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- 1 Erdman Palmore (ed.), *Normal Aging I: Reports from the Duke Longitudinal Studies, 1955–1969*, Duke University Press, North Carolina, 1971; *Normal Aging II: Reports from the Duke Longitudinal Studies, 1970–1973*, Duke University Press, North Carolina, 1975.

Janet Zollinger Giele, *Women in the Middle Years*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1982, 283 pp., no price, ISBN 0 471 09611 3.

The theme of Giele's book is best stated in the opening paragraph of the final chapter. She refers to Thomas Kuhn's thesis that science is not simply an accumulation of facts but is governed by central organising paradigms by which discrepant facts are either ignored or explained away. It is only when these facts become too numerous that a new paradigm replaces the old. Thus Giele argues that the organising paradigm that women's place is in the home can no longer be assumed. The book is organised to present the 'new' facts as well as hypotheses developed from them, all towards a new theory of women's adult development.

Themes for the book were originally developed from a series of seminars held in Boston, Massachusetts on the major dimensions of women's midlife experience. From those meetings emerged the content chapters of the book – women's health, psychological development and social roles – and a chapter on women's experience in a socialist country, the German Democratic Republic. As well, Giele has written introductory and concluding chapters suggesting in the former the basis for the new paradigm and in the latter directions for social policy and research.

Giele's first chapter is an excellent example of her thesis that scientific pursuits are organised by one's assumptions. In this case she presents the life span perspective as an appropriate framework for the understanding of the life experiences of adult women. None the less, her bias is explicit and the chapter provides a comprehensive review of the life span perspective. She argues that a general theory of adult development must include elements of both stage theories and timing theories. The former, in the mode of Erikson and Levinson, emphasise a progression through a series of stages marked by transition points. The latter are based on the idea that change is triggered by personal or environmental events and that general transitions are rare. Giele also makes a case for considering that adult development progresses differently for women than men, although she contends that such a case is risky in the present ideological climate. Finally she says that any new set of explanations about women's development is by necessity bound within the historical context in which it occurs.

In the first chapter the framework is set for the evaluation of the new research facts. The subsequent three chapters contain reviews of the physical and psychological dimensions and social roles. Each of these three chapters is written by different authors who perform have different styles of presentation,

always one of the difficulties of a book such as this. Yet each author provides a coherent evaluation of the literature in her particular area and Giele does an admirable job of weaving the thread among them.

Nathanson and Lorenz provide a sound discussion of recent findings on the relationship between health status, illness behaviour and such social roles as employment, marital status and parenthood. They conclude that although some of the gender differences in illness behaviour and levels of health are biologically based, the social construction of those biological processes is likely to be the more important for women (and probably for men).

Carol Gilligan's approach in chapter 3 is to address some more of the theoretical underpinnings of women's adult development. She states unequivocally that there must be separate theories of adult development for men and women. Men, she argues, see their identities in separateness while women see theirs in relationship. Thus life transitions for women are those that involve changes in the understandings and activities of care.

In chapter 4, Giele returns to the point raised in her initial chapter that any theory of women's adult development must be grounded in history. Her approach to the review of information about women's social roles is to consider historical trends in those roles over the past 30 years. She marks the increasing percentage of women who are involved in the work role while underlining the continued high involvement in marriage and family roles. Her conclusions seem to point to a timing theory of women's development. No single pattern of roles is likely to ensure satisfaction. Rather each woman must find the balance of nurturant and productive roles.

Chapter 5 by Joan Ecklein is the least well integrated of all the chapters in the book. Ecklein gives a detailed description of women's involvement in education, employment, leadership and family life in the German Democratic Republic. Her account illustrates the impact of social policy within a relatively closed society and is interesting in that respect. Implicit in this discussion is the issue of cultural differences in women's development. However, this theme is not developed by Ecklein nor does Giele incorporate it into her thesis regarding elements of the new paradigm.

If the old paradigm was that women's place is in the home, the new paradigm is that women's (and men's) place is in the workplace *and* in the home. In her final chapter, Giele calls this the crossover pattern in which the ideal is to express and combine instrumental and expressive qualities into a personal life pattern. Hence the new research relies on chronicles of specific life events and career histories rather than relying primarily on marriage or employment status as principal explanatory variables.

Women in the Middle Years is the best current treatise I have seen on the current research and theory of women's development. Giele has managed with only minor lapses to combine a series of disparate articles into a coherent thesis. My only criticism is that the title is misleading. This is much more a book on women's adult development than on the narrower topic of women in the middle years.

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