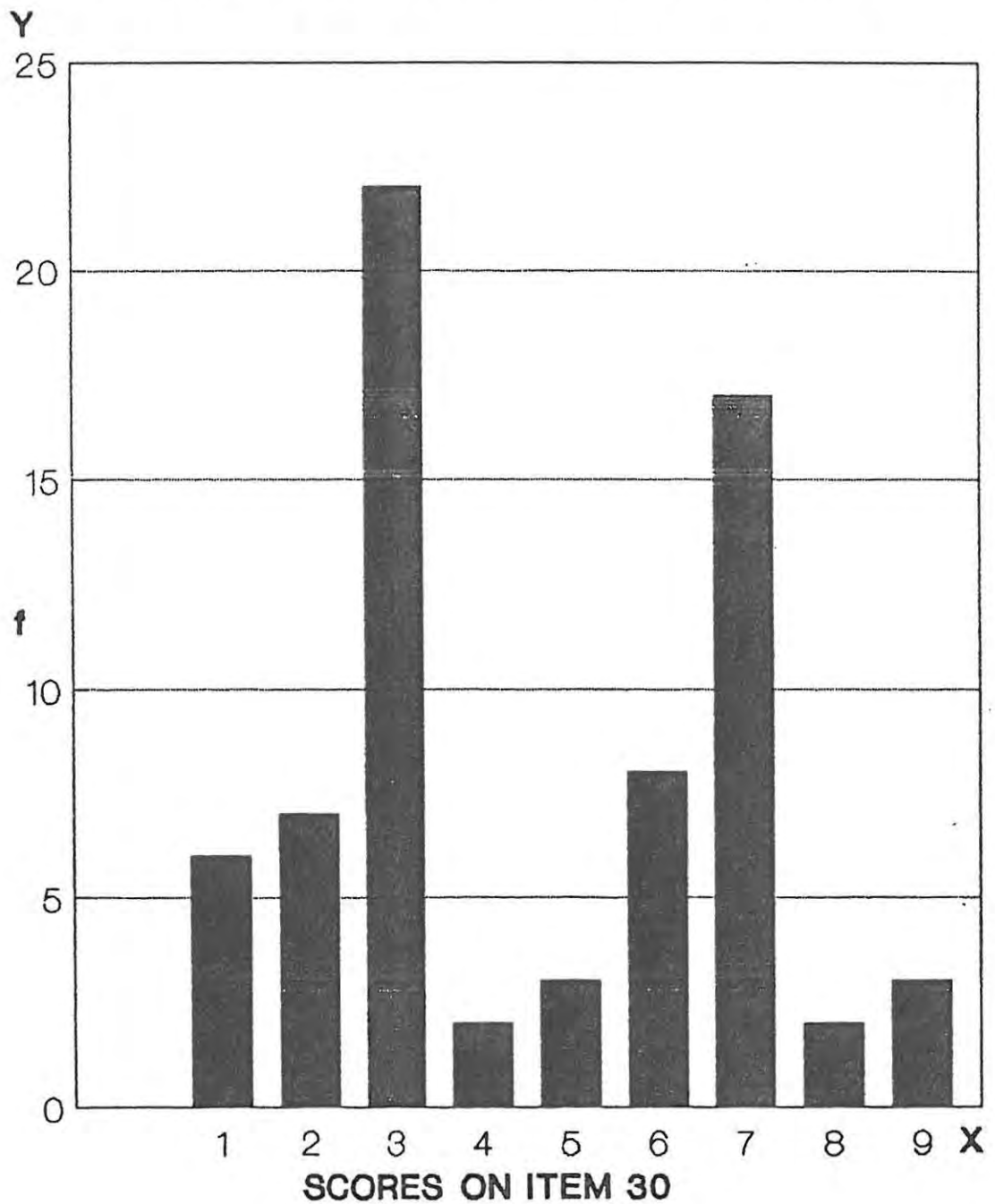


FIGURE 21 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 20- AGEING AS A POSITIVE EVENT/AGEING AS A NEGATIVE EVENT/SATISFIED WITH BODY/NOT SATISFIED WITH BODY

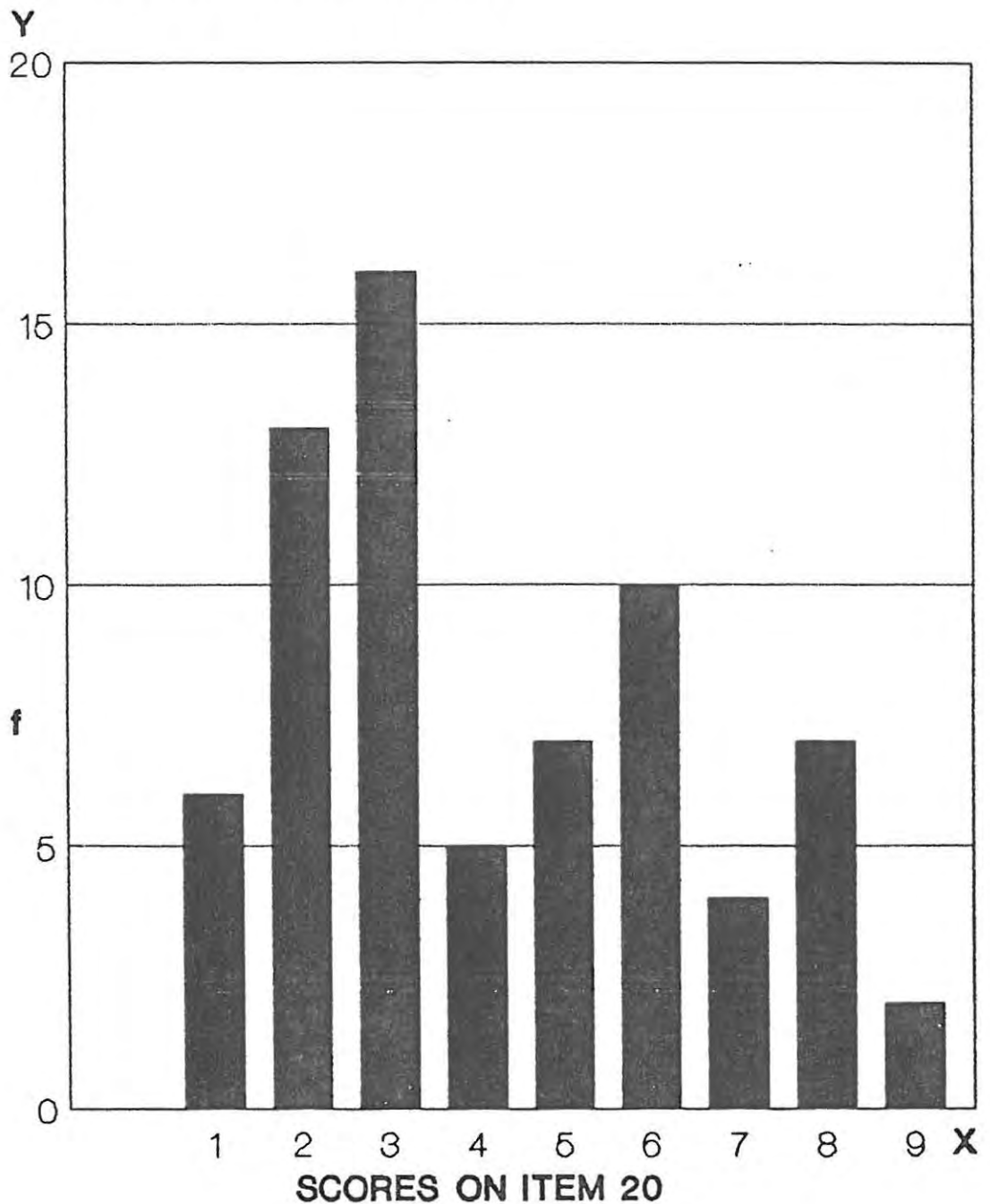
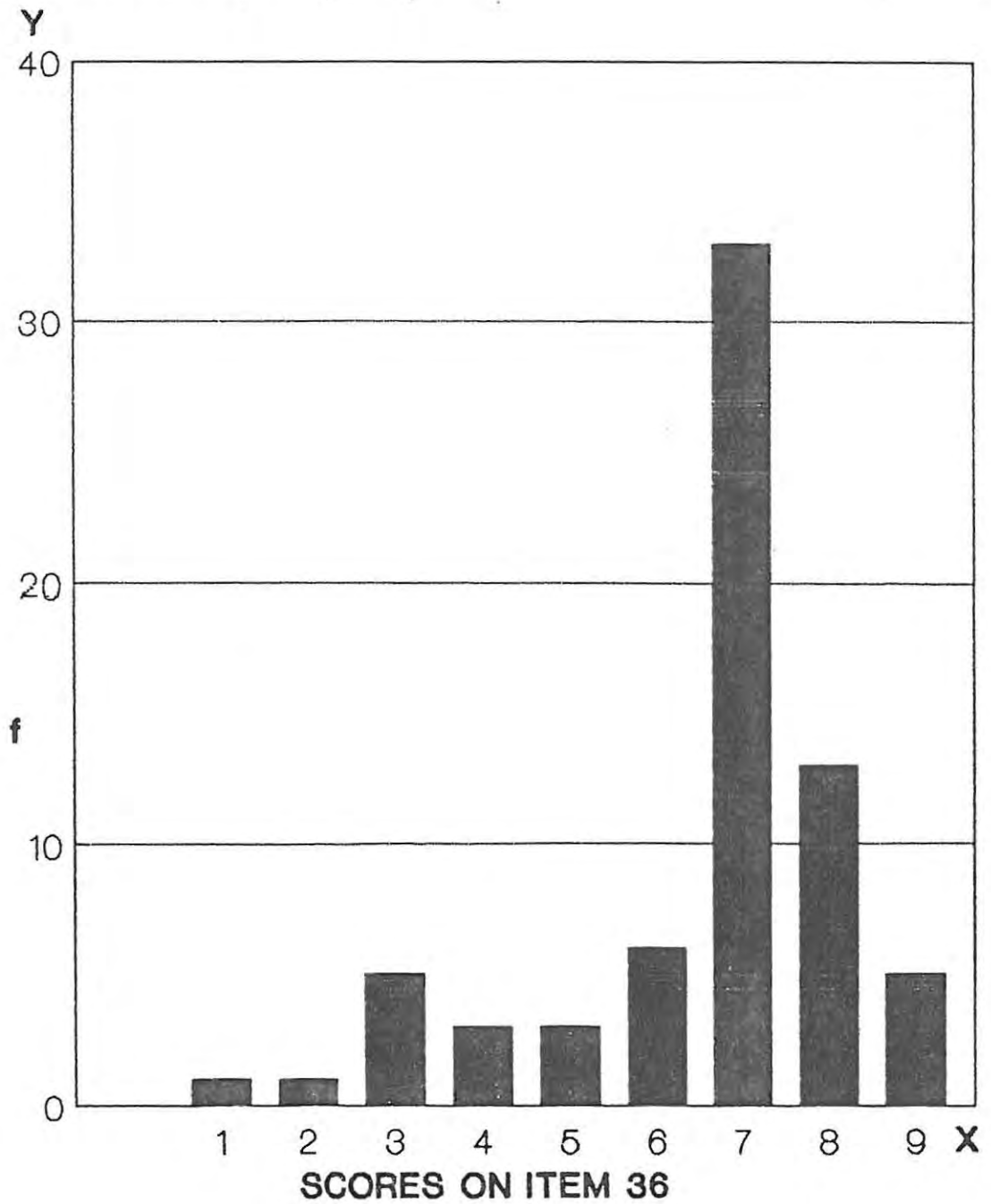


FIGURE 22 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 36 - PERCEPTION
OF HEALTH - HEALTH LESS IMPORTANT NOW/HEALTH
MORE IMPORTANT NOW



It can be observed from Table 3.11 that there are low positive correlations between some of the items measuring attitudes towards ageing, viz. items 19, 20 and 30, i.e. these range between .13 and .37. Also, there is a low positive correlation between items 30 and 36, viz. ($r = .22$).

It can be seen from Figure 19 that the scores on item 19 are negatively skewed because the majority of respondents felt stronger, happier and more lively with the onset of ageing (see Table 3.10).

It can be noted from Figure 20 that the scores on item 30 reflect a bimodal distribution because 52.9% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that they found it difficult to accept that they were getting older, 42.9% of them agreed with this statement, and 4.3% of them expressed indecisive attitudes (see Table 3.10). Also, there is a low positive correlation between the above-mentioned item and this one ($r = .31$).

The above findings indicate the following: firstly, some respondents felt stronger, happier and more lively with the onset of ageing, and did not find it difficult to accept that they were getting older. This implies that they have come to terms with the ageing process, and have a positive perception about it. It is obvious that these respondents have learnt to accept the physical changes of ageing, and also illnesses or disabilities (Erickson, 1950; Gould, 1972; Neugarten, 1968 and Levinson, (1978 cited in Nadelson, Polonsky and Mathews, 1979, p.292) (see chapter 1 section 4).

Secondly, some respondents felt weaker, unhappier and more depressed with the advent of ageing, and found it difficult to accept that they were getting older. According to Marmor (1968) and Collin (1979), signs of ageing and bodily deterioration may cause a major and painful crisis. This is experienced physically as a loss of health and vitality (Gutmann, 1976). Moreover, separation loss is a key psychological stress that occurs frequently during this period, for example, the loss of one's youthful self-image (Marmor, 1968) (see chapter 1 section 4).

It was expected that there would be a moderate to high positive correlation between the above item, i.e. item 30 (see Table 3.10) and item 38, viz. I worry that the time which I still have left to live is shorter now than it was when I was younger (see Table 3.19), because Gutmann (1976) and Marmor (1968) state that the somatic changes of the ageing process during middle-age carry with them an inescapable confrontation with the fact of mortality. The defenses which have worked so well in youth - the illusion of immortality and the denial of one's own ultimate death can no longer be maintained. The result is a marked increase in what has come to be known as "existential anxiety," the anxiety that is derived from fully facing the limits of existence and our own ultimate nonexistence (see chapter 1 section 5). This expectation proved to be correct, i.e. there is a moderate positive correlation between these two items, viz. ($r = .50$).

It can be discerned from Figure 21 that the scores on item 20 are negatively skewed because the majority of respondents felt that

their bodies were in good shape (see Table 3.10). The finding suggests that they have accepted the undeniable fact of their own ageing, and have come to terms with the physical signs of ageing, which becomes prevalent at middle age (Peck, 1968). Moreover, it is possible that they have developed a sense of fortitude against societal and cultural influences, which place such a high value on youthfulness and attractiveness (see Peck, 1968; Marmor, 1968) (see chapter 1 section 4).

The finding that a minority of respondents considered their bodies to be in bad shape, implies that they have a negative perception of their bodies, have in all likelihood been unable to accept their own ageing, and this has negative consequences for them, because signs of ageing and bodily decline may evoke a major and painful crisis (Marmor, 1968; Collin, 1979). They are probably less able to resist societal and cultural influences, which place such a high value on youthfulness and attractiveness than those respondents who have a positive perception of their bodies (see chapter 1 section 4) (see above).

It can be observed from Figure 22 that the scores on item 36 are positively skewed because the majority of respondents agreed with the statement that their health means more to them now than it used to (see Table 3.10). The finding suggests that they have a greater preoccupation with their health now than in earlier years. According to Feldman (1964) and Gould (1972), concern with health increases during the 50s (see chapter 1 section 4).

The finding that a minority of respondents disagreed with the above statement, implies that they are not more preoccupied with their health than in earlier years. This is unusual, given all the existing evidence about greater concern with health in the middle years (see Feldman, 1964; Gould, 1972) (see chapter 1 section 4) (see above). It is possible that they are denying that they have this concern.

3.1.8 Sex in marriage : At 40 and beyond

In this section, items 21, 22 and 23 focus on the nature of the sexual relationship between spouses from the perspectives of interest, importance and enjoyment. Item 33 focuses on whether the male respondent experiences anxiety about current decline in sexual functioning, or is not perturbed by current decline in sexual functioning compared to ten years ago (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.12 below. The intercorrelations between the four items are presented in Table 3.13 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 23, 24, 25 and 26 below.

TABLE 3.12 HUMAN SEXUAL RESPONSE : THE AGEING FEMALE AND THE AGEING MALE

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	5	6-9
				Much more now	Same	Much less now
21	69	5,7	1,8	13	39.1	47.8
How interested are you in sex now compared to ten years ago?						
				1-4	5	6-9
				Much more important now	Same	Much Less important now
22	69	5,6	1,9	23.1	31.9	44.9
How important is your sexual relationship with your husband/wife now compared with the time when you were a young married couple?						
				1-4	5	6-9
				More enjoyable	Same	Less enjoyable
23	67	4,5	1,9	34.4	47.8	18
How enjoyable do you find your sexual relationship with your husband/wife now compared to ten years ago?						
				1-4	6-9	5
				Disagree	Agree	Undecided
33	35	3,7	2,2	65.7	31.6	2.9
I worry that I am not able to get as sexually excited now as I could five years ago (Males only).						

TABLE 3.13 INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN ITEMS MEASURING NATURE OF SEXUALITY

Item No.	22	23	33
21	.74	.67	.34
22		.65	.30
23			.22

FIGURE 23 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 21- SEXUALITY- INTEREST IN SEXUALITY- MUCH MORE NOW/MUCH LESS NOW

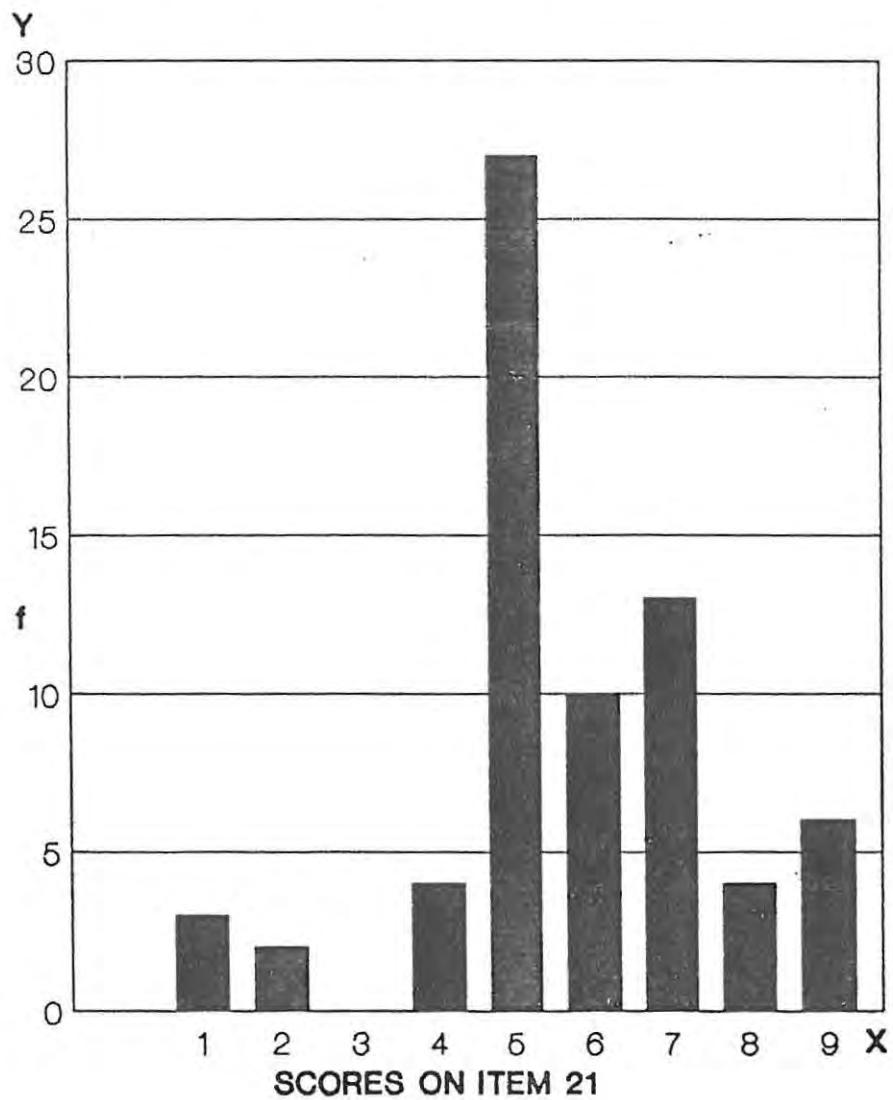


FIGURE 24 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 22-SEXUALITY- MUCH MORE IMPORTANT NOW/MUCH LESS IMPORTANT NOW

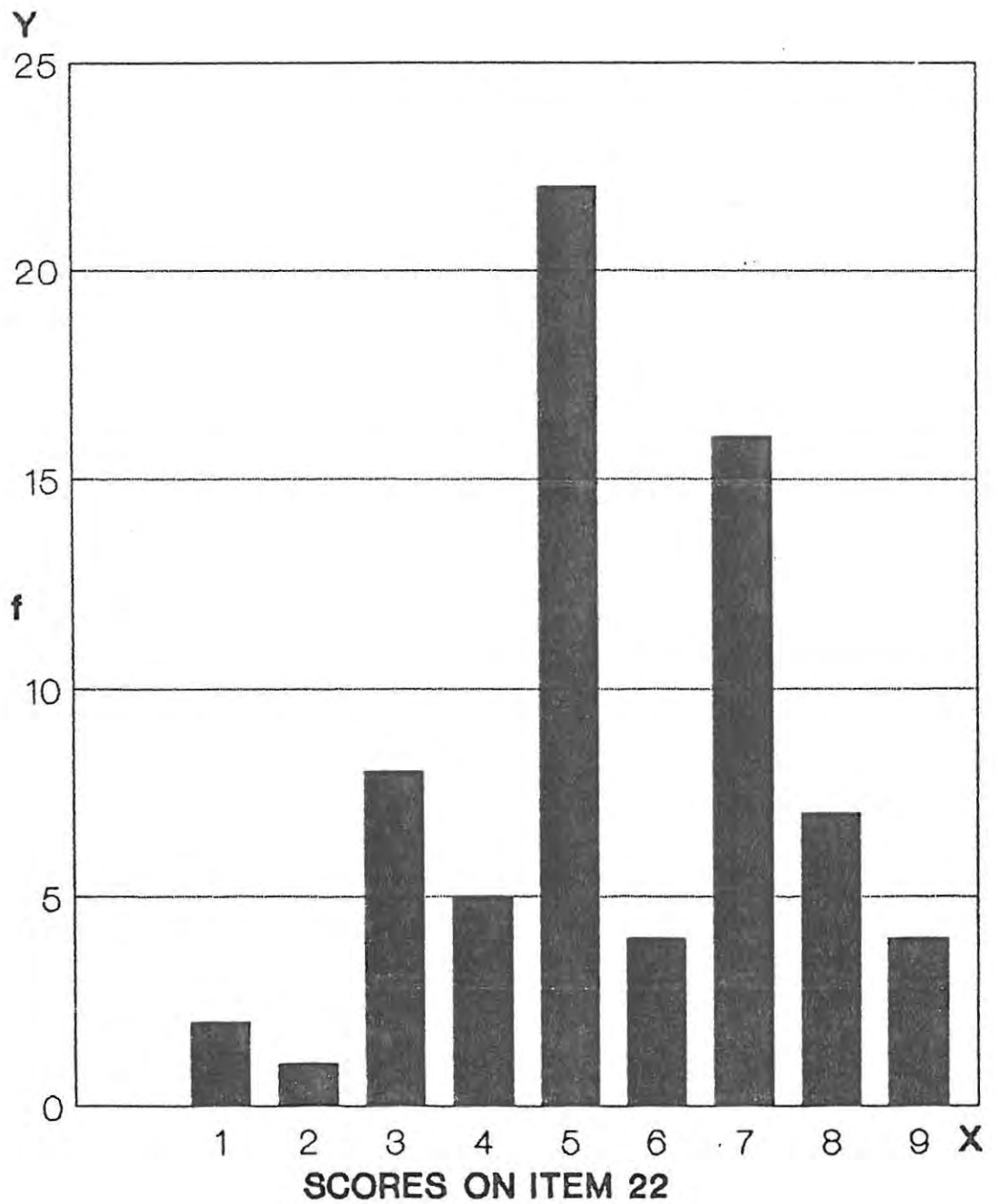


FIGURE 25 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 23- SEXUALITY- MORE ENJOYABLE/LESS ENJOYABLE

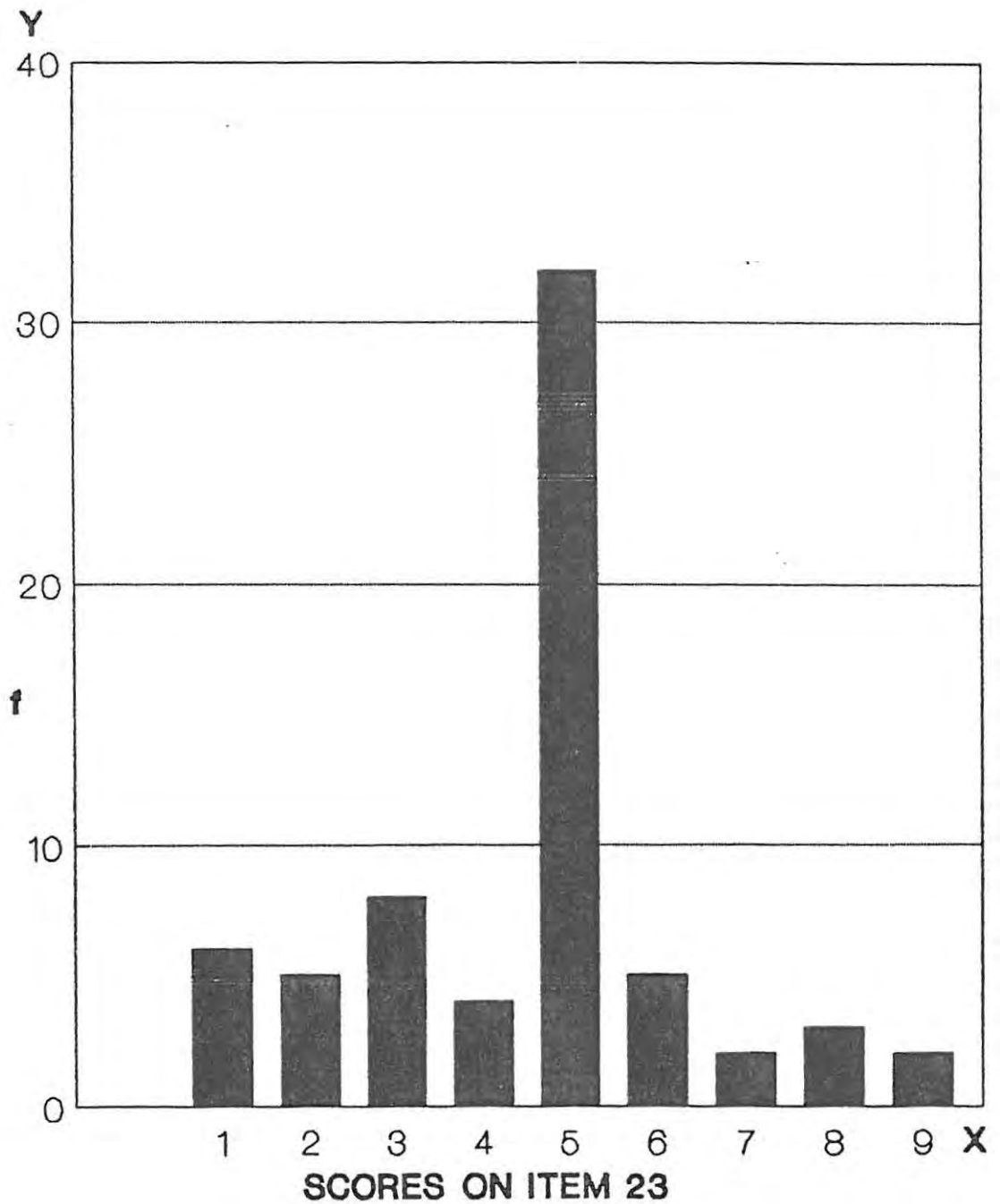
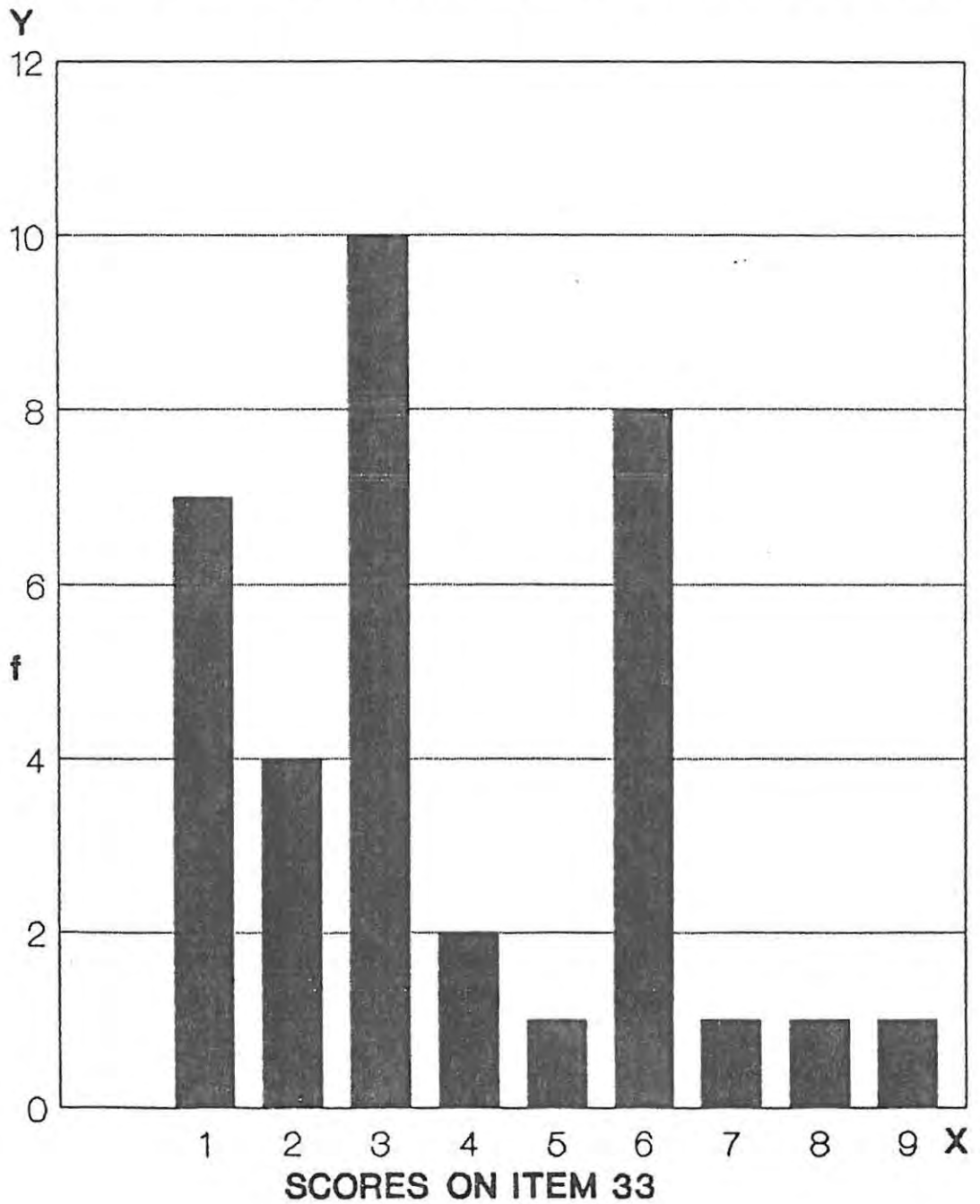


FIGURE 26 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 33- SEXUALITY - DOES NOT FEEL PRESSURE OF AGE IN RELATIONSHIP TO SEX - FEEL PRESSURE OF AGE IN RELATIONSHIP TO SEX- MALES ONLY



It can be discerned from Table 3.13 that there are moderate positive correlations between some of the items measuring the nature of sexuality, viz. items 21, 22 and 23, i.e. these vary between .65 and .74. Also, there are low positive correlations between the former items and item 33.

It can be seen from Figure 23 that the scores on item 21 are positively skewed because more spouses were much less interested in sex now 47.8% than much more interested in sex now 13% compared to ten years ago (see Table 3.12). Also, 39.1% of them reported that their interest in sex now compared to ten years ago had remained the same. This suggests that the passage of time did not have an effect on their sexual interest. Similar results concerning the diminution of sexual interest were obtained by Cristenson and Gagnon (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.599), who noted that sexual activity in middle age tends to be consistent with the individual's past behaviour, but at the same time there is a gradual decrease in most persons. Also, in the Pfeiffer, Verwoerdt and Davis (1972) study, there was a pattern of decline in current sexual interest from the younger to the older age categories, viz. (46-50, 51-55, 56-60), for both men and women (see chapter 2 section 2.1.1).

It can be noted from Figure 24 that the scores on item 22 are positively skewed because more spouses felt that their sexual relationship with their husbands/wives was much less important now 44.9% than much more important now 23.1% compared with the time when they were young married couples (see Table 3.12). Also, 39.1% of them indicated that the importance of their sexual relationship with

their husbands/wives now compared with the time when they were young married couples had remained the same. This suggests that the passage of time did not have an impact on the importance they attributed to sex. The subjects in the present study, who evaluated their sexual relationship with their spouses now compared with the time when they were young married couples as much less important now, are similar to the nonpatients in the Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles (1978) study, who ranked sex at a low point at ages 51-60. According to Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles, the reason for subjects attributing less importance to sex, can be ascribed to the lessening of the component of biological drive in mid - and late adulthood. Also, their hypothesis that in the context of growing intimacy, with increasingly stable relationships, the importance of sex as an isolated activity diminishes, is confirmed in the present study (see chapter 1 section 2.1.1).

These results differ from those obtained by a number of previous researchers, who concluded that the sexual dimension of marriage becomes relatively unimportant to later life marital adjustment (Dentler, 1960; Brayshaw, 1962; Feldman, 1964; Westley & Epstein, 1960; Pineo, 1968; Troll, 1970 cited in Cleveland, 1976, p.233) (see chapter 1 section 2.1), because a number of spouses in the present study indicated that the importance of their sexual relationship with their husbands/wives now compared with the time when they were young married couples had remained the same.

The finding that some respondents in the present study evaluated their sexual relationship with their spouses now compared to the

time when they were young married couples as much more important now, is supported by, and can be understood in terms of Cleveland's (1976) assumptions (see chapter 1 section 2.1), because she argues that the cultural view that sex becomes relatively unimportant to ageing marriages, is incorrect, because according to her, the fact that sex becomes physiologically and affectively less insistent, does not imply that it becomes less valuable and therefore less important. The above finding supports this view.

It can be observed from Figure 25 that the scores on item 23 are negatively skewed because more spouses found their sexual relationship with their husbands/wives more enjoyable now 34.4% than less enjoyable now 18% compared to ten years ago (see Table 3.12). However, the most notable feature of this distribution of scores, is that the majority of them believe that the enjoyment they derive from their sexual relationship with their husbands/wives now compared to ten years ago, has remained the same. This suggests that the passage of time did not have an effect on their sexual enjoyment. The results concerning the sexual enjoyment of spouses in the present study do not coincide with those of Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) (see chapter 1 section 2.1.1), where among their older groups, i.e. (middle-aged men and women and pre-retired men and women), questions of sexual intimacy and optimal sexual adjustment had been supplanted by other existential concerns, and changes were no longer as consistently positive. However, the finding that approximately one third of the older people reported increasing sexual satisfaction, is similar to the present study.

It can be discerned from Figure 26 that the scores on item 33 are negatively skewed because the majority of male respondents disagreed with the statement that they worried they were not able to get as sexually excited now as they could five years ago (see Table 3.12). It is clear that the majority of them do not experience anxiety about declining sexual potency. However, the finding that some of them experience anxiety about this issue, has received comment from a number of theorists, viz. Masters and Johnson (1966 cited in Neurgarten, 1968, p.275), Soddy (1967) and Strickler (1975) (see chapter 1 section 2.1.1). According to these theorists, the incidence of sexual inadequacy increases dramatically in men after the age of 50. It appears to be caused largely by psychological and social factors. It contributes to a crisis, in terms of loss, for the middle-aged male. This is often related to adolescent-type conflicts about sexual identity. If he cannot repress these feelings, symptoms of depression and anxiety can emerge, as well as acting-out behaviour in order to prove his virility.

3.1.9 Female attitudes to the menopause

In this section, items 24, 25, 26, 27(i) and 27(ii) focus on the middle-aged woman's attitudes towards the menopause from the perspectives of general emotional impact, children, and the spousal relationship (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and the distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.14 below. The intercorrelations between the five items are presented in Table 3.15 below. Histograms

of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 below.

TABLE 3.14 FEMALE ATTITUDES TO THE MENOPAUSE

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	6-9	5
				Relieved	Upset	Indecisive
24	35	1,10	1,9	77.3	5.7	11.4
How do women like you feel when your periods come to an end in later life? (WOMEN ONLY)						
				1-4	6-9	5
				Relieved	Unhappy	Indecisive
25	33	2,5	2,5	78.8	12.1	9.1
How do women like you feel when you are no longer able to have a child/children once your periods have stopped in later life? (WOMEN ONLY)						
				1-4	6-9	5
				More loving	Less loving	Same
26	32	4,9	1,1	6.3	6.3	87.5
How loving will/did your husband feel towards you when you are/were no longer able to have your periods? (WOMEN ONLY)						

TABLE 3.14 FEMALE ATTITUDES TO THE MENOPAUSE (CONT)

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	6-9	5
				Still sexually attractive	Less sexually interested	Indecisive
27(i)	33	2,10	2,0	57.6	3.0	39.4
Do/did wives like you feel that your husbands will/would not find you sexually attractive when you are/were no longer able to have your periods in the middle years of your life? (WOMEN ONLY)						
				1-4	6-9	5
				Not worried	Worried	Indecisive
27(ii)	31	2,0	1,7	77.4	0	22.6
The wife's feelings about whether her husband finds her sexually attractive at the menopause - How do/did you feel about this?						

TABLE 3.15 INTERCORRELATIONS BETWEEN ITEMS MEASURING ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE MENOPAUSE

Item No.	25	26	27(i)	27(ii)
24	.44	.30	.12	.28
25		.03	.20	.48
26			.39	-.00
27(i)				.51

FIGURE 27 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 24-MENOPAUSE- RELIEVED/
UPSET

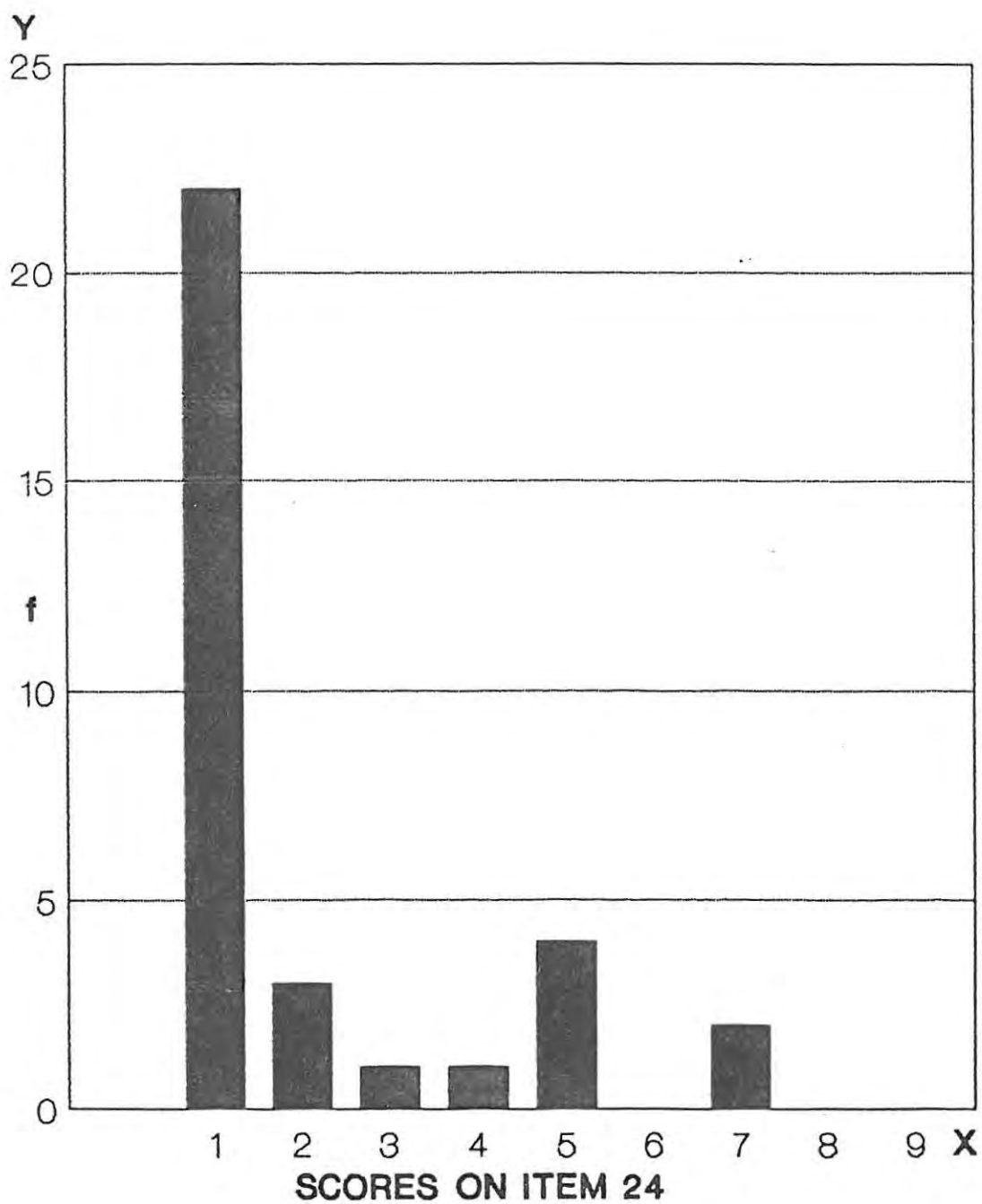


FIGURE 28 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 25- MENOPAUSE- CHILDREN AND THE MENOPAUSE- RELIEVED/UNHAPPY

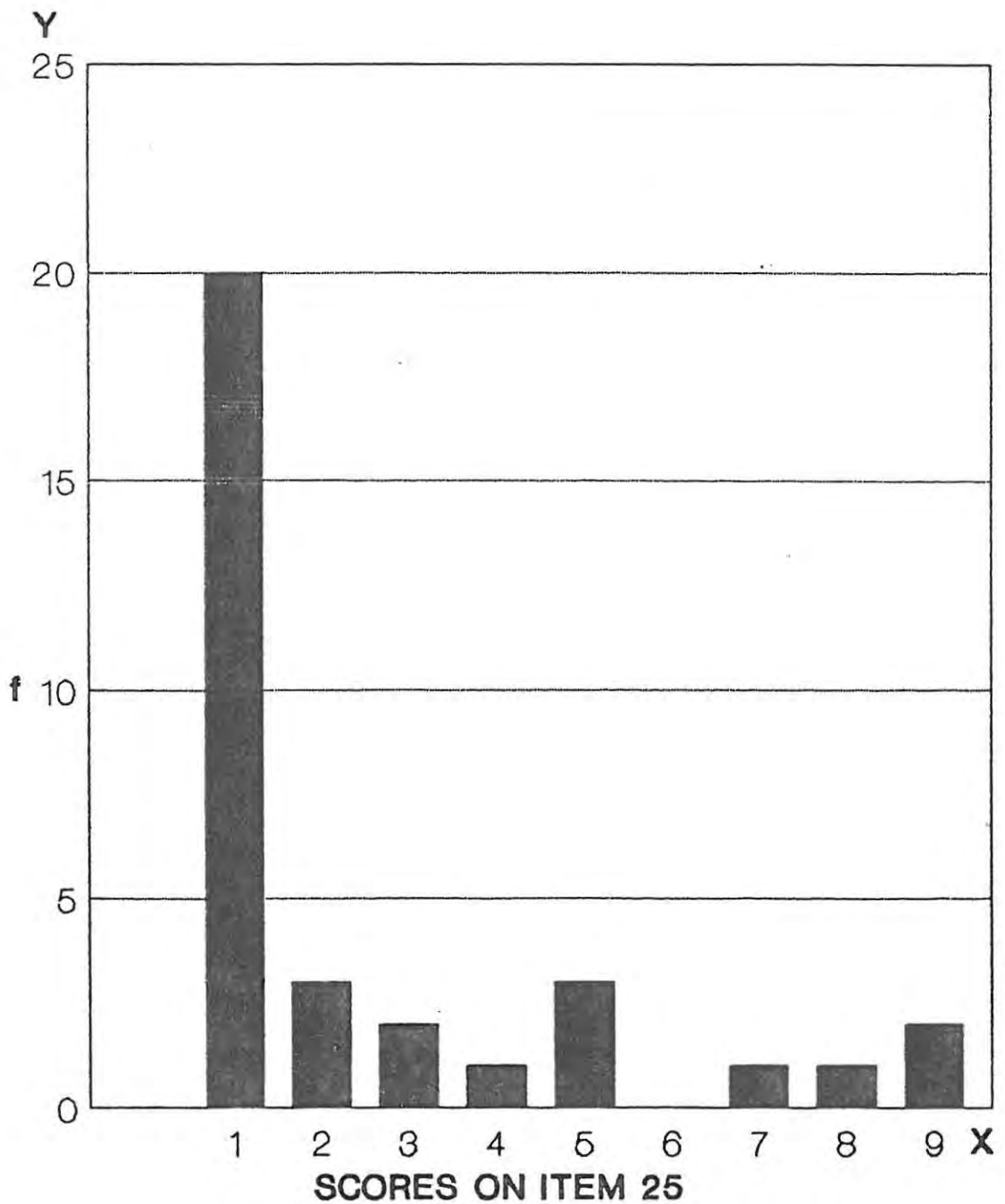


FIGURE 29 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 26-MENOPAUSE- HUSBAND AND WIFE- THEIR MARITAL RELATIONSHIP AND THE MENOPAUSE- MORE LOVING/LESS LOVING

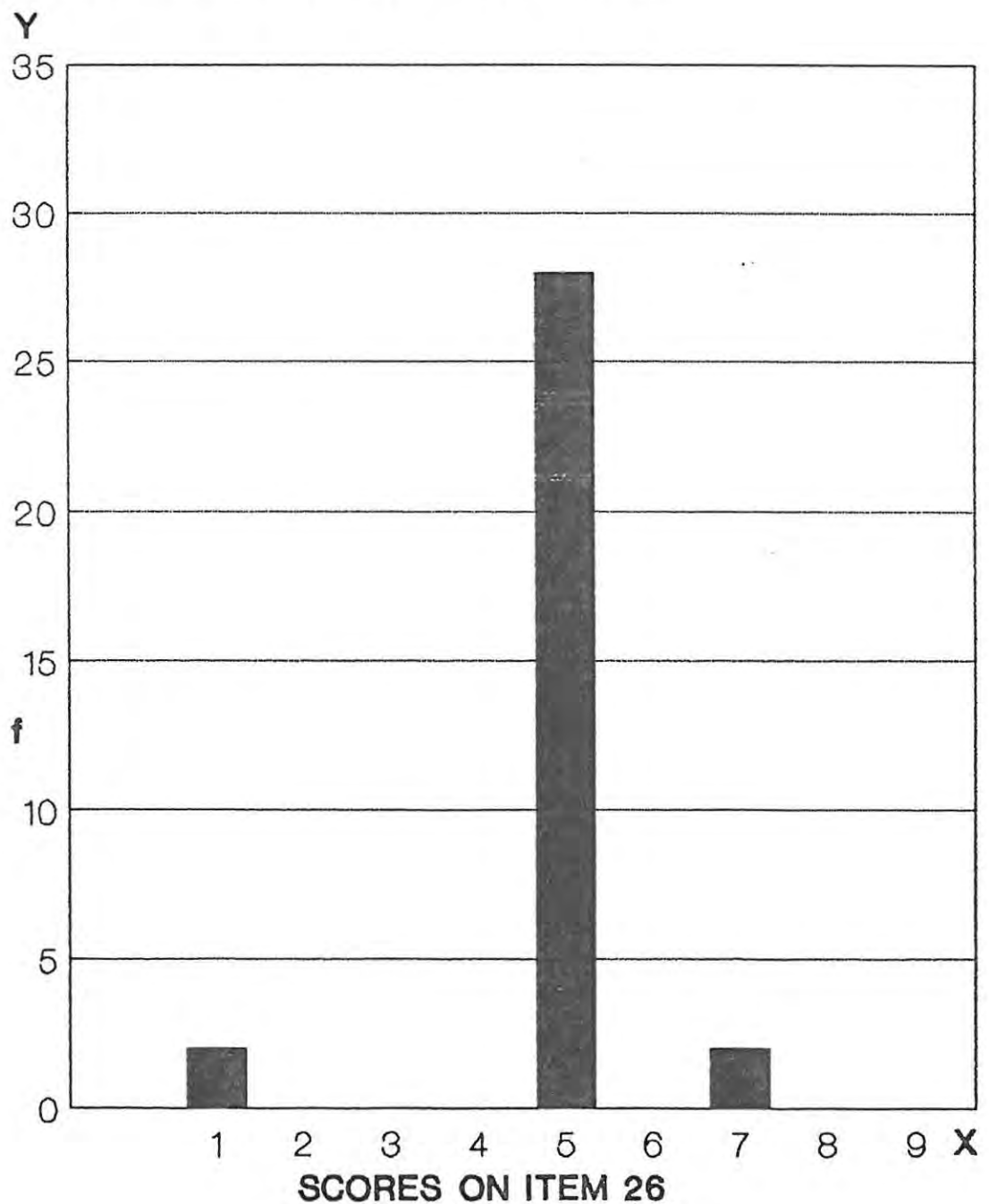


FIGURE 30 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 27(i)- MENOPAUSE - HUSBAND AND WIFE- THEIR SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP AND THE MENOPAUSE- STILL SEXUALLY ATTRACTIVE/LESS SEXUALLY INTERESTED

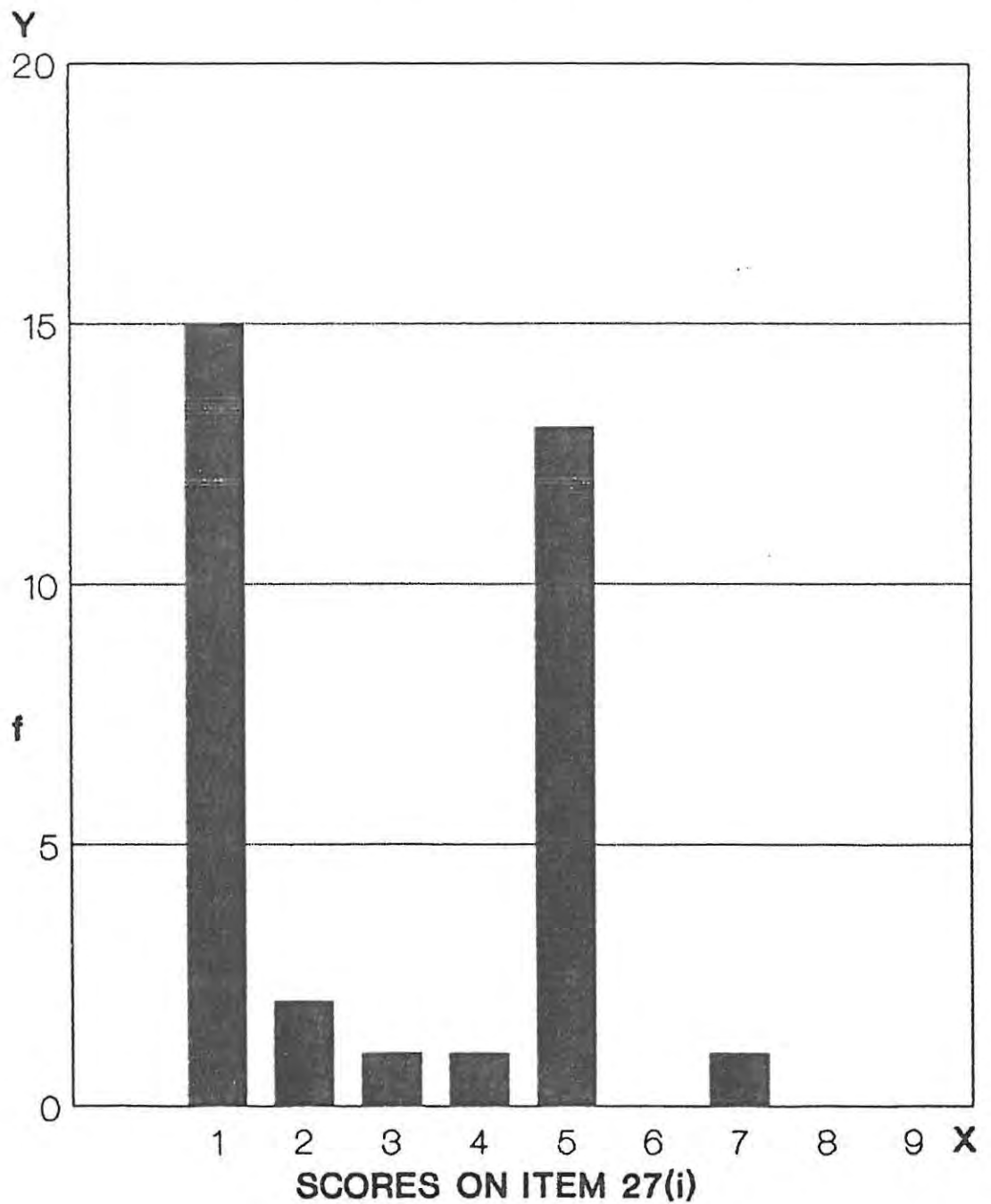
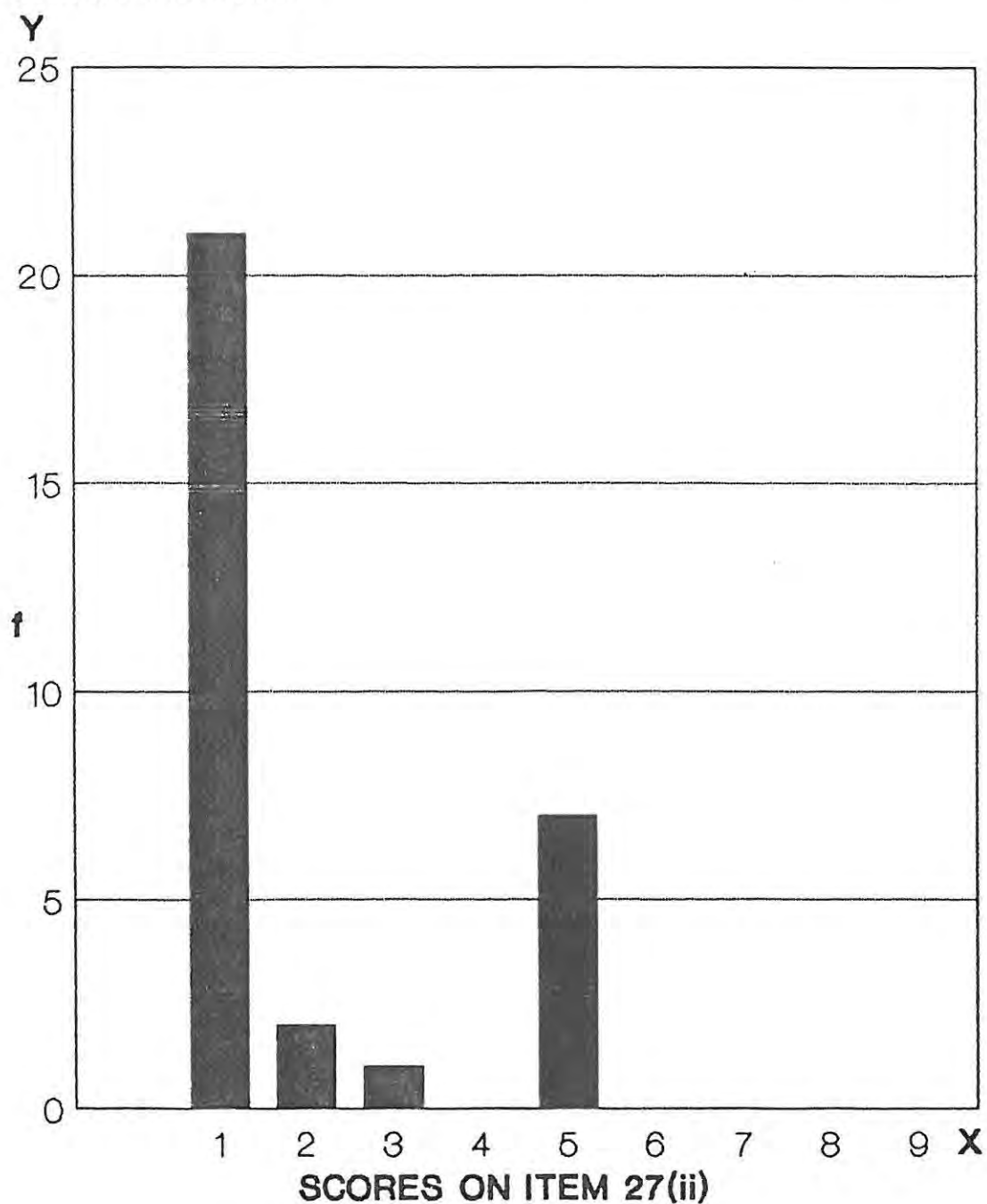


FIGURE 31 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 27(ii)-MENOPAUSE- EXTENT OF WIFE'S ANXIETY ABOUT WHETHER HER HUSBAND FINDS HER SEXUALLY ATTRACTIVE OR UNATTRACTIVE AT THE MENOPAUSE/ NOT WORRIED/WORRIED



It can be noted from Table 3.15 that there are low positive correlations between some of the items measuring attitudes towards the menopause, viz. 24, 25, 26, 27(i) and 27(ii), i.e. these range between .12 and .48. Also, there is a moderate positive correlation between items 27(i) and 27(ii), i.e. ($r = .51$).

It can be seen from Figure 27 that the scores on item 24 are negatively skewed because the majority of women feel relieved when their periods come to an end in later life (see Table 3.14). The finding is substantiated by a number of previous research findings, viz. Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963), Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten and Datan, 1974, p.602) and Weisman and Klerman (1977) (see chapter 1 sections 3.1 and 3.1.1). These findings indicate that the majority of women in the Kraines and Wood study, and a group of women in the Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis study, especially those at the upper middle-class level, believe that the menopause has no psychological significance for them, i.e. it is unlikely to cause much anxiety or stress. Many of them welcome the menopause as a relief from menstruation. In sum, the present study and the above-mentioned studies validate Weisman and Klerman's contention that there is good evidence statistically that the menopause does not increase rates of depression.

The finding that some women would feel upset about this issue, is similar to a number of previous research findings, viz. Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963) and Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten and Datan, 1974, p.602) (see chapter 1 section 3.1). For example, in the Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis study, some

women were scared of having mental breakdowns, while some of them seemed to be worried about the menopause but were actively defending against their anxiety. However, only a minority of subjects in the Kraines and Wood study, could think of a way that a woman's emotional health was likely to be negatively affected. In sum, the present study concurs with the above study, which shows that only a minority of women seem to suffer anxiety about the menopause.

It can be noted from Figure 28 that the scores on item 25 are negatively skewed because the majority of women would feel relieved when they are no longer able to have a child/children once their periods stopped in later life (see Table 3.14). The finding is supported by a number of previous research findings, viz. Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten and Datan, 1974, pp.602-603) and Neugarten (1976) (see chapter 1 sections 3.1 and 3.1.5). For example, in the Kraines and Wood study, no women expressed regret over lost fertility, rather many of them stated that they were happy to have completed child-rearing. Both the Kraines and Wood and Neugarten studies indicate that many women welcome the menopause as a relief from fear of unwanted pregnancies.

The finding that some women would feel unhappy about this issue, is validated by one previous empirical study, i.e. Neugarten (1976), and by a number of theorists, viz. Cavan (1958), Chilman (1968), Lidz (1968), and Notman (1978) (see chapter 1 section 3.1.5). All these theorists advance that the middle-aged mother is likely to regret, become depressed, or at least be ambivalent about, her declining, or terminated reproductive capacity. In addition, Lidz

and Notman contend that a woman's self-esteem is often closely related to her capacities to bear children, and the termination of this reproductive capacity contributes to depression. Lidz advances further that unless her self-esteem as a woman and mother, has become ingrained with her, she suffers with the loss of the physical tokens of her femininity.

Finally, the finding of Neugarten is similar to that of the present study, because she found that only a minority of women, viz. four percent, stated that the worst thing about the menopause was not being able to have more children.

It can be observed from Figure 29 that the scores on item 26 are symmetrically distributed because an equal number of wives 6.3% felt that their husbands will feel more loving towards them, or will feel less loving towards them when they were no longer able to have their periods, while 87.5% of them expressed the view that their husbands' feelings of affection towards them would remain the same (see Table 3.14). The finding that the majority of them believed their feelings of affection towards them would remain the same, is similar to a finding by Crawford and Hooper (1973) (see chapter 1 section 3.1.4). Crawford and Hooper asked the post-parental women in their study, a series of questions about their tendency to moodiness, the kind of qualities and abilities they valued most highly in their husbands, the extent of problem-solving with husbands, the relative degree of compatibility in their own marriages and the chief value of marriage. None of these features of the marital relationship were related in any way to menopausal state or to the reporting or type of symptoms.

The finding that some wives felt that their husbands will feel less loving towards them when they are no longer able to have their periods, may be explained in terms of Cavan's (1958) contention that a woman's reactions to the menopause that verge on the neurotic are perhaps more closely related to her relation to husband than to the physical changes. If her husband is nearing the peak of his occupational striving, he may seem to neglect her. She may easily misinterpret these situations, viewing them not as growing out of external social relationships but as proof that her physical changes make her unattractive and unappealing (see chapter 1 section 3.1.4).

The finding that a minority of wives felt that their husbands will feel more loving towards them when they are no longer able to have their periods, is similar to a finding by Neugarten (1970), who found in a review of one of her studies that eleven percent of the women stated that the best thing about the menopause was that it brought about a better relationship with their husbands (see chapter 1 section 3.1.3).

It can be discerned from Figure 30 that the scores on item 27(i) are negatively skewed because the majority of wives felt that their husbands will still find them sexually attractive when they are no longer able to have their periods in the middle years of their lives (see Table 3.14). The finding is verified by one previous empirical study, viz. Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963) (see chapter 1 section 3.1.3). For example, sixty-five percent of the women in the former study contended that the menopause had no effect on a woman's sexuality.

The finding that one wife felt that her husband will be much less sexually interested in her when she was no longer able to have her periods, can be understood in terms of existing theories, viz. Chilman (1968) and Lidz (1968) (see chapter 1 section 3.1.3). Chilman and Lidz advance that women believe that they lose their sexual responsiveness and ability to enjoy sex with the menopause, and this may cause a woman to feel that she will become an unattractive old girl whose husband may probably seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere. Chilman speculates further that along with the physiological changes associated with the start (or middle or end) of the menopause, she also may feel disturbed lest she may no longer be sexually attractive as a woman. Lidz contends that such beliefs have no basis in fact. The findings of the present study support Lidz's contention, because the majority of wives felt that their husbands will still find them sexually attractive once their periods stopped.

3.1.10 The work career

In this section, items 28 and 34 focus on the middle-aged respondents' attitudes towards their work career (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and the distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.16 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 32 and 33 below.

TABLE 3.16 THE WORK CAREER

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				6-9	5	1-4
				Agree	Indecisive	Disagree
28	55	6,1	2,4	63.3	3.6	32.7

I enjoy my job far more now than I did when I was a younger man/woman (EMPLOYED MEN AND WOMEN ONLY).

				6-9	5	1-4
				Agree	Indecisive	Disagree
34	52	3,1	1,7	9.6	5.8	84.6

I feel hopeless because there is no chance for me to improve my position at my place of work in the future (EMPLOYED MEN AND WOMEN ONLY).

FIGURE 32 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 28- GAP BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS AT WORK/ENJOYED MY WORK MORE AS A YOUNG MAN/WOMAN/ENJOY MY WORK MORE NOW THAN WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN/WOMAN

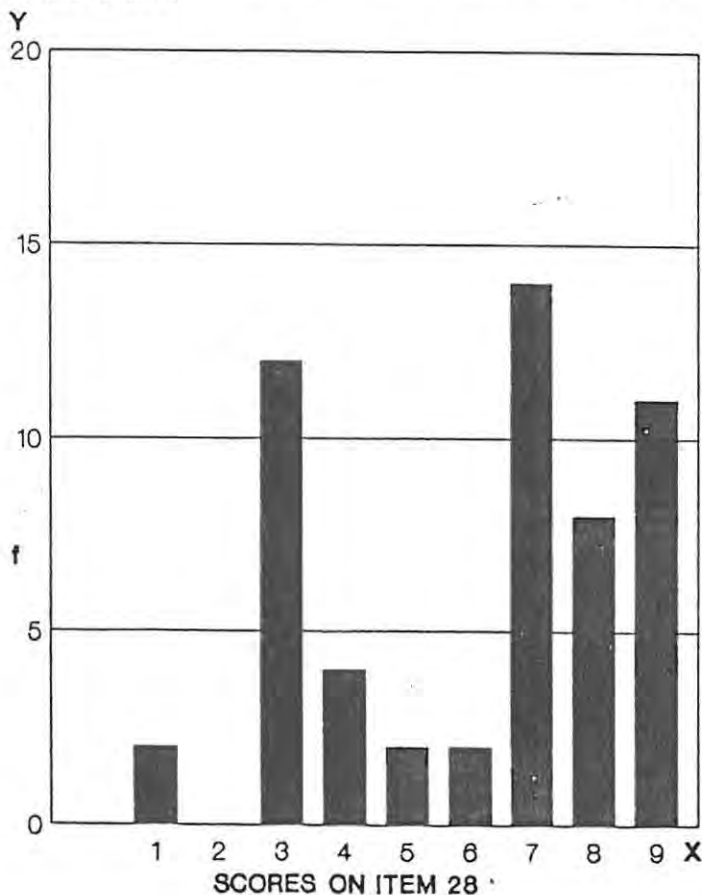
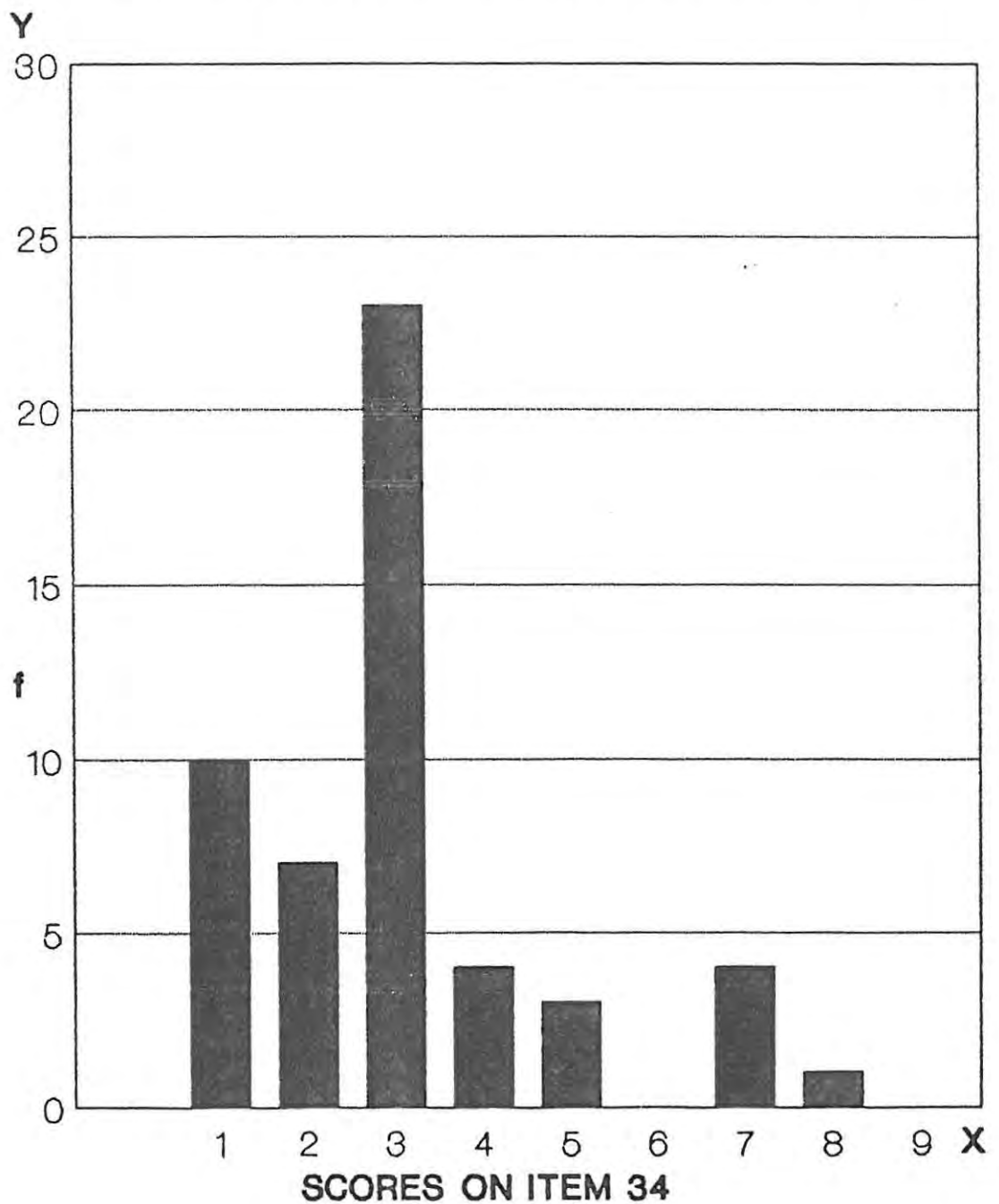


FIGURE 33 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 34- GAP BETWEEN ASPIRATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS AT WORK/HOPEFUL ABOUT FUTURE CAREER PROSPECTS/NOT HOPEFUL ABOUT FUTURE CAREER PROSPECTS



It can be seen from Figure 32 that the scores on item 28 are positively skewed because the majority of respondents enjoyed their job far more now than they did when they were younger men/women (see Table 3.16). The finding is supported by a number of previous researchers in the area of career and the middle-age stage of life, viz. Neugarten, Moore and Lowe (1965), Peterson (1968) and Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975). Neugarten, Moore and Lowe and Peterson see middle age in positive terms, i.e. as a period in one's life characterized by an increasing intellectual ability to make decisions, holding of high status jobs, earning a maximum income, and enjoying relatively good physical and mental health which allows one to work regularly. Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates found that job satisfaction increases with age.

The finding that some respondents disagreed with the above statement, can be explained in terms of Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) finding that job mobility decreases with age, i.e. the opportunity for career advancement for persons within work organizations, generally decreases with age, because such organizations tend to favour the young person over the middle-aged individual when making promotions within their concerns.

It can be noted from Figure 33 that the scores on item 34 are negatively skewed because the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement that they felt hopeless because there was no chance for them to improve their positions at their place of work in the future (see Table 3.16). Also, there is a low negative correlation between the above-mentioned item and this one, viz. ($r = -.38$). The finding

can be explained in terms of the fact that middle age is regarded as the "prime of life," the point when youthful drive is not yet noticeably diminished, experience is great, and the combination of the two carries the man to his peak of success (Cavan, 1958). According to Cavan, employment also has the advantage of giving the woman a future to which to look forward, a future of success in her job, financial compensation, and perhaps added security for old age. Lidz (1968) states that for men, particularly in executive circles, the period between forty and fifty, or even fifty-five, may involve intense striving to capture the elusive top positions or properly to climax a career by amassing the wealth or prestige that has come within grasp. Demonstrated capacities may lead to greater expectations, and open new opportunities. Others become involved in political jockeying to win out over a competitor (see chapter 1 section 8).

The finding that some respondents agreed with this statement, can be explained in terms of Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) finding that job satisfaction increases with age as job mobility decreases with age. Also, some men experience the feeling of being stuck in a rut that is to be found among the unsuccessful (Farrel et al. (1975 cited in Gutmann, 1976, p.42); Neugarten, 1979; Grunebaum, 1979). According to Neugarten (1966, 1979), Peterson (1968), Strickler (1975) and Collin (1979), some of them express concerns about reaching a plateau in their careers (see chapter 1 section 8). In sum, these men are often unhappy in the middle years because of their occupational frustrations, concerns and problems (Bossard & Boll, 1955; Lowenthal & Chiriboga (1972) (see chapter 1 section 8.1).

3.1.11 Attitudes towards the past

In this section, items 31 and 40 focus on the middle-aged respondents' attitudes towards the past, i.e. whether they have a positive preoccupation with the past or negative preoccupation with it (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means and standard deviations and distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.17 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 34 and 35 below.

TABLE 3.17 POSITIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PAST/NEGATIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PAST

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				6-9	1-4	5
				Agree	Disagree	Undecided
31	70	5,6	2,1	65.7	31.4	2.9
I am pleased with what I did with my life when I was younger.						
				6-9	1-4	5
				Agree	Disagree	Undecided
40	70	4,2	2,2	31.4	67.1	1.4
I worry about the mistakes which I made when I was younger.						

FIGURE 34 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 31- NEGATIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PAST/POSITIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PAST

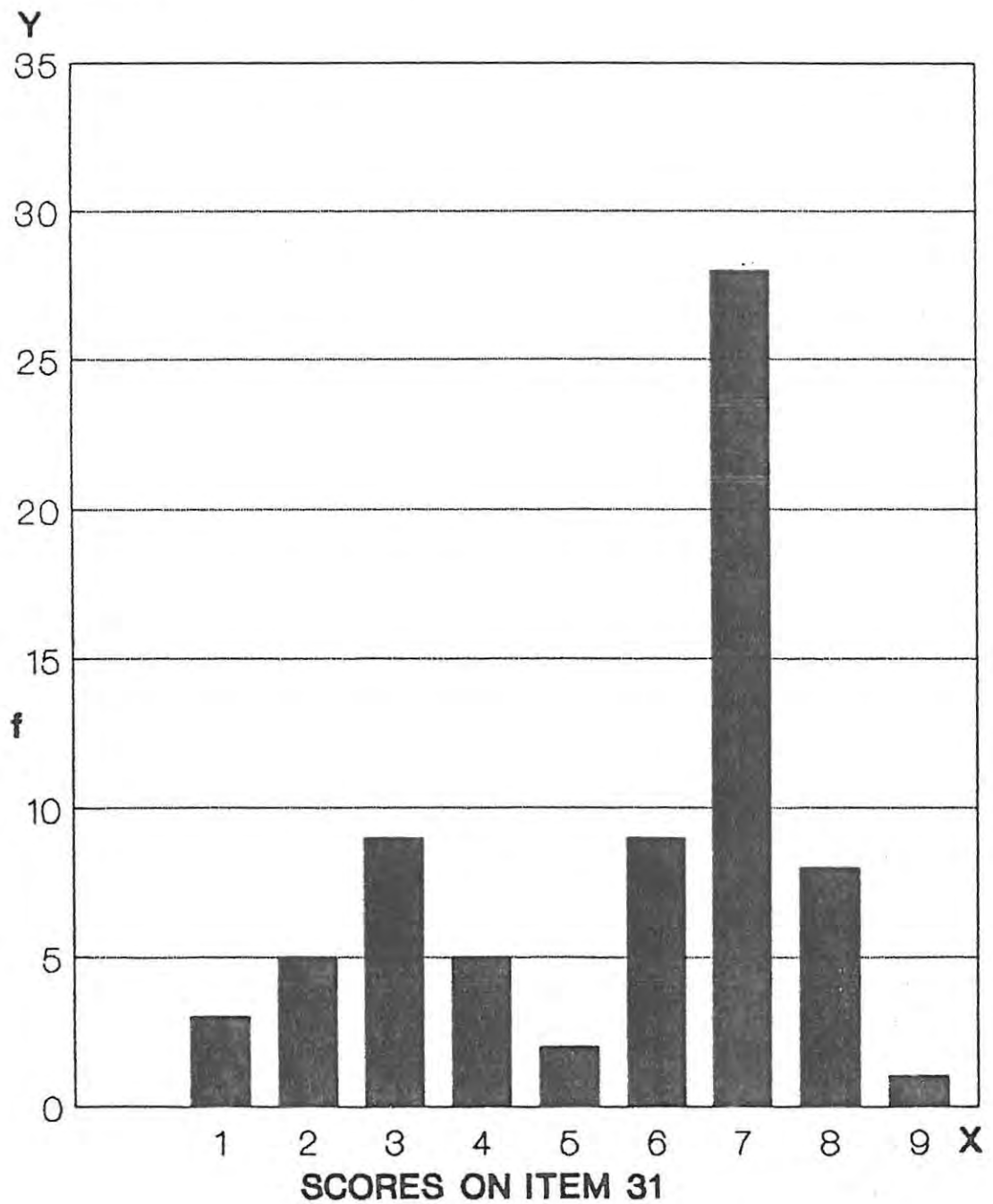
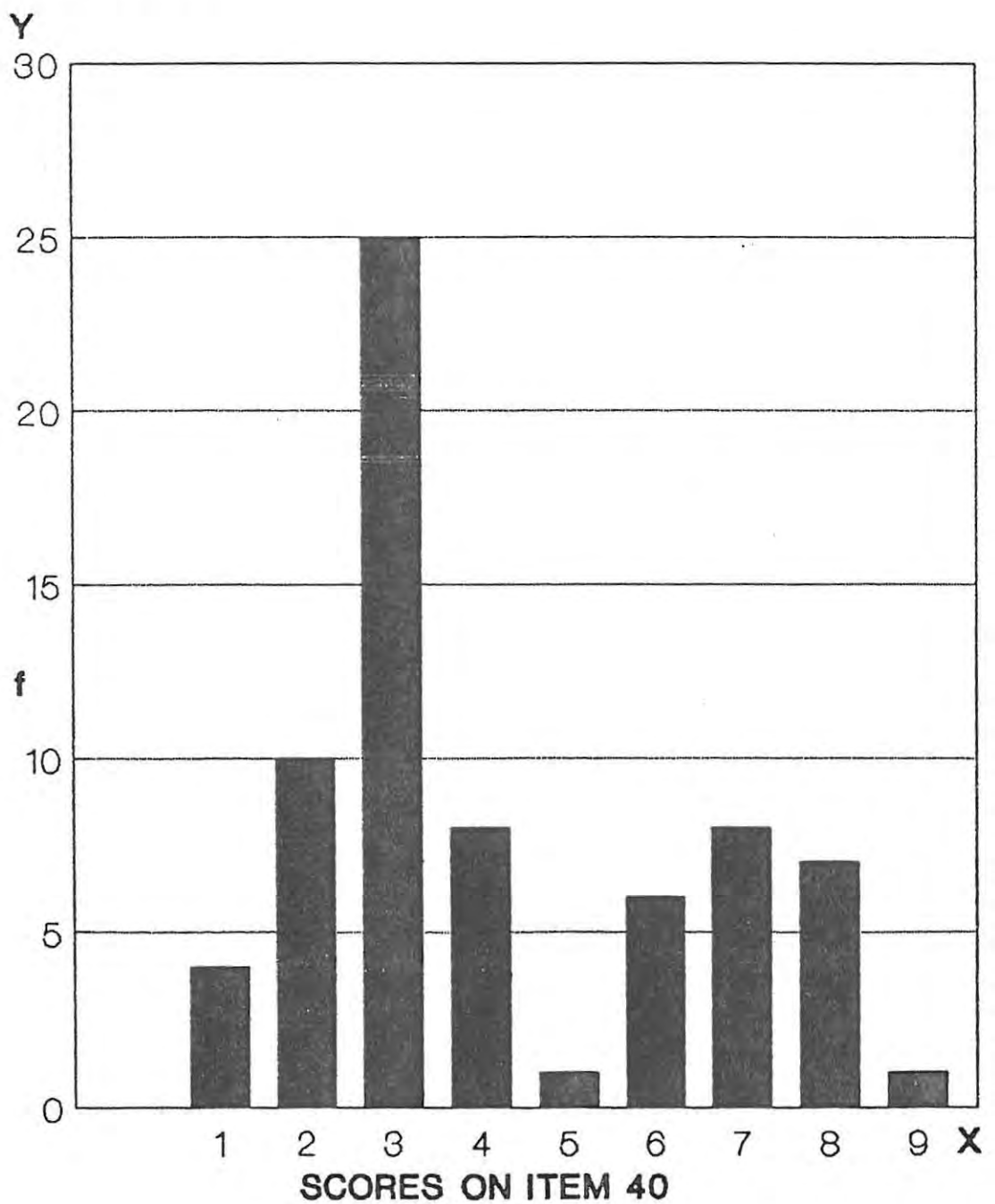


FIGURE 35 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 40- POSITIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PAST/NEGATIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE PAST



It can be seen from Figure 34 that the scores on item 31 are positively skewed because the majority of respondents felt pleased with what they did with their lives when they were younger (see Table 3.17).

It can be seen from Figure 35 that the scores on item 40 are negatively skewed because the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement that they worried about the mistakes which they made when they were younger (see Table 3.17). Also, there is a low negative correlation between the above-mentioned item and this one, viz. ($r = -.38$).

The above-mentioned findings demonstrate the following: firstly, some respondents felt pleased with what they did with their lives when they were younger, and did not worry about the mistakes which they made when they were younger. This suggests that they are socially and psychologically "healthy" because they have a positive preoccupation with the past (see Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates, 1975, chapter 1 section 7.1). Other results supporting this finding, were obtained by the same researchers, who asked their respondents to allocate their best age either to the past or to the future. They found that all of the middle-aged subjects assigned their best age to the past (see Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates, 1975, chapter 1 section 7.1.3).

Secondly, some respondents did not feel pleased with their lives when they were younger and worried about the mistakes which they made when they were younger. This suggests that they are in some

social or psychological sense less "healthy" because they have a negative preoccupation with the past (see Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates, 1975, chapter 1 section 7.1).

This finding is also similar to another finding by Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates (1975), because they found that active reconstruction of the past, characterized by a concern with "rehashing" specific past decisions or behaviour, shifted by stage, peaking at middle age - 44 percent of the middle-aged parents manifested such concerns (see chapter 1 section 7.1.1), while in the present study, 31.4% of the respondents did not feel pleased with what they did with their lives when they were younger, and worried about the mistakes which they made when they were younger.

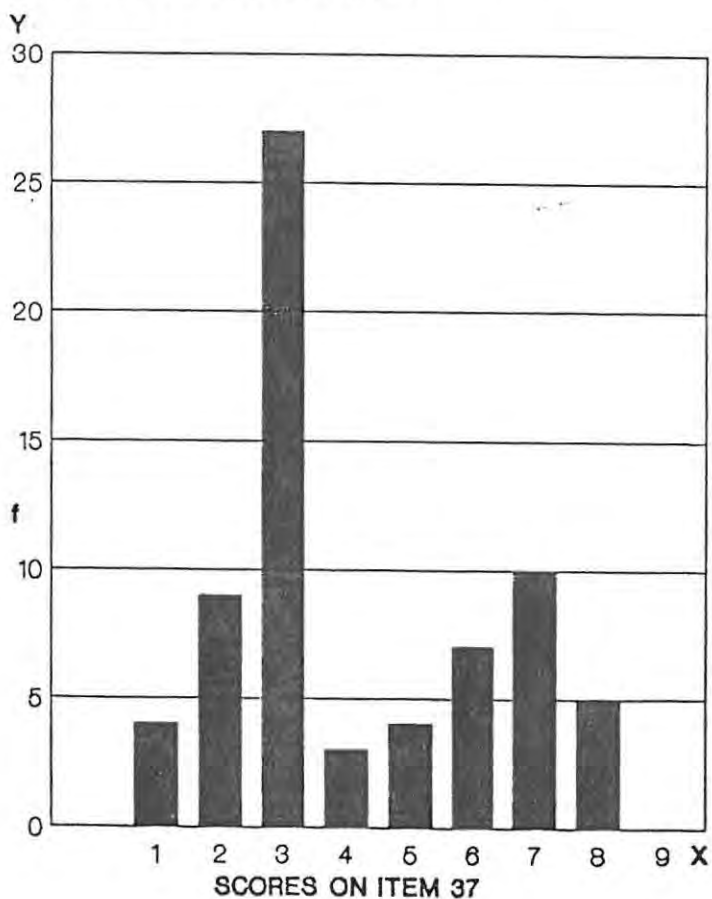
3.1.12 Attitudes towards the future

In this section, items 37 and 43 focus on the middle-aged respondents' attitudes towards the future, i.e. whether they have a positive preoccupation with the future or negative preoccupation with it (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.18 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 36 and 37 below.

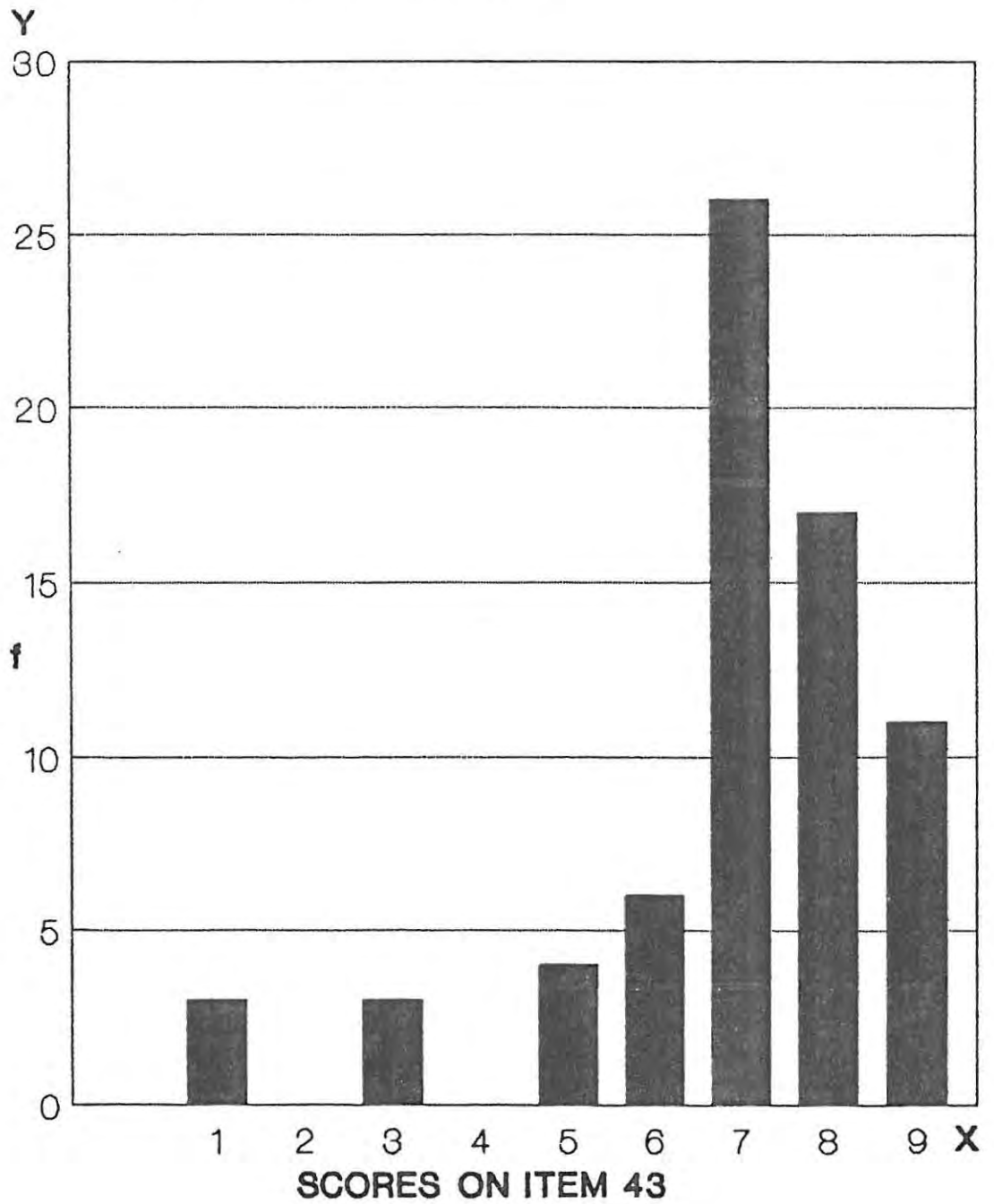
TABLE 3.18 POSITIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE FUTURE/NEGATIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE FUTURE

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				6-9	5	1-4
				Agree	Indecisive	Disagree
37	69	4,2	2,1	31.4	5.7	61.5
I am not as hopeful now as I used to be about my future.						
				1-4	5	6-9
				Disagree	Indecisive	Agree
43	70	6,9	1,9	8.6	5.7	85.7
I look forward with pleasure to my future.						

FIGURE 36 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 37- POSITIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE FUTURE/NEGATIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH THE FUTURE



**FIGURE 37 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 43- NEGATIVE
PREOCCUPATION WITH THE FUTURE/POSITIVE
PREOCCUPATION WITH THE FUTURE**



It can be seen from Figure 36 that the scores on item 37 are negatively skewed because the majority of respondents disagreed with the statement that they were not as hopeful now as they used to be about their future (see Table 3.18).

It can be noted from Figure 37 that the scores on item 43 are positively skewed because the majority of respondents looked forward with pleasure to their future (see Table 3.18). Also, there is a moderate negative correlation between the above-mentioned item and this one, viz. ($r = -.64$).

The above-mentioned findings show the following: firstly, some respondents felt as hopeful now as they used to be about their future, and looked forward with pleasure to their future. This suggests that they are socially and psychologically "healthy" because they have a positive perception of the future (see reasoning of Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates, 1975 chapter 1 section 7.1).

Secondly, some respondents were not as hopeful as they used to be about their future, and did not look forward with pleasure to their future. This suggests that they are socially and psychologically maladjusted because Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975) found that individuals who are in some social or psychological sense less "healthy" have a more limited perspective on the future (see chapter 1 section 7.1). These subjects are similar to the empty-nest and pre-retiree subjects in the Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates study, in a number of respects, viz. the

refusal by some of the subjects in the latter study, to project the number of years they anticipated for themselves in their future on the Life Evaluation Chart, the fact that the latter subjects generally projected less far into the future than did the newlyweds and high school seniors, and finally, the fact that none of these latter subjects allocated their best age to the future, in contrast to the high school seniors and newlyweds (see chapter 1 sections 7.1.2 and 7.1.3).

Overall, however, the subjects in the present study were more hopeful about the future than those in the Neugarten and Garron (1959) study (see chapter 1 section 7.1.2) because of the following: Firstly, 61.5% of the respondents in the present study were as hopeful now as they used to be about the future and 85.7% of them looked forward with pleasure to their future, while 14% of the respondents in the above study expressed positive attitudes about the future. Secondly, 31.4% of the respondents in the present study were not as hopeful now as they used to be about their future and 8.6% of them did not look forward with pleasure to their future, while only 13% of the respondents in the above study expressed negative attitudes about the future. Finally, only a minority of subjects 5.7% in the present study expressed indecisive attitudes about the lack of hopefulness about the future, or the degree to which they looked forward with pleasure to the future, while 55% of the respondents in the above study expressed neutral attitudes about the future.

3.1.13 Confrontation with death

In this section, items 32 and 38 focus on the middle-aged respondents' attitudes towards death, i.e. whether they have an acceptance of death or an anxiety about it (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.19 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 38 and 39 below.

TABLE 3.19 ACCEPTANCE OF DEATH/ANXIETY ABOUT DEATH

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	5	6-9
				Disagree	Indecisive	Agree
32	70	5,0	2,5	41.5	8.6	50

It is easy for me to think about my own death.

				1-4	5	6-9
				Disagree	Indecisive	Agree
38	70	4,7	2,4	52.8	5.7	45.8

I worry that the time which I still have left to live is shorter now than it was when I was younger.

FIGURE 38 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 32- DEATH- ANXIETY ABOUT DEATH/ACCEPTANCE OF DEATH

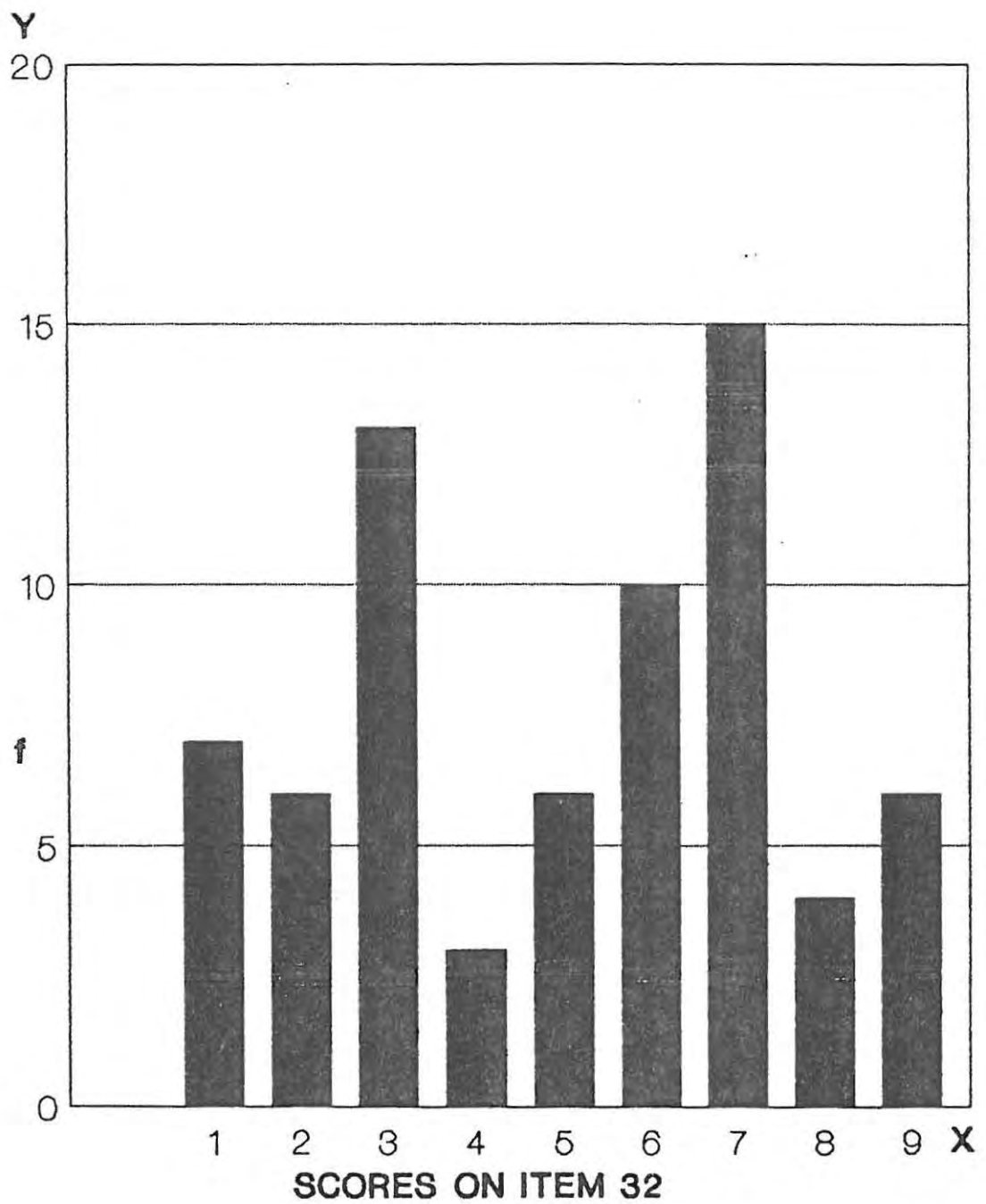
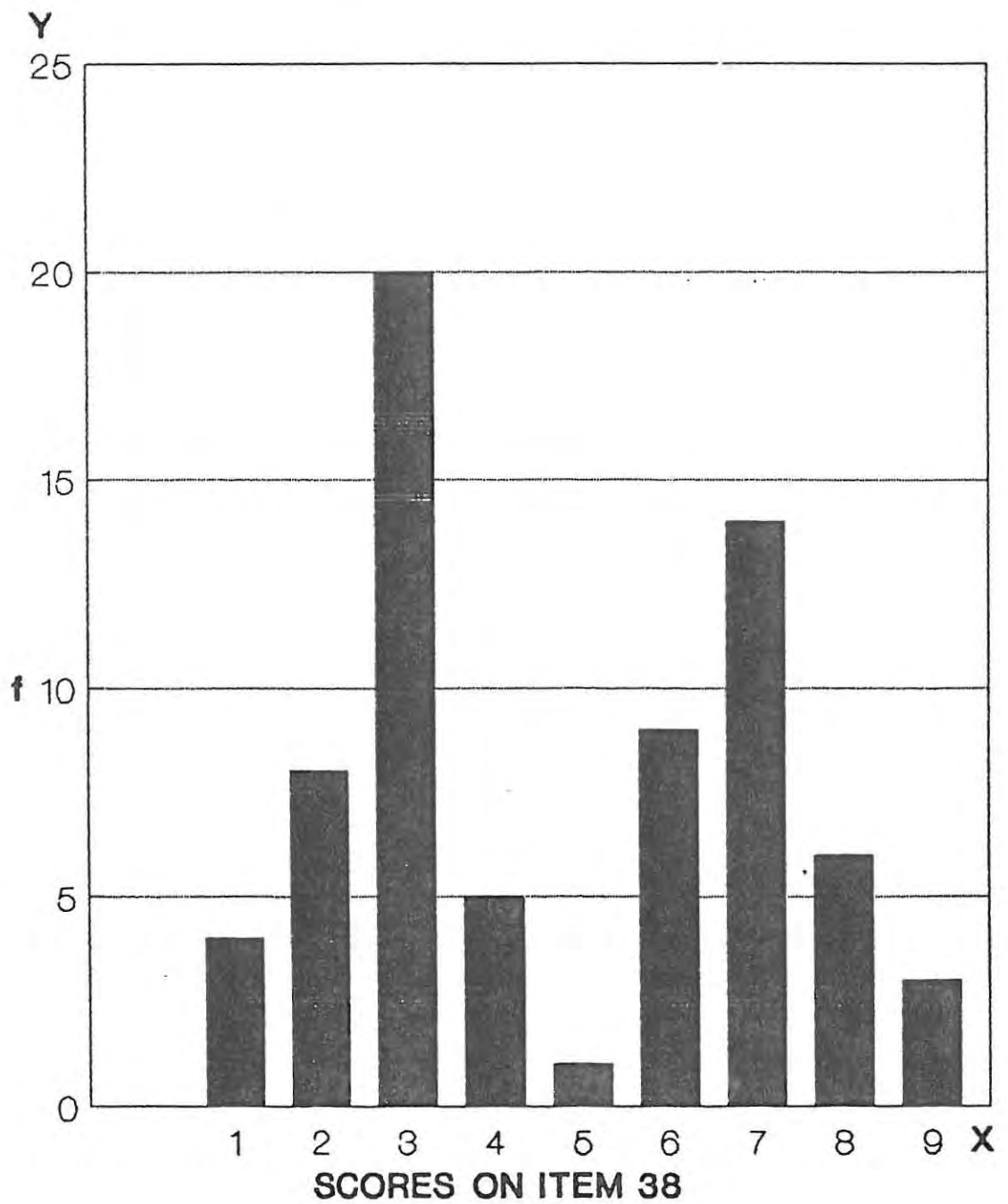


FIGURE 39 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 38- DEATH- ACCEPTANCE OF DEATH/ANXIETY ABOUT DEATH



It can be seen from Figure 38 that the scores on item 32 are bimodally distributed because 50% of the respondents found it easy to think about their own deaths, 41.5% disagreed with the above statement, and 8.6% expressed indecisive attitudes (see Table 3.19).

It can be noted from Figure 39 that the scores on item 38 reflect a bimodal distribution because 52.8% of the respondents did not worry that the time which they still had left to live was shorter now than it was when they were younger, 45.8% of them agreed with this statement, and a minority of them 5.7% expressed indecisive attitudes (see Table 3.19). Also, there is a low negative correlation between the above-mentioned item and this one, viz. ($r = -.42$).

The above-mentioned findings indicate the following: firstly, some respondents found it easy to think about their own deaths, and did not worry that the time which they still had left to live was shorter now than it was when they were younger. This suggests that they have come to terms with their own death, and have reconciled themselves to it. According to Brim (1976), one of the major psychological tasks for middle age is resignation to death and a permutation, a reordering of life priorities. It appears that each individual, must at least on an unconscious level, find a way to accept his/her mortality, and reconcile themselves to the loss of fantasized hopes (Nadelson, Polonsky & Mathews, 1979) (see chapter 1 section 5). Thus, it appears that these subjects have satisfied one of the major developmental tasks of this stage.

Secondly, some respondents found it difficult to think about their

own deaths, and worried that the time which they still had left to live was shorter now than it was when they were younger. This can be comprehended in terms of the views of a number of theorists, viz. Gutmann (1976), Marmor (1968) and Lifton (1973 cited in Collin, 1979, p.146) (see chapter 1 section 5). These theorists contend that the defenses which have worked so well in youth - the illusion of immortality and the denial of one's own ultimate death can no longer be maintained at middle age. The result is a marked increase in "existential anxiety," the anxiety that is derived from fully facing the limits of our existence and our own ultimate nonexistence. This 'death anxiety' centres on fear of disintegration, stasis and separation. Though experienced throughout the life cycle, it is especially 'salient' in middle adulthood.

From the above, it seems that middle-aged subjects have contrasting attitudes about the time which they still have left to live. This view is contained in a quotation provided by one of Neugarten's subjects (Neugarten, 1976) (see chapter 1 section 6.1).

Time is a two-edged sword. In some of my friends, it brings anxiety that there won't be time enough. To others, it adds a certain challenge in seeing how much pleasure can still be obtained (p.18).

3.1.14 Rehearsal for widowhood

In this section, item 41 focuses on the phenomenon of rehearsal for widowhood. The purpose of this question was to ascertain the extent to which women undergo a rehearsal for widowhood more frequently

than middle-aged men (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). Histograms of the frequency of responses to the above items, for both females and males, are presented in Figures 40 and 41 below. The t test was used to determine whether there were significant differences between males and females on this item (see Table 3.20 below).

TABLE 3.20 REHEARSAL FOR WIDOWHOOD

Item No.	Mean Female	N	Mean Male	N	t	df	p
41	6,2	35	5,3	35	1,64	68	\leq ,05 one-tailed

I sometimes think about what it will be like for me one day when my husband/wife is no longer living. Scale points (1-4)- Very strongly disagree - Slightly disagree/Scale point -(5)- Undecided/Scale points (6-9) - Slightly agree - Very strongly agree.

FIGURE 40 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 41- DEATH- REHEARSAL FOR WIDOWHOOD- WIVES MORE CONCERNED ABOUT REHEARSAL FOR WIDOWHOOD THAN HUSBANDS- FEMALES

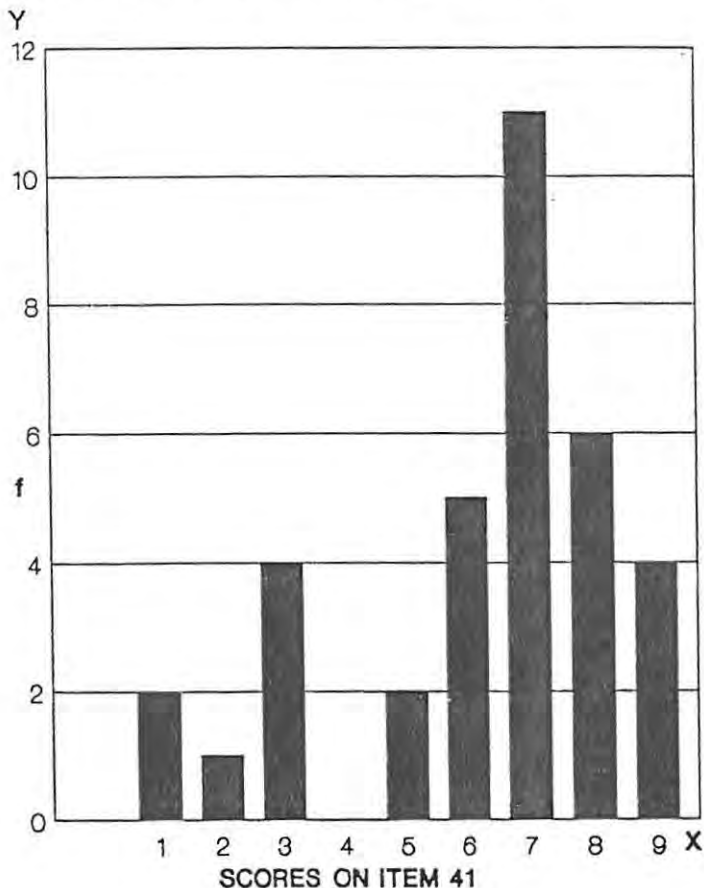
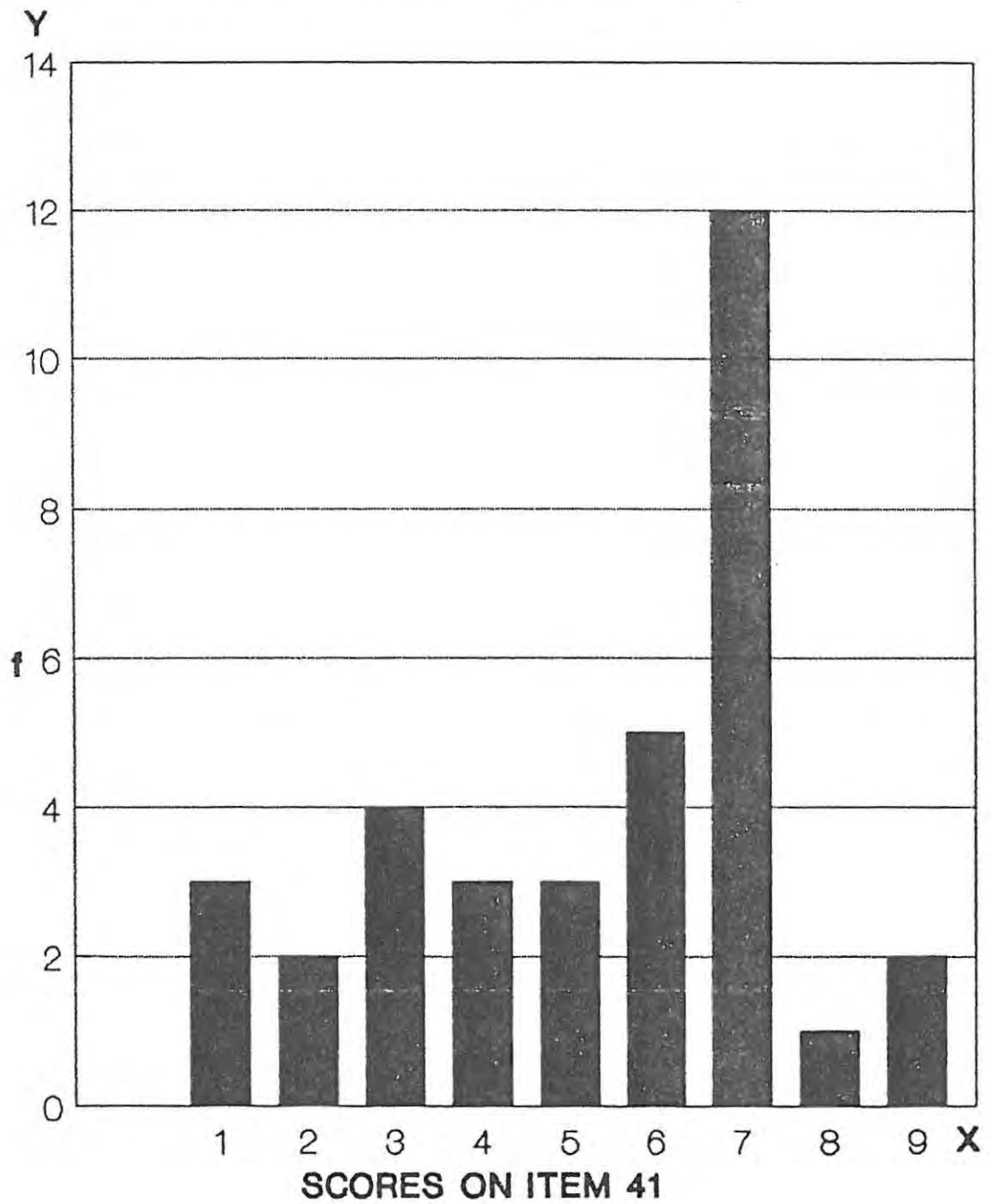


FIGURE 41 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 41- DEATH- REHEARSAL FOR WIDOWHOOD- WIVES MORE CONCERNED ABOUT REHEARSAL FOR WIDOWHOOD THAN HUSBANDS- MALES



Middle-aged women sometimes think about what it will be like for them one day when their husbands are no longer living, i.e. a rehearsal for widowhood more frequently than middle-aged men (see Table 3.20 above).

This finding is similar to the finding obtained by a number of previous researchers and theorists about this issue, viz. Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963), Neugarten (1966), (1970), (1979) and Neugarten and Datan (1974) (see chapter 1 section 4). All these researchers and theorists contend that body-monitoring is the term used to describe many protective strategies for keeping the middle-aged body at set levels of performance and appearance. This takes the form of rehearsal for widowhood in women. Women are more concerned about the body-monitoring of their husbands than of themselves (see chapter 1 section 4).

3.1.15 The marital relationship

In this section, items 35 and 45 focus on the impact of children leaving home on the marital relationship, i.e. whether this event has a positive or negative influence on the spouses (see chapter 2 section 2.6.3.1). The n's, means, standard deviations and distribution of percentage responses to these items are presented in Table 3.21 below. Histograms of the frequency of responses to the items are presented in Figures 42 and 43 below.

TABLE 3.21 CHILDREN LEAVING HOME A POSITIVE/NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

Item No.	N	Mean	S D	%	%	%
				1-4	6-9	5
				Disagree	Agree	Undecided
35	70	5,5	1,10	32.8	51.5	15.7

When my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own, my husband/wife and I will get closer to each other than we are now.

				%	%	%
				1-4	6-9	5
				Disagree	Agree	Undecided
45	70	2,7	1,8	85.7	8.7	5.7

When my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own, my husband/wife and I will have little in common.

FIGURE 42 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 35- CHILDREN LEAVING HOME A NEGATIVE/POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

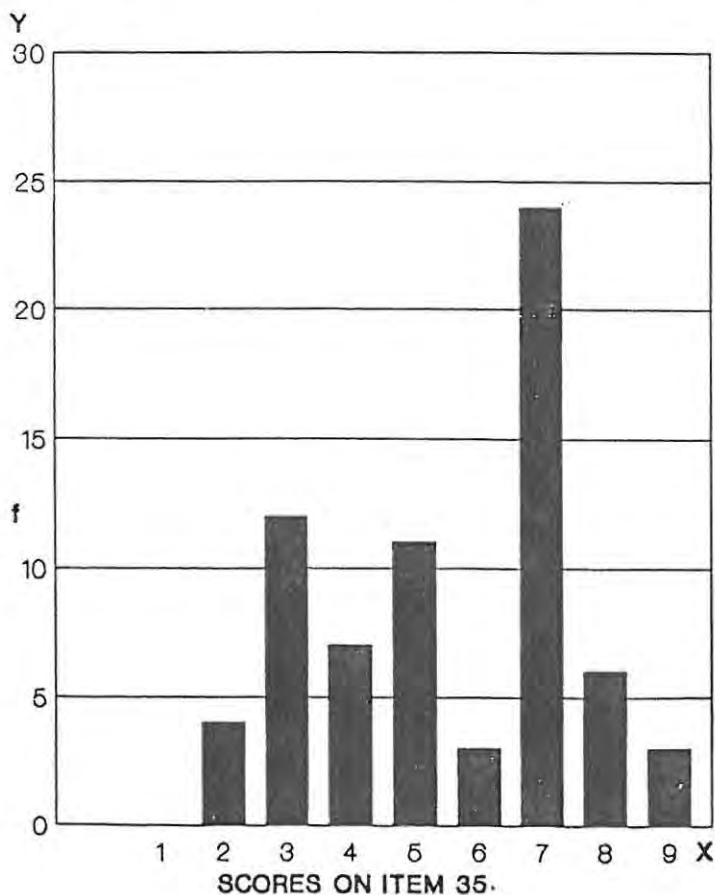
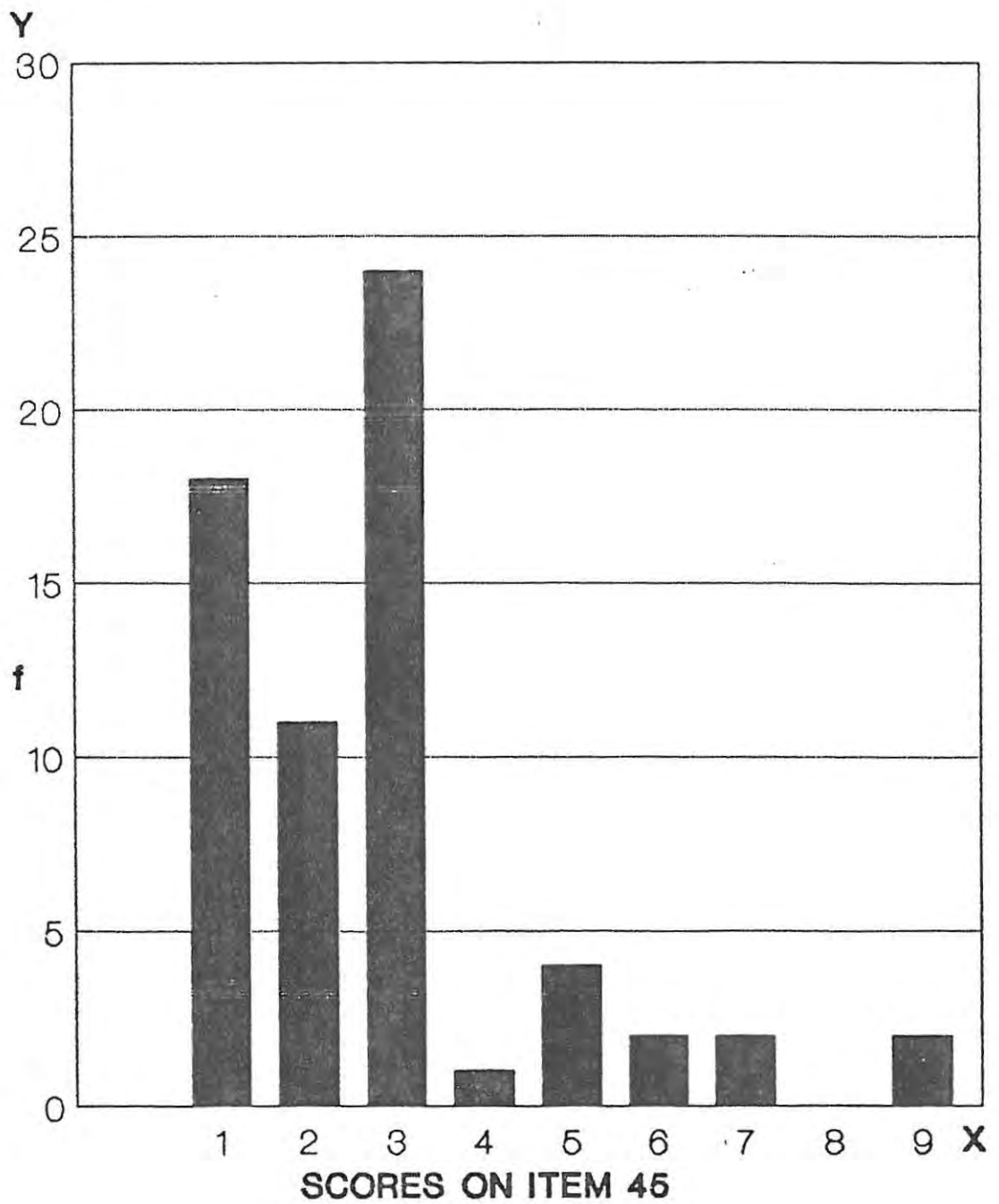


FIGURE 43 HISTOGRAM OF ITEM 45- CHILDREN LEAVING HOME- A POSITIVE/NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP



It can be seen from Figure 42 that the scores on item 35 are positively skewed because the majority of spouses agreed with the statement "when my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own, my husband/wife and I will get closer to each other than we are now" (see Table 3.21).

It can be noted from Figure 43 that the scores on item 45 are negatively skewed because the majority of spouses disagreed with the statement "when my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own, my husband/wife and I will have little in common" (see Table 3.21). It is discernible that the distribution of scores on items 35 and 45, are quite different, i.e. item 35, although positively skewed, approximates a bimodal distribution, while item 45 is clearly negatively skewed.

The above-mentioned findings demonstrate the following: firstly, some spouses felt that when their children leave home to live on their own, their husbands/wives and them will get closer to each other than they are now, and did not feel that they would have little in common with one another. These findings are similar to previous findings by a number of researchers, who indicated that the departure of children from the home has a positive effect on the degree of marital satisfaction experienced by the parents, viz. Axelson (1960), Deutscher (1964), Burr (1970), Rollins and Feldman (1970), Neugarten and Datan (1974) and Thurnher (1976) (see chapter 1 section 1.1.2). Axelson divided his subjects into two categories - those who still had one or more single children under eighteen years of age remaining at home and those respondents who had no single

children under eighteen years of age remaining at home. Subjects were asked to recall the time when their child was of high-school age and to note if changes had occurred. Both mothers and fathers indicated that a significant positive change in the area of marital adjustment had occurred since the child was in high school. Deutscher and Neugarten and Datan found that spouses who gave a positive assessment of the postparental period spoke of improved relationships with each other, while Thurnher found that they frequently express the desire that they will develop greater intimacy and companionship during this period. Burr and Rollins and Feldman found that marital satisfaction increases at the launched stage and continues to increase through the retired stage.

Secondly, some spouses did not feel that when their children leave home to live on their own, their husband/wives and them will get closer to each other than they are now, and also felt that they would have little in common with one another. These findings have been substantiated by a number of previous researchers and theorists, viz. Fried and Stern (1948), Cavan (1958), Bossard and Boll (1955), Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960), Deutscher (1964), Lidz (1968), Neugarten and Datan (1974), Lurie (1974) and Pincus and Dare (1977), who all noted a deterioration in some middle-age marriage relationships, which follows after the departure of the children from the home (see chapter 1 section 1.1.2). Fried and Stern, Cavan, Lidz and Pincus and Dare contend that husbands and wives who have turned to their children for the love and encouragement that normally comes from the spouse, also face difficult adjustment with the independence of the children for the following reasons: firstly,

they have more time for reflection on their own marital relationship - this can prove to be a negative experience, especially given the above-mentioned situation, secondly, the children no longer provide diversion or activity, or serve as scapegoats for the conflict between the spouses, thirdly, in such a situation, the marriage often becomes flat, the couple frustrate each other, and their sagging vitality is likely to affect all other areas of their lives. Conflicts arise which can lead to illness. Bossard and Boll and Gurin, Veroff and Feld located the lowest level of marital satisfaction at the stage of the family life cycle associated with the empty-nest. Deutscher found that there were some couples in his study, who had remained married "for the sake of the children" for as long as 25 years. Neugarten and Datan and Lurie found that both men and women were most likely to say that negative changes have occurred in their marriages since the departure of their children from the home.

The findings of the present study regarding marital satisfaction, which indicated that the departure of children from the home has a predominantly positive effect on the degree of marital satisfaction experienced by the parents, lends substance to the words of encouragement which Brayshaw (1962) offers to his middle-aged couples by quoting the words of Browning:

Grow old along with me,
 The best is yet to be,
 The last of life, for which the first was made
 Our times are in His hand
 Who saith, "A whole I planned,
 Youth shows but half;
 trust G-d; see all, not be afraid" (p.364).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, conclusions about the various theoretical issues examined in this thesis, viz. children are on-time or off-time with regard to major life events, impact of children leaving home on the parents, degree of parental involvement with children, ageing, sexuality, menopause, work-career, and attitudes towards the past, future and death, are drawn. In addition, an overall conclusion concerning the extent to which the empty-nest stage of life constitutes a negative crisis period, or a positive period of stability and growth for the empty-nest parents, is drawn.

4.1.1 Individual timetables: on-time and off-time events

The findings concerning parental attitudes towards children being on-time or off-time with regard to major life events such as vocational adjustment, leaving home, having children, and marriage confirms in one sense, and repudiates in another sense, the views of a number of theorists, viz. Neugarten (1970), Neugarten and Datan (1974), Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974), Bourque and Back (1977) and Rossi (1980), who contend that it is the unanticipated not the anticipated, which is likely to constitute the traumatic event as when the empty nest, occupational adjustment, marriage and grandparenthood occur at unexpected times during the life cycle,

i.e., too early or too late, viz. this is theoretically called being off-time with regard to major life events, for the following reasons, viz. on the one hand, the majority of parents would worry that their children cannot earn their own living if they were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in their jobs, 51.5% of them would worry that they cannot stand on their own two feet if they were in their middle to late twenties and were still staying at home, a minority of them would be anxious to have grandchildren if they waited a long time after they were married before deciding to have children, and 45.7% of them would fear that they would remain single if they were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet married, while, on the other hand, a minority of them would be unconcerned if their children were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in their jobs, because they felt that there was still plenty of time for them to do so, 48.5% of them would not be bothered if they were in their middle to late twenties and were still staying at home, the majority of them would not be upset if they waited a long time after they were married before deciding to have children, and 38.6% of them would not be troubled if they were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet married (see chapter 3 section 3.1.2 Table 3.1). Thus the evidence shows that there is a complexity inherent in these findings, which is not evident in the above-mentioned theories. The most outstanding characteristic of these findings, is that there is no general tendency for the majority of parents to experience stress if their children are off-time with regard to these events, and this contradicts the above theories. It appears that their responses to

them being on-time or off-time in relation to these events, differs according to the nature of each specific event (see chapter 3 section 3.1.2 and chapter 1 section 6.1.1).

The fact that some parents would be unconcerned if their children were off-time with regard to these events, vindicates Hirschhorn's (1977 cited in Neugarten, 1979, p.899) idea of the "fluid" life cycle, which is characterized by the disappearance of traditional timetables. It also substantiates Neugarten's (1979) contention that it is of doubtful value to describe adulthood as an invariant sequence of stages, each occurring at a given chronological age (see chapter 3 section 3.1.2).

4.1.2 The empty nest as turning point, frustration or satisfaction

It appears that the majority of parents experience the advent of the departure of their children from the home as a negative event because they sustained a profound sense of loss, i.e. they felt not pleased/not relieved and very sad with the anticipated or actual occurrence of this event (see chapter 3 section 3.1.3 Table 3.3). This is contrary to the findings of two empirical studies by Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972) and Anderson *et al.* (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176) (see chapter 1 section 1.1.3), for the following reasons: firstly, only five middle-aged parents (three women and two men) in the former study perceived the present period, i.e. the period just prior to the respondent's last child graduating from high school as the lowest points in their life charts, or as a turning point - the reason for these evaluations was unrelated to the

departure of children from the home, and secondly, none of them (with the exclusion of one) cited the past or impending departure of a child as frustrating or as a current problem, while in the latter study, a small majority of them expected new challenges. It is noteworthy that in this study, only 33% of them expected a loss of a sense of family.

The above findings are, however, similar to those of previous studies and theories, which suggest that the anticipated or actual occurrence of this event constitutes a loss for the middle-aged parents (Deutscher, 1964; Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1973; Anderson et al. (1977 cited in McCullough, 1980, p.176) (see chapter 3 section 3.1.3 and chapter 1 section 1.1.3).

Support was found for the relationship between level of parental involvement with children and the loss experienced by the parents after their departure from the home because those of them who were over-involved with them sustained a higher degree of loss than those who were optimally-involved with them. There was, however, only weak support for this relationship. This relationship can be explained in terms of Cavan's (1958) contention that the departure of a child for college or the marriage of a son or daughter is viewed as a bereavement, with parents mourning for the loss of the child's dependency as they might mourn over the physical death of a child (see chapter 1 section 1.1.4).

Overall, it appears that the anticipated or actual departure of children from the home represents a predominantly negative experi-

ence for the parents, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of them were optimally-involved with their children. However, this conclusion requires qualification because a minority of them felt pleased and relieved and not sad with the advent of this event.

4.1.3 The clinging parent

The term over-involvement appears to be a misnomer in relation to the findings concerning the extent to which parents were optimally-involved or over-involved with their teenage and young adult children, because of the following: firstly, the majority of them were optimally-involved, i.e. healthily-involved with them. This suggests a loosening of ties towards them. Also, their ability to allow them to separate from them was unimpaired (see Stein, Holzman, Karasu & Charles, 1978, chapter 1 section 1.1.4), secondly, it was impossible to identify one group of them who were over-involved, i.e. unhealthily-involved with them, on each of the items measuring the degree of involvement with them, for the following reasons: firstly, the items tapped different aspects of involvement, as evidenced by the low correlations between the items, and accordingly, the respondents' responses to each of the items were different. However, the distribution of scores on each of the items were similar, which validates the conclusion that the majority of them were optimally-involved with them (see chapter 3 section 3.1.4 Table 3.4). It is more likely that clinical studies would yield groups of parents who are over-involved with their children, viz. Curlee (1969), Bart (1971), Oliver (1977) and Stein, Holzman, Karasu & Charles (1978) (see chapter 1 section 1.1.4), unlike the present study, which comprises a "normal" sample.

4.1.4 Problems of empty-nest women

It can be concluded that wives are more critically affected by their children's departure from the home than husbands because the child-rearing role is more central to a mother's existence than a father's. A variety of factors contribute towards this phenomenon. These are the following: firstly, mothers have invested more emotionally in the rearing of their children than fathers, secondly, mothers often feel that their major life function has been completed, and this evokes feelings of regret and emptiness, thirdly, cultural values emphasize the importance of the child-rearing role more for women than for men, and the termination of this role, may cause mothers to feel rejected, because they have lost, what they perceive to be, one of the primary reasons for their existence. In contrast our culture stresses the importance of the occupational role more for men than for women, and consequently, the impact of children leaving home, is less severe on fathers than mothers, because the former are still able to feel relatively needed and involved in the outside world (see chapter 3 section 3.1.5; see Cavan, 1958; Lidz, 1968; Marmor, 1968; Duvall, 1971; The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1973; Troll, 1975 chapter 1 section 1.1.4).

4.1.5 Parent-child relationships

The findings that the majority of parents felt proud of their children's behaviour, and were not disappointed with the relationship that they had with them, is antithetical to the views of a number of theorists, viz. Peterson (1968), Vincent (1972) and Notman (1979)

(see chapter 1 section 1.1.6). All these theorists commented on the intergenerational conflict between middle-aged parents and their adolescent children and young adult children. The latter may be sexually and aggressively provocative, challenging or disappointing. It is also contrary to the findings of Lurie (1974) and Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974), because of the following: firstly, Lurie stated that empty-nest parents experiencing their adolescent children (who were going through a transitional stage) were most likely to say that being a parent was most difficult at the present time, secondly, Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal noted that about three-fourths of the middle-aged parents reported some conflict with the children (see chapter 3 section 3.1.6).

However, these findings are similar to the results of a number of previous researchers, viz. Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960), Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974) and Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975), who noted the existence of positive and satisfying relationships prevalent between parents and their adolescent and young adult children (see chapter 3 section 3.1.6 and chapter 1 section 1.1.6).

The findings that the majority of parents 97.1% felt proud of their children's behaviour, yet notwithstanding this, a minority of them 17.1% felt disappointed because they had an unhappy relationship with some of them, is similar to a finding by Thurnher, Spence and Lowenthal (1974), who observed that the presence of conflict did not detract from the positive descriptions and evaluations of children (see chapter 3 section 3.1.6 Table 3.7 and chapter 1 section 1.1.6).

The finding that a minority of parents felt that they had been unsuccessful parents, confirms the finding of Deutscher (1964), who noted that these couples considered themselves failures because their hopes and ambitions for their children had not been realized (see chapter 3 section 3.1.6 and chapter 1 section 1.1.6).

In conclusion, the majority of parents view their grown-up children in pleasurable terms, and only a minority of them consider them to be problematic.

4.1.6 The changing body

The findings that the majority of respondents felt stronger, happier and more lively with the onset of ageing, 52.9% of them did not find it difficult to accept that they were getting older, and the majority of them felt that their bodies were in good shape, is contrary to the views of a number of theorists, who view the process of ageing in negative terms, because, according to them, signs of ageing and bodily decline may evoke a major and painful crisis (Marmor, 1968; Collin, 1979), which is conceived in physical terms as a loss of health and vitality (Gutmann, 1976), and may contribute to a separation loss, which is a key psychological stress that recurs frequently during this period, for example, the loss of one's youthful self-image (Marmor, 1968) (see chapter 3 section 3.1.7 and chapter 1 section 4).

The above findings also show that these respondents have come to terms with the physical signs of ageing (see Erickson, 1950; Gould,

1972; Neugarten, 1968 and Levinson, 1978 cited in Nadelson, Polonsky & Mathews, 1979 p.292), and experience the process of ageing in positive and non-degenerative terms (see chapter 3 section 3.1.7 and chapter 1 section 4).

It was concluded that respondents who find it difficult to accept that they are ageing, also have fears about the closer proximity of death. This supports the contentions of Gutmann (1976) and Marmor (1968), who state that the somatic changes of the ageing process during middle-age carry with them an inescapable confrontation with the fact of mortality (see chapter 3 section 3.1.7 and chapter 1 section 5).

The finding that the majority of respondents felt that their health means more to them now than it used to, suggests that greater pre-occupation with health, is a common developmental concern of the middle years. This trend has also been validated by Feldman (1964) and Gould (1972) (see chapter 3 section 3.1.7 and chapter 1 section 4).

Overall, the majority of respondents have a positive view about the process of ageing, and only a minority of them seem to suffer from the deleterious effects of ageing.

4.1.7 Sex in marriage: At 40 and beyond

There appears to be a tendency towards a decline in sexual interest among spouses now compared to ten years ago, although this requires

qualification because almost forty percent of them reported no change in sexual interest in the same period. This latter tendency suggests that the passage of time had no impact on degree of sexual interest. Similar results concerning the first-mentioned tendency were obtained by Cristenson and Gagnon (1965 cited in Neugarten and Datan, 1974, p.599) and Pfeiffer, Verwoerd and Davis (1972), who noted a decline in sexual interest over time (see chapter 3 section 3.1.8 and chapter 2 section 2.1).

Secondly, there seems to be a tendency towards a decline in the importance that spouses attribute to sex now compared to the time when they were young married couples, although this demands qualification because nearly forty percent of them reported no change in the importance they attached to sex in the same timespan. This latter tendency suggests that the passage of time had no influence on the importance attributed to sex. Similar results were obtained by Stein, Holzman, Karasu and Charles (1978), who observed a decline in the importance that their nonpatients accorded to sex at ages 51-60. They contend that the reason for this decline, can be ascribed to the reduction in the biological drive in the middle years. They also advance that in relationships which are characterized by an enduring intimacy, the importance of sex as an isolated activity, is lessened.

The finding that twenty-three percent of the spouses expressed the opposite viewpoint, viz. they accorded more importance to sex now compared to the time when they were young married couples, can be understood in terms of Cleveland's (1976) assumptions, viz., that

the fact that sex becomes physiologically and affectively less urgent, does not necessarily imply that it becomes less valuable, and therefore less important (see chapter 3 section 3.1.8 and chapter 2 section 2.1).

Thirdly, there appears to be a trend towards more spouses considering their sexual relationship with their husbands/wives to be more enjoyable now than less enjoyable now compared to ten years ago, although this necessitates qualification because the majority of them reported no change in the level of their perceived enjoyment of sex in the same period. This latter trend suggests that the passage of time had no impact on the degree of sexual enjoyment experienced by them. These results are somewhat different to those of Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975), where among their middle-aged men and women, attitudes towards degree of enjoyment derived from the sexual relationship, were no longer consistently positive (see chapter 3 section 3.1.8 and chapter 1 section 2.1.1).

Fourthly, the finding that slightly over thirty percent of the male respondents worried that they were not able to get as sexually excited now as they could five years ago, suggests that anxiety about sexual potency is not a pervasive phenomenon among the majority of them. This is contrary to the views of Masters and Johnson (1966 cited in Neugarten, 1968, p.175), who report that after age 50, the incidence of sexual inadequacy increases dramatically in men (see chapter 3 section 3.1.8 and chapter 1 section 2.1.1).

4.1.8 Female attitudes to menopause

4.1.8.1 Introduction

In this section, some conclusions are drawn about the findings concerning the attitudes of middle-aged women towards the menopause from the perspectives of general emotional impact, children, and the spousal relationship (see chapter 3 section 3.1.9).

4.1.8.2 General emotional impact

There are a variety of attitudes concerning the general emotional impact of the menopause on middle-aged women because the majority of them feel relieved when their periods come to an end in later life, a minority of them feel upset about it, and a minority of them express indecisive attitudes. The finding that the majority of them feel this way, is similar to the attitudes expressed by a number of women in the Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963) and the Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten and Datan, 1974, p.602) studies, who welcomed the menopause as a relief from menstruation. The finding that a minority of them would feel upset about it, is similar to previous research findings, viz. Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963) and Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten & Datan, 1974, p.602), which indicate that only a minority of women seem to suffer anxiety about the menopause (see chapter 3 section 3.1.9 and chapter 1 section 3.1).

In sum, the majority of middle-aged women believe that the menopause

has no psychological significance for them from the vantage point of general emotional impact, while a minority of them have negative attitudes about it.

4.1.8.3 The termination of a woman's reproductive capacity and the menopause

There are a range of attitudes relating to the inability of middle-aged women to conceive children once their periods cessate in later life because the majority of them feel relieved about it, a minority of them feel unhappy about it, and a minority of them express indecisive attitudes. The finding that the majority of them feel this way, is contrary to the views of a number of theorists, viz. Cavan (1958), Chilman (1968), Lidz (1968) and Notman (1978), who contend that the middle-aged mother is likely to regret, become depressed, or at least be ambivalent about, her declining, or terminated reproductive capacity. The above finding, is however, similar to earlier research findings by Kraines and Wood (1965 cited in Neugarten and Datan, 1974, pp. 602-603), who found that the majority of women were relieved about no longer being able to bear children (see chapter 3 section 3.1.9 and chapter 1 section 3.1.5).

In conclusion, only a minority of middle-aged women are negatively affected by their anticipated or actual inability to reproduce.

4.1.8.4 Menopause and Marriage

There are various attitudes concerning the impact of the menopause

on the marital relationship of middle-aged women because of the following: firstly, the majority of them 87.5% feel that their husbands' feelings of affection towards them will remain the same once their periods terminate in later life, and secondly, an equal number of them 6.3% feel that their husbands will feel more loving towards them or less loving towards them during the same period. The latter findings are antithetical to the finding by Crawford and Hooper (1973), who demonstrated that a postparental woman's perception of her marital relationship, is independent of her menopausal status and symptoms.

In conclusion, the menopause appears to have minimal influence on the marital relationship at middle age.

4.1.8.5 Sexuality and the menopause

There are a range of attitudes relating to the extent to which wives feel that their husbands will find them sexually attractive when they are no longer able to have their periods in the middle years of their lives because the majority of them feel that they will still find them sexually attractive, a minority of them expressed indecisive attitudes, and one wife felt that her husband will be much less sexually interested in her. The finding that the majority of them felt this way, is contrary to the theories of Chilman (1968) and Lidz (1968), who contend that men and women believe that the woman loses her sexual responsiveness and ability to enjoy sex with the menopause and this may cause a woman to feel that she will become an unattractive old girl whose husband may properly seek sexual satis-

faction elsewhere. Chilman speculates further that along with the physiological changes associated with the start (or middle or end) of the menopause, she also may feel disturbed lest she may no longer be sexually attractive as a woman (see chapter 3 section 3.1.9 and chapter 1 section 3.1.3).

In conclusion, the majority of middle-aged wives believe that the menopause does not have a negative influence on the degree to which their husbands are sexually attracted to them.

4.1.9 The work career

The findings that the majority of respondents enjoyed their job far more now than they did when they were younger men/women, and did not feel hopeless because there was no chance for them to improve their positions at their place of work in the future, is contrary to the findings and views of a number of researchers and theorists, viz. Bossard and Boll (1955), Neugarten (1966, 1979), Peterson (1968), Lowenthal and Chiriboga (1972), Farrell et al. (1975 cited in Gutmann, 1976, p.42), Strickler (1975), Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga and Associates (1975), Grunebaum (1979) and Collin (1979), who contend the following: firstly, job mobility decreases with age, i.e. the opportunity for career advancement for persons within work organizations, generally decreases with age, because such organizations tend to favour the young person over the middle-aged individual when making promotions within their concerns, and secondly, many men experience fears about having reached a plateau in their careers. Thus, they are often unhappy in the middle years because

of their occupational frustrations, concerns and problems (see chapter 3 section 3.1.10 and chapter 1 sections 8 and 8.1).

In conclusion, there are contradictory findings regarding the degree of enjoyment, success, and opportunity for future career advancement men and women obtain from their jobs or careers at middle age, i.e. the majority of them experience increasing enjoyment, success, and opportunity for future career advancement, while a minority of them experience diminishing enjoyment, a lack of success, and lack of opportunity for future career advancement (see chapter 3 section 3.1.10).

4.1.10 Attitudes towards the past

It can be concluded that the majority of respondents have a positive preoccupation with the past, i.e. the majority of them felt pleased with what they did with their lives when they were younger, and did not worry about the mistakes which they made when they were younger, which suggests that they are socially and psychologically "healthy", while a minority of them had a negative preoccupation with the past, i.e., a minority of them did not feel pleased with what they did with their lives when they were younger, and worried about the mistakes which they made when they were younger, which suggests that they are in some social or psychological sense less "healthy" (see chapter 3 section 3.1.11 and chapter 1 section 7.1, viz. Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975).

4.1.11 Attitudes towards the future

It can be concluded that the majority of respondents have a positive preoccupation with the future, i.e. they disagreed with the statement that they were not as hopeful now as they used to be about their future, and looked forward with pleasure to their future, which suggests that they are socially and psychologically "healthy" because they have a positive perception of the future, while a minority of them have a negative preoccupation with the future, i.e. they agreed with the statement that they were not as hopeful now as they used to be about their future, and did not look forward with pleasure to their future, which suggests that they are socially and psychologically maladjusted because they have a more limited perspective on the future (see chapter 3 section 3.1.12 and chapter 1 section 7.1, viz. Lowenthal, Thurnher, Chiriboga & Associates, 1975).

4.1.12 Confrontation with death

Middle-aged respondents express divided attitudes towards the issue of confrontation with death because of the following: firstly, 50% of them found it easy to think about their own deaths, and 52.8% of them did not worry that the time which they still had left to live was shorter now than it was when they were younger, secondly, 41.5% of them found it difficult to think about their own deaths, and 45.8% of them worried that the time which they still had left to live was shorter now than it was when they were younger. The former respondents' attitudes indicate that they have satisfied one of the major psychological tasks for middle age, viz. resignation and

acceptance of death (see Brim, 1976; Nadelson, Polonsky & Mathews, 1979 chapter 1 section 5). The latter respondents' attitudes support the views of a number of theorists, viz. Jacques, (1965 cited in Brim, 1976, p.5); Marmor, 1968 & Gutmann, 1976), who contend that the individual is confronted with his own death at middle age. He is no longer able to deny his own mortality, and as a consequence, there is a marked increase in "existential anxiety", which centres on fear of disintegration, stasis and separation (Becker, (1973 cited in Chew, 1976, p.5); Lifton 1973) (see chapter 1 section 5 and chapter 3 section 3.1.13).

In conclusion, it appears that middle-aged subjects have contrasting attitudes about the time which they still have left to live.

4.1.13 Rehearsal for widowhood

It can be concluded that middle-aged women undergo a rehearsal for widowhood more frequently than middle-aged men. This finding concurs with the views of a number of theorists, viz. Neugarten, Wood, Kraines and Loomis (1963), Neugarten (1966, 1970, 1979) and Neugarten and Datan (1974), who maintain that women are more concerned about the body-monitoring of their husbands than of themselves (see chapter 3 section 3.1.14 and chapter 1 section 4).

4.1.14 The marital relationship

The findings that the majority of spouses felt that the anticipated or actual departure of their children from the home will have a

positive influence on their marital relationship, i.e. the majority of them felt that when their children leave home to live on their own, their husbands/wives and them will get closer to each other than they are now, and did not feel that they would have little in common with one another, is contraposed to the findings and theories of a number of researchers and theorists, viz. Fried and Stern (1948), Cavan (1958), Bossard and Boll (1955), Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960), Deutscher (1964), Lidz (1968), Le Shan (1973), Neugar-ten and Datan (1974), Lurie (1974) and Pincus and Dare (1977), who suggest that there appears to be a deterioration in some middle-age marriage relationships, which follows after the departure of chil-dren from the home. It is also antithetical to the findings of a number of researchers who have associated the lowest levels of mari-tal satisfaction with two stages of the family life cycle, viz. the unlaunched stage and the empty-nest stage (see Bossard & Boll, 1955; Gurin, Veroff & Feld, 1960; Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Burr, 1970; Rol-lins & Feldman, 1970). Finally, it is contrary to the findings of a number of researchers, who have described the negative aspects of the middle-age marital relationship, using terms such as "conflict-habituated", "devitalized" and "passive-congenital", and have com-mented on the emotional poverty of middle-age marriage relationships (see Cuber & Harroff, 1965; Pineo, 1961; Masters & Johnson, 1974) (see chapter 3 section 3.1.15 and chapter 1 section 1.1.2).

The above findings are similar to the findings of a number of stu-dies, which indicated that the departure of children from the home has a positive effect on the degree of marital satisfaction experi-enced by the parents (see Axelson, 1960; Deutscher, 1964; Le Shan,

1973; Neugarten & Datan, 1974; Glenn, 1975 & Thurnher, 1976) (see chapter 3 section 3.1.15 and chapter 1 section 1.1.2).

In conclusion, the departure of children from the home has a predominantly positive effect on the degree of marital satisfaction experienced by the parents.

4.1.15 Overall conclusion

In light of the empirical evidence presented in this thesis concerning the following theoretical issues, viz. children are on-time or off-time with regard to major life events, impact of children leaving home on the parents, degree of parental involvement with children, parent-child relationships, ageing, sexuality, menopause, work career, and attitudes towards the past, future and death, it appears that the empty-nest stage of life represents a positive period of stability and growth for some empty-nest parents in the present study, on certain of the above-mentioned issues. On the other hand, it constitutes a negative crisis for the same and other parents, on different issues.

Those parents who perceived the empty-nest stage in predominantly positive terms, seem to resemble Neugarten's (1968) sample of influential middle-aged men and women who certainly saw advantages to their position in life. Being in the middle put pressures on them, but it also allowed them to serve as a bridge between the

generations. Being more mature, they recognised their special competencies.

I know now exactly what I can do best, and how to make the best use of my time... I know how to delegate authority, but also what decisions to make myself from troublesome people... All this is what makes the difference between me and a young man, and it's all this that gives me the advantage... (cited in Kerckhoff, 1976, p.7).

They also resemble Neugarten's (1968) study of 100 successful middle-aged persons who conclude:

These people feel that they effectively manipulate their social environments on the basis of prestige and expertise; and that they create many of their own rules and norms. There is a sense of increased control over impulse life.

The successful middle-aged person often describes himself as no longer "driven" but as now the "driver" - in short, in "command" (p.98).

In addition, creative literature points to the many advantages of being middle-aged. Poet Carolyn Wells compares this period favourably with those which precede and follow it:

Youth is a silly, vapid state; Old age with fears and ills is rife; This simple boon I beg of fate - a thousand years of middle life (cited in Kerckhoff, 1976, p.8).

Finally, Novelist Hervey Allen's character says,

Grow up as soon as you can. It pays. The only time you really live fully is from thirty to sixty... The young are slaves to dreams; the old servants of regrets. Only the middle-aged have all their five senses in the keeping of wits (Anthony Adverse) (cited in Kerckhoff, 1976, p.8).

Those parents in this study, who perceived the empty-nest stage in predominantly negative terms, are similar to the middle-aged parents described by Bardwick (1981), of fairly grown children, who confront their ageing because their bodies are changing and so have those of their children, confront their ageing in terms of sex and confront their ageing in terms of alternatives. The parents know as the children cannot that the great part of their children's lives lie in the future and the choices made rationally and the accidents of proximity all lie ahead. In fantasy the parent forgets his pain and embraces his jealousy.

Howard (1961) offers some sound advice to parents, who perceive the empty-nest stage as a negative crisis. He states that middle-aged men and women feel like failures when they aren't failures at all. They are merely using the wrong tape-measure. They look at themselves in their 40's and 50's and take their measures by the standard of childhood dreams and ambitions.

He states further that childhood dreams are wonderful for children, but when we keep clinging to them in our middle years, they can make failures of us all. This is not because childhood dreams are wrong - it is rather that we misunderstand their function.

Finally, he asks the question, "Does it matter if the goals of childhood are not attained?" The poet Robert Browning wrote:

Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's heaven for? (cited in Vedder, 1965, pp.199-200).

It appears apt to the writer to initially, conclude, this thesis with a rhetorical question posed by Hershberger (1981), who asks: "Why do people dread the second forty years?"

She goes on to state that society makes some dismal and restrictive assumptions about the second half of life which are not necessarily valid. She makes an appeal for a healthier approach to the later years; one which accepts only the constraints that are real and expects an interesting time ahead, with many opportunities for further growth.

She states further that the problem is that, in our culture, the prevailing perception of the postparental years is only as added time - a longer holding-on-time before decline and death. The empirical evidence presented in this thesis, generally conflicts with this above-mentioned cultural view.

The writer of the present thesis would like to echo Hershberger's sentiments, in making a call for a healthier and more sound approach to the postparental years, in view of the findings of the present study.

It seems fitting to finally, conclude, this thesis with "A Prayer for the Middle-Aged", authorship unknown, which is hereby reproduced:

Lord, thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older and will some day be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it at all, but thou knowest, Lord that I want a few friends at the end. Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask grace enough to enjoy the tales of another's pains, but help me to endure them with patience. I dare not ask for improved memory, but for growing humility and less cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet, I do not want to be a saint - some of them are so hard to live with - but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people. Give me the grace to tell them so. Amen (cited in Vedder, 1965, p.x).

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APPENDICES

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIALFAMILY ATTITUDE SURVEY (FAS)1983/1984 RHODES UNIVERSITYPART 1 : BASIC INFORMATION

1.

--	--	--	--	--

 Code number of respondent

2.

--

 Sex

Key: 1. Female
2. Male

3.

Day	Month	Year

 Date of birth

4.

Age (Years)

5.

--

 Cultural group

Key: 1. Indian
2. 'Coloured'
3. White

6.

--	--

 Code number of interviewer

7.

Day	Month	Year

 Interview date

8a.

Std		
-----	--	--

 Education: School (Last standard passed at school)
For example: Std 8, 9, 10

8b.

--	--

 Completed years after school: (Number of years completed if any) For example: respondent has completed one, two, or more years of after school education

9.

--

 Language: Record the first language of the respondent using the following convention: 1 = Afrikaans, 2 = English, 3 = Tamil, 4 = Gujerati, 5 = Urdu.

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)PART 2 : BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATIONTABLE 1

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENT'S CHILD/CHILDREN IN DESCENDING
ORDER FROM THE ELDEST CHILD TO THE YOUNGEST CHILD

Number of children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
a) Status of child												
b) Alive												
c) Age in years												
d) Age in years when deceased												
e) Sex												
f) Marital status												
g) Place of residence												
h) Employment status												
i) Last standard passed at school												
j) Completed years of education after school												
k) Number of children each of your children have												

I) Information about respondent's child/children (from the eldest to the youngest)

a) Status of child

Key: 1. Own/biological child
2. Stepchild
3. Adopted child

b) Alive

Key: 1. Alive
2. Deceased

c) Age in years

Instructions: Place the age in years of each living child in row c.

d) Age in years when child/children deceased

Instructions: Place the age in years when child/children deceased in row d (if applicable)

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

e) Sex
Key: 1. Female
2. Male

f) Marital status
Key: 1. Married
2. Not married (single)
3. Not married but living together for at least five years
4. Divorced
5. Remarried after divorced from husband/wife
6. Remarried after husband/wife deceased

g) Place of residence
Key: 1. Live in parent's home
2. Live away from parent's home

h) Employment status
Key: 1. At school
2. Student at college or university
3. In the army
4. Employed
5. Not employed
6. Other (specify)

.....
i) Last standard passed at school

Instructions: Place the last standard child/children passed at school in row i. For example: Std 8, 9, 10.

j) Completed years of education after school

Instructions: Place the number of years of education child/children has/have completed after school in row j (if applicable). For example: child/children has/have completed one, two, or more years of after school education.

k) Number of children each of your children have

Instructions: Place the number of children each of the respondent's children have in row k (if applicable)

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)TABLE 2INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENT'S SIBLINGS, THAT HIS/HER BROTHER/S
AND SISTER/S (FROM THE ELDEST TO THE YOUNGEST)

Number of siblings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
a) Status of siblings												
b) Alive												
c) Age in years												
d) Age in years when deceased												
e) Sex												
f) Marital status												
g) Employment status												
h) Last standard passed at school												
i) Completed years of education after school												

II) Information about the respondent's siblings, that is his or her brother/s and sister/s (from the eldest to the youngest)a) Status of siblings

- Key: 1. Sibling
2. Stepsibling
3. Adopted sibling

b) Alive

- Key: 1. Alive
2. Deceased

c) Age in years

Instructions: Place the age in years of each living sibling in row c

d) Age in years when deceased

Instructions: Place the age in years when siblings deceased in row d (if applicable)

e) Sex

- Key: 1. Female
2. Male

f) Marital status

- Key: 1. Married
2. Not married (single)
3. Not married but living together for at least five years
4. Divorced
5. Remarried after divorced from husband/wife
6. Remarried after husband/wife deceased

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

III Information about the respondent's parents

a) Status of parents

- Key: 1. Own/biological parent
 2. Guardian^a
 3. Stepparent^b
 4. Adoptive parent^c
 5. Orphaned
 6. Parent divorced

a Definition of guardian - a person who has the responsibility of looking after a child not his own, especially after the parent's death.

b Definition of stepparent - the person to whom one's father or mother has been remarried

c Definition of adoptive parent - a person who takes a child into his family as a relation for ever and to take on the full responsibilities in law of the parent

b) Alive

- Key: 1. Alive
 2. Deceased

c) Age in years

Instructions: Place the age in years of each living parent in row c.

d) Age in years when parent/parents deceased

Instructions: Place the age in years when first parent deceased in row d (if applicable)

e) Age of respondent when first parent deceased

Instructions: Place the age in years when first parent deceased in row e (if applicable)

f) Age of respondent when second parent deceased

Instructions: Place the age in years when second parent deceased in row f (if applicable)

g) Sex

- Key: 1. Female
 2. Male

h) Employment status

- Key: 1. At school
 2. Student at college or university
 3. In the army
 4. Employed
 5. Not employed
 6. Other (specify)

i) Last standard passed at school

Instructions: Place the last standard parent/parents passed at school in row j. For example: Std 8, 9, 10

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

j) Completed years of education after school

Instructions: Place the number of years of education parent/parents has/have/had completed after school in row k (if applicable). For example: parent/parents has/have/had completed one, two or more years of after school education.

IV) Information about the respondent's marital status

a) How many times have you been married?

Obtain from respondent year/s when previous marriage/s ended:
Obtain from respondent reason/s why previous marriage/s ended:

- Key: 1. Divorce
 - 2. Husband/wife deceased
- Age in years of respondent when divorced from husband/wife or when husband/wife deceased.

V) Occupational information

a) Occupation of husband

.....

.....

(a detailed job description must be sought)

Occupational codes	Occupation	Socio-economic index, 1950
1. <input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	2. <input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	3. <input style="width: 60px; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

b) Is the wife employed?

- Key: 1. Not employed
- 2. Employed mornings/afternoons
- 3. Employed full day

c) Occupation of wife

.....

.....

(a detailed job description must be sought)

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)d) Income of husband per month

less than R50	1	50 - 99	2	100 - 149	3	150 - 199	4
200 - 249	5	250 - 299	6	300 - 349	7	350 - 399	8
400 - 449	9	450 - 499	10	500 - 549	11	550 - 599	12
600 - 649	13	650 - 699	14	700 - 749	15	750 - 799	16
800 - 849	17	850 - 899	18	900 - 949	19	950 - 999	20
1000 - 1049	21	1050 - 1099	22	1100 - 1149	23	1150 - 1199	24
1200 and more	25						

e) Total number of motor vehicles

- Key:
0. No motor vehicle
 1. One motor vehicle
 2. Two motor vehicles
 3. Three or more motor vehicles

PART 3 : ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIREOpen-ended questions about the respondent's family of origin, that is the respondent's family before he/she was married

1.
 - i) (From the eldest to the youngest) Tell me what each of your brother/s is/was like?
 - ii) (From the eldest to the youngest) Tell me what each of your sister/s is/was like?
 - iii) To which brother or sister do/did you feel closest?
 - iv) To which brother or sister do/did you feel least close?
2.
 - i) Do you think you are more like your mother or your father?
 - ii) In what way?
3. Who do/did you usually feel closer to most of the time your mother or your father?

Open-ended questions about the respondent's family of procreation, that is the respondent's family when he/she was married

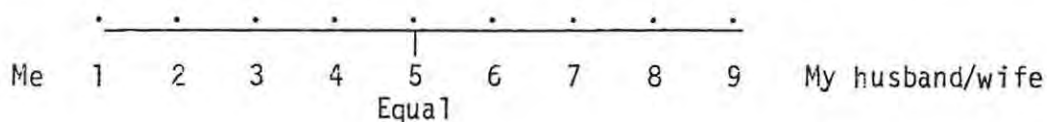
4.
 - i) Tell me what your wife/husband is like?
 - ii) What would you say were her/his major strengths?
 - iii) What would you say were her/his weak points?
 - iv) How do you think your wife/husband would describe you?

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

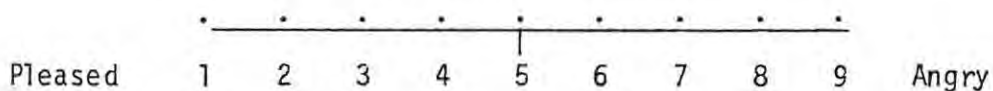
- v) How would you describe your relationship?
- vi) Who would you say is "boss" in your family?
5. i) (From the eldest to the youngest) Tell me what your children are like?
- ii) (For each child ask) What would you say were his/her strong points?
- iii) (For each child ask) What would you say were his/her weak points?
- iv) (From the eldest to the youngest) How would you describe your relationship with _____?
- v) With which of your children do you get along best? Why?
- vi) With which do you have the most problems? Why?

Bipolar Questions (Use boards)

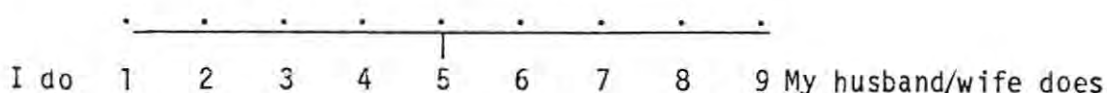
6. i) If your child/children want advice on something who does/do he/she/they go to more often you or your husband/wife?



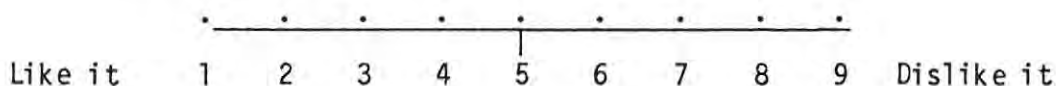
- ii) How do you feel about this?



7. i) In your family who has more say in how your child/children should behave himself/herself/themselves you or your husband/wife?

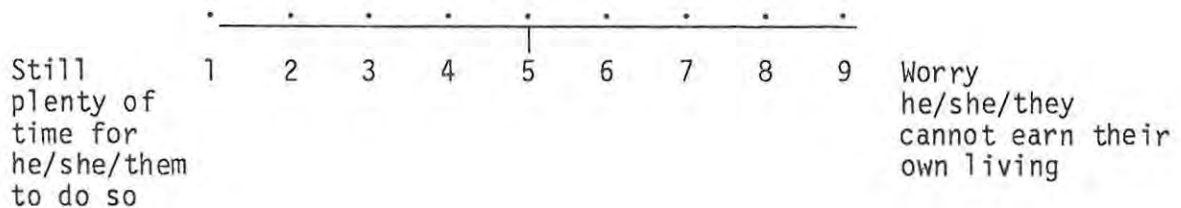


- ii) How do you feel about this?

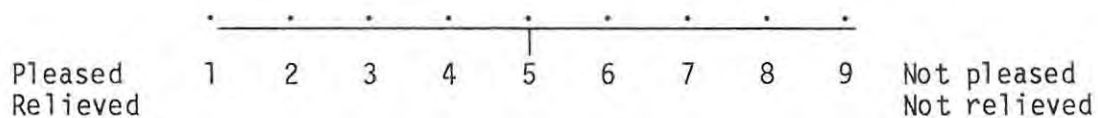


Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

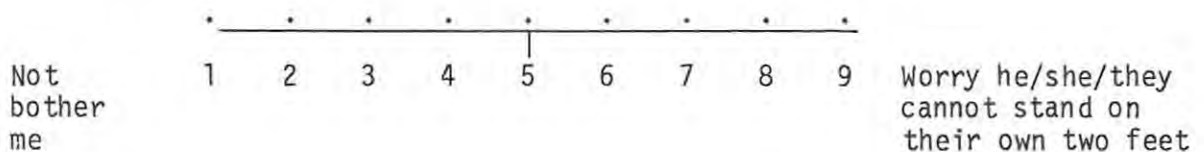
8. How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were aged between twenty-five and thirty years of age and had not yet settled down properly in his/her their job/s?



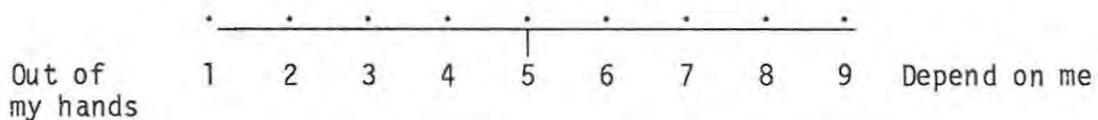
9. Does a mother/father like you feel pleased when your child/children start leaving home to live on his/her/their own?



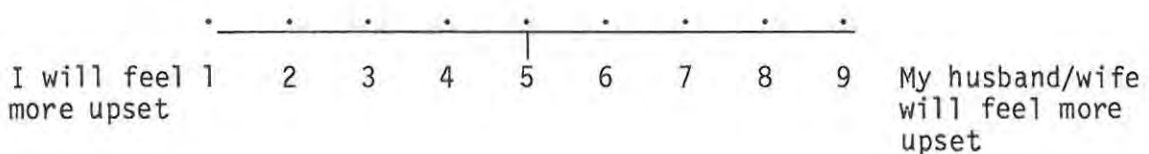
10. How would a mother/father like you feel if your child/children was/were in his/her/their middle to late twenties and was/were still staying at home?



11. Do you feel that what happens to your child/children in his/her/their future life/lives will for the most part depend largely on you?



12. Who do you think will be more upset when all your child/ children has/have left home to live on his/her/their own, you or your husband/wife?



Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

19. In general as you get older how do you find yourself feeling?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Stronger										Weaker
Happier										Unhappier
More lively										More depressed

20. Do you feel pleased with the condition of your body?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
My body										My body
is in										is in
good shape										bad shape

21. How interested are you in sex now compared to ten years ago?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Much										Much
more					same					less
now										now

22. How important is your sexual relationship with your husband/wife now compared with the time when you were a young married couple?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Much more										Much less
important					same					important
now										now

23. How enjoyable do you find your sexual relationship with your husband/wife now compared to ten years ago?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
More										Less
enjoyable					same					enjoyable

VI) Menopausal status (women only) Key: 1. 'Premenopausal' means that the respondent's menstrual pattern has not changed - not become (more) irregular during the last year.

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

2. 'Menopausal' means that her menstrual pattern in the last year has become (more irregular) or that menstruation appears to have stopped altogether, although she has had at least one menstrual bleeding.
3. 'Postmenopausal' refers to those women whose last menstrual bleeding occurred more than one year ago.
4. Those women who have had a hysterectomy.

24. How do women like you feel when your periods come to an end in later life? (WOMEN ONLY)

.

Relieved 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Upset

25. How do women like you feel when you are no longer able to have a child/children once your periods have stopped in later life? (WOMEN ONLY)

.

Relieved 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Unhappy

26. How loving will/did your husband feel towards you when you are/were no longer able to have your periods? (WOMEN ONLY)

.

Will/did feel more loving towards me 1 2 3 4 5 same 6 7 8 9 Will/did feel less loving towards me

27. i) Do/did wives like you feel that your husbands will/would not find you sexually attractive when you are/were no longer able to have your periods in the middle years of your life?

.

Will/still find/found me sexually attractive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Will be/was much less sexually interested in me

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

ii) How do/did you feel about this?

.

Not 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Worried
worried

Attitude Statements (Very strongly disagree to very strongly agree)

28. I enjoy my job far more now than I did when I was younger man/woman (employed men and women only).
29. Now that my child/children is/are grown-up I feel that it is important that I do not tell him/her/them what to do now as much as I used to when he/she/they was/were younger.
30. It is difficult for me to accept that I am getting older.
31. I am pleased with what I did with my life when I was younger.
32. It is easy for me to think about my own death.
33. I worry that I am not able to get as sexually excited now as I could five years ago.
34. I feel hopeless because there is no chance for me to improve my position at my place of work in the future (employed men and women only).
35. When my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own my husband/wife and I will get closer to each other than we are now.
36. My health means more to me now than it used to.
37. I am not as hopeful now as I used to be about my future.

Family Attitude Survey (FAS)

38. I worry that the time which I still have left to live is shorter now than it was when I was younger.
39. I feel that I am a better judge of when my child/children should get married than he/she/they is/are.
40. I worry about the mistakes which I made when I was younger.
41. I sometimes think about what it will be like for me one day when my husband/wife is no longer living.
42. I must say that it is hard for me to accept that my child/children is/are grown-up now and can care for himself/herself/themselves without needing so much of my help as he/she/they used to.
43. I look forward with pleasure to my future.
44. I feel disappointed because I have an unhappy relationship with some of my child/children.
45. When my child/children leave home to live on his/her/their own my husband/wife and I will have little in common.
46. I feel proud that my child/children is/are grown-up now and he/she/they can care for himself/herself/themselves without me needing to give him/her/them so much help as I used to.
47. Although my child/children is/are grown-up I will tell him/her/them what to do now as much as I used to when he/she/they was/were younger.

PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT

RHODES UNIVERSITY • GRAHAMSTOWN

P.O. Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140 South Africa

Telegrams 'Rhodescol' Telex 74 7227 Telephone (0461) 2219



Subject Committee Psychology
Faculty of Arts

Dear Mr and Mrs

There is growing interest among developmental psychologists in the relationships that manifest themselves in families when husband and wife are considered to be middle-aged. In order to gain a more scientific understanding of these relationships, we are asking a number of families to participate in a special research study.

We are writing to ask for your co-operation. Your family's name was selected from a list of names obtained from the principal of _____ High School and is one of many selected from a cross-section of families whose youngest children are about to matriculate this year.

For the purposes of our research we consider a husband and wife to be middle-aged when their youngest child is about to matriculate.

The study requires that we interview both you and your husband/wife separately. On these occasions myself or a fellow research worker would like to visit you. These meetings can be arranged at a time which is convenient for each of you, including the evening and weekends.

Both your husband/wife and yourself will be asked about your attitudes towards middle-age. You will also be asked to tell a story about a picture shown to you by the interviewer. Finally you will both be asked to describe yourselves using words given to you by the interviewer.

Either myself or a fellow research worker will contact you to arrange a meeting. If either of you have any questions about the study please feel free to contact me at Rhodes (tel. (0461) 6226 (Grahamstown) or Port Elizabeth (041) 33-2362. We think you will find participating will be an interesting experience and will also be a useful contribution to the future understanding of South African families.

Yours sincerely

Mr E. Kaplan
Masters Student in Psychology

Dr D.J.A. Edwards
Senior Lecturer
Department of Psychology
Rhodes University

LETTER RECEIVED FROM ONE OF THE EMPTY-NEST PARENTS EXPRESSING HIS
WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PRESENT STUDY

E. S. Page
Psychiatric Dept
Fisons Hall
Rhees University
24 March 1954

Mr E. Kephner
Psychology Department
Rhees University
Cranham, W. Va.

Dear Mr Kephner,

Your letter dated the 24 February was received
on the 22 March.

The description of a middle aged couple no
longer applies to my wife and myself as our
youngest child matriculated at Collegiate last
year and is a student at Rhees University
at present.

My age on my next birthday will be 56
years.

If we still comply with the requirements you
have set, my wife and I will be willing to
assist you by participating in your research study.

Yours sincerely
E. S. Page

PUBLICITY OBTAINED FOR THIS RESEARCH IN ROBIN STEVENSON'S
EVENING-POST COLUMN "IT'S ALL HAPPENING", ON SEPTEMBER, 19, 1983

Conference will shoot PE into centre of picture

A CONFERENCE that will put Port Elizabeth in the centre of the picture of the Southern Africa scene will be held in the Skyroof at the Marine Hotel from Friday, October 7, to Wednesday, October 12. The occasion is the 29th congress of the Photographic Society of Southern Africa.

The final programme has been drawn up by the PE Camera Club. On Friday, October 7, there will be registration and audio-visual judging followed by a braai at the Seaview Game Park.

Mr Garth Robertson will welcome the delegates on the Saturday. Mr Colin Urquhart, 1982 Press Photographer of the Year, will lecture on photo journalism. Other speakers are Mr Bruce Mann on make-up, Dr B J F Laubscher on psychic phenomena and Mr Rob Owen on nudes.

Sunday involves a visit to the Oceanarium complex, lunch, a portraiture workshop and "The Creation", an audio-visual presentation by Mr Barrie Wilkins.

An outing to Yellowwoods on the Apple Express takes place on Monday.

Tuesday's lectures are on macro photography by Mr Terry Carew, modern trends by Mr Ian Difford, mounting by Mr Ron Hall and judging by Mr Wilkins. A audio-visual competition will also be held.

Wednesday starts with a champagne breakfast on the beach. Lectures are on printing by Mr Billy Fletcher and Mr Owen, creative use of colour by Mr Robertson, derivations by Mr Robertson and Mr Wilkins and nature by Mr Wilkins. The honours and awards banquet ends the congress.

□ □ □

THE Eastern Cape region of the Red Cross spent R2,7 million on activities, R2 million on maintenance of services and R700 000 on capital projects during the past year, according to its annual report. The surplus for the year amounts to R63 542. The annual meeting will be held at 8pm tomorrow in Red Cross House.

The regional chairman, Mr G S Walton, says in the report the society is faced with ever-increasing costs and every effort is being made to manage its affairs efficiently and economically.

□ □ □

Mr ERNEST KAPLAN, who is working on a MA degree in psychology at Rhodes University, is conducting family research among middle-aged couples whose youngest child is about to matriculate this year. It is a cross-cultural study of Indian, white and coloured couples who fall into this category.

If they would like to participate in this study, please



It's All
Happening ...
Just tell
ROBIN
STEVENSON

contact Mr Kaplan at the Rhodes Psychology Department ☎ 0461-6226 Ext 9 during office hours from tomorrow.

□ □ □

THE inaugural meeting to form an organisation of parents of drug-addicted children will be held at 7.30 tonight in the St John's Methodist Church Hall in Havelock Street, Central.

This has been arranged by Miss C van der Lugt, a social worker at the PE branch of the SA National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (Sanca).

She says the group will have a supporting rather than rehabilitative role and will be the first of its kind in Port Elizabeth. Sanca will take part in an advisory capacity only while members of the group will be in control.

□ □ □

IF you would like to learn more about the star that we travel round, come to the monthly meeting of the PE People's Observatory Society at 7.45 tonight in the observatory in Macfarlane Road off Westview Drive. Mr Dieter Dippisch will talk on the sun.

The chairman, Mr Dave Jesson, will continue his series on the constellations. Should you wish to do some star gazing yourself, the observatory is open to the public at 8pm on the first and third Wednesdays of the month.

□ □ □

THE monthly meeting of the EP Writers' Club will be held at eight o'clock tonight in the Teachers' Centre, Belmont Terrace, Central. You can park in the grounds. The competition for tonight is an article of 200 words on "Should animals be allowed in flats?" Newcomers are welcome.

□ □ □

EAST LONDONERS can listen to young musicians perform in a schools concert in the Central Library at seven o'clock tonight. If the musical festival in April and May is anything to go by, you can look forward to a varied and entertaining programme.

Something happening in your area? If it interests you, it will interest others. Just phone our man in the middle, Robin Stevenson, at 523480, or write to him at "It's All Happening", Box 1121, Port Elizabeth, 6000.



LANDMARK FOR TRANSLATION

A visit to Rhodes University by a leading translator, Professor Wolfram Wilss, has been hailed as a landmark for translation in South Africa. Professor Wilss, author of many important writings on translation theory, is the head of the Department of Applied Linguistics, Translation and Interpreting at the University of Saarland, Saarbrücken, West Germany. He is also a member of the prestigious International Committee of Universities Training Translators and Interpreters (CIVTI) and Chairman of the Scientific Commission on Translation and Interpreting of AILA, the Association Internationale de la Linguistique Appliquée.

He was invited to Grahamstown by Mr Isadore Pinchuck, course director of the Rhodes University Translation Division. Mr Pinchuck said staff and students had shown great interest in Professor Wilss's visit. He felt the visit would make a significant impact on translation in South Africa, particularly at a time when the South African Institute of Translators and Interpreters is working towards official recognition of the professional status of translators and interpreters in the Republic.

In introducing Professor Wilss at a public lecture on September 6, the head of the Rhodes Department of Linguistics and English Language, Professor William Branford said that in Europe translating and interpreting were much more securely established both in the intellectual and professional sense than they were in Africa, or the rest of the English-speaking world. "We are sure that the visit of Professor Wilss will be a major contribution to South African thinking about translation - both the theory and practice of translation on one hand and the organization and status of the translator's profession on the other," he said.

Professor Wilss lectured on the significance of translating and interpreting as a means of international communication. He also delivered a lecture at the Computer Science Department on machine translation.

Professor Wilss is particularly interested in establishing and consolidating international links between universities training translators and interpreters, and his visit is expected to provide a great stimulus to universities training translators.

GUIDANCE SYMPOSIUM AT RHODES

A symposium aimed at assisting school personnel in guiding senior pupils to a university education was held at Rhodes University recently. The one-day symposium, organized by Mr Mervyn Wetmore, the Student Adviser, was the third to be held at Rhodes, and more

Page Two

than 20 teacher-psychologists, principals and school guidance personnel attended.

Speakers at the symposium included Rhodes Vice-Chancellor, Dr Derek Henderson, Deans of the university faculties and academics from a number of departments. Entitled "After school what ... Preparing for University education", the symposium also gave information on the general rules governing degrees in the various faculties.

Mr Wetmore feels guidance for school leavers is crucial. "It's my experience that too many students arrive at university not knowing what course to take. If senior pupils were encouraged to explore the courses on offer at university they would be better prepared to make a positive start and a success of their university careers," he said. A host of queries had to be explained. "Which university, how do I apply, which degree, what subjects, what entrance qualifications are necessary, how will I finance my studies - these are all questions which have to be answered before a pupil can make a final decision".

Previous symposia of this nature at Rhodes have focused on career education and career development.

LECTURER VISITS THE USA

A Political Studies lecturer from Rhodes University, Mr Mervyn Frost, left for a five-week stay in America, sponsored by the United States-South Africa Leader Exchange Programme (USSALEP), last month. Mr Frost is one of seven young South African academics who will be making the trip. Whilst in America the group will meet political, social and cultural leaders at various centres.

The basic aim underlying the tour is for the academics to meet and get to know the people and politics of America. Among those they may meet are the members of various congressional committees, members of the Black Caucus, state governors, legislators and trade unionists. They will also visit various universities, cultural centres and community associations, and a bit of light relief at Disneyland is also a possibility.

USSALEP, founded in 1958, is an association of Americans and South Africans who believe in fostering and improving human dignity in both societies. The association is funded by private donors, and so is not committed to any particular government or group. Whilst USSALEP members may have conflicting political preferences, they all subscribe to the view that human dignity can best be served by keeping the lines of communication open, both within and between the two societies.

HISTORIC PRESS FOR ART SCHOOL

The army was called in; part of a wall was knocked down - all to install the Rhodes Fine Arts department's latest acquisition, an old three-ton printing press. The press, more than 70 years old, was donated to Rhodes by the proprietor and editor of the Somerset Budget, Mr Albert van der Walt. "It's such a marvellous piece of

Page Three

machinery that I couldn't let it go to scrap, so I decided to donate it for educational purposes", he said.

Associate Professor in the Fine Arts Department, Jos Nell, and junior lecturer, Mr Dominic Thorburn, have stripped and modified the old press to be used for etching, wood-block printing, and lino cuts.

There are no dates on the press which was built in Otney, England, by T Payne and Sons, so its exact age is unknown. Mr van der Walt said his father, Mr P J van der Walt, had bought the machine second-hand from the Fort Beaufort Advocate in 1950. "So it was old even then. I have been told it's one of the first printing presses to be bought after the installation of electricity in Fort Beaufort", he said.

Mr van der Walt originally donated the machine to the Port Elizabeth Technikon but, being on the third floor of a building and given the bulk and weight of the press, they had to refuse. So the press came to Rhodes. Loading the press at Somerset East was no problem. "We have a special loading bay here, so we simply rolled the press on pipes onto the lorry", explained Mr van der Walt.

In Grahamstown the problem was more complicated. "Mr van der Walt phoned me and said the press would be arriving in an hour's time", said Professor Nell. "But no one had the machinery to offload the three-ton press. Then somebody suggested the army. I phoned the Commandant at the military base and he said he would be very happy to assist.

Entirely free of charge, the army brought one of its huge cranes along and offloaded the press right outside the department's door. It was obvious the press was too big to fit inside, so workmen had to knock a portion of the wall down. While they were doing that, Mr Thorburn and I stripped the press of its paper feeders and other unnecessary parts. We then rolled it into the room Egyptian-style on wooden poles".

Professor Nell is very pleased with the press: "we've got a very strong piece of equipment that will last for a very long time".

THE EXPERIENCE OF MIDDLE AGE

Middle age is normally defined as the period from 45 to 50 years of age and in psychological theory it is associated with a number of personal issues and emotional reactions which accompany the typical events of this stage of life.

However Ernest Kaplan, a Psychology MA student at Rhodes has found that research using the age definition of middle age has tended to find mixed results because people may actually be going through very different types of experience depending on whether they are single, married or divorced, whether they have children and how old the children are and other similar factors.

Mr Kaplan is studying married couples whose last child is currently in matric, and is using this criterion as the basis for a thesis on the experience of middle age in three different South African cultural groups.

Page Four

"We know a lot about the psychology of the Western White", said Dr David Edwards, who is supervising the project, "but we can't assume that people in other race and language groups have exactly the same experiences. That's why cross-cultural studies of this sort are so important. At a time like this in the development of South Africa it is really important for information about the experience of people in different cultural groups to be gathered. This is fundamental if the different groups in this country are going to learn to understand each other and live together in harmony!"

One approach that Mr Kaplan will be using is to study his subjects' self-concept. This will enable him to discover the feelings they have about themselves, what aspects of themselves they like or dislike and what they view as their weaknesses and strengths, their successes and failures in life.

Mr Kaplan will also be investigating the quality of the marriage relationship at this stage of life, the levels of intimacy people experience, and whether one or other partner tends to dominate the other. He will also examine attitudes to work and to the fact that the children are leaving home, and the extent to which the couples are coming to terms with their own ageing process.

People differ a great deal among themselves, so Mr Kaplan expects to find that his couples will have a wide range of different ways of understanding themselves at this stage of life. This stage can give rise to quite different emotions. Some people feel relieved that their children have left home so they can take their own interests more fully, while others feel rather lost when they no longer have the familiar role of parent to occupy them fully. This is also a stage in life where some people who have achieved the goals they worked hard for in their younger years begin to question whether these achievements are really giving them the sort of deep satisfaction they are looking for. These experiences are bound to be affected by the cultural background in which people live, and this is thus a fertile ground for cross-cultural psychological research of this nature.



NEIL PAPENFUS
Director

LIST OF PLATES

PLATE 2.1

PERSPEX SCALES DEPICTING ATTITUDE INDEX STATEMENTS

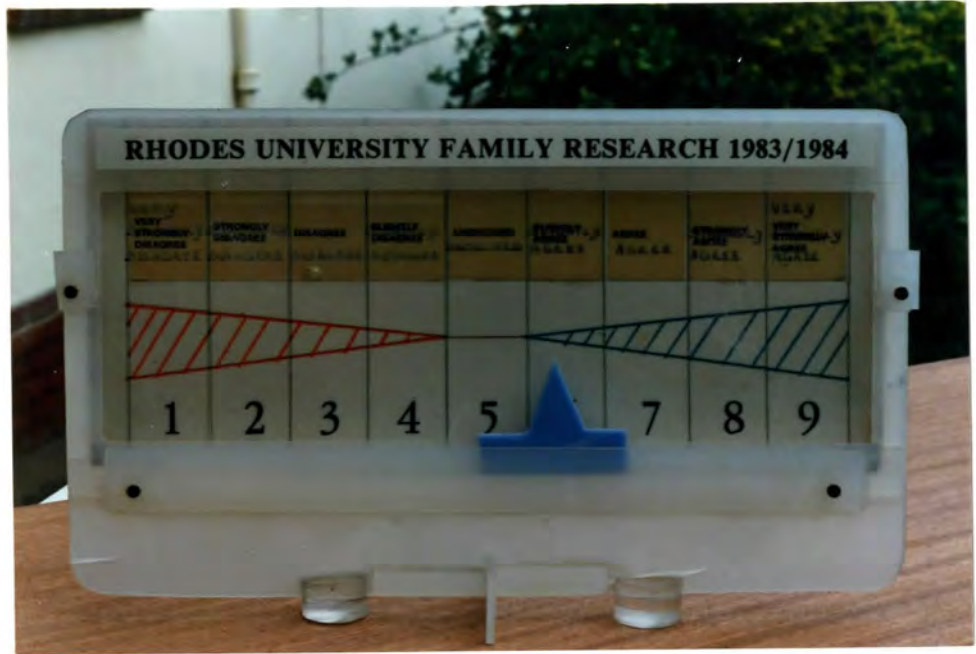


PLATE 2.2

PERSPEX SCALES DEPICTING MODIFIED BIPOLAR OPPOSITES

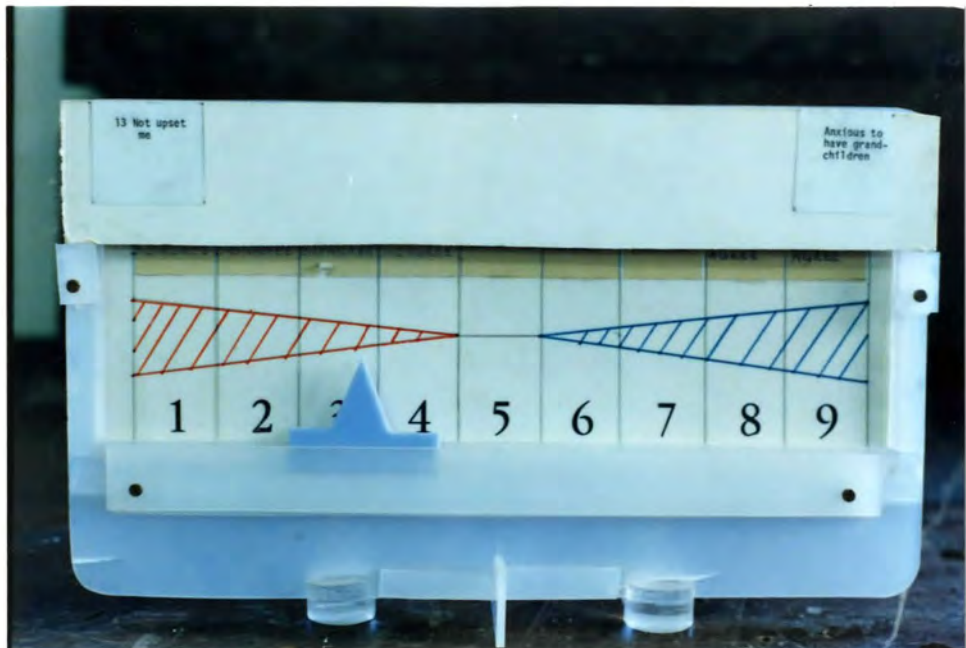


PLATE 2.3 Photograph of Researcher and accompanying Herald newspaper article.

EASTERN PROVINCE HERALD, WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1983

Preparing thesis



Mr Ernest Kaplan. . . looking for middle-aged subjects to assist in his work.

Middle-aged subjects sought by researcher

HERALD REPORTER

MIDDLE age is normally defined as the period from 45 to 50 years of age, but a researcher from Rhodes University in Grahamstown has changed this period for the purposes of his research to when the youngest child in the family matriculates.

Mr Ernest Kaplan, who is working on an MA thesis in psychology on "The middle-age stage of life: a comparison cross-cultural study of men and women facing a transition", said it was unusual to use the period he had chosen as middle age but past research based on the 45 to 50 age group had been found to be unreliable.

Mr Kaplan, who is working under supervision of Dr David Edwards of Rhodes, said very little research had been done in this field in South Africa.

He started his MA degree in February this year and had up to now been involved in compiling the outlines and details according to which the project would be done.

But for the next stage of his research Mr Kaplan needs intact families who are middle-aged people according to the definition he is using for this project.

In this study Mr Kaplan will concentrate on inter-generation relationships, self-concept, the nature of the marital relationship of middle-aged people, how middle-aged people feel towards this stage of life, how they view ageing, how they feel about their bodies and the emptiness of this stage of life.

He will also investigate family authority to determine which of the two partners in a marital relationship is dominant in middle-age and how the other spouse feels about the dominance of the partner.

Mr Kaplan said the aim of research on the inter-generation relationships of middle-age people was to find out how middle-age people perceive different relationships with their parents, their children and their brothers and sisters.

Self-concept has been included and will be analysed because Mr Kaplan wants to ascertain whether middle aged men and women perceive themselves in different terms.

To determine this Mr Kaplan will use a personality adjective checklist in which the subjects will be asked to describe themselves.

People who are middle-aged in terms of Mr Kaplan's definition and are interested in being subjects for this study can telephone him after 6pm at 33 2362 in Port Elizabeth or at Grahamstown 0461-6226 extension 9 during office hours.

PLATE 2.4 Photograph of Researcher and accompanying Oosterlig newspaper article.

OOSTERLIG DONDERDAG 15 SEPTEMBER 1983



MNR. ERNEST KAPLAN, 'n student aan die Universiteit Rhodes, wat aan sy MA-graad in die sielkunde werk. Hier sit hy by van die toerusting wat hy vir sy navorsing oor middeljarige egpare gebruik.

Student soek middeljarige egpare se hulp met MA

'n STUDENT aan die Rhodes-universiteit wat aan sy MA-graad in die sielkunde werk, soek dringend na middeljarige egpare wat hom in sy navorsing oor middeljarige ouers sal help.

Mnr. Ernest Kaplan, wat die middeljarige definieer as dié stadium wanneer die jongste kind matriculeer, moet onderhoude met 90 sulke gesinne voer.

VERHOUDINGS

Hy wil die aard van verhoudings in die huwelik ondersoek en sal in hierdie ondersoek die man en vrou alleen ondervra.

In sy navorsing konsentreer hy hoof-

saaklik op hul gevoel teenoor hul beroep, gesinsheerskappy en intergenerasie-verhoudinge.

GRAHAMSTAD

Só het navorsing reeds bewys dat middeljarige mans meer geïnteresseerd raak in hul gesin as in hul werk, waar die teenoorgestelde vir vroue geld.

Middeljarige egpare wat belang stel om met die navorsing te help, kan mnr. Kaplan by 332362 ná ure bel of van Maandag by Grahamstad 6226 uitbreiding 9 gedurende kantoorure. Elke onderhoud duur sowat twee uur.

GROCOTT'S MAIL, FRIDAY 18 OCTOBER, 1983



Psychology Masters student Ernest Kaplan (right) is currently doing research in Grahamstown on how couples cope with the transitions of middle age. Picture: Ernest conducts his first interview with volunteers Leon and Juliet Reich.

Volunteer couples wanted for research on middle age

Ernest Kaplan, a masters degree student in the Rhodes Psychology department, is currently doing important research on how white, Indian and Coloured couples cope with middle age.

With planning on the research project now completed, Ernest is ready to begin interviewing Grahamstown couples and is urgently looking for volunteers.

For the purpose of his research, he has defined his "middle aged" subjects as married couples whose youngest child is in matric.

"We know a lot about the psychology of the western white person", said Ernest's supervisor, Dr David Edwards, "but we can't assume that people in other race and language groups have exactly the same experiences. That's why cross-cultural studies of this sort are so important".

At a time like this in the development of South Africa", Dr Edwards added, "it's really important for information about the experiences of people in different cultural groups to be gathered. This is fundamental if the different groups in this country are going to learn to understand each other and live together in harmony".

Amongst the things Ernest intends to investigate are self-image, the quality of the marriage relationship, levels of intimacy, domination, attitudes to work, and the extent to which couples manage to come to terms with the ageing process.

"People differ a great deal amongst themselves", Ernest commented. He expects his research to reveal that the couples interviewed have many different ways of coping with the difficult transitions of middle age.

Any middle aged couples who qualify and would like to participate should contact Ernest Kaplan at the Rhodes Psychology department - phone (0461) 6226 X9 during office hours. He will need about 90 couples.

PLATE 2.6 Photograph of Researcher and guinea-pig subject in Weekend Post article of October, 19, 1983.



With his mother, Mrs SYLVIA KAPLAN, as a guinea pig, Mr EARNEST KAPLAN demonstrates how he will interview middle-aged couples for his MA thesis in psychology. Mr Kaplan, of Rhodes University, is using psychologists' "scales" to determine how couples in this age group view their marital and family relationships. Mr Kaplan has defined "middle-aged" for this research as parents whose children will matriculate this year. Anyone interested in participating should phone him at ☎ 0461-6226, extension 9, during office hours on Monday.