The cognitive development of women: a grounded theory derived from fiction

Harriet Howell Custer

Iowa State University

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Custer, Harriet Howell, Ph.D.

Iowa State University, 1987

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The cognitive development of women:
A grounded theory derived from fiction

by

Harriet Howell Custer

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1987
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A central image in Tillie Olsen's novella *Tell Me A Riddle* (1956) represents the desire of women to learn in a culture which inhibits their quest for knowledge. In the bitterness of old age, Eva remembers her husband's insensitivity to that need in her:

She thought without softness of that young wife, who in the deep night hours while she nursed the current baby, and perhaps held another in her lap, would try to stay awake for the only time there was to read. She would feel again the weather of the outside on his cheek when, coming late from a meeting, he would find her so, and stimulated and ardent, sniffing her skin, coax, "I'll put the baby to bed, and you--put the book away, don't read, don't read (pp. 75-76).

Now an old woman, Eva's intellectual development has been stunted--sidetracked by the demands of housewifery and of a husband who has failed to understand that her needs are unique, different and distinct from his own.

During the last two decades, psychological research has been concerned with cognitive and moral development. While Kohlberg (1969) and Erikson (1968) investigated development from childhood through early adulthood, Perry (1970) and Chickering (1984) described
the development of college students in formal learning situations. The research conducted by these four scholars has had an impact upon learning theory and practice as well as upon teaching in higher education and has provided a theoretical foundation for subsequent research; the results of their work, however, is limited (see Gilligan, 1982 and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). Each conducted his research on primarily male subjects and generalized that what he discovered through studying men could also be applied to women.

The application of this assumption to higher education was not seriously challenged until the publication in 1982 of Gilligan’s *In A Different Voice*. Basing her study on the development theories of Perry and Kohlberg as well as on the female identity development theories of psychologists such as Chodorow (1974) and Miller (1978), Gilligan questioned the application of the findings of research studies conducted on male samples to the intellectual and moral development of women. She contrasted psychological theories of male and female development and outlined a foundation for the moral and intellectual choices which women make. Recent studies
have tested Gilligan’s findings. Lyons (1983) described a methodology which she used to empirically test Gilligan’s hypotheses. In this comparative study she found that self-definition and moral development are gender-related. In Women’s Ways of Knowing (1986) Belenky et al. described the results of their research study on the development of women. They concluded that women’s development is indeed different from that of men; their findings supported and expanded upon those of Gilligan and Lyons.

While the study of the development of women is a relatively new addition to psychological investigations of development, the subject has been explored by women writers since the the nineteenth century. In Middlemarch (1872), George Eliot investigated the process through which her central female character acquired knowledge and developed intellectually. Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte explored the role of women in society and the nature of identity development among female characters. In the early twentieth century Virginia Woolf, in A Room of One’s Own (1929), discussed the relationship between women and fiction. According to Woolf, women writers present a unique vision of human conflict. She discussed the obstacles
which women must overcome in order to write, and speculated upon the impact which women writers might have in the future.

As women have grown to view their value to society as extending beyond motherhood into the intellectual world dominated by men, serious fiction, drama, and poetry written by women writers has proliferated (Gilbert & Gubar, 1985). They are using their artistic media to explore the female mind, the changing role of women in the family and in society, and how women develop (or do not develop) identities of their own (Pratt, White, Loewenstein, & Wyer, 1981).

Statement of the Problem

In Art as Experience John Dewey theorized that art deepens human understanding; he stated that art is "the remaking of the material of experience in the act of expression" (1934, p. 81). Writers of fiction use the imagination to create characters and situations which draw on their own experiences. Thus the characters, interrelationships, and situations created by women writers may reflect processes and stages of development which are uniquely female. Recent research studies on adult development conducted on
female samples (Gilligan, 1982; Lyons, 1983; Belenky et al., 1986) concluded that women's intellectual and moral development proceeds according to criteria of care and relationship; these criteria provide the foundation for making decisions and formulating judgments. A study of the development of central female characters in selected twentieth century American novels written by women provided a qualitative body of knowledge through which the theory of these research studies on women's intellectual and moral development could be tested.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine selected works of fiction, to derive a grounded theory of adult female development, and to compare that theory with the selected theories of female development previously discussed.

This study will investigate and answer the following questions:

1. Do female protagonists in selected novels written by women follow similar patterns of cognitive development?
2. Have researchers of female development identified common characteristics of cognitive development?

3. Are these characteristics consistent with the patterns of cognitive development identified in the novels?

4. What are the implications of the findings for adult development in higher education?

Methods

This research study was conducted according to a four-part procedure involving (a) analysis of the literature on the development of women, (b) selection of the fiction to be evaluated, (c) development of a grounded theory of cognitive development through analysis of these novels, and (d) comparison of the theory of cognitive development derived from the fiction and patterns of development discovered in selected research studies.

Relevant theoretical treatises and research studies on adult female development were identified and then evaluated to determine common characteristics and patterns or stages of development. An emerging pattern of criteria was identified, and the individual
criteria were described. Discrepancies between researchers were noted in distilling a pattern of development from the literature.

A panel of experts in American literature and/or women's studies was identified through an examination of the MLA International Bibliography and academic journals in the fields of women's studies, women's literature, and American literature. A Delphi technique was used to achieve consensus on the novels to be analyzed. The researcher developed criteria for selection of the fiction to be used by the panel members during the initial phase of the Delphi process.

Each novel was read to outline the plot and to identify and describe major characters. Situations which presented opportunities for the cognitive development of primary female characters were identified, coded according to factors of development, and analyzed using the constant comparison methodology. In analysis of the novels other imaginative elements such as details of setting, patterns of imagery, interrelationships between primary characters, and theme were considered in terms of their importance in revealing the cognitive development of the central female character.
Definitions of Terms

Literature. In the social sciences, literature refers to works written by scholars in specific disciplines and experts in related fields. For the purpose of this study, "literature" refers to written works by scholars in the fields of education and psychology. "Fiction" designates imaginative works by women writers.

Literary Criticism is the scholarly process of translating one's "experience of literature into intellectual terms" by assimilating it into a rational, coherent scheme (Wellek & Warren, 1942/1962) through which meaning is revealed.

Development is defined briefly by Knefelkamp, Widick and Parker as "systematic change over time," created by challenges which require the individual to develop "new, more differentiated responses" (1978, p. ix).

Stage Development is a theory which posits that development occurs through a sequence of chronological stages. Kohlberg, Perry and others further refine
this concept of stage development by including cognitive conflict as the catalyst which forces the individual to "accommodate or change" his or her way of thinking (Knefelkamp et al., pp. xi-xii).

**Cognitive Development.** Moral development (how one formulates and applies a system of values) has been differentiated from intellectual development (how one understands the world and the nature of knowledge (see Knefelkamp et al., 1978). Kohlberg's (1971) theory of moral development derives, according to Smith (1978), from the progressivism of John Dewey (1934/1958) and the structuralism of Jean Piaget (1964). Perry's (1970) theory of intellectual and ethical development also derives from the work of Piaget. Combining concepts of intellectual and moral development, Perry defined development as an interface between intellect and identity (King, 1978, p. 38). According to Knefelkamp et al., cognitive development includes the creation and growth of an internal organizing structure which the individual uses to guide behavior and solve problems, and which relies upon interaction between the individual and his or her environment (1978, p. 36).
A development opportunity is an encounter, an event, or the culmination of a series of events which serves as a catalyst or provides a stimulus for cognitive development.

Identity is the development of a concept of the self as distinct from others. Identity is formed as development occurs. Gilligan (1977, 1982) found that identity development in women was closely linked to the ability to make, increasingly independently, complex intellectual and moral choices.

Assumptions of the Study

This study was based on several assumptions which relate to the psychological literature, to literary interpretation, and to the nature of the works of fiction which were examined:

1. Fictional works of artistic merit provide a special view of human interaction which is valid in its own right
2. Fictional characters follow patterns of development
3. Female writers view women more perceptively than do male writers because of their own experience and orientation
4. Men and women develop in different ways, yet neither pattern of development is assumed to be superior to the other.

Actual men and women, while they do appear to develop in distinctly different ways, do not develop according to mutually exclusive patterns. Thus, whereas the research studies which were used as the basis for this study were conducted on samples of actual men and women, the dichotomous terminology used is artificial and theoretical, and is not intended to stereotype or to rigidly categorize the development of individual men or of women.

Limitations of the Study

Two primary factors limit the scope of this study. First, the development literature which provided the foundation for investigation excluded those studies and theories which were either based wholly on male samples or which assumed that women follow similar developmental patterns. Thus the literature considered was limited to those which either hypothesized or concluded that the development of women takes a different course from that of men.
Secondly, the novels which were analyzed were not necessarily representative of artistic written works. The study was limited to the following fiction: First, only modern or contemporary novels or novellas written by American women were subjected to the selection process. Secondly, the panel members who participated in the selection process were asked to consider only novels in which a woman is the central character, and in which her development (or lack of development) is central to the theme. In Silences (1965), a collected series of essays about women and fiction, Tillie Olsen stated that only one in twelve contemporary established writers is a woman. Thus the artistic works considered in this study, because they constitute such a tiny percentage of fiction written by both men and women, may not be representative of the Western tradition in fiction.

Significance of the Study

According to Wellek and Warren (1942/1962), while science is concerned with causation, art is concerned with meaning. The role of students of science or art, however, is similar: both must pursue their respective disciplines by translating experience
or experiment into intellectual terms by assimilating it into "a coherent scheme which must be rational if it is to be knowledge" (p. 3).

The importance of this study lies in the attempt to derive a theory of development from artistic works and compare it with scientific research. The artist's view of reality is a unique and valid one which can be used to enhance and reinforce the results of empirical research. Study of artistic works can thus provide an additional perspective on issues and points of controversy in the search for what is true and meaningful.

Clinchy, Belenky, Goldberger and Tarule (1985) proposed a model of "connected education" which they perceived as more appropriate for women than traditional higher education. Expanding upon Gilligan's metaphor of voice for the development of women, they believe that women are "silenced by institutions" of higher education (p. 20). They argue that higher education must begin to accommodate the differences in the ways in which men and women learn, and develop educational programs and strategies which facilitate the learning of female students.
In *The Small Room* May Sarton examines the insulated community of an elite women's college, the kind of institution which, according to Belenky et al., has been modeled after traditional educational establishments, created by men to perpetuate society's values. Sarton delves into the complex issue of the nature of teaching women: should teachers be didactic, objective and impersonal, or should a women's college be a community in which relationships are as important as any discipline? At the end of the novel Carryl Cope, the star faculty member, has realized that "teaching women is a special kind of challenge. Most of the cards are stacked against us" (Sarton, 1961, p. 247). Tillie Olsen's Eva, unable to indulge in the pleasures of reading and learning in her youth, retreated, finally, into silence in old age. In order to hear the voices of women and, in doing so, permit them to develop, educators must, according to Clinchy et al., alter traditional teaching methodologies, adapting them to a wider audience. The findings of this research project should provide some insights into the exercise of that difficult task.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

This chapter begins with an operational definition of cognitive development and continues with brief discussions of the cognitive development theories of Kohlberg and Perry, whose work provided a foundation for research on the development of women. Discussions of anthropologists Rosaldo and Ortner and psychologists Miller and Chodorow have been included to draw distinctions between the cultural roles and the psychological development of men and women. The central sections of this chapter are devoted to Gilligan's research on the development of women, and on the "perspectives" which Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule discovered in their research on how women learn. In addition to several other research studies on cognitive development and women in higher education, discussions of two dissertations have been included because of their similarity in methodology and purpose to the present study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between fiction written by women and female development.
Defining Cognitive Development

In higher education literature "cognitive development" refers primarily to theory and research on learning outcomes in specific, formal education settings. Pascarella (1985) in his critical review of cognitive development literature, stated that operational definitions of learning and cognitive development "can be overlapping" and the "same terms can sometimes stand for quite different constructs in different investigations" (1985, p. 3). For the purpose of his literature review, Pascarella defined cognitive development specifically in terms of college outcomes, and drew a distinction between cognitive and affective learning. Referring to Astin's (1973) taxonomy of postsecondary outcomes, Pascarella agreed that "cognitive outcomes refer to those measures having to do with the utilization of higher-order intellectual processes such as analysis, synthesis, reasoning, logic, and knowledge comprehension" (1985, p. 3). In "Learning Theory and Research," Fincher (1985) distinguishes between behavioral, cognitive, and developmental psychological learning theory and practice in relation to general principles of learning.
in college. The theoretical positions of these three approaches to research in the psychology of learning can be contrasted according to the level of specificity with which each is concerned. Behavioral theorists study observable student behaviors; cognitive theorists study educational outcomes resulting from mental processes; developmental theorists study how individuals develop structures which they use to interpret and interact with their various environments.

While Fincher viewed the work of Erikson, Chickering, Kohlberg and Perry as an important component in learning theory, he clearly classified them as "developmental" rather than "cognitive" theorists. He defined cognition somewhat narrowly in terms of the impact of verbal learning and memory on the "information processing capabilities of learners" (1985, p. 78). The reviews of both Pascarella and Fincher are, for the most part, restricted to research studies and theoretical works which focus on cognitive outcomes in postsecondary education. Rest (1974), discussing the use of Kohlberg's cognitive structures in value development, employed cognitive development in broader terms, deriving his definition from the
theoretical traditions of Deweyan progressivism and Piagetan structuralism. He defined cognitive structures as "general, internalized conceptual frameworks and problem-solving strategies" (1974, p. 242) which extend beyond formal education settings. For Rest, cognitive development refers to the ability of the individual to acquire "structured competencies that transfer to later life and have a cumulative effect in enhancing and enriching life" (1974, p. 242). Knefelkamp et al. (1978), in their assessment of various developmentalists, also place cognitive development theorists within the context of the Deweyan and Piagetan traditions.

While the present study has implications for higher education, it has not been restricted to how women learn in formal education settings. Cognitive development has been used in the broader sense, therefore, as defined by Rest and Knefelkamp et al., as the interaction of the individual with his or her environment by creating progressively complex organizing structures which are used to solve problems and guide behavior, fusing intellectual and moral development.
Theories of Cognitive Development

Cognitive development theorists follow the structuralist view of Jean Piaget (1965) which resulted from his research with children and adolescents. Through analysis of his findings, Piaget theorized that development constitutes a series of irreversible stages during which changes occur in the process through which the individual perceives and reasons about the world. Starting in the 1960s Kohlberg and Perry conducted research studies which resulted in their theories of cognitive development among college students. According to Knefelkamp et al. most developmental theorists have sought to identify the universal stages which individuals move through. Theories of development are "concerned with systematic changes over time while in college" (1978, pp. vii-ix). The process of development is interactive: "Individuals encounter problems, dilemmas, or ideas which cause cognitive conflict that demands that they accommodate or change their way of thinking" (1978, p. vii). Kohlberg and Perry, particularly, investigated how students think as well as shifts and growth in their reasoning. Although their research
was conducted using primarily male samples, much of
the research and theory of Gilligan, and Belenky et al.
who used primarily female samples, is based upon the
work of Kohlberg and Perry. Several of these
scholars, in fact, worked with Kohlberg and were
familiar with his work, as well as with that of Perry.
Thus a brief discussion of the cognitive development
theories of each of these men is presented in this
chapter as an introduction to explanations of the work
of Gilligan and Belenky et al. on the development of
women.

Kohlberg's Cognitive Stage Theory of the
Development of Moral Judgment

Employing adolescent male subjects in his
research, Kohlberg (1971) investigated how his subjects
made ethical choices. Using hypothetical moral
dilemmas, he examined the ways in which his subjects
formulated moral judgments, looking for rules,
strategies, social perspectives, and the underlying
logic employed (Knefelkamp et al., 1978). Kohlberg
identified three general levels of moral thought,
each consisting of two stages.
The preconventional level consists of awareness of cultural norms and rules, which are interpreted by the individual in terms of either the physical consequences of action or the physical power of the authority who is seen as the arbiter of the rules. At the conventional level, the individual is concerned with conforming to and maintaining familial and cultural norms and expectations regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. Conventional behavior and a reliance upon law and order and respect for authority are characteristic of this level. The postconventional level is characterized by a move toward cognitive independence. The individual becomes more able to define moral values independent from cultural norms. Although personal values are viewed as relative, they are governed by and understood through adherence to universal principles of right and justice.

Kohlberg believed that the stages of development which he identified were universal in their application and that the individual must move through them in sequence. The theme of justice which underlies his theory of moral development moves from a concrete reliance upon rules to an individual's understanding of justice as a universal principle.
Perry's Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development

Using Harvard students as subjects for his research, Perry (1970) identified a sequence of "positions" in cognitive development, each of which "presents a challenge to a person's previous assumptions and requires that he redefine and extend his responsibilities in the midst of increased complexity and uncertainty" (p. 44).

The nine developmental positions which Perry identified are generally clustered into four categories. At the position of dualism, students "use discrete, concrete, and absolute categories to understand people, knowledge, and values" (Knefelkamp et al., 1978, p. 38). Dualistic individuals view authority as the arbiter of knowledge, and are unable to comprehend differing points of view. Multiplism is characterized by the belief that a variety of approaches to a problem may be valid. The individual is not, however, able to evaluate points of view, and fails to understand the legitimacy of evaluation or analysis. At the position of relativism the student begins to understand that knowledge is relative. While
relativists often resist decision making, they "are beginning to realize the need to evolve and endorse their own choices from the multiple 'truths' that exist in a relativistic world" (Knefelkamp et al., 1978, p. 39). Perry's final position, commitment in relativism, is characterized by an affirmation of personal identity. The student is able to make decisions within a broad universal context, and to assume responsibility for those decisions.

Perry's scheme differed from Kohlberg's in that he believed that, while his positions constituted a clear sequence, there were legitimate alternatives to the sequence. For instance, the individual might remain in one position in fear of moving to the next, or might retreat to a previous position. While Kohlberg focused on formulations of oral judgments, Perry clearly fused intellectual development with moral development. Both scholars, however, assumed that their findings could be universally applied. While Kohlberg included no women in his study and Perry included very few, they concluded that the developmental sequences which they identified were as applicable to the development of women as to the development of men.
Women's Voices

As a result of the women's movement, since the 1960s women's role in society and women's psychological, cognitive, and moral development have become the subjects of research in a variety of disciplines. Defining the nature of women is confounded by historical cultural distinctions between the roles of men and women, by environmental influences, by the obvious biological differences, and by shifting roles in a society characterized by rapid socio-economic change. While an evaluation of each of these factors is beyond the scope of this study, a brief discussion of several theories and studies provided some insight into the impact which traditional sex roles has had on female development, and informed subsequent discussions of the cognitive development of women.

The Anthropological View

Art, as an element of culture, reflects, explores, and shapes the symbols, ideologies, and patterns of the culture out of which it grows. Anthropologists use these aspects of culture as well as psychological
theories and methodologies to study the natures of specific cultures.

Rosaldo (1974), drawing from a variety of anthropological studies in her analysis, argues that "women everywhere lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority" (p. 18). Stating that women are tied to child-rearing activities whereas men are "free to build up rituals of authority that define them as superior, special, and apart" (p. 27), she posits a structural framework which suggests a "differentiation of domestic [female] and public [male] spheres of activity." A universal asymmetrical relation exists between the sexes which explains sex roles, thereby shaping "a number of relevant aspects of human social structure and psychology" (p. 23). Women's development is thus shaped by and viewed through their domestic status within a given culture.

Through an analysis of culture as a generic, universal process, Ortner (1974) examines the cultural role of women in terms of their "universal devaluation" (p. 69). She used three types of data to evaluate cultures in terms of the inferior roles of women: elements of cultural ideology, symbolic devices and rituals, and social-structural arrangements. Whereas
Rosaldo found a universal split between public and domestic roles, Ortner observed a similar dichotomy in terms of culture (male) and nature (female). Women are physiologically closer to nature, and their relationships, she says, "tend to be, like nature, relatively unmediated, more direct" (p. 82), and more perishable. The role of men, on the other hand, is to create symbols, technologies, and structures which preserve the culture. Ortner argues that this dichotomy is a "construct of culture rather than a fact of nature. Various aspects of woman's situation (physical, social, economic, psychological) contribute to her being seen as closer to nature, while the view of her as closer to nature is in turn embodied in institutional forms [created by men] that reproduce her situation" (p. 87). So long as women's roles are subsumed within the public (Rosaldo) or cultural (Ortner) domain dominated by men, they will be viewed as inferior. Writing from a literary critic's perspective Squier (1984), in her analysis of urban novels by women, supports Ortner's view when she states that "women have always had a problematic relationship to culture" (p. 4).
The Psychological View

The cognitive development of women should be viewed within the context of the psychological development of women. An examination of two psychological studies of female development will illuminate subsequent discussions of developmental research. Feminine psychology has posed problems for scholars and practitioners. Freud believed that, because of physiological differences, women's psychological development suffered from an inadequate resolution of the oedipal crisis (Chodorow, 1974, p. 52). Both Kohlberg and Perry assumed that women followed the same patterns as their male subjects in cognitive and ethical development. When Perry found that the few female students who were subjects of his research study did not conform to his scheme, he dismissed the differences. When Gilligan (1977) discovered that the women who responded to Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemmas placed no higher than the conventional level, she began to question the validity of Kohlberg's theory in its application to the development of women. Recent analyses of the psychology of women reveal that they indeed develop according to different criteria from men.
Chodorow (1974, 1978), analyzing the processes through which women develop identity, found a key in the maternal relationship. In order to resolve the oedipal crisis identified by Freud as critical in personality formation, males develop identity through increasing separation from the mother. Chodorow found that female identity development, on the other hand, is embedded in connection with the mother. Masculine identification processes, she states, "stress differentiation from others, the denial of affective relation, and categorical universalistic components of the masculine role" (1978, p. 176). She further argues that a fundamental contradiction is implicit in the process of feminine identity formation. While connection with the mother enables a girl to learn her adult gender role, "she must be sufficiently differentiated to grow up and experience herself as a separate individual--must overcome primary identification while maintaining and building a secondary identification" (1978, p. 177).

The psychological development of women is therefore exceedingly complex, particularly for women who seek to develop outside of the traditional female role for which connection to the mother provides the
primary model. Feminine personality develops primarily in terms of relationships and connections with other people which, Chodorow argues, results in difficulties for women in developing distinct identities and self-esteem. This process of development, she said, results in social and psychological oppression which "is perpetuated in the structure of personality" (1974, p. 66). The difficulty women have in forming their own identities is compounded by the conventional feminine role of sacrificing oneself for others. "This loss of self in overwhelming responsibility for and connection to others," Chodorow said, "is described particularly acutely by women writers" (1974, p. 59).

In attempting to devise a framework for understanding the psychology of women, Miller (1978) described conclusions drawn from her experiences in the psychoanalysis of female patients. She agreed with Chodorow that pressure to conform to conventional feminine roles has hindered women's ability to develop distinct identities. Because "women have been so encouraged to concentrate on the emotions and reactions of others," she said, "they have been diverted from examining and expressing their own
emotions" (p. 39). Describing the stages of psychoanalysis as sexuality, emotional connectedness and creativity, Miller argued that the first two, which are "aspects of absolute human necessity," have been traditionally relegated to women. She described creativity as "personal," not artistic, and defined it as the "breaking through to a new vision" which constitutes learning for all individuals, and which is also essential for women (p. 44). Miller argued that, in the struggle for identity, men are concerned about doing, whereas women are concerned about giving and seek cooperation rather than confrontation as a means to resolving conflicts. She believed that combining creativity with this propensity for cooperation would result in advances in psychological understanding of women (p. 48).

Miller viewed female psychology as a source for understanding human psychology. Because women have been relegated to specific cultural roles, they have had "to innovate their inner psychological structures in order to survive at all within the dominant culture" (1978, p. 44). She further argued that, because the dominant society preserves the status quo, women are more attuned than men to change (p. 55).
Because change requires learning, Miller proposed that new understandings of feminine psychological development "opens up the prospect of a new way of studying learning" (p. 55).

Gilligan and the Ethic of Care

In studying cognitive development theory, Gilligan (1977, 1982) and Gilligan and Murphy (1979) observed that women's "failure" to fit patterns of development established through research on male subjects, such as the studies conducted by Perry and Kohlberg, has generally signified a "problem in women's development" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 2). She argued instead that existing models of human growth do not adequately describe women's developmental patterns. In response to what she viewed as the repeated exclusion of women from the critical theory-building studies of psychological research (1982, p. 1), Gilligan conducted three studies in which she examined the "relations between judgment and action in a situation of moral conflict and choice" (1982, p. 2). Each study was conducted according to the same methodology: questions about conceptions of self and morality and experiences of conflict and choice were
developed, and subjects in all three studies were asked to respond to the same questions in personal interviews. The purpose of the studies was to determine whether women and men responded differently to hypothetical dilemmas and actual situations of choice. Like Kohlberg, Gilligan was interested more in the process of choice than in the nature of the choice itself. Interviewers followed the language and logic of the subjects' thought, and asked follow-up questions as necessary for clarification.

The College Student Study was conducted on a sample of 25 randomly selected men and women who in their sophomore year had elected to take a course on moral and political choice. The Abortion Decision Study involved interviews with 29 women diverse in age, ethnic background, social class, and marital status. Referred to the study from pregnancy and abortion counseling services, all women were interviewed at the time of choice and 24 were interviewed again a year later. While Kohlberg used exclusively hypothetical dilemmas in his research, Gilligan believed that women would respond more accurately when they were confronted with an actual decision situation (Gilligan and Murphy, 1979). The Rights and Responsibilities Study involved
a sample of 72 men and 72 women matched "for age, intelligence, education, occupation and social class at nine points across the life cycle" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 3). A subsample of two men and two women in each age category were subjected to a more intensive interview. Data were collected on "conceptions of self and morality, experiences of moral conflict and choice, and judgments of hypothetical moral dilemmas" (p. 3).

Miller (1978) stated that women "have constructed an inner person who is different from the person most valued in this society" (p. 44). Seeking to identify and describe this inner person in her research, Gilligan found that attention to choice of language as well as to patterns of thought revealed that women base choices on different criteria from men. Whereas Kohlberg found that his male subjects were concerned with rules of law and order and concepts of universal justice, or an "ethic of justice," Gilligan discovered that women make intellectual decisions and moral choices on the basis of connection and relationships, or what she calls an "ethic of care."

In the Abortion Decision Study Gilligan (1977) identified a "sequence in the development of care," as she defined the criteria according to which her
subjects described their circumstances and reached decisions on whether or not to proceed with abortion. She found that women's judgments could be placed at one of three levels or at a transition between two levels, each level "representing a more complex understanding of the relationship between self and other and each transition involving a critical reinterpretation of the moral conflict between selfishness and responsibility" (1977, p. 515). At the level of individual survival, the woman is concerned entirely with self, and is influenced by others only according to their ability to affect the consequences of choice. The first transition, from selfishness to responsibility, is characterized by an understanding of attachment or connection to others. Concepts of selfishness and responsibility are recognized, and the emergence of a new priority, care, signals an enhancement in self worth. The second level, goodness as self-sacrifice, is characterized by adherence to concepts of conventional feminine goodness. Survival is seen to depend upon acceptance by others, and conflict arises when the passivity of dependence is challenged by the need to take action relating to care. The exclusion of
self at this level creates a disequilibrium between the notion of self-sacrifice and the care of self.

The second transition, from goodness to truth, involves a sorting out of this confusion by reconsidering the relationship between self and others. The concept of conventional feminine goodness as self-sacrifice is combined with a new inner judgment. The woman now wants to be responsible to both herself and others; introspection results in demands for honest appraisal of the decision within the context of her situation. During this transition the woman learns to question conventions which guide moral judgments and to consider her own needs as well as those of others. The criterion for judgment here, according to Gilligan, "shifts from 'goodness' to 'truth' as the morality of action comes to be assessed not on the basis of its appearance in the eyes of others, but in terms of the realities of its intention and consequence" (1977, p. 498). Gilligan calls the third level the morality of nonviolence because choice is based upon who will be hurt the least. At this level, women understand the interconnection between self and other and assume responsibility for choice. This level constitutes an encounter with self
that clarifies understanding of responsibility and truth in reconciling the previous conflict between selfishness and responsibility. Thus the development of women's moral judgment appears to proceed, says Gilligan, "from an initial concern with survival, to a focus on goodness, and finally to a principled understanding of nonviolence as the most adequate guide to the just resolution of moral conflicts" (1977, p. 515).

Gilligan did not attempt to fit the results of her other two studies into the scheme which she developed from the Abortion Decision Study; she found, however, in all three studies, that women tend to base their formulation of moral judgments on an ethic of care. Whereas Kohlberg found the highest level of morality to be "defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles" (Smith, 1978, p. 56), Gilligan found that women who achieve the highest level of morality in decision making base choices on a concept of responsibility which includes care of self and others and the willingness to accept responsibility for choice. The conflict between self and other, she argued, "thus constitutes the central moral problem for women, posing a dilemma whose
resolution requires a reconciliation between femininity and adulthood" (1977, p. 490).

When women are forced to view their experience through rules, or concepts and hierarchies of justice which have been developed and imposed by a male-dominated culture, they question themselves, their instincts, and what they perceive as truth. Until they come to terms with themselves as individuals and are able to resolve the conflict between conventional concepts of feminine goodness and the responsibility to self, they will not develop to their full potential. Gilligan has documented that "women order human experience in terms of different priorities": care and relationships with others (1982, p. 22). An interviewee in one of Gilligan's studies stated that "when a woman's inner voice [self] replaces outer ones [convention] as the arbiter of morality and truth, it frees her from the coercion of others, but leaves her with the responsibility for judgment and choice" (1982, p. 118). Gilligan found that not only did women formulate moral judgments on the basis of an ethic of care, but that self-concept is intricately bound up in how women make choices.
Lyons (1983) empirically tested the results of Gilligan's work. Thirty-six people (two males and two females at each of nine points in the life cycle) were interviewed. Data were analyzed for modes of self-definition and ways in which the subjects responded to "real-life moral conflicts" (p. 138). Responses were coded according to the categories of justice and care. Lyons' findings supported Gilligan's theory that a relationship exists between self-concept and consideration of moral choice, and that the basis for choice appears to be gender related. Women (or connected individuals) base moral judgments on care and preservation of relationships, while men (or separate/objective individuals) formulate their judgments according to universal concepts of justice.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule on How Women Learn

Having observed that women "often feel alienated in academic settings' and tend to doubt their intellectual competence, Belenky et al. (1986, p. 4) conducted a five-year study in which they attempted to define how women learn. Using an intensive case study approach, they interviewed 135 women, 90 attending or
recent alumnae of nine different colleges, and 45 involved in "invisible colleges"—human services agencies supporting women in parenting. Interview questions were designed to elicit responses on self-concept, educational and personal experiences, decision situations, and perceptions of development. These interview questions were based on the Perry and Gilligan research studies.

Belenky et al. used an inductive approach, listening to women's experiences told from the interviewees' own points of view. Interviews were taped, and then transcribed verbatim. Analysis of their interviews proceeded in two stages. First, the sections designed to yield specific scores based on the work of Perry, Kohlberg and Gilligan were scored by blind coders. When the researchers found that their subjects' responses did not fit into Perry's scheme, they developed a classification system, a scheme of five "perspectives" or epistemological categories with which the responses appeared to be consistent. The second phase was a contextual analysis of the reassembled interviews. Belenky and her colleagues developed coding categories designed to explain how women perceive themselves as developing individuals.
and experience the environments in which they learn. These coding categories evolved into ten bimodal dimensions which they called "educational dialectics." They found that one mode often predominated in women, whereas practice favored the opposing mode.

Ideas gleaned from the interviews which fit these dialectical categories were noted and grouped by epistemological position. Following extensive analysis of the interviews, the research team arrived at an epistemological scheme which included five "perspectives" on the ways in which women learn. While the authors make no claims that these perspectives constitute "stages" in the Piagetan sense, they do constitute a sequence in intellectual development.

**Silence,** the first perspective, is a position in which women perceive themselves as "mindless and voiceless" (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 15). They have no powers of introspection, are isolated from others, and believe that sources of knowledge are controlled entirely by others and are inaccessible to them. At the position of **received knowledge,** women believe that knowledge is absolute; although they do believe that they can learn through "listening" to others, they don't identify with authority. Intolerant of ambiguity
and confused by conflict, they do not believe that they are capable of creating knowledge.

The perspective of subjective knowledge is characterized by belief in the infallibility of an "inner voice;" knowledge is perceived as private and intuited. Women begin to want freedom from external authority, but are reluctant to risk openly expressing opinions, fearing that they will disrupt relationships.

At the position of procedural knowledge, the inner voice becomes critical of both the arguments of external authority and of intuited knowledge, and independent reasoning begins to emerge. Here "selfishness is required, however, because the sense of identity" is still weak (1986, p. 129). Belenky and her colleagues found two categories of cognition at this perspective: separate knowing, where the woman draws a distinction between understanding (which involves intimacy and equality between self and object) and knowledge (which involves separation from and mastery over the object), and connected knowing which is characterized by belief, rather than doubt, and occurs through empathy with the object. The connected knower seeks an integration between thinking and feeling, and believes that the most trustworthy
knowledge derives from personal experience rather than from external authority.

The fifth position which Belenky et al. discovered is **constructed knowledge**. Here, the woman learns by using reason, intuition, and the expertise of others; she relies upon self-understanding and reflection on the context of a dilemma in formulating a decision. They found that connected knowers had less difficulty moving into the position of constructed knowledge than separate knowers.

According to Belenky et al., each perspective presents a medium for learning in which conflicts with identity development and the role of authority are confronted (1986, pp. 133-134). Returning to those issues which provided the impetus for their study, the authors drew conclusions about how women function within educational settings. They argued in favor of a model of "connected education" in which the ways women learn are integrated into educational methodologies. Educators can help women develop intellectually "if they emphasize connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate; if they accord respect to and allow time for the knowledge that emerges from"
firsthand experience; if instead of imposing their own expectations and arbitrary requirements, they encourage students to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they are pursuing" (1986, p. 229). In developing these five epistemological perspectives, the research team found that women perceived their learning to be inhibited by traditional teaching methodologies, particularly by the "banking" model of education described by Freire (1971), in which knowledge is "deposited" into the head of the learner. While Belenky et al. found that none of the institutions in their sample "adhered closely to the banking model," their subjects related accounts of occasions on which teachers assumed the banker role (1986, p. 214). They propose that the "midwife" model, in which the teacher "draws learning out" is more appropriate for women (p. 217). None of their interviewees felt comfortable in a learning situation in which knowledge flowed only from teacher to student (p. 217). In fact, their subjects often found the devaluation of authority (antithetical to the banking model) to constitute "a powerful learning experience" (p. 216). In outlining their model of connected education, they argue that women's cognitive development is facilitated by a
reliance on belief rather than doubt as a catalyst for learning and on integrating personal experience with abstract theory as a means to understanding and creating knowledge. When their subjects were confronted with "bankers" as teachers, they perceived themselves as deficient learners (pp. 227-29).

Other Related Research Studies

In a study unrelated to characteristics of female development but important in terms of how women perceive themselves and how they fare in higher education, Lewis and Simon (1986) investigated the experiences of male and female students within a traditional "patriarchal" higher education context. In a graduate seminar "designed to explore the relationship between language and power" (p. 457), the authors (one the male professor, the other a female student) found that in what appeared (to the males) to be an open discussion environment, the male students assumed positions of authority and the female students were silenced. Men "monopolized not only the speaking time but the theoretical and social agenda as well" (p. 460). Women's ideas were reinterpreted by men, and often appropriated by the male students and then
"passed off as their own" (p. 462). The findings of Lewis and Simon support the contention of Belenky and her colleagues that women often feel alienated in academic settings. Their self-esteem is reduced, and they assume that those in power are right, and they are wrong.

Two 1984 dissertations analyzed works of fiction written by women in terms of theories of cognitive development. Brandom (1984) used a design developed by Colarusso and Nemiroff (1981) to analyze 28 novels in which she identified adult developmental stages in fictional representations of female professors. Her findings not only supported developmental theory, but also supported the use of works of the imagination to reinforce the results of scientific inquiry. Viniar (1984) used Gilligan's sequence in the development of care to "provide a new framework for interpreting the dilemmas faced by heroines" in twelve selected contemporary short stories and novels written by women (p. 2). She found that themes of identity development and care and responsibility emerged in her analysis of fiction which were consistent with Gilligan's theory.

Thelin and Townsend (in press) employed a data base of 80 college novels to analyze college life and
the undergraduate experience. They found that fiction written about college experiences served as a valuable alternative source for understanding higher education.

Comparing the Theories of Gilligan and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule

Within the selected literature reviewed in this chapter, only Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986) defined positions or stages in the moral and intellectual development of women. While certain similarities exist in the results of the work of Gilligan and Belenky and her colleagues, there are also some fundamental differences. Belenky et al. began with the assumption that Gilligan's concept that women's development derives from an ethic of care was accurate and, indeed, their research supports her thesis. However, as they analyzed the transcripts of their interviews they discovered more complex developmental patterns than did Gilligan. Furthermore, their purpose was somewhat different from hers. While Gilligan was concerned with the nature of responsibility and the relationship between responsibility and self in terms of how women formulate moral judgments, Belenky et al. sought to understand
how women learn. They focused on cognitive development and on relationships between the self and specific "others," including authority. They were concerned with the development of women within primarily educational contexts, investigating processes of knowledge acquisition, perceptions of the role of the self, sources of truth, use of experience, and perceived roles of authority.

The "sequence in the development of care" which Gilligan identified in the Abortion Decision Study does not lend itself to a point-by-point comparison with the epistemological sequence discovered by Belenky and her colleagues. Her first position, "individual survival," is similar to the perspective of "silence" identified by Belenky et al., in that both positions are characterized by self-centeredness and alienation from others and from authority. Gilligan's second position, "goodness as self-sacrifice" is similar to Belenky et al.'s perspective of "received knowledge," where women tend to devote themselves to care of others at the expense of the self. Gilligan's final position, the "morality of non-violence," can be related to "constructed knowledge" in that at this final position the results of both studies revealed an acceptance of
the self as a legitimate source of authority and the ability to make coherent choices and to accept responsibility for those choices, which implies the ability to accept compromise.

The two schemes differ considerably, however, in their latter stages. Belenky et al.'s second perspective corresponds to Gilligan's middle position, but Gilligan's third (and final) position corresponds to Belenky et al.'s fifth. This discrepancy suggests that Belenky and her colleagues discovered two perspectives which Gilligan's research had not revealed. Gilligan believed that awareness of self signaled the movement into mature thought. Belenky et al. disagreed with her on this key point (1986, p. 77), finding that subjectivist women, who were beginning to gain a sense of themselves as individuals, did not yet possess the capacity for constructing knowledge. The research of Belenky et al. has revealed a more complex pattern of development than has Gilligan's.

Further analysis of the developmental sequence outlined by Belenky and her research team revealed five factors which appeared to underlie each developmental perspective. Their definition of each epistemological position considers (a) sources of knowledge, (b) forms
of authority, (c) perceptions of self and authority, (d) catalysts for growth which create developmental opportunities, (e) frameworks or contexts of developmental opportunities, and (f) the ability to create knowledge.

**Fiction and the Development of Women**

Gilligan (1982) and Belenky et al. (1986) drew examples from fiction to illustrate their discussions of the intellectual and moral development of women. They used fictional characters facing situations of choice to reinforce and illuminate both their theories and their findings. Feminist literary critics and women writers also believe that writers cull from their own experiences, that the developmental experiences of women are different from those of men, and that women's fiction—particularly fictions of development—illuminate patterns of development which are uniquely female.

In "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1979), Adrienne Rich stated that the women's movement precipitated a time of "awakening consciousness" for writers which has provided a rich well of artistic achievement. Women writers, particularly, she said,
are discovering "the challenge and the promise of a whole new psychic geography" (p. 33) which invites exploration. The development of characters or the creation of action in fiction, Rich believed, requires an "imaginative transformation of reality" (p. 43), suggesting a direct relationship between the creation of art and the experience of the artist. Spacks (1975), in relating her experience teaching an undergraduate literature colloquium on "Women Writers and Women’s Problems" in a women’s college, found that "often the stories women tell shape themselves into patterns dictated by the same few clearly defined issues—patterns, if not universal, at least very widespread in female experience" (p. 5). As Viniar (1984) used Gilligan’s theory of female development as one avenue for interpreting fiction, a grounded theory of development derived from novels of female development written by women further illuminated theories of female development.

Abel, Hirsch, and Langland (1983) conducted an investigation of the Bildungsroman (novel of formation or development) as a male-dominated genre which women writers have successfully employed. Analyzing the developmental pattern which Jerome Buckley (1974)
discovered in the traditional male Bildungsroman, they demonstrated how it fails to apply to the development of female protagonists in novels written by women. According to Abel and her colleagues Buckley, like Freud in his theory of psychological development and Perry and Kohlberg in their theories of intellectual and moral development, assumed that the pattern which he observed fit women as well as men and that, if female protagonists did not follow this "universal" pattern of development, they were developmentally deficient (1983, p. 7). Finding in the female Bildungsroman developmental characteristics consistent with Gilligan's "ethic of care," Abel et al. identified two distinct narrative patterns in female fictions of development. The apprenticeship pattern is essentially chronological, following the childhood-to-adulthood pattern of the male Bildungsroman, although for the female protagonist the "frequently imperfect" adult resolution may assume diverse and unorthodox forms. In their second pattern, awakening, development does not proceed in stages. Here the protagonist progresses only after fulfilling "fairy tale or social expectations;" development "may be compressed into brief epiphanic moments" (p. 11).
The social and cultural dichotomies identified by Ortner and Rosaldo and the social and psychological constraints observed by Miller and Chodorow are reflected in female novels of development, where the protagonist must battle convention in order to attain maturation. According to Abel et al., "female versions of the Bildungsroman offer a vital form" to writers (1983, p. 13). The novel of development, they concluded, has become perhaps the most powerful form of fiction for contemporary women writing about women.

In her study of archetypal patterns in women's fiction, Pratt et al. (1981) also found that the protagonist of the novel of development is typically in conflict with social norms and with the broader cultural roles imposed upon her. "Every element of her desired world," says Pratt, "inevitably clashes with patriarchal norms. Attempts to develop independence are met with limitations and immurement, training in menial and frustrating tasks, restrictions of the intellect, and limitations of erotic activity" (p. 29). The research studies of Gilligan and Belenky and her colleagues were precipitated by their respective perceptions that women do not fit male models of development and that they often fail to develop in a
traditional patriarchal university environment. Pratt et al. found in their study that in female novels of development the "orderly succession of stages characterizing the male Bildungsroman is disrupted since the role requirements for women are antithetical to maturation" (1981, p. 34).

Thus the discovery of Gilligan, Belenky et al. that women develop morally and intellectually according to different criteria from men is being actively applied and investigated by scholars of women's fiction. As feminist critics, Spacks, Abel et al., and Pratt et al. have developed approaches to understanding women's fiction from a standpoint which considers the gender of the writer to be a key to unbiased scholarly analysis of selected Bildungsroman. Comparison of a grounded theory of adult female development with conclusions of research studies on female development should reveal that the patterns of development of female protagonists in fiction enhances the understanding of female development.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the methodology of the study. First the development of the research problem and a rationale for the methodology will be discussed, followed by an explanation of the procedures by which the review of selected literature was conducted. Next the method used to select the works of fiction will be outlined. Finally the procedure used to develop a theory of adult female development from selected works of fiction is explained.

The Development of Grounded Theory

This research project required a methodology of qualitative analysis techniques in order to arrive at findings which could be compared with a body of quantitative research. Content analysis is one technique for evaluating written communications for the purpose of producing descriptive information (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 514). Content analysis requires developing objectives from a hypothesis, devising a sampling plan, designing coding procedures, examining the samples and coding incidents, and analyzing the
results in terms of the hypothesis (pp. 514-518). While content analysis is a technique of observational research used in evaluating written material, it is a deductive rather than an inductive method, and therefore unsuited to the purpose of this research study—to derive a theory of female development from selected novels.

Literary analysis, on the other hand, is an inductive method of scholarly research (Wellek & Warren, 1942) in which meaning evolves from an examination of details within the context of a work or of a body of work. The development of grounded theory, which requires use of the inductive method of constant comparisons, was selected for application in this study. Grounded theory is a process for discovering theory from data which was first outlined by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later elaborated and applied to higher education by Conrad (1978, 1982).

The development of a grounded theory requires the use of the constant comparative method as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Constant comparative methodology involves four interdependent stages which are based upon identification, categorization and
comparison of data incidents. Conrad (1978) outlined the stages as follows: (a) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (b) integrating categories and their properties, (c) delimiting the theory, and (d) writing the theory. He found the constant comparison method a "multi-faceted approach to research designed to maximize flexibility and aid the creative generation of theory" (Conrad, 1982, p. 241).

Guided by research questions (rather than by hypotheses), the researcher gathers data through the process of theoretical sampling, whereby the selection of comparison groups is controlled by the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). In the first step of this process the researcher collects data and codes them into categories of analysis. "These categories or concepts (or variables) are abstracted by the researcher on the basis of constant comparisons of data incidents with other data incidents" (p. 241). As concepts evolve through this process of constant comparisons, the researcher begins to analyze the theoretical properties of each concept (p. 241), and moves into the second step in the process, integrating categories and their properties. Here, the researcher compares new data incidents with "properties of the
concepts that have been abstracted during the comparison of incidents" (p. 241). The third step, delimiting the theory, involves noting differences between data incidents and inconsistencies between data incidents and emerging concepts, thus clarifying the emerging theory by reduction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 110). In the final step the theory is presented "in a discussion format or as a set of propositions" (Conrad, 1982, p. 242). The goal of the constant comparative method is to infer from data a theory which can then be empirically tested.

The development of grounded theory, as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and by Conrad (1978, 1982), provided a methodology for this study. It combined the coding technique used in content analysis with a system for deriving a theory from analysis of novels. The constant comparison method established a process through which the researcher could maintain consistency with inductive literary analysis and arrive at a theory of adult female development which could then be compared to theories of development identified in selected psychological literature.
Development of the Research Problem

The research problem of this study evolved from the researcher's interest in the possibility of differences in how men and women think and learn. This question was first perceived in analysis of works of fiction. The researcher attempted to apply Gilligan's theory of female development to works of fiction by women. Prior research (Viniar, 1984) suggested that Gilligan's theory may provide new insights into themes in women's fiction. Thus the research problem evolved: if women's development theory could enlighten analyses of women's fiction, then perhaps analyses of women's fiction could lead to further understanding of the developmental research. A relationship between fiction and developmental research is suggested by Gilligan's (1982) and Belenky et al.'s (1986) use of fiction to clarify developmental concepts. This relationship is the subject of the research studies conducted by Brandom (1984) and Viniar (1984), who found that developmental patterns identified in psychological literature are present in works of fiction.
Procedure for Selecting and Reviewing the Literature

Literature pertinent to the research topic was identified by discussions with scholars in women’s development and in women’s literature, manual searches of bibliographical indexes, use of reference lists in relevant books and journal articles, and a computer search.

Discussions with scholars yielded Belenky et al.’s 1986 study as well as recent critical works on fictions of development written by women. Searches of bibliographical indexes such as Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE), the Modern Language Association (MLA) Bibliography and Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI) for entries containing research on women’s development or themes of development in women’s literature resulted in some sources. By far the most valuable sources of literature, however, were reference lists and bibliographies of books and journal articles. A computer search of ERIC documents using the descriptors "cognitive development," "intellectual development," and "female," yielded twelve unpublished papers and
journal articles on sex differences in cognitive
development and on the intellectual development of
women. Using the same descriptors, and adding
"literary criticism" and "novels," a search of MLA
(which includes dissertations) resulted in no new
sources. A search under the descriptor "content
analysis" revealed two English language sources.
Written comments from panel members revealed two
additional sources on sex differences in cognitive
development.

Theoretical Background

In order to derive a scheme from the development
literature which could be used to compare a grounded
theory derived from works of fiction, research studies
on the psychological and cognitive development of women
were identified. Selection of the works to be compared
with the grounded theory was based upon two criteria:
(a) identification of a pattern of female development,
and (b) studies which were conducted within the context
of higher education. Using the terminology developed
in each research study, a list of labels used to
designate developmental positions and the
characteristics of each position was compiled. The
characteristics of each set of labels were then compared, and similarities and differences between labels and degrees of complexity of each developmental scheme were noted. For example, characteristics of the developmental positions identified by Gilligan (1977, 1982) were compared with those found by Belenky and her colleagues (1986). The studies conducted by these scholars were found to incorporate the findings of the other research projects which were analyzed. In addition, the development literature was examined to determine relevance to cognitive development in higher education. The major studies which fit this criterion were, again, found to be those of Gilligan and Belenky et al.‘s. Lyons’ (1983) empirical test of Gilligan’s theory and the less extensive study by Lewis and Simon (1986) also investigate the cognitive development of women within the context of higher education.

Selection of the Novels

Because the purpose of this study was to derive a construct of female development from selected novels, it was necessary for the researcher to develop a procedure for selecting the novels. The goal was to arrive at a list of novels which thematically explored
and revealed the cognitive development of the protagonist. Therefore, a set of criteria was developed to be used in the selection process.

1. **Only novels or novellas were considered.** A variety of literary genres exist—poetry, drama, prose fiction (novels and short stories), prose non-fiction (including essays and autobiography)—each of which includes works which thematically address issues of development. Prose fiction was selected as the genre most appropriate for this study. Works employing a narrative structure are most likely to reveal patterns of cognitive development (thus eliminating poetry and essays), and in works of imagination the writer is most likely to employ the full range of artistic possibilities available to her in character development, plot, and theme (thus eliminating autobiography). Drama as a genre was excluded because few women have written plays. Short stories (with the exception of long stories, or novellas) were excluded because the conventions of the short story do not permit the writer sufficient freedom for the full development of character which is necessary to identify and analyze patterns of development. Abel et al. (1983) stated that "the novel offers the complexity
of form necessary to represent the interrelationships shaping individual growth" (p. 4).

2. Only women writers were considered. Because the writer creates out of her own experience, women provide a more accurate account of female development than men. In a television interview, Alice Walker stated that she writes about Black women because she must write out of her own experience as a Black woman (1987).

3. Only American novels written in the twentieth century were considered in order to maintain consistency with the cultural milieu in which the developmental research was conducted. Viniar (1984) selected works of fiction which were "written or read within the context of the women's movement" (p. 47) in order to maintain consistency between the fiction and the socio-cultural context of Gilligan's research. Rich (1979) spoke of increasing opportunities for contemporary women writers. Abel et al. (1983) suggested that the female Bildungsroman of the nineteenth century is more apt to portray growth as inhibited by cultural factors than are contemporary novels of development. Gilbert and Gubar (1985) documented an increase in the numbers of recognized
women writers during the twentieth century. Even though several panel members expressed frustration at not being permitted to include British and Canadian writers, limiting the selection process to novels written by American women in the twentieth century was necessary to focus the subject of the study on novels which thematically address the widest range of developmental possibilities.

4. Only novels in which the protagonist is female and in which a primary theme was the development of that protagonist were considered. The purpose of this criterion was to limit the study to those novels which were thematically closest to the focus of the study. Because the purpose of the study is to arrive at a theory of female development through analysis of fiction, the richest sources of data were considered to be novels which thematically addressed the development (or lack of development) of a female character. While many novels may deal with development as a secondary or tertiary theme, the Bildungsroman, or novel which is primarily concerned with the growth and development of the protagonist, was considered most appropriate for inclusion in this study.
Once the criteria for selection were developed, a method was chosen for selecting the novels which would be used in the study. The Delphi technique was selected because it is a documented method for arriving at consensus, and because a large number of respondents are not required in order to achieve valid results. Furthermore, it is a technique which "is best suited to intuitive judgments on topics for which reliable objective data are impossible or difficult to obtain" (Brooks, 1979), p. 379), suggesting that Delphi is an appropriate method for a qualitative research study. Brooks (1979) and Barnett, Danielson, and Algozzine (1978) recommended two to three Delphi rounds to achieve consensus. Brooks stated that little is gained in results by using a panel larger than 25 (1979, p. 377), indicating that a relatively small number of experts were required to achieve consensus on the novels which were analyzed in this study.

Brooks (1979) identified eight steps in the Delphi process: (a) The researcher identifies a panel of experts; (b) The potential panel members are asked if they are willing to participate; (c) The panel members are asked for initial input on the research topic, which often involves "some form of open-ended query"
(d) The researcher then analyzes the initial data by combining the responses of panel members; (e) The assembled data are mailed to the panel members for assessment by agreeing or disagreeing, ranking, or modifying the data collected in step three; (f) The researcher then analyzes this new input; (g) Each panel member is then asked to "reassess his own position based on the group's responses" (p. 378); (h) The researcher analyzes the reevaluated data. This process of reassessment by the panel members and analysis by the researcher is continued until consensus is reached.

**Selection of Panel Members**

The panel of experts should consist of recognized scholars in either women's literature or women's studies. The search for potential panel members began with the MLA Index (1981-1985). Journal articles and books are listed in MLA, however, primarily by artist rather than by subject matter. In order to avoid biasing the selection process by choosing potential panel members who were specialists on only one author, another method of identification became necessary. In order to identify generalists in women's literature or women's studies, therefore, six journals were
identified as sources for scholars in these fields. These journals were then reviewed for focus and emphasis. Excluding those, such as Feminist Studies, which have a more political than literary perspective, three scholarly journals devoted to women's literature or women's studies and two journals whose subject was American literature or American Studies were identified as resources for panel members: Women's Studies, Women and Literature, Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, American Literature, and the Journal of American Studies. The most recent (1983-1986) issues of these journals were searched for articles about twentieth-century American women's fiction. Each of these journals yielded potential panel members except for the Journal of American Studies, which contained no articles dealing with women or with women's literature. In addition to the journals, contributing authors in The Voyage Out (Abel et al., 1983), a collection of essays on female novels of development, were identified as another source. A list was compiled of 25 scholars who were journal editors, heads of women's studies or English departments, or who specialized in American literature and had published scholarly articles or
books about women writers (see Appendix A for a complete list of panel members).

Selection of the Novels

A packet of materials to send to the potential panel members was then developed, including a cover letter, an explanation of the purpose of the study and the methodology, the selection criteria, a selection form, and a list of American writers taken from the modernist and contemporary sections of the Norton Anthology of Literature by Women (Gilbert & Gubar, 1985). Panel members were asked to select works by writers on that list or, if they felt that another writer should be included, to provide a short rationale.

These materials and a description of the proposed procedure were submitted to the Human Subjects in Research Committee which reviewed them in terms of the selection process and the protection of rights and privacy of the potential panel members. The materials and the procedure were approved by the Human Subjects Committee on March 5, 1987.

The selection process was piloted by three scholars in the fields of American literature or
women's literature who found the material clear and the selection process relatively easy to complete. They felt, however, that the list of authors was too conservative, omitting some writers whose work fit the selection criteria. Therefore the list of writers was eliminated entirely in order to allow panel members greater freedom in the selection process. (See Appendix B, which contains a sample packet.)

The Delphi method as outlined by Brooks (1979) was modified somewhat for use in this study. Four steps were used:

1. Potential panel members were identified.

2. In the first communication they were both asked to participate in the process and to list 10-15 novels which met the selection criteria. Of the 25 original candidates for panel members, twelve agreed to participate in the Delphi process. Four could not be located, one was unable to participate because of other commitments, and eight failed to respond to both the initial request and a follow-up letter.

3. The researcher evaluated the initial responses in terms of the selection criteria. Those works which did not meet the selection criteria (such as works by non-American writers, autobiographical works, short
stories, and one novel by a male writer) were eliminated from the list. Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, which was published in 1899, was not eliminated for several reasons. First, all twelve of the panel members listed it, clearly indicating that, in their expert opinions, this novel should be included in the study. Second, the elimination of a novel from consideration because it was published in the last year of the nineteenth century was judged by the researcher to be arbitrary. In addition, *The Awakening* has recently been "rediscovered," and is considered as belonging to the tradition of the modern psychological novel.

At the conclusion of round one of the process, 77 separate novels which met the selection criteria had been mentioned by a panel member at least once. These novels were ranked according to the number of times each had been mentioned.

4. This ranked list of novels was sent to each of the eleven panel members who responded in round one (excluding one scholar who declined to participate beyond round one). They were asked to use the ranked list to reevaluate their original selections. The researcher requested that they list the ten novels most
appropriate for inclusion in this study, and to prioritize the novels by assigning quality points (ten points for the most appropriate, one point for the "least" appropriate).

5. The researcher then evaluated the data collected in round two. Eight panel members responded; follow-up letters were sent to the other three, one of whom responded. Round two resulted in a list of 38 novels. The quality points assigned to each novel were totaled, resulting in six novels which had been assigned between 60 and 44 quality points. The next highest number of points assigned to a novel was 22. Because there was a difference of 22 quality points between the sixth and seventh ranked novels, the researcher determined that consensus had been reached.

The novels selected by panel members for inclusion are listed in Table 1. The order in which the researcher applied the constant comparative method to the novels was determined by the number of quality points assigned by panel members. Because two novels were assigned 50 points, the order in which these novels were analyzed was determined by the number of times each was mentioned in round one. Table 1 also reflects the order in which the novels were analyzed.
Table 1. Novels Selected by Panel Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice Walker</td>
<td>The Color Purple</td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Chopin</td>
<td>The Awakening</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toni Morrison</td>
<td>The Bluest Eye</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willa Cather</td>
<td>The Song of the Lark</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>The Bell Jar</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edith Wharton</td>
<td>The House of Mirth</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying the Constant Comparative Method

Constant comparison, as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), was modified somewhat for the purpose of this study. First of all, the nature of the selection process limited adherence to the principle of theoretical sampling. In its purest form theoretical sampling would require analysis of an infinite number of novels until theoretical saturation (the point at which no additional data are being found, Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 61) occurred. Conrad (1978), however, suggested that theoretical sampling of selected comparison groups is consistent with the
criteria established for the constant comparison method if the selection process is based on the theoretical foundation of the research questions and preliminary criteria relating to categories of comparison (Conrad, 1978, p. 335).

In developing his grounded theory of academic change, Conrad (1978) identified four comparison groups which fit his pre-established criteria. He then used one group to create, through constant comparison, a theoretical framework which then guided his analysis of the other comparison groups. Following Conrad’s procedure, the novel which was assigned the highest number of quality points from panel members—Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982)—was used to create a theoretical framework to guide analysis of the other novels.

The procedure used followed the steps for constant comparison as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967). First, opportunities for the cognitive development of the protagonist of *The Color Purple* were identified, corresponding to Glaser and Strauss’s identification of "data incidents." As these incidents were analyzed, four primary categories of cognitive development emerged. Each of these categories of cognition either
enhanced or inhibited (or both, depending upon the level of development) the cognitive development of the protagonist: the role of authority, introspection, imagination, and articulation. The protagonist's use of these categories to develop increasingly complex cognitive skills as revealed in the novel were subjected to constant comparisons. Upon completion of the initial analysis, these categories appeared to reveal a pattern of cognitive development, as they acted as agents and reflectors of cognitive change. Analysis of these categories also revealed that two themes appeared to function as parallel continuums of cognitive development: the formation of identity and the ability to make choices. The interrelationships between these themes and categories of cognitive development as revealed in The Color Purple constituted a construct of cognitive development which was used as a theoretical framework to guide the analysis of the other five novels.

As each novel was analyzed, opportunities or incidents of development were identified and evaluated using the coding categories identified in the initial analysis. As variations on these categories occurred, and as additional categories were identified, they were
noted and subjected to constant comparisons. As the analyses proceeded, the researcher found it necessary to adapt the constant comparison methodology as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Conrad (1982). The narrative structure of several of the novels made clear identification of incidents of development difficult. Therefore, in order to preserve the structural integrity of these novels, the researcher identified patterns of development which were consistent with the narrative structures and organized the analyses according to these patterns. For example, patterns of theme and image were found to be more prominent than specific incidents of cognitive development in *The Awakening*. Variations in the organization of these analyses are explained in the introduction to each discussion.

Each of the four steps identified by Glazer and Strauss (1967) was employed in the analyses of the novels. However, literary analysis is an inductive methodology in which comparisons of details of image, setting, character, action, and style are examined and evaluated to reveal meaning. Thus as analyses of the novels included in this study proceeded, the methodology of constant comparisons became almost
indistinguishable from techniques of literary analysis. The cognitive characteristics identified in the analysis of *The Color Purple* were compared with characteristics of protagonists in the other novels as incidents or other patterns of development were identified. As the theory evolved the researcher integrated new categories (or variations of categories) of development. While new concepts were identified as subsequent novels were analyzed which enhanced theory development, none were identified which contradicted (or reduced) the theoretical framework revealed in the analysis of *The Color Purple*. Thus the theory was not significantly delimited, possible because so few novels were considered in the theory-building process.

An analysis of each novel was written using the following structure: (a) A general introduction to the novel which included a brief statement of the general theme and setting; (b) a summary of the plot of the novel; (c) an evaluation of the cognitive characteristics of the protagonist and preliminary evidence of cognitive categories; (d) a discussion of each identified incident of cognitive development using constant comparisons; and (e) a summary of conclusions. The theoretical framework was reevaluated at the
conclusion of the analysis of each novel, constituting an evolving theory of cognitive development. The theory of the cognitive development of women derived from analyses of six novels is discussed in Chapter X.
CHAPTER IV

THE COLOR PURPLE

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), set in a Black community in the rural South between the world wars, traces the development of the protagonist, Celie, from an oppressed, ignorant adolescent to a self-sufficient, confident, creative middle-aged woman. The narrative is told through personal letters from Celie to God and in a correspondence with her younger sister Nettie. While this convention provides a limited point of view, it enables the reader immediate access to the cognitive development of the protagonist. Celie's growth, defined by Walker as the "development of her connection with the universe" (television interview with Walker, 1987), is the center of the novel. Internal growth occurs throughout the course of the novel and is gradually reflected in her external behavior through articulation and action. Incidents of Celie's cognitive development become obvious to the reader and to other characters through her thoughts and actions.

Celie is a most unlikely heroine—a poor, brutalized black woman. As a character, however, she
is immediately accessible to the reader, because through her letters we quickly perceive how she views herself and her world. Celie has a natural intelligence and an innate capacity to learn which are conveyed with simplicity, honesty and humor. She constantly questions and thinks, creating an openness of mind which enables her to take advantage of opportunities for cognitive development.

Narrative Summary

The Color Purple opens when Celie is fourteen years old. She has been repeatedly raped and has given birth to two children by her stepfather Alfonso, whom she believes to be her real father. At twenty she is married to Mr.____, a neighboring widower with three children. Celie’s younger sister Nettie, the only person she is close to, leaves town in order to avoid Mr.____’s sexual advances, promising Celie that she will write. Nettie is taken in by Corinne and Samuel, who have adopted Celie’s children. When they go as missionaries to Africa, Nettie accompanies them. She writes to Celie, but Mr.____ hides the letters. Some years later, Mr.____ brings his lover Shug Avery, who is ill, home, and Celie nurses Shug back to health.
The two women develop a close friendship, and Celie comes to depend upon Shug as a mentor. Shug discovers that Mr.____ has been hiding Nettie's letters, and she finds them for Celie. At this point in the novel Celie ceases writing letters to God and begins to write to Nettie; this correspondence constitutes the remainder of the narrative as Nettie's story is interwoven with Celie's. Celie leaves Mr.____ and goes to live with Shug in Memphis where she starts a small business making trousers and becomes financially independent. When Shug runs off with a young man, Celie returns to her home, continues her business, and eventually becomes friends with her husband, although they no longer live together as man and wife. At the end of the novel, Nettie returns home from Africa with her husband and Celie's two children. Throughout the course of the novel Nettie has served as Celie's alter ego; the reunion of the two sisters symbolizes the fullness of Celie's cognitive development.

Preliminary Evidence of Cognitive Categories

The Color Purple opens with the first of Celie's letters to God. After raping Celie, Alfonso has told her, "You better not never tell nobody but God." Celie
tells God, "I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me" (Walker, 1982, p. 11). In this opening letter Walker establishes major variables which affect Celie's cognitive development. Three forms of authority are established as sources of knowledge: her stepfather, representing physical authority; God, or spiritual authority; and notions of conventional goodness. A primitive form of introspection is implicit in this passage, as Celie wants to understand "what is happening" to her. "I am," corrected by "have always been" suggests confusion about both her own identity and her concept of virtue. The "sign" which she requests is a simple blessing, a benign intervention in a world she cannot cope with. She has been prohibited from articulating either her situation or her pain to another person, so she finds an alternative in communication with a conventional Christian deity. Celie's ability to articulate, however, is limited. Her syntax conveys only rudimentary communication: her sentences are short and disjointed; although the content is meaningful, indicating Celie's continual
attempt to understand, her thought is unsustained and she has difficulty drawing conclusions.

Celie's early letters reflect total submission to the authority imposed by her stepfather and to cultural convention. Restricted to external sources of knowledge in interpreting events, she is unable to articulate except in her letters to God, which constitute an interior dialogue. An element of fatalism is revealed as Celie attempts to interpret what happened to her children. When her mother asks whose child the first is, Celie tells her it's God's. Later, dying, her mother asks her where the baby is. Celie tells the reader, "I say God took it./ He took it. He took it while I was sleeping. Kilt it out there in the woods. Kill this one too, if he can" (p. 12). Not only does she identify God with her stepfather, indicating that she perceives no difference between these two sources of control, but she formulates the judgment that her children are dead because she is unable to conceive of another reason for their absence.

While Celie was forced to leave school when her first pregnancy became obvious, she retains a strong desire to learn. Nettie, who has faith in Celie's
intelligence, becomes her first real mentor in this respect, as she teaches Celie all that she learns in school. But Celie’s learning is fragmented and literal: "look like nothin she say can git in my brain and stay. She try to tell me something bout the ground not being flat. I just say, Yeah, like I know it. I never tell her how flat it look to me" (p. 20). Here Celie demonstrates a lack of imagination because her context for learning is very narrow, whereas Nettie’s education is formal and she is more easily able to accept abstract concepts. Celie’s education is informal, restricted to personal experience and her interpretation of experience. It is difficult for her to accept either what she cannot experience directly or what she cannot observe in the behavior of others. While Celie’s introspection allows her to acknowledge this limitation to herself, she cannot articulate it to Nettie or to any other person.

While marriage is considered by social convention to be a milestone in one’s life, it is not so for Celie; her life remains virtually unchanged, except that she is brutalized by her husband and his children rather than by her stepfather. Yet while her behavior remains submissive and silent, cognitive development
occurs internally through introspection. Throughout the years she lives with Mr.____, other people are far more important to her development while he serves as an inhibitor of growth. For Celie, all men are oppressors; they represent authority and a primary source of control, and they are seldom characterized as individuals. "I don't even look at mens," she says. "I look at women, tho, cause I'm not scared of them" (p. 15).

Celie's introspective ability is reinforced when she sees a little girl whom she recognizes as her daughter, Olivia. This child "got my eyes just like they is today. Like everything I seen, she seen, and she pondering it" (p. 22). Here Celie sees herself "pondering," reflected in the eyes of her daughter. Celie speaks to Corinne (Olivia's adoptive mother), but she is again unable to publicly acknowledge her motherhood because "I don't have nothing to offer and I feels poor" (p. 23). Here Celie is still silent; she can neither tell Corinne the truth nor articulate her feelings.

To this point in the novel, three primary variables, or categories, of Celie's cognitive development have emerged. Authority in the forms of men, God, and social convention serves as a primary
source of both knowledge and oppression. Introspection, a personal reassessment of knowledge based on inferences drawn from experience, is evident in a primitive form as she attempts to understand her relationship to the world around her. Articulation, or the communication of knowledge, is also present in a primitive form. Celie communicates to God, but she is unable to articulate either her situation or her understanding of it to other people. Her behavior is controlled by the expectations of others, and her actions by limited alternatives and fatalism.

"I don't fight"

The first major incident of cognitive development for Celie occurs in a confrontation with her daughter-in-law. Sofia accurately accuses Celie of counseling Harpo, Sofia's husband, to beat her to "make her mind" (p. 45). The issue of standing up to oppressors by fighting, something Celie cannot do, becomes extremely important in her development. Several minor related incidents occur prior to the major confrontation with Sofia which are worth relating because they provide additional insight into Celie's discovery of self-assertion as a real alternative.
Mr. beats Celie regularly; her stepchildren are "bright but they mean" (p. 25), and she cannot control them. She is advised to fight her stepchildren by both Nettie and Mr.'s sister, Kate. She remains passive, however, telling Nettie that "I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive" (p. 26). When Kate tells her "I can't do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself," Celie can't even articulate a response. She thinks "bout Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (p. 29). Survival has become the motive which shapes her behavior.

Celie's instinct for survival and her inability to articulate are enhanced by Walker's introduction of an image which reveals Celie's perception of her relationship to the world throughout the novel. She tells the reader that when Mr. beats her, "I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you a tree. That's how come I know trees fear man" (p. 30). Celie's use of the tree image introduces a new cognitive theme: imagination, or the ability to create ideas by incorporating new sources of knowledge. Nature does not intimidate Celie as do the familial
conventions by which she lives, so she identifies with trees—tall, strong, resilient living things which are, however, subject to control in the interest of convention and at the mercy of men.

Unlike Celie, Sofia is assertive, self-confident, and unswayed by social convention. Bothered by Sofia's look of pity when she observes Celie's submission to Mr.'s abuse (p. 43), Celie tells Harpo to beat Sofia. When she has trouble sleeping, she realizes that it's because she "sin against Sofia spirit" (p. 45). When Sofia confronts her, Celie lies ("You told Harpo to beat me, she said./ No I didn't, I said, p. 45). As she admits her lie, Celie tells Sofia that

I say it cause I'm a fool. I say it cause I'm jealous of you. I say it cause you do what I can't.
What that? she say.
Fight. I say. (p. 46)

This admission precipitates a conversation in which Walker gives us a glimpse of real growth in Celie. "What you do when you get mad?" Sofia asks. Celie responds,

I think. I can't even remember the last time I felt mad, I say. I used to git mad at my mammy cause she put a lot of work on me. Then I see how sick she is. Couldn't stay mad at her. Couldn't be mad at my daddy cause he my daddy.
Bible say, Honor father and mother no matter what. Then after while every time I got mad, or started to feel mad, I got sick. Felt like throwing up. Terrible feeling. Then I started to feel nothing at all.

Sofia frown. Nothing at all?
Well, sometime Mr._____ git on me pretty hard. I have to talk to Old Maker. But he my husband. I shrug my shoulders. This life soon be over, I say. Heaven last all ways.
You ought to bash Mr._____ head open, she say. Think bout heaven later.
Not much funny to me. That funny. I laugh. Then us both laugh so hard us flop down on the step.
I sleeps like a baby now. (p. 47)

Here, for the first time, Celie has engaged both in introspection and in communication with another person. She is motivated by her conscience, which cannot allow her to "sin against Sofia spirit," transcending the borrowed conscience of duty to the Bible and to parents. Celie not only tells Sofia the truth, but explains why she lied. Whereas Sofia exhibits her rage, Celie sublates hers, to her own cost. Controlled still by external forces including social convention and religious precepts, Celie cannot yet express her rage. So she has learned to sublate it, and she writes letters to God that serve as an emotional outlet. The laughte which she and Sofia share, signifying release from repressive fear, binds them together in mutual recognition of the need for personal assertiveness.
In this incident of cognitive development Celie is no longer silent; she has found an external voice which she uses to translate her thoughts into verbal action. Although her relationship to authority is the subject of the conversation, here she is able to analyze that relationship as well as her resulting behavior. Her emphasis upon the word "think" throughout her narrative of this incident indicates that she is aware of her introspective ability. Celie’s action is based on deliberation and conscience, having found an alternative source of authority within herself. Celie’s behavior hasn’t changed, but she has questioned, understood, and communicated her understanding of that behavior. Introspection has resulted in analysis of her relationship with one source of authority, and the emergence of conscience as a source of internal authority has increased her ability to articulate. Furthermore, Celie’s use of imagination as a new cognitive variable has been reinforced by her response to Sofia’s suggestion that she "bash Mr. ____ head open," an image which affords her an emotional release, although she cannot yet translate thought into action.
"My feets can let go the spot where they stuck"

Celie becomes "Miss Celie" to the women in the Black community, a public identity which she has developed by conforming to the social expectations of a "good woman." Celie has earned this respect because, not only has she become a model wife and housekeeper, but she is also raising another woman's children for a man whose long-term intimacy with Shug Avery is public knowledge. Shug’s appearance signals a major change in the course of Celie’s development. Celie has long cherished a photograph of the blues singer, whom she perceives as her opposite: beautiful, free, spirited, loved and wise. When Shug falls ill, no one is willing to care for her because the community views her as a social pariah, a "bad woman." So Mr._____ brings Shug home for Celie to nurse.

When Shug arrives, Celie feels at her most awkward and unattractive: "a new dress won’t help none with my knotty head and dusty headrag, my old everyday shoes and the way I smell" (p. 49). Shug’s appearance, however, lives up to Celie’s fantasies: "She look so stylish it like the trees all round the house draw
themself up for a better look" (p. 50). Walker's variation on the tree image emphasizes the contrast between Celie's perception of Shug and of herself as well as Celie's first habitual impulse to displace her thoughts and feelings in some removed source. Celie writes, "Come on in, I want to cry. To shout. Come on in. With God help, Celie make you well. But I don't say nothing. It not my house. Also I ain't been told nothing" (p. 50). Celie's excitement is evident to the reader, but her behavior remains silent and submissive. She senses that Shug's presence in her house will be important: "I need to see her eyes. I feel like once I see her eyes my feets can let go the spot where they stuck" (p. 50). Perhaps, if Shug's eyes reveal the wisdom which they suggest in her photograph, then Celie will be able to move figuratively as well as literally. But Shug's eyes are "mean," and her first words to Celie, "You sure is ugly" (p. 50), seem to reinforce Celie's oppression, her self-contempt, and the apparently vast differences between the two women.

Celie cares for Shug, nursing her back to health; and Shug, in spite of her initial meanness, allows Celie to care for her, to love her. Celie not only heals Shug physically, but she inspires Shug's creative
energies. Shug writes a song and dedicates it to Celie: "This song I'm bout to sing is call Miss Celie's song. Cause she scratched it out of my head when I was sick." Celie reacts quietly, thinking that this is the "first time somebody made something and name it after me" (p. 75). Shug's song also signals a shift in their relationship. Previously, Celie had assumed the role of caretaker, and Shug the role of recipient. Shug's gift to Celie begins a relationship of mutual care and understanding, but one in which Shug assumes the role of teacher and model. Celie's capacity for care has created a new, beneficent, form of authority in Shug. When Celie tells Shug that Mr.____ beats her when Shug isn't there, "for being me and not you" (p. 77), Shug promises not to leave until she is certain that Mr.____ "won't even think about beating you" (p. 77). When Shug discovers that Celie has never enjoyed sex, she teaches her that she can derive pleasure from her body.

Celite has undergone substantial growth since Shug's arrival, and the departure of her mentor is not traumatic. Celie's increased capacity to reflect on and assess her environment has the potential to lift her out of oppression when she says to Sofia, "My life
stop when I left home, I think. But then I think again. It stop with Mr.____ maybe, but start up again with Shug" (p. 82). She has developed a relationship of mutual care with Shug, a woman who refuses to submit to any authority and who exists outside of social convention. Celie's capacity for care has created a transfer in authority from Mr.____ to Shug; his control over her life diminishes as Shug's role as mentor evolves. Her introspective abilities have altered as well.

Celie has translated her feelings into care, and her perceptions about herself and her relationship with her world have become more acute. Although she is as yet unable to translate thought into action, her ability to articulate her thoughts has increased as she confides in both Sofia and Shug. Both the capacity to care and a heightened imagination are important cognitive variables revealed in this incident of development. Celie has created a variation on the tree image, using it to explain her reaction to her first sight of Shug. Here the image not only represents Celie herself, but her interaction with another. She is also able to consider the possibility of a future which she had previously been incapable of imagining
for herself. Celie has begun to view herself as an individual with alternatives.

"A needle and not a razor in my hand"

Shug’s return with Grady, her new husband, provides the central incident for Celie’s cognitive development. Shug is no longer sexually interested in Mr.____, and Grady is a peripheral figure, leaving open the way for increased intimacy and strength in the relationship between the two women. "Us two married ladies now" (p. 105), Shug tells Celie. They talk constantly, but the level of communication reaches a new height when Shug asks Celie about sex with "your children daddy" (p. 108). Celie pours out the story of her rape, which she has never before been able to articulate. She finds emotional release in this revelation as she cries for the first time, and Shug comforts her. "Nobody ever love me," she says to Shug, who responds, "I love you, Miss Celie." Shug makes love to Celie, who feels "like a little lost baby" (p. 109). Here Shug’s care enables Celie to articulate and confront the absolute control by authority, for Celie’s rebellion against her stepfather Alfonso’s prohibition of silence diminishes
his power. She also uses both introspection and imagination in comparing herself to "a little lost baby," as though Shug has replaced Celie's mother, to whom she was not permitted to tell the truth. Figuratively, at this critical point in the novel, Celie is like an infant. In addition, her involvement in a lesbian relationship signals her freedom from the authority imposed by social convention. The emotional release of articulating her rape coupled with pleasure in physical intimacy with Shug has wiped her emotional slate clean. Shug has given her a sense of worth—a sense of being significant enough to be noticed and loved, preparing her for a major shift in development.

As a result of their new closeness Shug becomes very interested in Nettie, "cause she the only one you ever love sides me" (p. 113). Mr.____'s withholding of Nettie's letters from Celie is a vicious act, and a far greater offense to Celie than his mental and physical abuse because it is a conscious attempt to sever a relationship. When Shug purloins one of Nettie's letters from Mr.____ and gives it to Celie, she reacts with violence, finding herself "standing hind his chair with his razor open" (p. 115). Celie's repressed instinct to fight back at last is
understandably intensely violent, but is thwarted by Shug, who takes the razor away from her, forcing Celie to deal with her rage non-violently: "All day long I act just like Sofia. I stutter. I mutter to myself. I stumble bout the house crazy for Mr.____ blood. In my mind, he falling dead every which a way. By time night come, I can't speak" (p. 115). Shug stays with her "all night long. I don't sleep. I don't cry. I don't do nothing. I'm cold too. Pretty soon I think maybe I'm dead." As Shug talks to her, Celie progressively withdraws: "I know what I'm thinking bout, I think. Nothing. And as much of it as I can" (p. 116). Here Celie consciously avoids introspection, preferring instead to allow herself to be consumed by her feelings of rage and hatred. Later, as they read Nettie's letters, Shug suggests that they do something different: "let's make you some pants" (p. 136). Celie understands that Shug has "put a needle and not a razor in my hand" (p. 137).

Celie is unable to verbalize her rage to either Shug or Mr.____ at this point. However, because of Shug's love for her she learns to translate violent emotion into constructive action. She is able to recognize the potential consequences of unthinking
violence and understands Shug's motive in putting the
needle in her hand, indicating her ability to use her
imagination to both perceive the possible consequences
of violent action and predict her own potential for
creative action. Both of her primary oppressors are
losing control over Celie, and she no longer writes
letters to God, indicating that religious and
fatalistic precepts have diminished as sources of
knowledge and models of behavior. While Shug
represents a source of authority upon which Celie has
become dependent, she is beginning to find an internal
source of authority which will enable her to take
constructive action and assume responsibility.

"Nothing but blooming trees"

Celie's correspondence with Nettie constitutes
the last half of the novel. Celie articulates more
clearly; her syntax and vocabulary become increasingly
complex as she communicates not only events but her
perceptions, understandings, and judgments. Nettie's
letters dramatically enlarge Celie's world. Her
description of Blacks in New York--who "own a whole
section of it, called Harlem" (p. 126)--and in Africa
give Celie an ethnic heritage. At this point in her
development, Celie is cognitively prepared to accept the content of Nettie's letters, whereas she was unable to accept the concept that the earth was round years earlier.

While Nettie's story is vastly different from Celie's, her cognitive development roughly parallels that of her sister, and Nettie often articulates what Celie has learned from experience. For instance, Nettie comments on the friendships among Olinka women, who "share a husband, but the husband does not share their friendships" (p. 153), echoing the relationship between Celie, Shug, and Mr._____. She also tells Celie that "unbelief is a terrible thing" (p. 169), a judgment which Celie can understand, relating it to the pain she experienced in believing that Nettie was dead because she received no letters.

The importance of belief in terms of Celie's cognitive development is reinforced when Nettie tells her sister the truth about their parents. The man who raped Celie and fathered her children was not their father. Their real father, a successful businessman, was lynched when Celie was two years old. Celie's reaction to this revelation constitutes her last letter to God. She "feels daze," and her parting comment to
God is "You must be sleep" (p. 163). Celie realizes that she had never received the "sign" from God that she asked for at age fourteen. Again, she had accepted the obvious, interpreting her world literally. However, she has begun to learn to understand her circumstances without God's help, releasing her from dependence upon this remaining form of external authority. The truth here frees Celie, not from the brutality of rape and the loss of her children but from her horror of incest, the ultimate violation of relationships.

Celie is at last able to translate her thoughts into action. She and Shug set out to find Alfonso. As they approach his house, they see "all round [it], all in back of it, nothing but blooming trees" (p. 165). She confronts Alfonso with Nettie's story, which he confirms. Celie is able, unflinchingly, to openly take constructive action by confronting one of her primary oppressors, thus freeing herself from his control. Her earlier belief, which was based upon false information from an external authority has been replaced by a belief based on a discovered and confirmed truth.

Instead of relying on external sources of authority, Celie has assumed an internal authority.
Although Shug continues to present a beneficent influence, the fact that their relationship is based on love enables Celie to recognize her potential rather than being controlled and inhibited. Celie’s growing ability to understand herself and her relationship to the world have made it possible for her to take constructive action. Her use of her imaginative skill to construct new knowledge out of her experience is more obvious here, as she employs another variation of the tree image. Here the trees represent neither Celie’s instinct for survival nor her attraction to Shug. All in bloom "round Easter" (p. 164), these trees represent a spiritual renewal for Celie. She is also, at this point in her development, able to articulate fully. Celie is communicating physically (in her sexual relationship with Shug), verbally (in her conversations with Shug and her discussion with Alfonso), and in written form (in her letters to Nettie).

"This hard work, let me tell you"

A short time later, Shug and Celie enter into a conversation about the nature of God which results in another shift in Celie’s cognitive development. She
had stopped writing letters to God because she was angry with him; he represented another source of authority which had failed her. She tells Shug that God "acts just like all the other mens I know. Trifling, forgetful, and lowdown" (p. 175). Celie has come to believe that God doesn't care about her, when "All my life . . . deep in my heart I care about God. What he going to think. And come to find out, he don't think (pp. 175-176). When Shug asks Celie to tell her what God looks like, she describes a very conventional deity:

He big and tall and graybearded and white. He wear white robes and go barefooted.
  Blue eyes? she ast.
  She laugh. (pp. 176-177)

Shug explains that once her concept of God was similar to Celie's, but "when I found out I thought God was white and a man, I lost interest" (p. 177). Then she explains to Celie

  The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. . . .
  It? I ast.
  Yeah, It. God ain't a he or a she, but a It. But what do it look like? I ast.
  Don't look like nothing, she say. It ain't a picture show. It ain't something you can look at apart from anything else, including yourself. I
believe God is everywhere, say Shug. Everything that is or even was or ever will be. And when you can feel that, and be happy to feel that, you’ve found It. (pp. 177-178)

Here again Shug serves as a model for Celie. She has rejected the traditional concept of God as a white male and arrived at her own perception of religion in which she is part of, not separate from, the deity.

Celie struggles with this new perception of God, realizing that she’s been so preoccupied with the traditional image (and the social institutions associated with him) that she’s never really noticed what God has made: "Not a blade of corn (how it do that?) not the color purple (where it come from?)" (p. 179). As she begins to entertain the possibility of a beneficent creator who "love admiration" (p. 178), even "Mr._____ evil sort of shrink" (p. 179). But she does not accept Shug’s God at face value; she struggles to develop a concept which makes sense to her. Celie’s introspective ability reaches a new cognitive level as she consciously wrestles with an abstract concept, attempting to arrive at a perception of the world which she can understand and of which she is a part.

Complicating this intellectual effort, however, is the fact that she identifies the old white male God with her other oppressors. She is not yet ready to achieve
her own vision of her relationship to the universe because she has not yet come to terms with her rage at Mr._____.

"When ever you trying to pray," Shug tells her, Conjure up flowers, wind, water, a big rock. But this hard work, let me tell you. He been there so long he don't want to budge. He threaten lightening, floods, and earthquakes. Us fight. I hardly pray at all. Every time I conjure up a rock, I throw it. (p. 179)

While she fuses imagination (attempting to construct her own image of God and conjuring rocks in an attempt to pray) with introspection, she still confuses her conventional notion of God with Mr._____, imagining the rock as a weapon rather than as a subject for prayer. While her cognitive struggle is not communicated verbally to Shug, the fact that Celie explains her cognitive process in such detail to Nettie, using both imagination and introspection, indicates a heightened ability to articulate both a complex mental process and the context in which she thinks.

"I'm poor, I'm black, I may be ugly. But I'm here"

Now that she perceives herself as part of a larger world, Celie chooses to leave her home and go with Shug to Memphis. This decision to physically separate from
her husband constitutes another major shift in her cognitive advancement. When Shug informs Mr._____ that Celie is going with her, he turns to Celie in confusion. She confronts him with her knowledge of Nettie's letters, at last articulating her rage: "It's time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body just the welcome mat I need" (p. 181). She thus not only tells Mr._____ what she feels for him, but that she is entering a new phase in her life which has nothing to do with him. A more volatile confrontation occurs as Celie prepares to leave.

Mr._____ tells Celie that "You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all" (p. 187). Celie responds with a curse: "Until you do right by me, I say, everything you even dream about will fail. I give it to him straight, just like it come to me. And it seem to come to me from the trees" (p. 187). As they battle verbally, Celie has an apt retort for each bit of derision he heaps on her. Her parting line in this letter to Nettie echoes Mr._____'s earlier condemnation of her: "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here" (p. 187).
In confronting the last of her oppressors, Celie sheds the last vestige of authority as a source of control over her. She has found God inside herself, as her voice "seem to come from the trees." Celie's voice is full and assertive here, as she affirms her existence "to everything listening." Her curse is not vicious, but prophetic, challenging Mr.____ to change, indicating that she sees potential for growth even in him. She has translated thought into both verbal and physical action. Celie has also learned to separate fact (she is poor and Black) from opinion (she "may" be ugly), indicating that she is able to define her own self-concept. Through her developing cognitive abilities, including both introspection and imagination, enhanced by her relationship with Shug, Celie has found a place for herself within an expanding world view.

"Whatever happens, whatever you do,
I love you"

In the final primary incident of cognitive development, Celie releases herself from her emotional dependence upon Shug. When Shug tells Celie that she's going off with a nineteen-year-old boy, Celie again
becomes inarticulate. "I don't say nothing. I pray to die, just so I don't never have to speak" (p. 220). However, Celie's numbness here is different from that which she experienced in her rage at Mr.____. As Shug tries to explain her reasons, Celie writes notes laden with sarcasm: "Shut up," "Spare me" (p. 220). The tables have turned here. Shug, "scared to death," is the one who needs her. Celie manages, independently, to translate emotion, through thought, into constructive action. She finally tells Shug that "whatever happens, whatever you do, I love you" (p. 221), releasing Shug from her role as Celie's mentor but in a way that strengthens the relationship. Here Celie is able to use her all cognitive skills (introspection, imagination, and articulation) to understand another person's suffering as well as her own. In freeing Shug, Celie frees herself.

Concluding Comments on Celie's Development

When Celie returns home, she becomes financially independent through her successful business and an inheritance from her father. She custom designs pants to fit individual personalities (which she calls "folkspants"), indicating that she has developed a keen
insight into others and that she now has a variety of alternatives at her disposal. While she misses Shug, she has also become emotionally and cognitively self-sufficient. Celie’s development has reached a level at which she can become a mentor for her husband. As Mr. reflects, Celie asks him what he thinks, and he responds:

I think us here to wonder, myself. To wonder. to ast. . . . The more I wonder, he say, the more I love. And people start to love you back, I bet, I say. They do, he say, surprise. (p. 247)

Celie has attained a level of confidence in her own cognitive abilities which enables her to affirm the perceptions of another. In assuming the role of Mr.’s teacher, she reaches a higher level of development herself. When Mr. asks Celie to marry him again "in the spirit as well as in the flesh," she answers "Naw, I still don’t like frogs [men], but let’s us be friends" (p. 247). She has achieved not only the freedom of choice, but the ability to articulate her decision without threatening a relationship. When Shug writes that she’s coming home, Celie is no longer hurt or angry. "I be so calm," she writes to Nettie. "If she come, I be happy. If she don’t, I be content./
And then I figure this the lesson I was suppose to learn" (pp. 247-248).

The categories of Celie's cognitive development merge at the end of the novel. She has achieved an inner authority and assumed control over her life; introspection provides her with the ability to understand her place within the context of the universe; her imaginative skill has been transferred into a creative vocation; and she is fully able to articulate in all forms. She has attained wisdom, the ability to perceive fully and act constructively, and has learned to love freely and without restricting the subject of her love. With the return of Nettie and Celie's children, the cycle has come full circle. Celie has made her own connections and her own peace with the universe.

A Primitive Theory of Cognitive Development

An evaluation of the analysis of Celie's development yielded four primary cognitive categories or variables; it also revealed a continuum of cognitive development in her character. These four primary variables--the role of authority, articulation,
introspection, and imagination—acted as both agents and reflectors of cognitive change. In *The Color Purple* these categories appeared to reveal a pattern of cognitive development in which two themes—the formation of identity and the ability to make choices—functioned as parallel continuums of development. This construct is complex because the categories and themes of cognitive development are interdependent. Celie's abilities to expand her sense of identity and to make choices intersect as she learns to translate thought into action. In *The Color Purple* the pattern of Celie's cognitive development was viewed in terms of sources of knowledge. The constant comparisons of categories and themes revealed a primitive theory of cognitive development.

**External Sources of Knowledge**

As the novel opens, Celie is virtually controlled by external authority, including men, God, and social convention, so her world view is narrow and fatalistic. Her self-concept is determined by others, and she bases conclusions upon information provided by the various forms of authority. However, she has not yet learned to distinguish truth from falsehood, and the
conclusions she draws result in self-deception. Because her sources of knowledge are entirely external, she has no imaginative skill. Prohibited from communicating with anyone but God, she is silent. Celie’s innate capacity for introspection, however, enhanced by her need to articulate, is a cognitive tool which enable her to develop.

**Personal Experience as a Source of Knowledge**

A primitive sense of self begins to emerge as Celie learns to interrelate within the narrow context of her world. While her behavior is still controlled by external sources of authority, her cognitive process is becoming more complex. Her instinct for survival indicates that she has a primitive sense of herself as distinct from others, but also causes her to sublimate her feelings. She attempts to understand the motives and the behavior of others, and begins to develop a capacity for imagination as she incorporates images from the outside world into her concept of self.

The choices which she makes are based either on self-sacrifice, or on care for others. She achieves an identity within the community by conforming to a generic concept of conventional feminine goodness.
Celle's emotions constitute a source of knowledge here, as she begins to develop conscience, or an awareness of herself and her actions in relation to others. She listens to her feelings and uses her introspective skills to communicate her perception of the truth. At this point, however, only those people and forces (such as nature) who pose no threat to her are considered as sources of knowledge.

Caring Others as Sources of Knowledge

While Celie's behavior is still controlled by external sources of authority, her ability to establish a relationship of mutual care with another person to diminishes the impact of external authority. As care supplants control by others her ability to use her cognitive processes expands because she becomes more aware of new sources of knowledge. She learns to communicate more freely, articulating her thoughts and her feelings. Her self-concept becomes more distinct as she begins to view herself as an individual.

A caring relationship becomes critical to Celie's cognitive development. Through introspection and communication she learns to better understand not only her own behavior but that of others. However, when
her emotions become violent she reacts, unthinkingly, with violence. Because she is involved in a relationship based on care, Celie is prevented from translating feeling into violent action and learns through the understanding and guidance of another to translate her feeling, through thought and articulation, into non-violent action. She is, however, dependent upon the relationship of care for developing a sense of identity and for making choices. While it is beneficent, this relationship of care still assumes the role of authority as a source of knowledge.

Abstract Others as Sources of Knowledge

As Celie's world view enlarges, she learns that she has alternatives and becomes able to accept an increasingly wide variety of sources of knowledge into her understanding. Her growing sense of identity enables her to use her introspective and imaginative skills to make new cognitive connections between herself and the world around her. She is able to distinguish fact from opinion, to incorporate abstract concepts—such as God and her African heritage—into her view of herself and her relationship with the universe, and to engage in intellectual exercise. Her
ability to translate feeling into constructive action through thought makes it possible for her to perceive reality and to confront former sources of authority, thereby freeing herself from their control. With the support of a caring relationship, she learns to translate her imaginative and introspective skills into action through creativity, making herself economically independent.

Self and Other as Sources of Knowledge

In order to achieve personal independence or freedom, Celie must release herself from her emotional dependence upon her mentor. She accomplishes this by first by letting Shug go without severing the relationship, and then by realizing that she no longer needs the relationship in order to grow. She discovers that she herself is a legitimate source of knowledge. In making that discovery, Celie finds that she is able to incorporate all sources of knowledge—abstract concepts, personal experience, and other people into her cognitive repertoire and use them through introspection, imagination, and communication, to draw conclusions, formulate judgments, and articulate decisions. She has developed a construct of moral
responsibility through which she identifies alternatives, sets priorities, and makes choices based on care of self and others. She views herself as a distinct individual who has forged connections within a broad universal context, thus freeing herself from all sources of external control.
First published in 1899, Kate Chopin's novel describes the sensual awakening of the protagonist, Edna Pontellier. The awakening of Edna’s erotic nature consumes her, inhibiting cognitive development. Although this novel could easily be read as a feminist tract about a woman victimized by dictates of Southern convention, the researcher found more complex themes. While Edna is indeed the product of a culture which rigidly defined the role of women, she ultimately victimizes herself. *The Awakening* is a novel about non-development. The protagonist has enormous opportunities for cognitive development of which she fails to take advantage, allowing instead her newly discovered erotic nature to consume her.

*Whereas in The Color Purple the chronology of development is inherent in the theme, the internal consistency of The Awakening is achieved by exploration of the relationship between thematic variables and the potential for growth of the protagonist, rather than by chronology. Therefore, the researcher used a different format in the discussion of this novel, basing the*
analysis on emerging themes rather than on chronologically ordered incidents of cognitive development.

In describing the growth of her protagonist, Chopin explores three extremely complex subjects: the nature of convention, the nature of art, and the nature of freedom. Edna wants to escape the dictates of convention, she wants to be an artist, and she wants to be free. Her tragedy is that she gains no understanding of the purpose of convention, of the discipline required by art, or of the interrelationship between freedom and responsibility.

A brief summary of the plot is followed by an analysis of the primary cognitive characteristics of the protagonist. Next three important secondary characters are discussed in terms of their potential influence on Edna's cognitive development: Adele Ratignolle, a friend of Edna's; Mademoiselle Reisz, a pianist; and Doctor Mandelet. The three themes outlined above will be discussed as they emerge throughout the novel. The final section discusses the primary images in the novel and how they reveal the cognitive development of the protagonist.
Narrative Summary

Edna was born and raised on a Kentucky horse farm, a daughter of the Southern gentility. She married into the Creole aristocracy of New Orleans. The novel opens in Grand Isle, a resort island off the Gulf Coast of Louisiana. Leonce Pontellier is a highly conventional man who expects Edna to be a model wife and mother. As she falls in love with young Robert Lebrun, Edna becomes increasingly dissatisfied with this role. When the family returns to New Orleans she begins to rebel against her husband's expectations. She refuses to entertain according to Creole tradition, isolates herself from her husband and children, and begins to paint. When her husband leaves to attend her sister's wedding, she refuses to go with him. She sees only people she likes, and forms a romantic liaison with Alcee Arobin, a man of questionable reputation. Having decided to support herself on a small income supplemented by what she earns in the sale of her paintings, she moves out of her home. Robert returns from Mexico, and they meet twice by accident. They declare their love for each other but Robert leaves her, unwilling to establish a sexual relationship with
another man's wife. Edna returns to Grand Isle and drowns herself.

Cognitive Characteristics of the Protagonist

Edna Pontellier has substantial opportunity for cognitive growth. She is wealthy, educated (at least through adolescence, probably at a finishing school), attractive, talented, intelligent, and socially adept. Chopin (1899/1976) describes her as a woman whose eyes were quick and bright. . . . She had a way of turning them swiftly upon an object and holding them there as if lost in some inward maze of contemplation or thought. . . . Her face was captivating by reasons of a certain frankness of expression and a contradictory subtle play of features. (p. 3)

While Chopin suggests intelligence in her protagonist, she also introduces two qualities which provide greater insight into Edna's character. She daydreams, and her expression suggests both honesty and internal contradiction. Edna is also creative, as she has a "natural aptitude" for painting.

Edna's marriage is conventional and polite. She is fond of her husband and children, but is "not a mother-woman," (p. 8), and is treated by her husband as "a valuable piece of personal property" (p. 2). As an
outsider—a rural Southern "lady"—Edna is somewhat unfamiliar with the culture of the sophisticated urban Creole society. She is naive, a quality suggested by her "frankness of expression." She is unaccustomed to a culture in which marriage is so inviolable an institution that flirtation between single men and married women is accepted. For Creoles, romance poses no threat to marriage because flirtations aren't taken seriously. Without realizing it, Edna begins to fall in love with Robert, who caters to a different woman every summer because "it is the fashion to be in love with married people" (p. 122). Her relationship with Robert both awakens her erotic impulses and brings her emotions to the surface. After a minor disagreement with her husband Edna weeps:

An indescribable oppression, which seemed to generate in some unfamiliar part of her consciousness, filled her whole being with a vague anguish. It was like a shadow, like a mist passing across her soul's summer day. It was strange and unfamiliar. It was a mood. (p. 7)

Moods and emotions are unfamiliar to Edna, who has been trained to be self-contained and ornamental. In this passage Chopin introduces two feelings—indescribable oppression and vague anguish—which appear as refrains for Edna throughout the novel.
Chopin provides the reader, in a rather long passage, with further insight into the problem which plagues her protagonist: the contradictory impulses of evaluating through introspection her affections for Robert or of giving in to her feelings.

A certain light was beginning to dawn dimly within her—the light which, showing the way, forbids it. . . .

Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her. This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight—perhaps more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any woman.

But the beginning of things, of a world, especially is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such a beginning! How many souls perish in its tumult!

The voice of the sea is seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abysses of solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation.

The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace. (pp. 13-14)

The dangers for Edna are clearly outlined here. The light (of reason, perhaps) shows her the dangers inherent in "the beginning of things," of the new world which is opening up within her. The sea, a primary image in the novel, represents the "tumult" of Edna's repressed emotions; the sea seduces, "inviting the
soul" to "wander" and to "lose itself." It is this
impulse, rather than that of reason, which Edna chooses
to follow.

In another passage which is in part Edna’s
internal reverie and in part a conversation with her
friend Adele Ratignolle, Chopin provides the reader
with greater insight into the character of her
protagonist. "Even as a child," Edna "had lived her
own small life all within herself. At a very early
period she had apprehended instinctively the dual
life—that outward existence which conforms, the inward
life which questions" (p. 14). She begins to recognize
this "dual life," and it is her inability to reconcile
these two parts of herself that is largely responsible
for her tragedy. Chopin tells the reader that Edna’s
girlhood friends were all "self-contained," and
suggests that her protagonist developed few close
relationships. In her only reference to Edna’s
education, Chopin reveals that her closest friend at
school had possessed "rather exceptional intellectual
gifts, who wrote fine-sounding essays, which Edna
admired and strove to imitate, and with her she talked
and glowed over the English classics, and sometimes
held religious and political controversies" (p. 18).
Here Chopin suggests that Edna was receptive to the development of higher level cognitive skills. However, Chopin suggests an adolescent superficiality in Edna's response to this friend which has not developed into a more mature discrimination and analysis of self, relationships, or abstract ideas.

To Adele, Edna describes a summer day in Kentucky: a "meadow that seemed as big as the ocean to the very little girl walking through the grass, which was higher than her waist. She threw out her arms as if swimming when she walked, beating the tall grass as one strikes out in the water" (p. 17). She was, Edna says, "a little unthinking child in those days, just following a misleading impulse without question." She confides to Adele that "'sometimes I feel this summer as if I were walking through the green meadow again; idly, aimlessly, unthinking and unguided'" (p. 17). When Adele lays her hand over her friend's, Edna is confused because "she was not accustomed to an outward and spoken expression of affection, either in herself or in others" (p. 18). Edna is a romantic, and had youthful romantic fantasies. As a small girl she had "been passionately enamored of a dignified and sad-eyed cavalry officer who visited her father in Kentucky"
(p. 18). As an adolescent she fell in love with an young man who was engaged. As a young woman

she was overtaken by what she supposed to be the climax of her fate. It was when the face and figure of a great tragedian began to haunt her imagination and stir her senses. The persistence of the infatuation lent it an aspect of genuineness. The hopelessness of it colored it with the lofty tones of a great passion. The picture of the tragedian stood enframed upon her desk. (pp. 18-19)

In these excerpts from a long passage, Chopin predicts for the reader those elements of character which lead to Edna’s tragic end. As a child she followed "a misleading impulse without reason;" as an adult she is "unthinking and unguided." The potential for cognitive growth indicated in her adolescent receptivity to ideas has not been realized, and she remains, emotionally and intellectually, an adolescent. As Edna becomes increasingly aware of her emotional and her erotic nature, she allows herself to be led by them; her "inward life" fails to raise questions to the level of introspection. Her romantic fantasies of the cavalry officer, the engaged young man, and, particularly, the great tragedian indicate her propensity for desiring that which is hopeless and unattainable, another theme which runs throughout the novel.
Chopin has compared the sea with Edna’s memory of the meadow through her reference to swimming, suggesting a connection between the "seductive" voice of the sea and the childhood memory. This reference is reinforced by Edna’s romantic fantasies, recalled perhaps by her involvement with Robert. Unfortunately, because they arouse the same feeling of lassitude, of freedom from care, Edna confuses her fantasies with a real relationship. Chopin uses swimming as a metaphor when Edna, who has tried to learn to swim all summer, finally conquers her "ungovernable dread" one night and swims on her own.

A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given her to control the working of her body and her soul. She grew daring and reckless, overestimating her strength. She wanted to swim far out, where no woman had swum before. (p. 29)

Here Edna is no longer a child "swimming" through a meadow, but a woman swimming in the "seductive" sea. While she feels elated at her sense of autonomy, she overestimates "her strength," a forewarning of danger, for as she "swam she seemed to be reaching out for the unlimited in which to lose herself" (p. 30). This image also suggests the dangers of excess in which Edna does indeed lose herself.
Throughout the novel Edna has many opportunities to make choices which could lead to cognitive development. However, she consistently selects the one option which ultimately leads to her destruction by choosing to abandon her potential for introspection and imagination to her tumult of feelings. The morning after her swim, Edna seeks Robert out and suggests an excursion to a nearby island. Previously she had allowed Robert to cater to her. This time she makes the overture, an unconscious decision which removes them from the social context of Grand Isle and isolates them, creating a situation in which their relationship becomes more than a passing flirtation. She was "blindly following whatever impulse moved her, as if she had placed herself in alien hands for direction, and freed her soul of responsibility" (p. 34). On the boat Edna "felt as if she were being borne away from some anchorage which had held her fast, whose chains had been loosening--had snapped the night before; . . . the mystic spirit was abroad, leaving her free to drift whithersoever she chose to set her sails" (p. 37). Edna spends the afternoon taking a nap, after which the whole island seemed changed (p. 40). They eat, listen to local tales of pirates, and return
to Grand Isle very late at night. Alone at home, Edna "could only realize that she herself--her present self--was in some way different from the other self. That she was seeing with different eyes and making the acquaintance of new conditions in herself that colored and changed her environment, she did not yet suspect" (p. 1030). Both the bases and the consequences of Edna's choice are clear. She chose out of impulse, and her choice is to follow impulse, to drift, her direction set by "alien hands." She has divorced her "present self," which is motivated by emotion and desire, from her "other self," which had the potential for cognitive growth. She failed to understand, however, that these "new conditions in herself" would cause her, "seeing with different eyes," to dramatically alter how she perceived the world around her.

The next morning, having found that his relationship with Edna is moving beyond the boundaries set by Creole society, Robert announces that he is leaving for Mexico. Edna is troubled by his departure.

For the first time she recognized anew the symptoms of infatuation which she felt incipiently as a child, as a girl in her earliest teens, and later as a young woman. The recognition did not lessen the reality, the poignancy of the
revelation by any suggestion or promise of instability. The past was nothing to her; offered no lesson which she was willing to heed. The future was a mystery which she never attempted to penetrate. The present alone was significant; was hers, to torture her as it was doing then with the biting conviction that she had lost that which she had held, that she had been denied that which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded.

(p. 49)

Here Chopin again illustrates Edna’s potential for cognitive development. She is able to liken her infatuation for Robert to romantic fantasies, but chooses to learn nothing from this recognition. She has, willfully, chosen to divorce herself from her past and to assume no responsibility for her future—both of which, together with her environment, have provided context to her life. She wants no context; she wants only to be guided by her emotions and her eroticism. Allowing herself to be deluded by a desire for a vague concept of personal freedom, she has forsaken her potential for developing personal autonomy; her rejection of a static marriage and her "awakening" to passion teach her nothing.

When Edna returns to New Orleans she moves from a setting in which her unconventional behavior was accepted into one which is ruled by rigid conventions. Instead of assuming her responsibilities as wife and mother, Edna rebels against her husband’s expectations.
She begins to cut herself off from society, refusing to accept callers on her "reception day," and refusing to attend her sister’s wedding. "She began to do as she liked and to feel as she liked . . . lending herself to any passing caprice" (p. 61). After a disagreement with her husband, Edna retreats into her feelings, "seeking herself and finding herself in just such sweet, half-darkness which met her moods. But the voices were not soothing that came to her from the darkness. . . . They jeered and sounded mournful notes without promise, devoid even of hope" (p. 56). Edna does not heed these voices, which may be harbingers of danger; she has become willful and self-indulgent. In a tantrum, she childishly stomps on her wedding ring and breaks a vase because she "wanted to destroy something" (p. 57). Continually, she reacts against, not toward a coherent self-concept.

Edna has chosen a new direction for her life. However, because she has submitted to her newly awakened passion, she has traded the potential for cognitive growth (which requires conscious thought) for control by unconscious desires. Edna has many opportunities for cognitive development through the course of the novel, most of which are embedded in her
relationships with three characters: her friend Adele Ratignolle, the pianist Mademoiselle Reisz, and Doctor Mandelet. Each perceives the self-destructive course upon which Edna has embarked and offers advice to her in the hope that she will change her direction to one which is more constructive.

Adele Ratignolle: "You seem to me like a child"

Adele, "the embodiment of every womanly grace and charm" (p. 8), is a Creole and thus comfortable with the conventions of that culture. Her candor inspires Edna to talk about herself and her past. Adele is an astute observer, whose care for and understanding of Edna are illustrated in a conversation which she has with Robert. She asks him to "let Mrs. Pontellier alone" because "she is not one of us; she is not like us. She might make the unfortunate blunder of taking you seriously" (p. 21). Adele and Edna engage in an argument about children which is vital to an understanding of Edna's suicide. Edna tells Madame Ratignolle that "she would never sacrifice herself for her children." In explanation, she says
"I would give up the unessential; I would give my money, I would give my life for my children; but I wouldn't give myself. I can't make it more clear; it's only something which I am beginning to comprehend, which is revealing itself to me."

"I don't know what you would call the essential, or what you mean by the unessential," said Madame Ratignolle cheerfully; "but a woman who would give her life for her children could do no more than that--your Bible tells you so. I'm sure I couldn't do more than that."

"Oh, yes you could!" laughed Edna. (p. 51)

Adele, who is comfortable in the conventional role of motherhood and is shocked by Edna's statement, questions her friend's use of "essential" and "unessential." And Edna cannot explain her statement because it is "revealing itself" to her; she is making no conscious effort to understand her own feelings.

In New Orleans Edna continues to visit Adele, although she contrasts her own desires with her friend's contentment in a highly traditional and conventional existence. After one such visit, Edna is depressed: "The little glimpse of domestic harmony which had been offered her, gave her no regret, no longing. It was not a condition of life which fitted her, and she could see in it but an appalling and hopeless ennui" (p. 60). She prefers "the taste of life's delirium," although she "vaguely wondered" what that phrase meant (p. 61). Adele's is a lifestyle
which Edna has experienced and which no longer satisfies her. Unfortunately, the only alternative which she sees for herself is "life's delirium." Edna has sent her own children to her in-laws; she has chosen to reject domesticity, but has replaced that former commitment with nothing tangible.

After Edna moves out of her husband's home, Adele visits her in her new house, asking Edna to be with her when her child is born. Adele says, "'In some ways you seem to me like a child, Edna. You seem to act without a certain amount of reflection which is necessary in this life'" (p. 103). By this time, Edna has taken the opportunistic "Don Juan," Alcee Arobin, as her lover, and it is to this relationship that Adele refers. She tells Edna that because of Arobin's "dreadful reputation" she won't "'be able to come back and see you; it was very, very imprudent today'" (p. 103). Thus Edna has cut herself off from her friend because of her unconscious decision to indulge her erotic impulses. Edna attends the birth of Adele's baby; as she leaves, Adele says to her, "'Think of the children, Edna. Oh think of the children! Remember them!'" (p. 119). It is this plea, combined with Edna's rejection of her responsibility as a mother (and, by
extension, any meaningful feelings of common human interaction), which partially motivates her suicide.

Adele’s dedication to convention and concern for reputation seem somewhat superficial and her thoughts circumscribed by platitudes, but she has a kind of wisdom (including an understanding of the purpose of convention) which Edna lacks. Rather than considering what Adele says to her within the context of her friend’s life, Edna simply reacts against the traditional role which Adele represents. Implicit in these conversations are choices which Edna continues to ignore, such as discretion, introspection, and, most important, the development of an instinct for fellow feeling and continuity.

Mademoiselle Reisz: "You are the only one worth playing for"

The pianist Mademoiselle Reisz is a rather unpleasant woman to whom Edna is initially attracted because she is an artist. Mademoiselle is "a disagreeable little woman, no longer young, who had quarreled with almost every one, owing to a temper which was self-assertive and a disposition to trample
upon the rights of others" (pp. 26-27). When Edna hears her play Chopin in Grand Isle, however, the "very passions themselves were aroused within her soul, swaying it, lashing it, as the waves daily beat upon her splendid body. She trembled, she was choking, and the tears blinded her" (p. 28). When the piece is finished, Mademoiselle tells Edna that "you are the only one worth playing for" (p. 28), recognizing Edna's imaginative potential and artistic passion. While Edna responds to the artist in Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle is attracted to the potential artist in Edna. She also cares for Robert, the only Lebrun "worth a pinch of salt" (p. 52).

During one of her black moods, Edna goes to visit Mademoiselle, wanting to hear her play. She discovers that Robert has written to Mademoiselle. Because the primary subject of his letter is herself, she realizes that he cares for her. Mademoiselle becomes the only link between Edna and Robert; Edna visits Mademoiselle frequently, not only for her music, but to read Robert's letters. Mademoiselle rather enjoys keeping the romance alive, and Edna, who has tried to forget him, cannot. Mademoiselle often questions Edna, challenging her to think. For instance, when Edna
tells her that she has decided to move out of her husband's home. Mademoiselle asks her why, and is unsatisfied with any of the answers Edna gives her:

"'Your reason is not yet clear to me.'"

Neither was it clear to Edna herself; but it unfolded itself as she sat for a while in silence. Instinct had prompted her to put away her husband's bounty in casting off her allegiance. She did not know how it would be when he returned. There would have to be an understanding, and explanation. Conditions would some way adjust themselves, she felt; but whatever came, she had resolved never again to belong to another than herself. (p. 86)

Here Edna is still subject to whim. Having made the crucial decision to leave her husband, she is unable to explain the reason to Mademoiselle Reisz or to herself. She has not thought the situation through, and is unable to predict what will be the result. Refusing to assume any responsibility for the decision, she relies on the situation to "adjust" itself. Edna uses neither introspection nor imagination either to understand her behavior or to set a direction for her life. She prefers to let events carry her rather than making real choices for herself. The fact that Mademoiselle Reisz is an artist and thus something of a model for Edna will be discussed in a later section. Had Edna chosen Mademoiselle Reisz for a model,
however, her end might have been different.

Mademoiselle is a true artist, a woman who has come to terms with herself and her music. She is content to be poor and, although she is accepted in society because of her talent, she is unhampered by the conventions against which Edna has chosen to rebel.

Doctor Mandelet: "You seem to me to be in trouble"

Doctor Mandelet is not Edna's friend, but an acquaintance of her husband, who consults the doctor about Edna's odd behavior. The Doctor suggests to Pontellier that he not push Edna. "'Don't contradict her. The mood will pass, I assure you. It may take a month, two, three months--possibly longer, but it will pass; have patience'" (p. 72). The Doctor, however, suspects that the reason for Edna's behavioral change is a man, although he does not mention this to her husband. In order for the Doctor to observe Edna, Pontellier invites him to a dinner party for Edna's father, who is visiting. "She reminded him of some beautiful, sleek animal waking up in the sun" (p. 75). The Doctor is troubled as he walks home. Chopin tells the reader that "he knew his fellow-creatures better
than most men; knew that inner life which so seldom unfolds itself to unanointed eyes." Having perceived that the change in Edna is due to a new sensuality, he hopes "'to heaven [the man she's involved with] isn't Alcee Arobin''" (p. 76). Edna has not yet encountered Arobin, but shortly after this party she does, and allows him to fully awaken her passion by becoming her lover.

Doctor Mandelet does not appear again in the novel until the end. Edna has left Robert at her house to attend the birth of Adele's baby. After walking her home, the doctor asks her if she plans to go abroad with her husband, Edna replies

"Perhaps--no, I am not going. I'm not going to be forced into doing things. I don't want to go abroad. I want to be let alone. Nobody has any right--except children, perhaps--and even then, it seems to me--or it did seem--" She felt that her speech was voicing the incoherency of her thoughts, and stopped abruptly.

"The trouble is," sighed the Doctor, grasping her meaning intuitively, "that youth is given up to illusions. It seems to be a provision of Nature; a decoy to secure mothers for the race. And Nature takes no account of moral consequences, of arbitrary conditions which we create, and which we feel obliged to maintain at any cost."

"Yes," she said. "The years that are gone seem like dreams--if one might go on sleeping and dreaming--but to wake up and find--oh! well! perhaps it is better to wake up after all, even to suffer, rather than to remain a dupe to illusions all one's life."

"It seems to me . . . you seem to be in trouble. I am not going to ask for your
confidence. I will only say that if ever you feel moved to give it to me, perhaps I might help you. I know I would understand, and I tell you there are not many who would—not many, my dear."

"Some way I don't feel moved to speak of things that trouble me. . . . I don't want anything but my own way. That is wanting a good deal, of course, when you have to trample upon the lives, the hearts, the prejudices of others—but no matter—still, I shouldn't want to trample upon the little lives. . . . Don't blame me for anything."

"Yes, I will blame you if you don't come and see me soon. We will talk of things you never have dreamt of talking about before. It will do us both good." (pp. 119-120)

Doctor Mandelet understands Edna's dilemma as she tries to articulate the contradiction between her chosen lifestyle and her responsibility to her children. However, she rejects his offer of help when she needs it the most. Articulation could have provided Edna with some needed answers, but she does not feel "moved" to talk about herself. The Doctor possesses a wisdom from which Edna could learn; he doesn't judge her; he understands her situation, and he knows that she needs human companionship. Just before she drowns, Edna remembers Doctor Mandelet's offer of help, but it is too late.
Robert’s character is loosely drawn, and he is important only as the object of Edna’s obsession. He is a member of the Creole aristocracy and thus understands and accepts the conventions of his culture. When he realizes that he loves Edna, he goes to Mexico to avoid her. Upon his return to New Orleans, they meet by accident at Mademoiselle Reisz’s apartment. As Edna later waits in vain for him to come to her, she begins to feel that "she had abandoned herself to Fate, and awaited the consequences with indifference" (p. 112). When they meet, again by accident, Edna’s pointed questions about his absence force him to reveal his love for her. He tells her that he has been avoiding her because she is "not free" (p. 115), and he is shocked to realize that Edna is willing to engage in an extra-marital affair with him. At this point she leaves to attend the birth of Adele’s baby, extracting a promise from Robert to wait for her. When she returns, however, he has left a note for her: "I love you. Good-by--because I love you" (p. 121). Robert does the honorable thing, taking action which he
believes will save Edna from social ostracism. Nothing, however, can save Edna at this point. As she did as a child, she continues to follow a misleading impulse without question . . . idly, aimlessly, unthinking and unguided" (p. 17).

Primary Themes Which Relate to Cognitive Development

The Nature of Art

Edna wants to be an artist. She has a "natural aptitude" (p. 12) for painting, sees defects in her early work (p. 58), later draws "satisfaction from the work itself" (p. 79), and finds that she can make enough from the sale of her paintings to live on, supplemented by a small personal income. However, Edna only works "when in the humor," and has little understanding of what it takes to really be an artist. This is where her greatest potential lies; had she understood that art requires discipline and commitment as well as the use of the intellect to understand and channel passion, she might have been able to live a creative and fruitful life. However, her painting is as ruled by impulse as Edna herself is. Mademoiselle tells Edna what is required of an artist:
"I do not know your talent or your temperament. To be an artist includes much; one must possess many gifts—absolute gifts—which have not been acquired by one's own effort. And, moreover, to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul."
"What do you mean by the courageous soul?"
"Courageous, ma foi! The brave soul. The soul which dares and defies." (p. 68)

In addition to natural talent, which Edna has, Mademoiselle believes that an artist must have a courageous character. Whereas Edna does defy social convention, she does not possess a "courageous soul," which requires introspection and imagination. Art requires discipline as well, another criterion which Edna fails to meet, as she is embroiled in her feelings. The Romantic poets, who were subject to melancholy, investigated their emotions; melancholy became a subject of their art. The very qualities which Edna lacks as an artist—willingness to be introspective, to dedicate oneself to a difficult discipline, to survive the "tumult" (p. 14)—are those which she lacks as an individual. Her art comes to be far less important to her than either her relationship with Robert or her reliance upon impulse and physical passion to sustain her.
The Nature of Freedom

Edna wants to be free, but she mistakes her vague notion of freedom for lack of responsibility. By placing herself in "alien hands" she "freed her soul of responsibility" (p. 34); the anchor's chains snapped, "leaving her free to drift whithersoever she chose to set her sails" (p. 36); she lent "herself to any passing caprice" (p. 61); Mlle's music "seemed to reach Edna's spirit and set it free" (p. 84); Arobin's first kiss lifts the "mist from her eyes," leaving her with "an overwhelming feeling of irresponsibility" (p. 90). In order to free herself, Edna cuts her social ties and isolates herself. She fails to understand that freedom is an abstraction which only has meaning within a context, that being "free" to make one's own choices, to live one's own life, implies responsibility to self as well as to others; freedom is relative. Edna's concept of freedom is delusory because she allows passion, unbalanced with thought, to consume her.

The Nature of Convention

Edna views social convention as symbolized by her children, "antagonists who had overcome her; who had overloaded her and sought to drag her into the soul's
slavery for the rest of her days" (p. 123). Much of what Edna sees in convention is arbitrary and constricting; what she fails to see is that convention is necessary. Societies formulate rules in order to protect their members; the continuity of tradition includes laws as well as proprieties--standards as well as habits. Convention is a foundation of civilization which provides a context for life. When one breaks with convention one must make one's own rules--a dangerous game, at the very least requiring considerable self-awareness and much close observation. Edna is unable to make decisions contextually; she sees only her own desires and those forces which inhibit their fulfillment. Her only law is the passion which rules her; thus she is aimless, willful and self-indulgent. She chooses to commit suicide because, ironically, she refuses to sacrifice "herself" (by which she means freedom to do as she chooses) for her children, for whom she feels a vague responsibility. She foresees for herself a life of promiscuity and aimlessness which, while she desires it, she ultimately finds unacceptable. Edna had alternatives, but she was either unable to see them or unwilling to consider them. Her suicide is as self-indulgent as the life
style that led to it. As she drowned in the "soft close embrace of the sea," Edna heard the "spurs of the cavalry officer [clang] as he walked across the porch" (p. 125), thus indicating that she has immersed herself in the romantic fantasy of rescue by a "knight in shining armor."

Chopin's Use of Imagery to Reveal Character and Cognition

The artist constructs images in order to create meaning. The only images Edna uses are those from the romantic memories of her past: the child walking aimlessly through the field of grass and the cavalry officer. Instead of creating understanding through concrete experience, she allows fantasy to guide her. Whereas the artist must be receptive to forces and images in nature, Edna is blinded by her reliance upon fantasy. Chopin, however, uses a variety of images to guide the reader to an understanding of Edna's character and her fate. Repeatedly she describes two lovers in Grand Isle who are always followed by a woman in black, symbolizing death; whereas Edna fails to find significance in this image, its portent is clear to the reader. Chopin also uses the title of a song, Si tu
savais (Couldst Thou but Know) as a refrain throughout the novel. At first, Edna sings the song herself, having learned it from Robert. In New Orleans, she sings it to remind herself of him. When Robert's brother sings the song, however, after Edna has become enamored of Arobin, it upsets her violently. Chopin uses this song as a refrain for Edna; if she could have known herself, gained cognitive understanding, she could have survived.

It is the bird imagery in the novel, however, which leads the reader most directly to the meaning of Edna's story. Chopin opens the novel by describing a parrot (domesticated and ornamental) and a mockingbird (wild and free), representing what Edna is and what she wants to be. The image is used again when Mademoiselle "put her arms around [Edna] and felt [her] shoulder blades, to see if [her] wings were strong. 'The bird that would soar above the level plain of tradition and prejudice must have strong wings. It is a sad spectacle to see the weaklings bruised, exhausted, fluttering back to earth'" (p. 89). Here Chopin directly applies the image to Edna. Mademoiselle wants to know if Edna's "wings" are strong enough for her to "dare and defy," to take the risks necessary to
transcend the banalities of convention by selecting the rules and prerequisites that underscore creative accomplishment. Implicit in Mademoiselle Reisz's image is the vision of the weakling, signifying a warning to the reader and to Edna. In order to dare and defy, Edna needs the wings of an eagle; what Chopin gives her are the wings of a pigeon. Edna names her new home the "pigeon house;" the strength of this image is two-fold: Chopin unmistakably employs it to represent Edna, and Edna selects it for herself. Unlike eagles, pigeons are domesticated, dependent birds; they are also easily duped. Edna is a victim of herself, but she is also a victim of convention, a point which Chopin reinforces by using the pigeon image. She suggests that Edna, too, is domesticated and dependent; that because she was raised, trained, educated within the Southern aristocracy, she lacks the necessary temperament to "dare and defy" that culture which created her. The final bird image in the novel is a "bird with a broken wing" which Edna sees on the beach as she prepares for suicide, "beating the air above, reeling, fluttering, circling disabled down, down to the water" (p. 125). Here is the "bruised, exhausted [bird] fluttering back to earth" which Mademoiselle hoped would not be Edna's
fate. A traditional literary symbol of the spirit, the bird here represents Edna's spirit, which she believed she had freed. Chopin uses the image to reinforce for the reader that Edna crippled her spirit when she submitted herself to the guidance of her passions. Ironically, when her sensual nature awakened it engulfed her, preventing her spirit, her potential for self-understanding, to awaken as well.

An Evolving Theory of Cognitive Development

In terms of the subject of this research study, the primary theme of The Awakening is Edna Pontellier's lack of cognitive development. Edna possesses potential for growth: she is intelligent, receptive, and talented. The primary external factor which mitigates against her development--her rigidly prescribed role as a woman within upper class Southern society--is, however, a relatively superficial deterrent. The only real obstacle to Edna's cognitive growth is Edna herself. In spite of her receptivity and intelligence, she is essentially incurious, particularly about herself. In spite of her awareness of what Chopin calls the "inner life which questions," Edna ironically fails to question her motives, her
goals, or her behavior, and fails to examine her alternatives. As a result, she is unable to achieve a balance between her heritage (imposed conventions and a prescribed social role) and her own personal need for autonomy. She fails to develop a value system which will allow her to survive.

This analysis of Chopin's novel revealed several important variations on the categories and themes of cognitive development which were discovered in *The Color Purple*. Convention emerges as a controlling force against which the protagonist struggles to rebel in order to assert her individuality and attain autonomy. Chopin introduces the concept of a separated self—the outer, conventional self, and the inner self. In Edna's case the "inner life which questions" is neglected in favor of another, her emerging erotic and emotional impulses. Chopin suggests that Edna's survival depends upon her ability to merge these three aspects of herself into one whole, thereby coming to terms with her heritage and her feelings through questioning and evaluating her motives and her choices. Edna fails to survive because she does not perceive the complex nature of cultural and artistic convention, and chooses to permit her emotions to control her thoughts.
She is unable to personalize social roles—to formulate her own values in terms of the values rooted in her heritage. In rejecting convention, Edna also rejects relationships as a source of knowledge. She cuts herself off from all relationships which could sustain her, nurture her, and aid in her cognitive growth. Finally, while Edna is receptive, she is unable to use her imagination to translate new perceptions into a coherent cognitive structure. Instead, she relies upon fantasies—which are derived from romantic desires rather than from concrete experiences—to guide her choices and decisions.

One cognitive characteristic—authority in the form of self-indulged passion—consumes her, negating all her potential for development. Because Edna accepts only her own feelings as a source of knowledge she fails to grow. Her cognitive development progresses only to the point at which she recognizes latent emotional forces within herself; she wilfully refuses to learn anything constructive from her "awakening," confusing physical passion with artistic discipline. Because she cannot view herself as surviving within a context broader than her own feelings, her potential for cognitive development becomes subsumed by those feelings.
CHAPTER VI
THE BLUEST EYE

Toni Morrison's 1970 novel, set in Loraine, Ohio in 1940-41, is the tale of the descent into madness of eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove. Whereas *The Awakening* is a novel about inhibited development, *The Bluest Eye* is a story of anti-development. Here Morrison outlines factors which inhibit rather than enhance her protagonist's potential for cognitive growth. What Pecola learns stunts her development. The cycle of the seasons, usually representing the cycle of death and rebirth, frames the novel. Here, however, the seasons express a cycle of oppression for Black people. As the plot evolves, Pecola repeatedly experiences incidents of cognitive regression as events which have the potential for growth become progressively more brutal and oppressive. Pecola is unable to learn through interaction with her environment because her environment itself prevents her growth. Whereas in *The Color Purple* Celie used her developing cognitive skill to connect herself with the external world, Pecola's cognition becomes
progressively internalized until it is completely removed from experience.

Morrison begins the novel and introduces major sections with excerpts from a "Dick and Jane"-like primer, a strategy which she uses to establish several major themes in the novel: the influence that a pretty (but puerile) version of white family life has on Black children, the role of authority which whites impose upon Blacks through cultural convention, and a suppression of imagination which she finds in the Dick and Jane stories. One of the primary narrators is Claudia McTeer, who with her sister Frieda befriended Pecola at the time the events of the novel occurred when Claudia and Frieda were, respectively, nine and ten years old. Claudia's role as narrator serves a two-fold purpose. First, she provides the reader with a child's view of events, thus introducing one of the categories of the novel, the status to which children are relegated in an adult world. Secondly, the cognitive growth which the adult Claudia has achieved, illustrated by her retrospective evaluation of an important incident in her childhood, is the only positive message in Morrison's novel. For Claudia-the-narrator, Pecola has become a symbol of the
self-destruction inherent in a suppressed culture; for Claudia-the-child, Pecola is an individual whom, with the naivete of children, she and her sister attempted to save from destructive forces over which they had as little control as Pecola.

Narrative Summary

Pecola's story is quite simple. In the fall of 1940 she is placed by social workers with the McTeers after her father Cholly has set fire to their house. She is befriended by Frieda and Claudia, begins to menstruate, and is finally reunited with her family. In winter, she has several verbally brutal confrontations with Black schoolmates. In the spring she is raped twice by her father, becomes pregnant, is expelled from school, and asks Soaphead Church—a self-proclaimed local healer—for blue eyes. In the summer Pecola's baby is born prematurely and dies; believing that she herself has blue eyes, Pecola becomes mad. The marigolds which Frieda and Claudia planted in the hope of saving Pecola's baby fail to grow. Into Pecola's story Morrison weaves Claudia's retrospective commentary upon these events. An omniscient narrator supplies those aspects of Pecola's
story which Claudia could not experience, and digresses into the backgrounds of the three people who were most influential in the formation of Pecola's character and most responsible for her destruction: her father, Cholly; her mother, Pauline; and Soaphead Church.

Preliminary Evidence of Cognitive Characteristics

All four primary categories of cognitive development were discovered in *The Bluest Eye*: each is countered with its inverse. The role of authority and social convention, particularly as imposed by the dominant white culture, is critical to an understanding of the novel. This category creates fear, brutality, decay and isolation—the opposites of being loved and cared for and learning to love. Whereas introspection was a key category in *The Color Purple*, vision is predominant in Morrison's novel. Vision involves understanding and perceiving (internally)—viewing others and viewing oneself; its inverse is how one is viewed by others, which, in this novel, is determined by cultural convention. Eyes constitute the predominant image for Pecola, representing and determining both her self-concept and what she wants to
become. The third primary cognitive category is imagination, which is closely tied to the lack of relationship between children and adults. Frieda, Claudia and Pecola want answers, but they must attempt to understand events without sufficient knowledge because adults withhold information from them. Therefore, in an attempt to understand, they enhance their own limited experience with imagination, incorporating isolated bits of knowledge with previous experience.

Pecola is also curious; she constantly asks questions of those few people who befriend her. However, instead of using imagination to reconstruct and interpret experience, Pecola indulges in fantasy, the inverse of imagination. Fantasy is a destructive force because it is stimulated by images outside of one's experience, creating unrealistic expectations rather than understanding. Articulation is also force in the novel. The language directed at Pecola is vicious and destructive. Pecola herself is singularly inarticulate; while she questions, she does not provide answers. She communicates only in madness, when she conducts a lengthy conversation with an imaginary friend. Claudia, however, deals as a
narrator with inarticulation. Early in the novel, relating her childhood efforts to learn the truth from adults, she tells the reader that "we cannot know the meanings of their words. . . . So we watch their faces, their hands, their feet, and listen for truth in timbre" (Morrison, 1970, p. 16). While Claudia-the-narrator has obviously become articulate, as a child she was forced to rely upon imagination to find truth.

Two of these categories are introduced in the first pages of the novel. Pecola arrives at the McTeer home, having been put "outdoors," which, for Black people, is "the real terror of life" (p. 17). Her situation immediately generates the protective instincts of Frieda and Claudia who try "to keep her from feeling outdoors" (p. 19). For Blacks, who "moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate [their] weaknesses and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment" (p. 18), being removed from one's home, particularly by a family member, means total isolation—a kind of death concrete enough for even children to understand. Blacks have been forced outside the dominant culture
through cultural convention and authority; Pecola has been put "outdoors" by her brutal father.

The categories of both imagination and convention are implicit in Claudia's discussion of her impulse to destroy white baby dolls. She is a realist, sensing that the gift of white dolls is dangerous to her identity as a Black person. Claudia dismembers the dolls in order to discover how they work. However, "the truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulses to little white girls. . . . To discover what eluded me; the secret of magic they weaved on others" (p. 22). Pecola, on the other hand, is fascinated by Shirley Temple, symbolizing the wonderful white world of her fantasies. Here convention, in the guise of the influence of white culture upon the lives of blacks, creates a destructive form of imagination in Claudia and an even more destructive fantasy for Pecola.

"How do you get somebody to love you?"

Pecola is relatively happy with the McTeers, having fun, laughing and smiling as she plays with Frieda and Claudia. However, she doesn't fully interact with them; when they ask her what she wants to
do, she repeatedly says "'I don't care. Anything you want'" (p. 25), submitting herself to the authority of even her playmates. Pecola begins to menstruate, creating a potential incident of cognitive development, as the onset of menstruation traditionally signals entry into womanhood. When she begins to bleed, Pecola is terrified that she is going to die. Frieda, who knows something about "ministratin,'" tells Pecola that "'it just means you can have a baby!'' (p. 25). Instead of telling Mrs. McTeer, the girls drag Pecola off into the woods and try to deal with the bleeding themselves. When they are discovered, Mrs. McTeer cares for Pecola with the same tenderness that she would give her own daughters.

Later, Pecola questions Frieda: "'Is it true that I can have a baby now?'" When she asks how, Frieda replies, "'somebody has to love you.'" "'How do you do that?'" Pecola asks. "'I mean, how do you get somebody to love you?'" (p. 29). Both Pecola's penchant for asking questions and her need for love are introduced at this point. Most of her questions throughout the novel are variations of this one. Morrison's use of irony is implicit in this incident: not only are the Breedloves unable to "breed love,"
but Frieda's excitement at Pecola's ability to have a baby is countered by the fact that it is this very ability to create life which ultimately destroys her. The importance of this incident of development for Pecola is that she formulates the central question which motivates her subsequent behavior as she searches for a way to generate love.

At this point the omniscient narrator intrudes, providing the reader with a context for Pecola's story. The Breedloves believed they were ugly; they wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them. . . . You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. (p. 34)

Each of the Breedloves deals with this ugliness differently. Whereas Cholly's ugliness has become real because of his behavior, Mrs. Breedlove uses hers as a form of martyrdom; Pecola's brother Sammy uses his as a weapon. Pecola "hid behind hers. Concealed, veiled, eclipsed--peeping out from behind the shroud very seldom, and then only to yearn for the return of her mask" (p. 35). The Breedloves perceive themselves as ugly because that is how they are perceived by others.
Pecola, because she is convinced she is ugly, is isolated: teachers ignore her, classmates taunt her, and her parents brutalize her. Pecola believes that her eyes are the key to her ugliness; it occurs to her that "if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different" (p. 40).

The cognitive categories of convention as authority, imagination, and vision are all merged in the image of eyes. Self-concept is dictated by convention and reflected entirely in the perceptions of others. Instead of using imagination constructively, Pecola fantasizes that blue eyes, because they are considered beautiful by others will make her beautiful. She fails to distinguish—and this is her tragedy—between what others perceive externally, and the potential of her inner self: "she would never know her own beauty. She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people" (p. 40). So Pecola prays for blue eyes. Belief, determining the truth within a specific context, is a function of both vision and imagination here. Pecola believes that she is ugly because she accepts the judgment of others. Her observations tell her that people with blue eyes are
loved. Therefore, she believes that, if she has blue eyes, she too will be loved. Because others doubt her beauty, however, Pecola doubts herself.

"The total absence of human recognition"

The second incident which retards Pecola's potential for cognitive development occurs as she walks to a small grocery store to buy some candy. As she approaches the store she is "gently buffeted by familiar and therefore loved images" (p. 41). Looking at the dandelions and thinking that they are pretty, she wonders why people call them weeds and attempt to get rid of them. The leaves are useful, collected by "hunkie women in black babushkas," but "nobody loves the head of a dandelion. Maybe because they are so many, strong, and soon" (p. 41). Pecola is attracted to the dandelions because they are pretty, but also because they constitute an image which she, as Pecola and as a Black person, can identify with. Pecola's mind is receptive here. The dandelions and "other inanimate things she saw and experienced were real to her. She knew them. They were the codes and touchstones of the world, capable of translation and possession. . . . And owning them made her part of the
world, and the world a part of her" (p. 41). Pecola is able to use concrete experience to perceive herself as connected to a larger world. Here, her use of vision is constructive in terms of cognitive development. Perceptions of natural phenomena, "inanimate things," have the potential to enhance her growth. Her confrontation with another human being, however, destroys that potential.

Having decided to use her pennies to buy candy called Mary Janes, she enters the store and encounters the blue-eyed proprietor Mr. Yacobowski, who "urges his eyes out of his thoughts to encounter her" (p. 41). He reacts to Pecola as if she were not there: "he does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see" (p. 42). Pecola reacts to him, seeing the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge. And something more. The total absence of human recognition - the glazed separateness. . . . Yet this vacuum is not new to her. It has an edge; somewhere in the bottom lid is the distaste. She has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people. So. The distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes. (p. 42)

Hardly able to speak, Pecola purchases the candy and walks outside. Now, feeling shame, she reacts
negatively to the dandelions. "A dart of affection leaps out from her to them. But they do not look at her and do not send love back. She thinks, 'They are ugly. They are weeds'" (p. 43). The dandelions haven't changed, but Pecola's perception of them has because her perception of--her belief in--herself has been altered. Dandelions cannot reciprocate love; people can, but the storekeeper has failed even to recognize Pecola as a human being, so she doubts herself. Anger rises in her, overcoming her sense of shame. While there is a "sense of being," an "awareness of worth" in anger, "it will not hold," but is supplanted by shame (p. 43). The "static and dread" of Pecola's blackness has eclipsed the "flux and anticipation" of her youth, teaching her that receptivity to natural forces and to other people creates pain, anger and shame. Trying to prevent tears, Pecola remembers her Mary Janes, which have a picture of a little white girl with blue eyes on the wrapper. She eats the candy, which is "somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane" (p. 43).

Each cognitive category is fully developed in this incident. Authority is present in Mr. Yacobowski and
his reaction to Pecola which she internalizes, viewing herself as he viewed her. The perception and imagination with which she reacted to the dandelions is countered by the fantasy of blue eyes, of becoming Mary Jane, someone who is obviously loved. The eye image is central here. Pecola's entire self-concept has been altered by what blue eyes failed to see: a human being in a little Black girl. The category of inarticulation is also evident here, as the storekeeper's non-recognition prevents Pecola from speaking, even to tell him what she wants to purchase. Sensitivity, a variation on the category of imagination, is introduced in this incident. Pecola is highly impressionable and vulnerable, suggesting that she has the potential to become either a poet or a tragic victim.

Although after her confrontation with Mr. Yacobowski Pecola's potential for cognitive growth has been inhibited, she does retain some cognitive qualities. She spent a good deal of time with three prostitutes who lived in her building. She "loved them, visited them, and ran their errands. They, in turn, did not despise her" (p. 43). She questioned them, primarily about love: "'How come you got so many boyfriends, Miss Marie?'" (p. 44); "'How come
they all love you?'" (p. 45). As Miss Marie fabricates a tale about herself and John Dillinger, Pecola responds with a remarkable capacity for sensory imagination: she

saw Marie’s teeth settling down into the back of crisp sea bass; saw the fat fingers putting back into her mouth tiny flecks of white, hot meat that had escaped from her lips; she heard the "pop" of the beer-bottle cap; smelled the acridness of the first stream of vapor; felt the cold beeriness hit the tongue. (p. 46)

Later, Pecola thinks about her conversation with the prostitutes. When she tries to imagine "What did love feel like?" the only personal experience upon which she can draw is her parents’ lovemaking—the "choking sounds and silence" (p. 49) which she has overheard. Pecola wonders if Miss Marie and her friends were real. This question indicates Pecola’s potential for cognitive growth, as she contrasts Miss Marie’s pleasant story of love with the sounds of her parents’ lovemaking. However, she questions the reality of Miss Marie’s story because that kind of love is outside of her experience.

"She seemed to fold into herself"

Throughout The Bluest Eye confrontations with other people progressively destroy Pecola’s potential
for cognitive advancement. During the winter she has encounters with two Black children: Maureen Peal, a "high-yellow dream child" (p. 52) and Junior, a boy whose mother Geraldine had worked all her life to "get rid of the funkiness" (p. 68) of being Black. On a "false spring day" (p. 54), Maureen condescends to walk home with Frieda and Claudia. As they approach the playground, they see "a group of boys circling and holding at bay a victim. Pecola Breedlove." They are taunting her, chanting "'Black e mo black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked.'" Pecola is crying, and has "covered her eyes with her hands" (p. 55). She is rescued by the three girls, and Maureen, "suddenly animated, put her velvet-sleeved arm through Pecola's and began to behave as though they were the closest of friends" (p. 56). As the four girls walk together, Claudia, who has hated Maureen passionately, is pleased with her friendliness to Pecola. Maureen buys Pecola an ice-cream cone, and Pecola responds to her chatter and conventional aphorisms with questions.

Maureen's true motive in befriending Pecola emerges, however, when she asks Pecola

"Did you ever see a naked man?"
Pecola blinked, then looked away. "No. Where would I see a naked man?"
"I don't know. I just asked."
"I wouldn't even look at him, even if I did see him. That's dirty. Who wants to see a naked man?" Pecola was agitated. "Nobody's father would be naked in front of his own daughter. Not unless he was dirty too."
"I didn't say 'father.' I just said 'a naked man.'" (p. 59)

Maureen, out of prurient curiosity, only wants to know whether the boys' taunt is accurate. As she echoes the accusation Pecola vigorously denies it: "'I never saw my daddy naked. Never'" (p. 60). Defending Pecola, Frieda and Claudia chase Maureen away. Pecola "seemed to fold into herself, like a pleated wing.... She held [her misery] in where it could lap up into her eyes" (p. 61).

Maureen's viciousness is exceeded by that of Junior and his mother, but here Pecola has no one to defend her. Junior lures Pecola into his "beautiful" home with the promise of seeing kittens and, instead, abuses his mother's cat as Pecola looks on, horrified. When Geraldine enters, Junior accuses Pecola of killing the cat. The mother looks at her, seeing the kind of Black child she had tried to sanitize out of her existence:

She had seen this little girl all of her life.... They had stared at her with great uncomprehending eyes. Eyes that questioned nothing and asked everything. Unblinking and
unabashed, they stared up at her. The end of the world lay in their eyes, and the beginning, and all the waste in between. (p. 75)

The "pretty milk-brown lady in the pretty gold-and-green house" says to Pecola: "'You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house'" (p. 75).

At the grocery store Pecola's fragile self-concept is threatened by a white adult. In these two incidents she is tricked by Black children whose parents have submitted to the white world's system of caste. Pecola is lured by false friendliness into their traps, a victim of their own self-hatred because she is a symbol of everything they are trying not to be. Again the role of authority appears in the guise of convention; although the brutality which it produces is verbal in these two incidents, its impact upon Pecola is devastating. After each incident, shame at being what she is rises, as she covers her eyes, tucks her head in, and (as she walks away from Geraldine's house) holds her head down. Vision as a variation of introspection is also reinforced here. Pecola sees prettiness in Maureen and in Geraldine and her house; they see only ugliness in her. Pecola, seeing herself reflected in their eyes, believes more firmly in her own blackness and ugliness. Imagination is present
here only in the form of fear and deception: the image of a naked man and a false promise of kittens. Articulation is vicious and is directed toward Pecola, and the words reinforce her sense of shame. She cannot verbally defend herself against the onslaught of unjust accusation and labeling because she believes herself that it is true. Claudia tells the reader that "The Thing to fear was the Thing that made her [Maureen] beautiful and not us" (p. 62). Pecola is learning that receptivity, both to natural forces and to people, is painful; so she withdraws progressively into herself, trying both to hide her ugliness from others and to hide behind it. What she learns increasingly reduces her potential for cognitive growth.

"She never felt at home anywhere"

Pecola's next two encounters involve first her mother, in a seemingly minor incident, and then her father in the incident which leads directly to Pecola's destruction. Morrison provides the reader with detailed accounts of the backgrounds of both Cholly and Pauline Breedlove in order to provide greater insight into the cycle of oppression which consumes their daughter.
Pauline Breedlove is a woman whose dreams have died. The primary image which Morrison selected to represent Pauline is one of decay. A slight limp resulting from a nail puncture in her foot "saved [her] from total anonymity." It explained for her why she had no nickname, was never teased, and "why she never felt at home anywhere, or that she belonged anyplace" (p. 88). Cholly came into her life during her fantasy of rescue by a mysterious stranger, a "Presence, an all-embracing tenderness with strength and a promise of rest" (p. 90). Cholly seemed to walk right out of her fantasy. He took her from Kentucky to Ohio, however, where she did not fit in with Northern Blacks. Pauline became addicted to the movies where she was introduced to white concepts of romantic love and physical beauty. Ironically, it is at the movies that one of her front teeth, its decay long hidden from her, comes out; and she settles down to "just being ugly" (p. 98). Her marriage began to deteriorate as she became more emotionally dependent upon Cholly. Indulging in religion, she came to regard her husband as "a model of sin and failure; she bore him like a crown of thorns, and her children like a cross" (p. 100); into her daughter "she beat a fear of
growing up, fear of other people, fear of life" (p. 102).

Pauline works for a white woman whose house and family she loves. They represent the world of her movie fantasies; she neglects her own family in favor of her employer's. It is in this environment that the reader next sees Pecola, who has come to collect some wash from her mother. Frieda and Claudia have joined her there, and they engage in a conversation about Miss Marie, of whom the McTeer girls are frightened. Pecola tells them that the prostitutes are nice, and that they give her "'lots of stuff, pretty dresses, and shoes. I got more shoes than I ever wear. And jewelry and candy and money '" (p. 85). Frieda and Claudia accuse of her of lying; Pecola, about to defend herself, is interrupted by her mother. In the white woman's kitchen Pecola accidentally upsets a pan of hot cobbler which burns her. Pauline reacts violently, knocking Pecola to the floor, and turns to comfort her employer's daughter, a "little pink-and-yellow girl" (p. 87) who is frightened by Pecola. Pauline banishes the Black girls. Claudia tells the reader that "over her shoulder she spit out words to us like rotten pieces of apple" (p. 87).
Again, all the primary cognitive themes are present. In this incident Pecola responds to the McTeer girls' friendship; her story about the prostitutes, however, is pure fantasy, constructed in an attempt to create a caring relationship and to defend them against public opinion, represented here by Frieda and Claudia who have heard their mother call Miss Marie "the Maginot Line." The contrast between Pecola and the little white girl, both in cultural background and in Pauline's affections, reinforces the authority theme. Pauline is obsessed with the white way of life, and her ugly Black daughter represents both an unwelcome intrusion and an unmistakable contrast. While the prostitutes do tolerate Pecola--they are certainly kinder to her than any other adults are--her story is not founded at all on reality as were her perceptions of the dandelions. Pecola's story also constitutes her most extended bit of dialogue in the novel, suggesting that she is already more comfortable in a world of unreality. Because she does not experience love, she creates a fantasy in which she is loved, causing Frieda and Claudia to doubt her, thus reinforcing her belief in her inability to generate love. Articulation is also important as
Pauline spits angry words at her daughter while she croons lovingly to the little white girl.

"How dare she love him?"

Cholly Breedlove also had potential for development which was destroyed by the psychological brutality of white men and his struggle to survive in a white-dominated culture. When he and Pauline married, there was love between them. But "the constantness, varietylessness, the sheer weight of sameness drove him to despair and froze his imagination" (p. 126). As Pauline turned into a martyr, Cholly became a brutal drunkard, "rendered totally disfunctional [by] the appearance of his children" (p. 126).

One afternoon he comes home drunk and sees Pecola standing at the kitchen sink in the same pose as Pauline when he first saw her. "The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, then love. . . . If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness would irritate him--the love would move him to fury. How dare she love him?" (p. 127). Cholly expresses both his love for and his fury toward Pecola by raping her. "His soul seemed to slip down to his guts and fly out into her, and the
gigantic thrust he made into her then provoked the only sound she made—a hollow suck of air in the back of her throat. Like the rapid loss of air from a circus balloon" (p. 128). Pecola is raped by her father because he himself has been brutalized. When Pauline discovers him raping Pecola a second time, she beats her daughter.

Here the cognitive themes are perhaps the most obvious. Violence, created by the authority and convention of white culture is the only form of expression that Cholly knows. Pauline is equally brutal, punishing Pecola because she is her daughter. Cholly's imagination has been frozen by his marriage; Pauline lives a fantasy life in a white woman's kitchen. Each once had a vision of a productive life which was eroded by both their Blackness and their conviction of their ugliness; Cholly cannot bear to see the truth in Pecola's eyes because he has failed her. Pecola, the total victim, is completely inarticulate in this fatal encounter. All the "flux and anticipation" in her is now dead, murdered by the cycle of oppression which engulfed her parents.
Soaphead Church, a West Indian pedophile, anglophile, and misanthrope, is the primary villain in the novel. For Morrison, he represents the worst of both cultures: the white man's emotional and intellectual sterility and the Black man's self-destructiveness. For generations his ancestors had attempted to lighten "the family complexion" and thin "out the family features" which resulted in "a weakening of faculties and a disposition toward eccentricity in some of the children" (p. 133).

Soaphead's father was a schoolmaster who saw in his son an opportunity to

work out his theories of education, discipline, and the good life. Little Elihue [Soaphead] learned everything he needed to know well, particularly the fine art of self-deception. He read greedily but understood selectively, choosing the bits and pieces of other men's ideas that supported whatever predilection he had at the moment. . . . For all his exposure to the best minds of the Western world, he allowed only the narrowest interpretation to touch him. He responded to his father's controlled violence by developing hard habits and a soft imagination. A hatred of, and fascination with, any hint of disorder or decay. (p. 134)

Thus a man educated in the white Western tradition, he had been a minister and a social worker until he found his true vocation as a "Reader, Adviser, and
Interpreter of Dreams" (p. 130). Soaphead, whose business card read "Satisfaction guaranteed" (p. 137), deals in dreams, fear, and fantasy. Whereas Morrison has empathy for Cholly and Pauline Breedlove, she has none for Soaphead Church. He is a vicious small-minded man whose "business was dread" (p. 136). It is into this spider's den that Pecola, now pregnant with Cholly's baby, comes for help, hoping for a miracle.

With some difficulty, Pecola explains to him that she wants him to give her blue eyes. Stimulated by the sense of power which her request vests in him, Soaphead tells Pecola that he will grant her request. After she leaves he writes a letter to God, accusing Him of not caring for Pecola. But Soaphead Church has assumed Godlike powers: "I did what You did not, could not, would not do; I looked at that ugly little black girl, and I loved her. I played You" (p. 143). Crazed with power, Soaphead says that "I gave her the blue, blue, two blue eyes. Cobalt blue. A streak of it right out of your own blue heaven. No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily ever after" (p. 143).

All the most destructive forms of authority are present in Soaphead Church. He is the whitest
character in the novel, one who detests people but loves the things that people leave behind. He is highly educated, but intellectually sterile. His brutality is not physical but spiritual, arising not out of oppression as was Cholly’s and Pauline’s, but out of small-mindedness. He loves power, but has none until he encounters Pecola, who believes in the power of his magic. He uses this power, consciously understanding that she will become insane when he grants her request. So Soaphead Church indulges Pecola’s fantasy. But he fails to understand the reason for her request. He thinks that she wants to see the world through blue eyes; what Pecola wants is for other people, by seeing her blue eyes, to see into her soul, and to love her. Soaphead is highly articulate, but his letter to God is vicious and his kindness to Pecola is false. His imagination is "soft," unproductive and distorted. He doesn’t imagine that he has the power to give Pecola blue eyes; he knows that he cannot. But he has the power to indulge her fantasy, to make her believe that she has blue eyes. And she will live a fairy tale, happily ever after, because she will become completely, irrevocably, insane.
"The damage done was total"

Pecola conducts a lengthy conversation with an imaginary friend which reveals the extent of her madness. The friend, who functions as a level of sanity submerged within Pecola's mind, brings up subjects--such as Cholly's rapes and Pauline's condemnation--which Pecola wants to avoid. She repeatedly brings the conversation back to her eyes in order to avoid any encroachment of reality. She believes that she was forced to leave school not because of her pregnancy (which she never acknowledges), but because the teachers and students are prejudiced against her; her eyes are so blue. Pecola is worried, however, that her eyes aren't blue enough. She believes that to keep her imaginary friend she must have the bluest eyes:

Don't go. Don't leave me. Will you come back if I get them?
Get what?
The bluest eyes. Will you come back then?
(p. 158)

The tone of this conversation is childish, but the substance is devastating. Pecola uses her blue eyes to hide from the awful truths of her life. She wanted blue eyes so that people would love her, but even her
imaginary friend leaves her. She is isolated, silent, living in a world of fantasy and is, ironically, feared.

That summer of 1941 Frieda and Claudia gradually piece together, by overhearing fragments of adult conversation, the "secret, terrible, awful story" (p. 147) of Pecola's rape and her pregnancy. In an attempt to save the baby, they planted marigold seeds, believing that if the marigolds grew the baby (which everyone wanted dead) would magically live, and Pecola would be saved. "Our limitations were not known to us--not then... So it was with confidence, strengthened by pity and pride, that we decided to change the course of events and alter a human life" (p. 149). But the marigolds did not grow, and Pecola's baby died. Morrison opens and closes her novel with Claudia's discussion of this fact and of its meaning. She says that "our innocence and faith were no more productive than [Cholly's] lust or despair. What is clear now is that of all of that hope, fear, lust, love, and grief, nothing remains but Pecola and the unyielding earth" (p. 9).

Claudia describes Pecola:

The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendrils sap-green days, walking up and down,
up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a
drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbows
bent, hands on shoulders, she flailed her arms
like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile
effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but
grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could
not reach—could not even see—but which filled
the valleys of the mind. (p. 158)

Pecola was destroyed in the promise of her youth.
Claudia, who never knew that Pecola wanted blue eyes,
defers to her earlier image for her friend—a bird,
then tucking its head in shame, now trying tragically
to fly. But the blue void, like blue eyes, is
unattainable for Pecola; her fantasy of blue eyes
reflects in her crippled mind.

Whereas Pecola loses all her potential for
development, Claudia has achieved a high level of
cognitive growth. She views Pecola as a symbol of what
the white world destroys in Black people, and she
assumes some guilt for that herself. She tells the
reader what she gained from the symbolic Pecola's loss:

All of our waste which we dumped on her and which
she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was
hers first and which she gave to us. All of
us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we
cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful
when we stood astride her ugliness. Her
simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us,
her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness
made us think we had a sense of humor. Her
inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent.
Her poverty kept us generous. Even her waking
dreams we used—to silence our own nightmares. And she let us, and thereby deserved our contempt. We honed our egos on her. (p. 159)

Pecola is like the scapegoat who is slaughtered after absorbing the sins of a community. She had potential for authority, imagination, vision, and articulation, but these qualities and skills were unrealized, sacrificed, while others gained them by contrasting themselves with Pecola’s external self. She was unable to respond to discrimination and violence in any way other than interpreting it personally. It is her self-reflection and personalization of social injustice which causes her downfall. Morrison’s final irony is that Pecola could have generated love if her child had lived. Claudia, one of the few who actually befriended Pecola, views herself as symbolically responsible for destroying her because she did not look beyond the obvious. Claudia charges herself with being unable to see Pecola’s beauty; ironically, although she accepts her guilt symbolically, she is, in the end, the only one who does understand what Pecola could have become and why she did not begin to reach her potential. The bluest eye—the most melancholy vision—is Claudia’s, not Pecola’s.
An Evolving Theory of Cognitive Development

In Pecola Breedlove, Morrison has created a protagonist who, while she possesses potential for cognitive growth, is unable to counteract the forces in her environment which inhibit her development. While Pecola is an eleven-year-old child during the year that the events of the novel take place, the onset of menstruation in the opening pages indicates that one theme of the novel involves Pecola’s passage into adulthood. Symbolically the cycle of life represented by Pecola’s entry into womanhood coincides with the cycle of the seasons which frames Morrison’s novel and with the cycle of oppression from which Pecola is unable to liberate herself.

Pecola has a strong instinct for survival, and her curiosity and receptivity indicate that she also possesses a native intelligence which could have aided in her cognitive development. Pecola’s cognitive growth is stunted not because she fails to learn, but because her learning is counterproductive to growth. What she learns drives her into herself, where she has few resources. Because of the absence of love Pecola
has no recourse, no place where she can feel safe; she
can only retreat into herself, relying upon the little
knowledge she has acquired. What she understands is
that others perceive her as ugly; because she has no
other authority upon which to form self-perceptions,
she finds no alternative but to accept that she is as
other see her. She thus personalizes external
perceptions and develops no sense of personal identity.
Her native receptivity is converted into vulnerability,
enhanced by her reliance upon others to determine her
identity. Instead of constructive use of imagination
(the potential for which is indicated by her
identification with the dandelions), she gradually
comes to rely on fantasy as an escape from the pain of
her real world. Fantasy finally devolves into belief
in magic which, in Pecola's case, is madness.

Several variations of categories of cognition are
introduced by Morrison in *The Bluest eye*.
Vision—which includes seeing others, being seen, and
seeing oneself--is critical to an understanding of why
Pecola's cognitive development is regressive. She
confuses self-perception with external perceptions of
self, and selects a fantastic image of herself which
experience dictates is most accepted by the outside
world. Abstract ideas (the white culture) and the person who has abstracted himself from productive human contact (Soaphead Church) represent the primary villains in the novel. Concrete experience, on the other hand, provides potentially positive growth and learning experiences for Pecola. However, all her experience is tinged with fear, the logical result of brutality (physical, verbal, or cultural). Personal experience reinforces only negative self-perceptions: Pecola's experience tells her that others believe she is ugly, so she doubts her own self-worth. Morrison suggests here that belief—in the form of self-esteem, or belief in one's own internal worth—is one prerequisite to cognitive growth. Pecola tragically believes in others rather than in herself. Her story appears to indicate that accurate self-reflection is necessary for cognitive development, which in turn is an essential ingredient for personal growth. Pecola lacks love which, combined with the fierce imposition of a society which negates the very existence of Black girls, undermines her feeble but desperate attempts to define herself as an individual and to understand herself in relation to the world around her.
Morrison contrasts Pecola with Claudia, who demonstrates a high level of cognitive growth both in telling Pecola's story and by explaining to the reader what it means. Morrison suggests that Claudia-the-child achieved adulthood (whereas Pecola did not) because she was loved. Claudia also possesses a spirit of rebellion against the white culture and an imagination which is complemented by a sense of reality and of having a place in the world. Pecola, victimized by forces outside her control, survives; but her inability to formulate a self-concept which could withstand superficial social and cultural condemnation causes her inner vision to devolve into madness.
CHAPTER VII

THE SONG OF THE LARK

First published in 1915, Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* is the story of Thea Kronborg, a preacher's daughter from rural Colorado who becomes a Wagnerian soprano at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Whereas the protagonist in *The Awakening* fails as an artist, Thea Kronborg is an artist who reaches the height of her profession. In *The Song of the Lark* Cather explores what Thea has to overcome, to sacrifice and to learn in order to become an artist. In *The Awakening*, Mademoiselle Reisz explains to Edna Pontellier that an artist must have both talent and temperament; Edna had the talent to become a painter, but not the temperament, the "courageous soul" which could "dare and defy." It is what makes up the artistic temperament that interests Cather: the innate qualities of her protagonist, the circumstances which provide artistic opportunities for her, and the people, events, and forces which influence her. The central question in this novel is: What made Thea Kronborg an artist? The analysis and discussion of the novel are organized around this theme, and the cognitive
development of the protagonist is illuminated through analysis of her artistic development.

Thea’s artistic development is revealed to the reader primarily through other characters’ views of her. These secondary characters influence her cognitive development directly and indirectly by providing opportunities for growth. What Cather cared about, according to her preface to The Song of the Lark, "was the girl’s escape; the play of blind chance, the way in which commonplace occurrences fell together to liberate her from commonness" (Cather, 1915, p. i). The secondary characters who provide these "commonplace occurrences," fall into three categories. Thea’s mother, Doctor Archie, and Ray Kennedy make it financially possible for Thea to leave Moonstone to study music. Professor Wunsch (her first piano teacher) and Spanish Johnny (a talented Mexican musician) sense Thea’s talent and inspire her to develop it. Andor Harsayni (her piano tutor in Chicago) and Fred Ottenberg (her friend and, later, her lover) teach her where her talent truly lies, and provide her with opportunities to gain the cognitive tools she needs to become an artist.
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Narrative Summary

The novel opens when Thea is eleven years old and traces her development through her twentieth year, at which time she had gained the understanding to fuse her talent and her intellect with her drive to become a great artist. Thea is the daughter of a Methodist preacher in the small desert town of Moonstone, Colorado. She takes piano lessons from Professor Wunsch, a dissipated though talented and demanding itinerant piano teacher, and often plays and sings at church functions. At fifteen Thea leaves school to teach piano, which both she and her parents see as her vocation. While she is part of a large family, she is not close to her siblings and has few close friends her own age. Cather makes passing references to these friends, but does not show them to the reader as characters. The friends who are important to Thea are considerably older than she is: Doctor Archie, the town physician; Ray Kennedy, a railroad man who is waiting to marry her; and Spanish Johnny, a Mexican musician.

While Cather provides the reader with insightful descriptions of Moonstone and of Thea's character and
artistic potential, few significant events occur until she is seventeen years old. At this time Ray Kennedy dies in a railroad accident, having named Thea as the beneficiary of his insurance policy on the condition that she use it to spend a year in Chicago studying piano. With her parents' permission Doctor Archie takes her to Chicago and establishes her with a renowned pianist, Andor Harsanyi. After Thea has studied with Harsanyi for some months, he discovers that she has far greater talent as a singer than as a pianist, and arranges for her to study with the best vocal instructor in Chicago. Thea returns to Moonstone for the summer and finds herself frustrated by the narrow social traditions of the townspeople. She rebels against Moonstone proprieties and attends a dance in the Mexican community, where she sings, for the first time, for an appreciative audience. Upon her return to Chicago, she meets Fred Ottenberg, a wealthy brewer's son. Frustrated by city life and by the less talented but more successful singers for whom she plays accompaniment, Thea becomes ill and discouraged. Fred arranges for her to spend her nineteenth summer at a ranch in Arizona. Here she becomes entranced with the natural beauty of the
landscape and the myths of ancient cliff dwellers which restore her belief in her abilities, and she decides that she will go to Germany to study. She falls in love with Fred, however, and spends several months with him in Mexico. On the trip to New York Fred confesses that he is already married; unwilling to take any money from him, Thea borrows enough from Doctor Archie to fund several years' study of vocal music in Germany. When the reader next sees her ten years later, Thea has become a successful soprano in Europe and is singing leading roles in Wagnerian operas in New York.

Cognitive Characteristics of Thea Kronborg

When Thea is eleven, Dr. Archie "believed there was something very different about her" (p. 12). Professor Wunsch is interested in Thea's "power of application" and her "rugged will" (p. 37). Thea has a kind and patient nature, and loves those people whose intelligence and receptivity interest her. Mrs. Kronborg and Thea are both "serious," but whereas the mother is "calm and satisfied," the daughter is
"intense and questioning" (p. 153), treating "difficult things" as "enemies" to be conquered (p. 90).

As a child Thea is intelligent, intense, and rather solitary, preferring the company of her adult friends to other children. She is proud of her talents and her intelligence, preferring "to be hated than be stupid" (p. 181); superficial, conventional people are her "natural enemies" (p. 75). At twelve Thea is given an unheated attic room for her own, which was "the beginning of a new era in [her] life" (p. 73). The "clamor" of her large family "drowned the voice within herself," and in her own room

her mind worked better. She thought things out more clearly. Pleasant plans and ideas occurred to her which had never come before. She had certain thoughts which were like companions, ideas which were like older and wiser friends. She left them there in the morning, . . . and at night, . . . she found them waiting for her.

From the time when she moved up into the wing, Thea began to lead a double life. (p. 73)

Here Cather introduces a concept which is central to Thea’s cognitive development: the dual personality. Thea gradually becomes aware of an inner self—represented here by the "voice within her" and her "companions"—which is distinctly different from the rather removed and driven person which she
appears to be to others. The emergence of Thea as an artist is intricately tied to this "double life," as the inner personality possesses those characteristics of imagination, receptivity, and sensuality which she learns to temper with her intelligence and drive. This side of her character is also linked specifically to her voice. Whereas instrumental music for Thea represents intellectual exercise, her talent as a vocalist arises from the more hidden side of her nature. Her "companion" (her inner, creative nature) appears at those points in the novel when her music reaches the quality which can only be achieved, as Cather suggests, by blending imagination with intellect.

An important cognitive characteristic which stimulates Thea's imagination is her receptivity to natural forces. Moonstone is a "frail, brightly painted desert town . . . shaded by the light-reflecting, wind-loving trees of the desert, whose roots are always seeking water and whose leaves are always talking about it, making the sound of rain" (p. 46). Cather's language is filled with references to strong desert plants. During her childhood Thea's favorite place is the Turquoise Hills, a configuration
of rocks and sand dunes ten miles from Moonstone. Ray Kennedy takes her there for a day's outing. In the midst of "the many-coloured hills; rich, sun-baked yellow, glowing turquoise, purple; all the open, pastel colors of the desert" (p. 60), Thea hears tales of the Grand Canyon and Death Valley. She remembers a trip she made with her father to Laramie, and tales of eagles flying over the plains, where the "spirit of human courage seemed to live" (p. 169).

The natural beauty of the West and Midwest is a pronounced force in Cather's fiction, representing the strength of her protagonists. In The Song of the Lark the openness of the desert represents Thea's receptivity to her natural surroundings and, ultimately, to her own nature, suggesting that experiential learning is a requirement for cognitive development. During her childhood in Moonstone, it is primarily Ray who both shares Thea's love of nature and describes for her parts of the West which she has never seen. On a trip to Denver he described the cliff-dwelling Indians of the great canyons and his visits to Indian burial grounds, expressing his deep respect for the fortitude and artistry of those "old aborigines" who "'got all their ideas from nature'"
(p. 147). He tells Thea that "'when you sit in the sun and let your heels hang out of a doorway that drops a thousand feet, ideas come to you. You begin to feel what the human race has been up against from the beginning. . . . You feel like it's up to you to do your best, on account of those fellows having it so hard. You feel like you owed them something'" (p. 149). These stories haunt Thea, as does Ray's attitude toward the cliff-dwellers.

Countering Thea's receptivity to nature (part of her inner self) is her concern with convention (her outer self). As a preacher's daughter, she had to behave in public according to the expectations of the community. The most conventional people in Moonstone, however, are Thea's "natural enemies," such as Mrs. Livery Johnson, a "big, florid, powdered woman, a fierce W.C.T.U. worker" (p. 75) and Lily Fisher, the "angel-child of the Baptists," who "looked exactly like the beautiful children on soap calendars" (p. 79). Thea, however, is somewhat at the mercy of these people. The community is aware that she can sing, but at a Christmas concert she finds herself thwarted by Mrs. Johnson, who allows Lily to sing while Thea must play a number on the piano. Thea is "indignant, for
the vocal numbers were always more popular" (p. 75). Later, when Thea takes Mrs. Johnson's daughter as a pupil, this "natural enemy" again wins a confrontation. Thea pushes her students hard, reflecting her own intensity and expectations of self in her expectations of her pupils. When Mrs. Johnson accuses her of verbally abusing her daughter and threatens to see that she loses her advanced pupils, "Thea was frightened. She felt she could never bear the disgrace" (p. 133), and apologizes to Mrs. Livery Johnson. Thea's public image in the community centers around her role as a preacher's daughter and her abilities as a teacher of piano. Her inner nature is related to her voice. The fact that she is not permitted to sing in public for the Moonstone community is symbolically consistent with the part of her character which is prevalent at this point in her life--the preacher's daughter-piano teacher. While Moonstone's values provide Thea with the discipline necessary to develop as a pianist and to channel her creative powers, the small-town society represents convention, an inhibitor of her vocal talent. Those residents of Moonstone who influence Thea-the-artist, such as Professor Wunsch and Spanish Johnny, are outcasts from the community. Cather
suggests that, in order for Thea to grow cognitively and artistically, she must question and examine the values inherent in the conventions of Moonstone. She must learn to identify what she can use and to reject those values which inhibit and constrict her.

Another incident which reveals Thea's cognitive development evolves from a chance meeting with "the dirtiest and most utterly wretched-looking tramp she had ever seen" (p. 171). As he walks by the Kronborg house obviously hungry, Thea not only ignores him, but puts "her handkerchief to her nose. A moment later she is sorry, for she knew that he had noticed" (p. 171). When the tramp, angry at the townspeople for shunning him, drowns himself in the Moonstone standpipe (which caused a typhoid epidemic) Thea "struggled with the problem of his behavior as if it were a hard page in arithmetic. . . . She was constantly trying to make herself realize what pitch of hatred or despair could drive a man to do such a hideous thing" (pp. 173-74). When Thea discusses this problem with Doctor Archie her "eyes were hard and green with excitement" (p. 174). He tells her that "the things that last are the good things. The people who forge ahead and do something, they really count" (p. 176). Leaving Doctor Archie's
office, Thea feels "happy, flattered and stimulated" after her first "grown-up conversation" (p. 176). She "felt as if she were being pulled in two, between the desire to go away forever and the desire to stay forever" in Moonstone (p. 177). Thea has not really come to terms with the problem of the tramp; but she has learned from observation that human despair exists, and she is later able to incorporate her understanding of his despair into her songs. However, this discussion with Doctor Archie is important because for the first time she realizes that she may have a future outside of the confining boundaries of Moonstone, and she is torn between the security of what she knows and the excitement, the "ardor and anticipation" (p. 177), of what might await her.

Because intellectual and artistic development are merged in the character of Thea, the primary incidents of cognitive development in the novel center around her voice, for her the instrument of creation. Four significant incidents generate her cognitive development, and one situation serves as an inhibitor of growth. The characters categorized as musical influences on Thea play a major role in these incidents of development.
All four cognitive categories (roles of authority, introspection, imagination, and articulation) are present in Thea's early development. While the role of authority is less acute here than in the three novels previously discussed, it is an important force in the guise of social convention. Moonstone presents expectations which Thea must confront and escape in order to become an artist. In addition, however, she must learn to distinguish between those (personal) values which aid in learning and those (more social) values which inhibit learning. Thea has a strong intellectual nature, indicated by her propensity for questioning, her intensity, and her view of difficult problems as enemies. While she has the capacity for penetrating introspection, in Moonstone her mind is limited to rather solitary thoughts and a sense of communion with herself (in her little room) and with nature. Whereas in *The Awakening* Edna is initially receptive to nature and to other people, she ultimately limits her receptivity to her emerging eroticism. Thea's receptivity is far broader. Cather suggests that solitude, receptivity to people and to nature (in Thea's case a developing aesthetic sensibility), and experiential learning are prerequisites to cognitive
development. The category of articulation takes a somewhat different form in *The Song of the Lark*. Understanding truths about human nature and the human condition is important to Thea; her interest in external and internal truth is suggested in her "grown up" conversation with Doctor Archie. Later the concept of articulation becomes increasingly important in the interface between her voice and her character.

**Professor Wunsch:** "It was a nature-voice"

During one of her piano lessons Thea recites a German poem for Wunsch. He notices that when she read anything in verse the character of her voice changed altogether; it was no longer the voice which spoke the speech of Moonstone. It was a soft, rich contralto...; the feeling was in the voice itself, not indicated by emphasis or change of pitch... It was a nature-voice... breathed from the creature and apart from language, like the sound of the wind in the trees, or the murmur of water. (p. 97)

Wunsch forces Thea to think about the lyrics and to understand their meaning. For her, however, "it spoils [music] to ask questions" (p. 98), and she is reluctant to delve beyond the surface for meaning. Wunsch tells her that the beginning of all things is
"der Geist, die Phantasie. It must be in the baby when it makes its first cry, like der Rhythmus, or it is not to be. You have some voice already, and if in the beginning when you are with things-to-play, you know that what you will not tell me, then you can learn to sing, may-be." (p. 99)

In order for her to be a singer, Wunsch tells Thea, she must possess both "geist" (soul or intellect) and "phantasie" (imagination) and be able to use these faculties to understand the song "in der Brest" (in her heart). "'Some things cannot be taught,'" Wunsch tells her. "'If you not know in the beginning, you not know in the end. For a singer there must be something in the inside from the beginning'" (p. 98).

This lesson has a powerful impact upon Thea:

She was shaken with a passionate excitement. She did not altogether understand what Wunsch was talking about; and yet, in a way she knew. She knew, of course, that there was something about her that was different. But it was more like a friendly spirit than like anything that was a part of herself. She brought everything to it, and it answered her; happiness consisted of that backward and forward movement of herself. The something came and went, she never knew how. Sometimes she hunted for it and could not find it; again, she lifted her eyes from a book or stepped out-of-doors, or wakened in the morning, and it was there. . . .—a kind of warm sureness. And when it was there, everything was more interesting and beautiful, even people. When this companion was with her, she could get the most wonderful things out of Spanish Johnny, or Wunsch, or Doctor Archie. (pp. 99-100)
After this incident Thea "felt there was a secret between her and Wunsch. Together they had lifted a lid, opened a drawer, and looked at something. They hid it away and never spoke of what they had seen; but neither of them forgot it" (p. 100). In the above passage Cather suggests the cognitive processes which Thea must develop in order to become an artist. The intellect and the imagination as two faces of her cognitive character are reflected in Thea. Her outer nature, which questions and confronts "difficult things" as enemies is primarily intellectual; however, at this stage Thea is reluctant to "spoil" the song by examining it too closely. Before she can truly understand her music, she must "become" a song. In order to gain that level of insight, what she must find in herself is her "companion," represented by the "warm sureness," which is her aesthetic response to the beauty and wonder of nature. The secret which she and Wunsch share is the knowledge that something exists in Thea which has not yet emerged in her personality. When Thea senses this "companion," she feels whole; without it she loses her ability to be introspective and creative. Under Wunsch's tutelage, however, an identifiable inner self has begun to emerge in Thea.
Andor Harsanyi: "She sang from the bottom of herself"

On the train to Chicago at age seventeen, Thea looks forward to living in a city and studying piano under a master teacher. She is not reluctant to leave her home, and feels that everything "essential seemed to be right there in the car with her. She lacked nothing. She felt even more compact and confident than usual. She was all there, and something else was there, too—in her heart, was it, or under her cheek? Anyhow, it was about her somewhere, that sturdy little companion with whom she shared a secret" (p. 199).

Andor Harsanyi, a rising young concert pianist, finds he "had never had [a pupil] more intelligent [than Thea] and had never had one so ignorant" (p. 219). He discovers that, whereas she has "developed an unusual power of work," her "ardor was unawakened. She had never heard a symphony orchestra. The literature of the piano was an undiscovered world to her" (p. 220). Her intelligence, however, becomes obvious to him, as he watches her "charge at difficulties. . . . Sometimes she was so silent that he wondered, when she left him, whether she had got
anything out of it. But a week later, two weeks late, she would give back his idea again in a way that set him vibrating" (pp. 220-21). Thea does not learn quickly, but she learns thoroughly, using her intelligence to understand the complexities in a piece of music. Harsanyi tells Thea that "'every artist makes himself born. It is very much harder than the other time, and longer. Your mother did not bring anything into the world to play piano. That you must bring into the world yourself'" (p. 221). Here Harsanyi places the responsibility for Thea's success as an artist with her. Whereas Wunsch suggested that she could only be an artist if she had intellect and imagination, Harsanyi adds the essential ingredients of desire, ambition and hard work. Cather suggests that learning is the process of harnessing perceptions gained through introspection and imagination and channeling them into creative action.

In spite of her study with Harsanyi, Thea is unhappy in Chicago. She is frustrated with the piano because, while she is improving her technique as a pianist, she senses a lack of personal achievement and fulfillment in her work. She begins to believe that "everything she wanted was impossible" (p. 223), and
feels alienated in the city. "The thing that used to lie under her cheek, that sat so warmly over her heart when she glided away from the sand hills that autumn morning, was far from her. She had come to Chicago to be with it, and it had deserted her, leaving in its place a painful longing, an unresigned despair" (pp. 223-24). Thea has lost her "companion," that other part of herself which made her feel whole.

One evening Thea sings for Harsanyi a German song which Wunsch had taught her, and "it came back like an old friendship." She "drew back her shoulders, relaxed them instinctively, and sang" (p. 236). For Harsanyi, listening to Thea sing for the first time "was like a wild bird that had flown into his studio. . . . No one knew that it had come, or even that it existed; least of all the strange, crude girl in whose throat it beat its passionate wings. . . . She sang from the bottom of herself" (p. 237). Harsanyi knows immediately where Thea’s true talent lies. He begins to add vocal instruction to their sessions without telling Thea about this perception. "Under her crudeness and brusque hardness, he felt there was a nature quite different, of which he never got so much as a hint except when she was at the piano, or when she sang. It
was toward this hidden creature that he was trying, for his own pleasure, to find his way" (p. 240). Thus Harsanyi perceives in Thea one of the qualities which Wunsch told her she must have: the ability to feel a piece of music in her heart.

Cather provides the reader with additional insight into Thea's cognitive processes when she describes how her protagonist works through a song. Harsanyi notices that "she could not think a thing out in passages. Until she saw it as a whole, she wandered like a blind man surrounded by torments."

She was sometimes impervious to suggestion; she would stare at him as if she were deaf and ignore everything he told her to do. Then, all at once, something would happen in her brain and she would begin to do all that he had been for weeks telling her to do, without realizing that he had ever told her. (pp. 241-42)

Cather doesn't take the reader inside Thea's mind, but rather views the cognitive processes of her protagonist through the eyes of Harsanyi. He observes to his wife that "I like to see Miss Kronborg get hold of an idea. In spite of being so talented, she's not quick. But when she does get an idea, it fills her up to the eyes" (p. 242). Here the concept of an "idea" is connected with a feeling for, a sense of the meaning of a song--the lyrics and the music as they represent
tradition, form and celebration. It is only later that Thea learns to consciously understand these musical ideas.

Two relatively minor incidents expand Thea's artistic awareness and aid in her cognitive development. She visits the Chicago Art Institute, a "place where she could relax and play" (p. 247). The picture which she loves best is called "The Song of the Lark," a painting of a peasant girl who stops on a walk through a field to listen to a lark. For Thea, this picture is "right" (p. 249). She identifies with the girl who, according to Cather, is "awakening to something beautiful" (p. i). Thea's aesthetic sense has responded to the painting, but she is not yet able to translate her artistic perceptions into further understanding and recognition of herself as an artist.

It is Thea's first concert that introduces her to the power of music and its ability to enlarge her world. The impact of Dvorak's "New World Symphony" is to recall for her the best of Moonstone: "the sand hills, the grasshoppers and locusts, all the things that wakened and chirped in the early morning; the reaching and reaching of high plains, the immeasurable yearning of all flat lands" (p. 251). So obsessed is
Thea with Dvorak's ability to capture the natural spirit of the American West that she is "sunk in twilight" when the orchestra moves into its final piece, Wagner's "Das Rhinegold." Thus "with a dull, almost listless ear she heard for the first time that troubled music, ever-darkening, ever-brightening, which was to flow through so many years of her life" (p. 252).

After the concert, Thea is accosted by a strange man, a crude experience which causes her to lose the feeling which the music has given her. She feels that "there was some power abroad in the world bent upon taking away from her that feeling with which she had come out of the concert hall. Everything seemed to sweep down on her to tear it out from under her cape. If one had that, the world became one's enemy" (p. 254). Thea decides, however, that they should never have it. As long as she lived that ecstasy was going to be hers. She would live for it, work for it, die for it; but she was going to have it, time after time, height after height. She could hear the crash of the orchestra again, and she rose on the brasses. She would have it, what the trumpets were singing! She would have it, have it--it! Under the old cape she pressed her hands upon her heaving bosom, that was a little girl's no longer. (pp. 254-55)

Thea has discovered the power of art and decided that she wants "it." Whereas she had found a place of
retreat in her visit to the Chicago Art Institute, the concert has clarified her ambition and focused her drive. She consciously understands Dvorak, responding to his natural themes. While she heard Wagner with a "listless" ear, however, it is his music from which she derives a sense of her own power. Listening to Dvorak, Thea finds her love of nature expressed through art; this understanding opens her to the power of Wagner's complex compositions and abstract themes. These experiences provide Thea with opportunities for interaction with institutions of culture and education.

Harsanyi finally tells Thea that he believes her true vocation is as a singer, not as a pianist. "I believe," he says, "that the strongest need of your nature is to find yourself, to emerge as yourself. Until I heard you sing, I wondered how you were to do this, but it has grown clearer to me every day" (p. 263). When Thea argues with him, Harsanyi explains to her that he felt, in his piano instruction, that "there was something fighting us: your gift, and the woman you were meant to be" (p. 265). She understands finally what he means, and agrees to leave his instruction and hire a highly respected vocal instructor. Harsanyi's intuition that Thea's talent
for the piano was in conflict with her potential as a singer echoes Cather's earlier suggestion that two selves existed in her protagonist. As a pianist Thea is primarily a technician, adept at the conventions of the instrument; when she later "emerged as herself," it was as a singer. While learning the piano is a cognitive process, it is not enough for Thea; she needs to move beyond the technical to higher levels of cognition in which she can become one with her art.

Moonstone: "Something in the air froze her throat"

Thea returns to spend the summer in Moonstone. On the train to Denver, she thinks about her work with Thomas Bowers, the vocal instructor, and realizes that although she didn't like him she was happy. While she had studied piano in order to be a music teacher, she "never asked herself why she was studying voice. Her voice, more than any other part of her, had to do with that confidence, that sense of wholeness and inner well-being that she had felt at moments ever since she could remember." She has tried to keep it secret, to "protect it even from herself" (p. 272). It is that part of her which makes her feel safe with Ray Kennedy
because "by him she would never be discovered" (p. 138). As a girl Thea feared exposure of her inner self because she sensed that it would not conform with Moonstone expectations; as a young woman, however, Thea feels as if "she had an appointment to meet the rest of herself sometime, somewhere" (p. 272). She thinks that perhaps others "concealed another person in himself, just as she did," and realizes that it is their "second selves" that cause Wunsch to drink and Spanish Johnny to "go crazy," and understands that her other self spoke to theirs through their mutual love of music. "How deep they lay, these second persons, and how little one knew about them, except to guard them fiercely. It was to music, more than to anything else, that these hidden things in people responded" (p. 273). Armed with the confidence brought about by this introspection, Thea returns to Moonstone a different person.

She attends a Mexican dance at which she sings to the accompaniment of Spanish Johnny's mandolin. Here, for the first time, she feels the power which she is able to exert over people.

She had sung for churches and funerals and teachers, but she had never before sung for a really musical people, and this was the first time
she had ever felt the response that such a people can give. They turned themselves and all they had over to her. (p. 292)

Their reactions "seemed to be within her instead of without, as if they had come from her in the first place" (p. 293). As Thea sings, her two selves join together and bring out the second selves in her audience. Thus her voice becomes for the first time an instrument of art, joining artist to listener through a piece of music—the thing which is beautiful and powerful, which the artist becomes and translates.

Thea no longer fits easily into either the Moonstone community or her family. She finds that her brothers and sister have grown up and "become persons. They face each others as individuals" and Thea realized that they are among her "natural enemies" (p. 301), leading lives of tedium and habit. She is even somewhat alienated from Doctor Archie, who is frightened by her intensity and her drive:

Her pale cheeks, her parted lips, her flashing eyes, seemed suddenly to mean one thing--he did not know what. A light seemed to break upon her from far away--or perhaps from far within. She seemed to grow taller, like a scarf drawn out long; looked as if she were pursued and fleeing, and--yes, she looked tormented. "It's easy to fail," he heard her say." (p. 307)

Thea has shown Doctor Archie the "fierceness of her nature" (p. 308) and he feels a greater sense of
obligation toward her. Throughout her subsequent struggles, Archie is a rock upon which she can always lean for advice and support, representing, along with Thea's mother, the best of Moonstone.

Thea becomes unable to work at home, and longs to return to Chicago. In Moonstone there seemed to be "something in the air that froze her throat" (p. 309). Yet when she leaves she is disconsolate, realizing that she will never return, that she has outgrown many things which were important to her childhood and left behind the security which could have been hers had she stayed home and become a teacher of piano. Moonstone no longer provides what Thea needs: a broader, more diverse context within which to grow. Whereas on her first trip to Chicago she felt that she "lacked nothing," here Thea is troubled by leaving her childhood behind. Through introspection she has begun to gain a deeper understanding of her own potential and has found an artistic direction for her life which, although she is full of uncertainties, will ultimately enable her to forge her two selves into one.
Ottenberg: "The voice is simply
the mind and the heart"

In spite of what she has learned about herself in
Moonstone, when she returns to work with Thomas Bowers
Thea finds herself more divided than ever. In order
to pay for her lessons she plays accompaniment for some
of his other advanced pupils, most of whom are
professional singers. Thea is "getting tired of the
human countenance" (p. 313), especially of those
mediocre singers who are popular with the public.
Whereas Thea’s "figure had become definite, her
carriage positive," she has also achieved an
"indifference, something hard and skeptical" (p. 321).
Her smile is "cold and desperate" and she is learning
"to dislike" (p. 323). To young men she appears "cold,
self-centered, and unimpressionable" (p. 327). Thea is
unhappy, without realizing that her unhappiness comes
from witnessing the success of singers who neither have
her talent nor her drive for perfection. "She had
never been conscious of those instinctive standards
which are called ideals, and she did not know that she
was suffering from them" (p. 327). Thus playing the
piano becomes a source of torment for Thea; when she
sings, however, she is like a different person. When Bowers listens to her sing for Fred Ottenberg, he notices "something about his girl's back that he had not noticed before: a very slight and yet very free motion, from the toes up. Her whole back seemed plastic, seemed to be molding itself to the galloping rhythm of the song." She produced a "river of sound" (p. 339).

Fred becomes concerned about Thea, recognizing that she is "stale," "dead tired," and that she looks ill (p. 359). Fearing that overwork and discouragement will cut short her career, he offers to send her to his ranch in Arizona near a "whole canon [sic] of Cliff-Dweller ruins" (p. 361). Thea accepts Fred's invitation, remembering Ray Kennedy's tales of ancient Indian ruins. She stays several months at the ranch, spending her days in the canyon. "This was her old idea: a nest in a high cliff, full of sun" (p. 371). Thea finds time for reflection, and it "was as if she were waiting for something to catch up with her. She had got to a place where she was out of the stream of meaningless activity and undirected effort" (pp. 372-73). Although she sings very little, music comes to her "like a spring welling up. . . . It was much
more like a sensation than like an idea, or an act of remembering" (p. 373). Her power to think "seemed converted into a power of sustained sensation. She could become a mere receptacle for heat, or become a colour, like the bright lizards that darted about on the hot stones outside her door; or she could become a continuous repetition of sound, like the cicadas" (p. 373).

Thea’s experience at Panther Canyon echo Ray’s perceptions about the Indians. As she spends more time in the caves and on the trail to the cliff dwellings, she begins to have "intuitions about the women who had worn the path." Lying in one of the houses she feels "that a certain understanding of those old people came to her out of the rock-shelf" (p. 376). Henry Biltmer, the caretaker of the ranch, explains to her that the "customs and ceremonies and religion [of the Indians] went back to water. The men provided the food, but water was the care of the women. The stupid women carried water for most of their lives; the cleverer ones made the vessels to hold it" (p. 377). Thea becomes fascinated with shards of pottery and with the women who made them and begins to forge a sense of identity with the ancient people of the canyon:
One morning, as she was standing upright in the pool . . . something flashed through her mind that made her draw herself up and stand still until the water had quite dried upon her flushed skin. The stream and the broken pottery: what was any art but an effort to make a sheath, a mould in which to imprison for a moment the shining, elusive element which is life itself. . . . In singing, one made a vessel of one’s throat and nostrils and held it on one’s breath, caught the stream in a scale of natural intervals. (p. 378)

What Thea finds in the canyon is a context for herself and, therefore, for her music. "Those potsherds were like fetters that bound one to a long chain of human endeavor" (p. 380). Thea felt older, things seemed "simple and definite" as they were in her childhood. "Her ideas were simplified, became sharper and clearer. She felt united and strong" (p. 380). Her "companion" has been replaced by the discovery of her own nature and her connection with a history of artistic and personal endeavor.

Through her receptivity to nature Thea has discovered her second self, merged it with her other self and become whole. Her music is an integral part of this process which she had to achieve before she could become a true artist, merging intellect with imagination as Professor Wunsch had told her she must do. "She had not been singing much, but she knew that her voice was more interesting than it had ever been
before. She had begun to understand that—with her, at least—voice was, first of all, vitality, a lightness in the body and a driving power in the blood" (p. 381). With these insights, "everything seemed suddenly to take the form of a desire for action," and Thea decided to go to Germany to study music (p. 382). Believing in her potential as an artist, she takes hold of her future, divorcing herself from the life she had led in Moonstone, but taking with her the influences of the people she has loved and the natural beauty of the region. "The Cliff-Dwellers had lengthened her past. She had older and higher obligations" (p. 383).

When Fred Ottenberg joins Thea in Arizona they fall in love. For the first time she opens herself—both her selves—to another person; this relationship, while it causes her sorrow, is sustained for many years. Their relationship is less important than Thea's experiences in the canyon, however, in terms of her cognitive development. She has learned that the essential element of the creative process is receptivity and communication, and that these must be forged within the context of the broad range of human desire, suffering, and endeavor. It is this realization that enables her to become a Wagnerian
soprano, probably the highest achievement of a singer during the early twentieth century. Wagner's music is not only extremely complex and highly demanding for a singer, but his subject is the conflict between gods and men, framed by the ancient myths of the Teutonic people.

While Thea has yet to forge them into art, she has now recognized those cognitive characteristics which are essential to her development as an artist. While she has rejected the conventions of Moonstone, she has achieved greater insight into its constructive qualities. Moonstone is a desert town and, as the Indians of the canyon made a religion out of water, so Thea recognizes the tenacity and strength necessary to sustain life in the desert; it is this quality in her which drives her to achieve success as an artist. The cliff-dwellings also provide both a cultural and a human context which enables Thea to use her introspective powers to translate imagination into art. She experiences (through imagination) and understands (through intellect) both the struggles and the achievements of the cliff-dwellers. It is through these emerging abilities and understandings that Thea is able to view herself as a singer and make the choice
to pursue a career through the artistic "vessel" of her throat. As she became "a colour" and a "continuous repetition of sound" in the canyon, Thea learns to "become" her song.

Cather provides the reader with little information about Thea's ten years in Germany. Fred tells Doctor Archie that Mahler commented that she "seems to sing for the idea" (p. 483). He explains that

"There's the voice itself, so beautiful and individual and then there's something else; the thing in it which responds to every shade of thought and feeling, spontaneously, almost unconsciously. That colour has to be born in a singer, it can't be acquired. . . . It's almost like another gift--the rarest of all. The voice simply is the mind and is the heart. It can't go wrong in interpretation, because it has in it the thing that makes all interpretation. (p. 509)

Thea made sacrifices for her career. She terminated her romantic relationship with Fred, and did not return home when her mother was dying because her career was at a critical point. But she suffered from these decisions and learned from them. She tells Fred that "I learned to lose when my mother died" (p. 559).

Thea found the best in her experiences and used them to develop as an artist. She explains to Archie, "when I set out from Moonstone with you, I had had a rich, romantic past. I had lived a long, eventful
Artistic growth is, more than it is anything else, a refining of the sense of truthfulness. The stupid believe that to be truthful is easy; only the artist, the great artist, knows how difficult it is. That afternoon nothing new came to Thea Kronborg, no enlightenment, no inspiration. She merely came into full possession of things she had been refining and perfecting for so long. Her inhibitions chanced to be fewer than usual, and, within herself, she entered into the inheritance that she herself had laid up, into the fullness of the faith she had kept before she knew its name or its meaning. (p. 571)

Thea has moved into the fullness of artistry: "her body was absolutely the instrument of her idea" (p. 571). Not only have her two selves merged into one, but the passion, the sensory understanding which she learned in
the canyon is controlled, tempered, by her intellect. She has become an artist because she has learned to delicately balance der geiste and die phantasie. She has taken what was best in the conventions of Moonstone and translated them into the disciplines of her profession. As a singer she has symbolically achieved the highest form of articulation, communicating with a vast and diverse audience through the power of both intellect and imagination.

An Evolving Theory of Cognitive Development

Cather wanted to entitle this novel Artist's Youth, but was discouraged by her editor (p. i). She makes clear to the reader, however, that the primary theme of The Song of the Lark is the development of a young girl into an artist. Cather defines artistic growth as "a refining of the sense of truthfulness" (p. 571); Thea's story is about how she learns to recognize and understand fundamental truths about herself and to communicate these to her audience through the medium of her voice. Cather suggests that cognitive development is essential for artistic
development, and often illustrates in this novel the cognitive characteristics necessary for artistic growth.

As a girl Thea Kronborg possesses the qualities of receptivity, intelligence, and intensity. Her early learning is the result of the influence of other people. From her parents she learns the basic values of responsibility, kindness, and mental discipline. From Moonstone society she learns fastidiousness and the pain which results from small-mindedness and prejudice. From Ray Kennedy she develops a love of nature, an interest in other, older cultures, and the rudiments of an aesthetic sensibility. From Doctor Archie she learns trust in the basic goodness of human nature. From Professor Wunsch Thea learns artistic discipline and a drive for perfection. Key experiences in her childhood cause her to call upon the resources which she has gained in these early relationships. The solitude of her own room thrusts her upon herself, and she begins to develop introspective skill. Her confrontation with the tramp causes her to examine her own reaction—the result of Moonstone fastidiousness—to him and to question the meaning of his despair and his suicide. Here Thea initially
personalized the social role taught her by Moonstone society; in questioning the meaning of the tramp's experience, however, she is questioning the values of Moonstone. The town becomes restricting to her; when she eventually rejects the rigid social standards of her home town she is more fully prepared to enter the larger world which she finds in the cliff-dwellings of the Arizona Indians.

Thea has learned to distinguish between those values which inhibit and facilitate learning; the values which she retains and uses are those which derive from supportive relationships. All of the sustained relationships which Thea forms are supportive; she rejects (particularly in Chicago) those people who cannot nurture her personally, cognitively, or artistically. Unlike the other protagonists considered in this study, Thea has only minor confrontations with people who have the potential to harm her. Thus her cognitive struggles are directed more internally than toward conflict with others.

Thea learns through a combination of experience, aesthetic response (a specialized form of receptivity), introspection, and imagination. Ultimately it is her aesthetic sense which enables her to respond to the
natural beauty of Moonstone and, especially, of Arizona and to understand the heritage provided by the cliff-dwellers. Learning to use personal experience as a source of knowledge is the key to Thea's cognitive and artistic growth. Her receptivity to natural forces in Moonstone and in the canyons, her reactions to paintings and to her first concert--all contribute to her artistry and her success at singing Wagner by taking her out of herself and giving her a sense of origin, of a world worthy of celebration through art. The culture of the cliff-dwellers represent the primary abstract source of knowledge for Thea. She makes ancient experiences concrete and personal through her use of imagination and intellect. She comes to understand how they are a part of her heritage, thus creating a universal context for herself.

In the formal sense, music is convention, tradition, and abstraction. Like any other art form, it requires learning and tools--hard work, discipline, and native talent. Learning technique is as much as Thea can accomplish with the piano. Singing is her metier because, in addition to the formal aspects of the medium, she is able to incorporate imagination and sensation--the requirements of art which permits full
immersion--into song. For Cather the voice is a more effective symbol than the piano because the singer is one with her instrument. Thea's voice comes "from the bottom of herself" even in her sessions with Harsanyi. As she learns to become an artist this quality persists; she learns to translate the abstraction of music into direct, heartfelt utterance. She becomes able, as did Celie, to rely upon herself--as part of a long multi-cultural tradition, by learning to respond honestly to other people and to music as sources of knowledge, thereby constructing a context for her art which enables her to experience the "idea" of Wagner's teutonic legends. Thea understands that different legends, from different times and different cultures, merge in the presence of art.

In The Song of the Lark the concept of the dual self is prominent in that Thea forges the two parts of her nature into a unit. The major dilemma for Thea is how she becomes whole; her intellect and drive finally serve her imagination and her sense of beauty and power. Cather insists that Thea's creative power resulted from her drive and her ability to use introspection to understand and channel her imagination and her passion.
CHAPTER VIII
THE BELL JAR

The Bell Jar, Sylvia Plath's autobiographical novel about the causes of and recovery from her mental breakdown, was published in 1963. The Bell Jar is narrated by the protagonist, Esther Greenwood, who provides the reader with a limited but highly personal view of events, characters and perceptions. Esther's story spans eight months in the late 1950s, covering the events which led directly to her breakdown, her nearly successful suicide attempt, hospitalization, and treatment. She also includes flashbacks to events which contributed to her illness, providing the reader with a rich context for understanding the process of cognition. This discussion of The Bell Jar follows the structure of the novel, as Plath traces both the causes of her protagonist's breakdown and the changes in cognitive characteristics which aid in her recovery.

Narrative Summary

As the novel opens, Esther, a high achieving junior at an elite women's college near Boston, is in New York. She has been selected in a national
competition to work as a guest editor for a popular fashion magazine, Ladies Day. A scholarship student from a family of modest means, Esther is uncomfortable in the highly sophisticated world of New York fashion. A brilliant student who is beset with complex conflicts between her own ambitions and the expectations of others, Esther begins to show signs of mental illness as she returns home after completing her month at Ladies Day.

During July she is unable to sleep, eat, or work on her senior honors thesis. Her mother takes her to a psychiatrist, Doctor Gordon, who prescribes shock therapy. After one treatment, Esther refuses to return to him. She becomes progressively obsessed with suicide and with her father, who died when she was nine years old. Using the money she earned in New York, she makes several excursions, one to a seaside resort where she was happy, and one to find her father’s grave. She experiments with various forms of suicide and finally nearly succeeds in killing herself with an overdose of barbiturates. She is committed to a state asylum, but is quickly moved to a private hospital, sponsored by the benefactress on whose scholarship she is attending college. Esther gradually improves due to the care of
a woman therapist, Doctor Nolan, and a series of more humane electro-therapy treatments. The novel ends as she is about to be released from the hospital to return to college the following January.

In flashbacks Esther describes encounters with several secondary characters who contribute to her illness. Jay Cee, her editor and boss at Ladies Day, pressures Esther to make a career decision. Buddy Willard, a medical student at Yale, wants Esther to marry him, settle down to have babies, and forget about a career. Mrs. Greenwood, Esther's mother, is a very conventional and unimaginative woman who teaches clerical skills at a local college and believes that Esther should learn shorthand so that she can support herself after college. As Esther describes these people during the progression of her illness, they are caricatures rather than fully developed characters, and the reader knows them only through Esther's eyes.

Cognitive Characteristics of Illness

The personal characteristics which precipitated Esther's illness are revealed through her expression of her need to discover a personal identity. These characteristics, including indecision, a sense of
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divided self, and a distorted view of people and events, reveal Esther's confusion about roles and expectations as well as a deeply seated psychic struggle between what she wants (to be a poet) and what she believes convention demands of her (to be a wife and mother).

Esther's narrative begins during the summer the Rosenbergs were electrocuted, and it is with this reference that Plath opens the novel. The Rosenbergs "had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned live all along your nerves. I thought it must be the worst thing in the world" (p. 1). Esther tells the reader

I knew something was wrong with me that summer, because all I could think about was the Rosenbergs and how stupid I'd been to buy all those uncomfortable, expensive clothes, hanging limp as fish in my closet, and how all the little successes I'd totted up so happily in college fizzled to nothing outside the slick marble and plate-glass fronts along Madison Avenue. I was supposed to be having the time of my life." (pp. 1-2)

She felt she should be "steering New York like [her] own private car. Only I wasn't steering anything, not even myself. . . . I couldn't get myself to react. I felt very still and very empty" (p. 2). Here Esther describes symptoms of her illness. She contrasts how
she believes she should be behaving with her actual psychological state. She feels that she has lost control over herself; her inability to react, as well as her stillness and emptiness, suggests a lack of learning, or of any mental or emotional activity.

A series of reflection images reveals Esther's confusion about her identity. In a New York bar she feels herself "melting into the shadows like the negative of a person I'd never seen before in my life" (p. 8). In mirrors she sees "a big, smudgy-eyed Chinese woman staring idiotically," (p. 15), a face like "the reflection in a ball of dentist's mercury" (p. 16), a face that "seemed to be peering from the grating of a prison cell after a prolonged beating" (pp. 83-84), and "a sick Indian" (p. 92). These images suggest someone displaced, someone she doesn't know, someone who is the opposite of what Esther is supposed to be (brilliant, glamorous, in control); the mercury suggests a reflection that is easily fragmented. She combs her hair over her face "so Buddy couldn't see it" (p. 56), and doesn't want her picture taken with the other contest winners (p. 82). The night before she leaves New York she takes her clothes, which "seemed to have a separate, mulish identity of their own" (p. 85),
and throws them out of her hotel window. On her return home, Esther "felt it was very important not to be recognized" (p. 94). These images reveal an increasingly fragmented personality; as Esther begins to consider suicide after she returns home from New York, she becomes obsessed with newspaper pictures of suicide victims, believing that they "had something important to tell me" (p. 111). In the hospital, after her suicide attempt, she insists upon looking in a mirror and describes what she sees in the third person, insisting that it is a picture of another person rather than a reflection of herself.

Reinforcing these mirror images is Esther's increasingly firm conviction that she is two people: the high-achieving Esther who tries to meet everybody else's expectations, and the real Esther, terrified of failure, who doesn't. She fears that others will discover that she is not what she appears to be. When Jay Cee "unmasked" her, forcing her to admit that she doesn't know what she wants to do, Esther feels that "all the uncomfortable suspicions I had about myself were coming true, and I couldn't hide the truth much longer" (p. 24). At the same time, however, she wants people to see through the "mask" to the real Esther.
On a date with Constantin, a simultaneous interpreter, she hopes that he "won't mind if I'm too tall and don't know enough languages and haven't been to Europe, he'll see through all that stuff to what I really am" (p. 60). At home she introduces herself to a sailor as Elly Higginbottom from Chicago, which seemed to her "the sort of place where unconventional, mixed-up people would come from." Esther thought,

if I ever did get to Chicago, I might change my name to Elly Higginbottom for good. Then nobody would know I had thrown up a scholarship at a big eastern women's college and mucked up a month in New York and refused a perfectly solid medical student for a husband who would one day be a member of the AMA and earn pots of money.

In Chicago, people would take me for what I was. (p. 108)

Here Esther clearly conveys her perceptions of what others expect of her and her desire to escape that pressure. She also believes that her success is only superficial; that, if examined closely, she will be judged a failure. Esther is struggling to discover her own identity, and much of her confusion about herself results from her perception of what she wants to be as opposed to a mold she is convinced others are trying to force her into (a fiction editor or a wife and mother). Esther knows that she does not want to conform to the belief of Buddy Willard's mother that "what a man is is
an arrow into the future and what a woman is is the place the arrow shoots off from" (p. 58); she wants "change and excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself" (p. 68). Esther knows she's "unconventional and mixed-up," characteristics which she vaguely attributes to poets. However, she fails to realize that she herself may be very different from either her perception of a poet or Mrs. Willard's perception of a woman. Confusion about her identity is closely related to the role of authority in the form of a desire for personal autonomy; although Esther attempts to appear to be in control of herself, she is actually losing control. The images which she chooses to describe herself indicate potential disintegration of personality; the people Esther sees in mirrors are frightened, sick, or incarcerated, representing her fears about her private self.

Esther's successes have been academic; her discussions of her attitudes toward higher education and her own preferred methods for learning provide the reader with considerable insight into the cognitive processes which contributed to her illness. She is an observer who likes "looking on at other people in crucial situations. If there was a road accident or a
baby pickled in a laboratory jar for me to look at, I'd stop and look so hard I never forgot it" (pp. 10-11). Among the sophisticates of New York she learned that "if you do something incorrect at table with a certain arrogance" other people "will think you are original and very witty" (p. 22).

A brilliant student with "fifteen years of straight A's" (p. 68), Esther uses her mind to trick people as well as to achieve academically. In descriptions of her college success the reader becomes keenly aware of both her ability to deceive and the way she prefers to learn. The purpose of the honors program in which she is enrolled is "to teach you to think independently." Esther is an English major planning to write her honors thesis on images of twins in James Joyce. Insight into her cognitive processes, however, is revealed when she discusses her course work in the hard sciences. She loved botany because "it seemed so real to me." Physics, however, "was death":

A short dark man with a high lisping voice, named Mr. Manzi, stood in front of the class in a tight blue suit holding a little wooden ball. He put the ball on a steep grooved slide and let it run down to the bottom. Then he started talking about let a equal acceleration and let t equal time and suddenly he was scribbling letters and numbers and equals signs all over the blackboard and my mind went dead. (p. 28)
Esther earned an A in physics, but "it made me sick the whole time I learned it. What I couldn't stand was this shrinking everything into letters and numbers" (p. 29). Esther enjoys the concrete images in literature, but abhors the abstract formulas in physics. In order to avoid taking chemistry in which "all the perfectly good words like gold and silver and cobalt and aluminum were shortened to ugly abbreviations with different decimal numbers after them" (p. 29), Esther manipulates her advisor. Her "clever plan" is to convince her Class Dean to allow her to audit chemistry, rather than to enroll in the course. Her suggestion was approved by the Faculty Board, who were impressed with her "intellectual maturity" (p. 30).

Esther has provided the reader with a succinct analysis of her academic skill, her manipulative ability, and her preferred cognitive style. What she has also provided here, however, is further evidence of her illness, suggesting that, while she may have attained "intellectual maturity," she remains cognitively and personally confused. Esther feels uncomfortable with deductive reasoning, preferring the inductive methodology of literary analysis. She is
very good at deductive thinking, however, as evidenced by both her A in physics and her ability to delude faculty members. In addition to physics and chemistry Esther also hates eighteenth-century literature, "with all those smug men writing tight little couplets and being so dead keen on reason" (p. 102). She learns from observation of living things and human experience as long as they have not been abstracted into chemical elements and tight couplets. Esther’s assessment of Buddy Willard is a reflection of her aversion to abstract logic; he was "very scientific, so he could always prove things. When I was with him I had to work to keep my head above water" (p. 46).

The characteristics which led to Esther’s illness are further clarified by her perception of a dichotomy between her mind and body. This duality reflects her attitude toward men and how she believes they view women, as well as toward society in general. The primary image Esther uses to illuminate this dichotomy is that of babies. While she is confident in using her cognitive skill to get straight As and manipulate higher education, Esther is wary of her body. She fears sex because she connects it with having babies and being forced into domesticity. Consistent with
her propensity for learning from observation, she asks Buddy to "show [her] some really interesting hospital sights" (p. 51). He takes her on a tour of the morgue where autopsies were being conducted, and then "into the hall where they had some big glass bottles full of babies that had died before they were born. . . . The baby in the glass bottle was the size of a normal baby and he seemed to be looking at me and smiling a little piggy smile" (p. 51). It is in obstetrics, however, that Esther learns "what a hypocrite [Buddy] was" (p. 50). As they watch a baby being born he told her "the woman was on a drug that would make her forget she'd had any pain." Esther thought it sounded just like the sort of drug a man would invent. Here was a woman in terrible pain, obviously feeling every bit of it or she wouldn't groan like that, and she would go straight home and start another baby, because the drug would make her forget how bad the pain had been, when all the time, in some secret part of her, that long, blind, doorless and windowless corridor of pain was waiting to open up and shut her in again. (p. 53)

This experience reinforces Esther's fears of both motherhood and the conventional attitudes of men toward women, represented by Mrs. Willard's belief that women should be "the place where the arrow shoots off from" rather than the arrow itself. It was Buddy who
told her "in a sinister, knowing, way that after I had children I would feel differently, I wouldn't want to write poems any more. So I began to think maybe it was true that when you were married and had children it was like being brainwashed" (p. 69).

Images of babies become most prominent when Esther returns home from New York and her illness increases in intensity. The purpose of the image shifts, however, from reflecting Esther's fears of the traditional female role to revealing a primary reason for her suicide attempts. For a month she doesn't sleep. She attempts to start her honors thesis and to write a novel, but is unable to concentrate. She experiments unsuccessfully with various forms of suicide, including drowning and hanging. On a trip to the beach with several acquaintances, Esther considers drowning herself, which she thinks must be the "kindest way to die," and remembers that some of the babies in the bottles had gills. Trying to drown, she swims toward an egg-shaped rock: "I thought I would swim out until I was too tired to swim back. As I paddled on, my heartbeat boomed like a dull motor in my ears I am I am I am" (p. 129). This image is double-edged, suggesting Esther's confusion about suicide (her mind wants to
escape from the pressure others are exerting on her, but her body wants to live) and her desire to relinquish responsibility by symbolically returning to the womb (the fetus has gills, and her goal is the egg-shaped rock).

Esther also uses the baby image to refer to herself when, during her final suicide attempt several days later, she curls into a fetal position; it is her cry of "Mother" (p. 139) which saves her, causing Mrs. Greenwood to find her after three days in a "secret crevice" in the cellar (p. 138). Baby images represent not only Esther's ambiguous feelings about motherhood, but an unconscious need to be taken care of which is in direct conflict with her desire for personal autonomy.

Whereas the baby images suggest Esther's fears of losing personal autonomy and reflect her need to relieve herself of responsibility for personal choice, a series of visceral images reveals a perceived conflict between her mind and body. When Esther arrives home from New York and her mother tells her that she has not been accepted into a special summer writing seminar, "the air punched out of [her] stomach" (p. 93). *Finnegan's Wake* "made an unpleasant dent in [her] stomach" (p. 101). Her favorite tree in the
Boston Public Garden is the Weeping Scholar Tree, which she believes has come from Japan, "where they understood things of the spirit. . . . They disemboweled themselves when anything went wrong" (pp. 112-113). The stomach is an image representing Esther's sense of emptiness at the loss of something she had depended upon—maternal love, perhaps, or at least being understood. It also represents visceral impulses which disturb her, as if by disemboweling oneself one could cut out the thing that "went wrong." Her use of the viscera also suggests, perhaps, that Esther is uncomfortable with "gut level" intuitions or inductive perceptions because shesuspects that they may not be valid. She feels safer relying upon carefully deduced conclusions and manipulations.

Images representing Esther's ambiguous feelings about her mind and body appear during her account of her attempt to hang herself which occurs on the morning of her aborted drowning attempt. Her "body had all sorts of little tricks . . . which would save it, time and again. . . . I would simply have to ambush it with whatever sense I had left, or it would trap me in its stupid cage for fifty years without any sense at all" (p. 130). In the hospital she felt she "would rather
have anything wrong with [her] body than something wrong with [her] head" (p. 149). Esther views her mind and body as separate beings, each with a life of its own, which are fighting to control her.

Although Esther's illness is never diagnosed for the reader, Plath's selection of images suggests a schizophrenic personality symbolizing the separation of identity which was the cause of Esther's breakdown. Esther's reliance upon concrete observation as a source of knowledge is countered by her recognition of its insufficiency. When she tried to write a novel, her slow progress frustrated her until she discovered "what the trouble was. I needed experience. How could I write about life when I'd never had a love affair or a baby or even seen anybody die?" (p. 99). Esther believes that observation and deductive reasoning are inadequate sources of knowledge, and suggests that what she needs in order to become a writer is first-hand involvement. Like The Song of the Lark, The Bell Jar is about a young woman's struggle to become an artist. What Thea Kronberg learns is that the intellect and the heart must interact in the creative process. Plath presents a similar dichotomy in Esther, although here it is presented as observation versus experience.
Esther is very good at deductive reasoning and she is a keen observer; in her illness, however, she views observation as seeing life from the outside, and experience as its opposite—participating in life. Esther is observant, but she is open to primarily dissociated impressions and unable to incorporate her observations into coherent patterns. What she fails to understand at this point is that observation is a part of experience, and that both are essential in learning and creating.

In addition to the cognitive category of roles of authority, both introspection and imagination are prominent in Esther's progressing illness. They are present, however, in distorted form. Esther has identified two sources of knowledge—observation and experience—but she does not yet know how to use them constructively. She is introspective in that she understands that her behavior is erratic and that she is losing control over her thoughts and actions. But her perceptions become increasingly fragmented and controlled by both her contradictory desires: to take control of her own life and to be taken care of. Esther's use of imagery suggests the potential for constructive imagination which will enable her to be a
poet, but her images lack continuity. During her progressing illness they provide the reader with insight into her mental condition, but they are fragmented, revealing a distorted personality which is governed by fear.

While articulation is not a prominent theme at this point in the novel, its absence is significant. Esther has no one to talk to; she has no friends in whom she can confide, and her mother is unable to recognize that she is troubled. Esther’s story is internal: she shows the reader her dilemma through her own eyes. When she relates conversations, they are viewed as debilitating, as contributing to her illness. Both substantive communication and interaction with others are absent; as Esther’s illness progresses, she becomes increasingly solitary.

Transitional Images: The Fig Tree and the Bell Jar

Two prominent images link the cognitive characteristics of Esther’s illness with those of her recovery: the fig tree and the bell jar. The fig tree first appears in a story Esther reads for Jay Cee:
This fig grew on a green lawn between the house of a Jewish man and a convent, and the Jewish man and a beautiful dark nun kept meeting at the tree to pick the ripe figs, until one day they saw an egg hatching in a bird's nest on a branch of the tree, and as they watched the little bird peck its way out of the egg, they touched the backs of their hands together, and then the nun didn't come out to pick figs with the Jewish man any more. . . .

It seemed to me that Buddy Willard and I were like that Jewish man and that nun. . . . We had met together under our own imaginary fig tree, and what we had seen wasn't a bird coming out of an egg but a baby coming out of a woman, and then something awful happened and we went our separate ways. (p. 45)

Whereas the original image suggests the hope implicit in a birth and the despair in an impossible love, Esther's revision suggests a betrayal which made love impossible. On her date with Constantin she uses the fig tree as an image of alternatives:

I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantin and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names and offbeat professions, and another fig was an Olympic lady crew champion, and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out.

I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing
one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet. (pp. 62-63)

After dinner, it occurs to Esther that her "vision of the fig tree and all the fat figs that withered and fell to earth might well have arisen from the profound void of an empty stomach" (p. 63). Here the figs represent all the possible directions which Esther's future could take; each stands for a choice which, at this point, she is unable to make. As she discovered when she was "unmasked" by Jay Cee, Esther wants to do everything. The juxtaposition of the stomach image with the fig tree suggests that this inability to choose has resulted in the "profound void" of unfulfillment.

The second, more profound central image in the novel is the bell jar. Closed at the top and open at the bottom, bell jars are used either to display fragile objects or to establish controlled environments in scientific experiments. The bell jar first appears as an image when Esther enters the private hospital where she finally recovers. As she approaches the grounds she thinks that, no matter where she is, she "would be sitting under the same glass bell jar,
stewing in my own sour air." As Esther leans back in
the seat of the car, "the air of the bell jar wadded
round me and I couldn't stir" (p. 152). As employed
here the image suggests that Esther considers herself
responsible for her own illness. The more she breathes
her own air, the staler it becomes, creating a vicious
cycle of self-embroilment from which she cannot escape.

After Esther's first shock treatment at the
private hospital "all the heat and fear purged itself.
I felt surprisingly at peace. The bell jar hung,
suspended, a few feet above my head. I was open to
circulating air" (p. 176). Breathing more freely,
Esther begins to improve. When her mother is finally
allowed to visit, she tells Esther that "'We'll act as
if all this were a bad dream.'" Esther thinks to
herself, "a bad dream. To the person in the bell jar,
blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is
the bad dream":

A bad dream.
I remembered everything.
I remembered the cadavers and Doreen and the
story of the fig tree and Marco's diamond and the
sailor on the Common and Doctor Gordon's wall-eyed
nurse and the broken thermometers and the Negro
with his two kinds of beans and the twenty pounds
I gained on insulin and the rock that bulged
between sky and sea like a gray skull.
Maybe forgetfulness, like a kind of snow,
should numb and cover them.
But they were part of me. They were my landscape. (pp. 193-194)

Esther is no longer "blank and stopped," no longer a "dead baby." The purpose of shock therapy is to break up the patient's pattern of recent mental associations so that, with therapy, she can learn to reintegrate those associations. Open to "circulating air," Esther begins to view herself more clearly, formulating new perceptions about herself and her past.

The fig image represents Esther's illness and reappears here as one of the events in her past which was partially responsible for or symptomatic of her illness. These are primarily negative experiences: the cadavers Buddy took her to see at Yale; Doreen, the Southern belle, always in control, who was a co-contest winner in New York; the fig tree story of impossible love, as well as Esther's variations on the original image; Marco, who gave her a diamond and then tried to rape her; the sailor to whom she introduced herself as Elly Higginbottom; the nurse who was present at her first shock treatment; the thermometers which she broke on purpose in the hospital; the orderly whom she kicked; the changes in her appearance caused by medication; and the egg-shaped rock which represents
one of her suicide attempts. Although she may want to forget them, she is able to acknowledge them as part of the context of her life.

While Esther has not completely recovered from her illness, she is able to accept her past actions and associations, although what she acknowledges here are primarily images of failure. Significantly, the "egg-shaped" rock toward which she swam in her drowning attempt has become a "grey skull," indicating that the desire to be taken care of is destructive and counterproductive to assuming control of her life. What she had perceived in her illness as life-giving (the egg-shaped rock) she now perceives as an image of death (a gray skull). Esther associates her inner self, which emerges through therapy, with these negative actions and associations. The success images (brilliant student, contest winner, talented poet) are part of the other "fake" Esther. Prath suggests that Esther's recovery is dependent upon her ability to merge these two facets of her character. Free from the bell jar, in breathing circulating air she begins to view herself within the context of her own "landscape"—her own past which, hopefully, will include both Esthers.
Plath incorporates the bell jar as a double image, representing both Esther's distorted view of the world and the way in which she was viewed by others. Esther perceived herself as a displayed object, observed by those who imposed their own expectations upon her. Her distaste for deduction and science is also suggested here, as the bell jar is used to establish a controlled environment, which she had felt she was subject to. Freed from the bell jar's sour, self-perpetuating air, she begins to learn to interact with others. Esther is at first reluctant to allow Buddy to visit her, but, after thinking about it, she decides that "it would be a step, placing him, renouncing him, in spite of the fact that I had nobody--telling him . . . that he was the wrong one, that I had stopped hanging on" (p. 178). When Buddy does visit her, Esther describes him as a person with weaknesses: "his face was grave, even tentative--the face of a man who often does not get what he wants" (p. 195). This is a Buddy who is no longer self-assured, able to "prove things," and therefore no longer a threat to Esther. In response to his question "Do you think there's something in me that drives women crazy?" Esther laughs. Her reaction here is healthier,
and she is able to be objective about both Buddy and her previous relationship with him.

In spite of Esther’s fear of electrocution and her association of shock therapy with the execution of the Rosenbergs, electrotherapy has worked for her. In addition, this radical form of treatment indicates the serious nature of her illness; Esther is genuinely disabled, and recovery is a long, difficult, and uncertain process. As she prepares to leave the hospital to return to college she realizes that "someday—at college, in Europe, somewhere, anywhere--the bell jar, with its stifling distortions" could "descend again" (p. 197). The "distortions" of the bell jar are double-edged: not only has Esther’s perception of reality been distorted, but others’ perceptions of her have been distorted also. Freed from the bell jar, perhaps she can begin to view the world more clearly, and perhaps others will see her as she really is--no matter which of her alternatives she selects.

Three of the four primary cognitive characteristics are present in these two key images. The role of authority exists in the fig tree story as social and religious convention abort the love between
the Jewish man and the nun. Authority and convention as sources of control are prevalent in both aspects of the bell jar image. Esther's feeling that she is an object to be viewed by others and her sense that her environment was "rarified"--controlled as in a scientific experiment--suggests behavioral control by expectation. Esther's choice of imagery and her variations on these two extended metaphors suggest a great potential for both introspection and imagination. She uses the image of the fig tree to attempt to understand her relationship with the external world, and the bell jar to explain the nature of her illness. Her ability to select and amplify images out of fiction (the fig tree) and science (the bell jar) indicates a strong imaginative power. She has taken objects out of her own experience and used them, through introspection, to come to at least a germinal understanding of herself. The cognitive themes of identity formation and making choices are also evident in these images in a primitive form, as Esther begins to accept the need to establish her own identity and to choose among the alternatives available to her.
Cognitive Characteristics of Recovery

Each of the images which Esther employed in describing her descent into madness she also uses to describe her recovery. Whereas earlier Esther had refused to have her picture taken and saw only bizarre reflections of herself in mirrors, as she recovers she is able to look at pictures of herself and both recall the context in which the pictures were taken and examine them objectively. When another patient shows Esther a picture of herself in a magazine, in "a strapless evening dress of fuzzy white stuff, grinning fit to split, with a whole lot of boys bending around her" (p. 169), Esther denies that it is a picture of her. Here, however, she means that it is a photograph of the superficial Esther, the super college-girl-contest-winner, not of the real Esther who is frightened but gaining the confidence to try to live in the real world. She indicates here that when she rejected the image of herself which had been imposed by external, societal expectations, she became freer to formulate her own personal identity. Electrotherapy has been an effective form of treatment for Esther because she has begun to learn to integrate the
fragments of her identity into a complex but more coherent whole.

Because she has begun to gain a sense of identity, Esther is no longer afraid that other people will discover that she's a phony. She hated visitors because she felt that they measured "my fat and stringy hair against what I had been and what they wanted me to be" (p. 166). Recognizing the difference between expectations and reality and wanting to be free from the expectations, she has also recognized that the "weird old women" who she thought wanted to teach her something "wanted to adopt me in some way, and, for the price of their care and influence, have me resemble them" (p. 180). She is no longer willing to let others plan her life for her. In order to attain a higher level of maturity, however, Esther will need to learn to integrate her newly defined self with the larger world.

Esther's relationship with Joan Gilling is strained. Whereas their illness has provided a common ground for conversation, and Joan wants to be friends, Esther never likes her. Esther's attitude toward Joan as they recover, in fact, illustrates the limited nature of Esther's improvement and her continuing
difficulty in forming relationships with others. Her view of her schoolmate is eerily similar to that of a scientist:

"In spite of the creepy feeling, and in spite of my old, ingrained dislike, Joan fascinated me. It was like observing a Martian, or a particularly warty toad. Her thoughts were not my thoughts, nor her feelings my feelings, but we were close enough so that her thoughts and feelings seemed a wry, black image of my own." (p. 179)

Still immersed in herself, Esther is unable to discern the severe nature of Joan's illness and fails to care for her. When she later asks Doctor Nolan, "What does a woman see in a woman that she can't see in a man?" the therapist replies, "Tenderness." Esther's response is "That shut me up" (p. 179). She appears unable or unwilling to consider the implications of Doctor Nolan's observation. When Joan tells Esther that she likes her and makes a gesture which Esther interprets as a lesbian overture, Esther replies, "That's tough, Joan. . . . Because I don't like you. You make me puke, if you want to know" (p. 180). Esther's cruelty to Joan is defensive; she doesn't know how to be close to other women because she believes that they all want something from her that she finds threatening and is unprepared and unwilling to give. Esther learns to
accept the care that Doctor Nolan offers her, but she is unable to translate what she gains from that relationship into care for another. She makes no effort to understand Joan's need to be cared for, permitting instead her old prejudices regarding social roles and superficial success to dictate her behavior.

Esther employs a variation of the stomach image when, having gained weight in the hospital, she "looked just as if [she] were going to have a baby" (p. 157). The baby imagery suggests, perhaps, that she is less fearful of motherhood; more importantly, its use in this context indicates that, rather than needing to be cared for, she is more prepared to care for another. Sexuality is a key to Esther's recovery, as it was a critical factor in Celie's development. When Esther purchases a diaphragm, she feels that she is "buying [her] freedom" (p. 181). "I was my own woman. The next step was to find a proper man" (p. 182). Esther wanted the first man she slept with to be "intelligent," "experienced," "somebody I didn't know and wouldn't go on knowing--a kind of impersonal, priestlike official" (p. 186). The man she selects is Irwin, a mathematics professor. After losing her virginity, Esther felt part of the "great tradition"
(p. 187) of sexually experienced adults, which she had earlier viewed as "the only really significant difference between one person and another" (p. 66). However, Esther has chosen to reject the value system of a society in which, for women, "purerness was the great issue" (p. 66) and chart a different course for herself. Although there is no evidence that Esther has come to terms with the conflict between having babies and losing her artistic autonomy, Esther has separated sex from pregnancy. While she makes and acts upon her own choice in this matter, however, she raises questions for the reader regarding the actual degree of her cognitive development. In orchestrating the rite of passage through sexuality into adulthood she made a conscious choice to free herself from the expectations of people like Buddy Willard and her mother. However, her first sexual experience is not unlike a scientific experiment. Esther wants a ritual, not a relationship. Irwin is another caricature rather than a real person, someone on whom she could "practice [her] new, normal personality" (p. 184). Esther has managed to simplify a very complex choice, manipulating Irwin as she had manipulated her teachers at college. The fact that she selected a professor of mathematics as her first sexual
partner suggests a defensive symbolic confrontation with her aversion to deductive learning rather than a recognition of deduction as a legitimate process for gaining knowledge. In addition, her feeling that she was "part of a great tradition" suggests that she is conforming to a prescribed role rather than freeing herself from the expectations imposed by convention. Esther's ritual loss of her virginity, while it is an action based on choice, is an empty action in that constructive sexuality is rooted in commitment and relationship and her action negates relationship.

Attending Joan's funeral, Esther "took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart. I am, I am, I am" (p. 199). Here the chant is not her body's insistence upon survival as it was when she tried to drown herself, but a tentative affirmation of spirit. When she departed from the hospital Esther hoped "I would feel sure and knowledgeable about everything that lay ahead--after all, I had been 'analyzed.' Instead, all I could see were question marks. . . . There ought, I thought, to be a ritual for being born twice" (p. 199). Instead of preferring things that can't be proven, she is asking questions, realizing that there
are no easy answers. The ambiguous baby image has been translated into the concept of rebirth.

Esther has achieved a level of cognitive development during the process of her recovery but it is limited, suggesting potential rather than achievement. She has been reborn in the sense that she views herself and her surroundings in a new light; but her future is fraught with all the dangers that a baby is subject to. Esther is equipped with the cognitive skill necessary to become a poet, evidenced by her personally narrated autobiography. Additionally, she is intelligent, ambitious, and has shown evidence of both introspection and imagination. The fourth cognitive category, however, is vital to her success. Inability to communicate with others was a symptom of her illness; articulation is required for recovery. Esther learned to talk with her therapist, but when she leaves the hospital she is alone. Plath gives the reader no indication that there is anyone other than her therapist with whom she has a close relationship. Articulation assumes two forms for Esther: communication in personal relationships and through poetry. In each case, telling the truth is the primary goal. Her early conversations were
manipulative and evasive; her experience with psychoanalysis has enabled her to begin to view herself as an individual and to accept her idiosyncrasies and past mistakes. As a poet, however, Esther must learn to translate, through introspection and imagination, her own experiences and observations into images which will communicate to a universal audience. Thea Kronborg found that art combines tradition, convention, discipline, and abstraction with celebration. Esther, at the end of The Bell Jar, is as yet unprepared to become an artist. The most positive aspect of her recovery is her realization that it may be only temporary.

An Evolving Theory of Cognitive Development

Whereas Thea Kronborg's story is about becoming an artist, Esther's is about developing the potential for creative production through learning to reintegrate her schizophrenic personality. Esther achieves limited cognitive development, although she possesses at the end of the novel most of the necessary prerequisites for becoming an artist. The reader, however, doesn't know whether or not she will be able to use them,
whether she has the temperament—as Mademoiselle Reisz put it to Edna, the courage to dare and defy.

Esther's view of herself as an observer rather than a participant in life indicates her reliance upon external sources of knowledge to form her self-concept. The expectations of other people and of social convention, however, resulted in the ambiguous self-concept that was a primary cause of her illness. Esther possesses extraordinary imaginative powers, as evidenced by her use of imagery to understand herself and her illness. But her receptivity is limited, and her distinction between observation and experience is a symptom of illness. As she recovers she begins to learn that observation is a part of experience, and her images become more coherent and less disjointed.

While Esther's mother cares for her, she represents a negative influence for her daughter because she is unable to comprehend either the nature of Esther's illness or her need to be permitted to develop as an individual. The only person who provides the care that Esther needs is Doctor Nolan, her psychotherapist. This relationship, however, is limited to the roles of doctor and patient. Personal relationships have been critical in the cognitive
development of each protagonist included in this study, and the reader must question Esther’s ability to recover fully without the support of other people.

Esther rebels against abstract concepts, or at least against the process of abstraction (chemical symbols, tight couplets), which she connects with deductive logic. While she realizes that she is very good at deduction as a form of manipulation, she fails to see (at least early in the novel) that science is based on concrete observation, and is less abstract than literary analysis. When the bell jar lifts, Esther perceives that she is no longer isolated, but part of a larger context which includes the "landscape" of her past. Writing poetry involves abstracting meaning and communicating it through the condensed medium of images. One of the questions Esther must answer is whether or not she can accept the world as larger than herself and abstract meaning from that context. Esther’s reliance upon herself as a sole source of knowledge was a symptom of her illness.

In The Bell Jar Plath explores each of the cognitive categories and themes identified in the other novels included in this study. As in The Awakening,
The Bluest Eye, and The Song of the Lark, the concept of a dual self is prevalent, represented symbolically in The Bell Jar by the schizophrenia of the protagonist. Here it is related to the concept of authority as a distorted source of knowledge about both self and others. For Esther, this variation on the theme of identity formation assumes the form of a perceived dichotomy between mind and body and, by extension, the larger "body" of the prevailing social order. She attempts to use her mind to control her body, but is unable to balance one with the other; she is reacting to the fear that her body (or society) will control her mind. A symptom of Esther's illness is that she simultaneously personalizes accepted social roles and wants to rebels against the established social order. Eventually, Esther begins to define and assert her own identity and is no longer obsessed with the attempts of others to force her to live up to their expectations. However, her achievement is limited, and the reader is left to speculate on whether she will be able to use her potential. Plath clearly reveals the pain implicit in the growth of her protagonist. Cognitive development is, at best, a difficult and torturous process.
Published in 1905, Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* is a tale of alienation and despair as well as a satiric novel of manners in which the author reveals the emptiness of New York high society in the late 1800s. Wharton's tale is extremely intricate; the plot is sustained by undercurrents of subplot and social intrigue, much of which provides the novel with its satiric force. The protagonist, Lily Bart, is a beautiful and extravagant but relatively poor young woman who, in order to maintain the lifestyle in which she was raised, must marry a wealthy man. Wharton describes Lily's decline from a valued member of this society to a shunned outcast. While her beauty and grace gain her entrance to society, her inability either to allow herself to be entirely molded by the rigid and artificial expectations of the social order or to transcend them causes her decline. Lily's social descent is attributable to her belief that she cannot exist without wealth and luxury, and to the absence of a value system on which she can rely for guidance in situations of personal crisis.
Lily moves in a world of extreme wealth and luxury where the primary goals are pleasure and indolence. The people who populate this sphere do not constitute the highest echelon of New York society. Instead, they are the "nouveaux riches": extremely wealthy businessmen, lawyers, and stock brokers who emulate members of the New York aristocracy, but who have no sense of the aristocratic notion that wealth implies responsibility. Appearance rather than substance governs the attention of the members of this class, whose behavior is characterized by intrigue, subterfuge, evasion and deception. Specific stated and unstated rules of conduct exist from which one is seldom permitted to deviate without risking ostracism. Only the very rich, by virtue of their wealth, are permitted deviations from the norm; the "hangers on," such as Lily, exist within the social order at the mercy of those who control it. Those who do not meet the criterion of extreme wealth are permitted entrance if they are useful to the social order. The attributes which make Lily acceptable to these people are her beauty, her sense of style, and her apparent ability to play their games with ease and flair.
The only characters portrayed as individuals are those on the fringes of society, such as Lily and the few people who try to help her. Wharton does not fully delineate the social standard setters; as a result, the reader does not perceive them as real people. In addition, she clearly defines their world as artificial, consistently employing theatrical imagery to describe it. Lily, however, is drawn as an exceedingly complex character, and the realism with which she is revealed places her in stark relief to members of the inner circle. Wharton's use of understatement and connotation results in a style in which elements of character and the importance of actions are implied rather than stated, lending layers of complexity to Lily's cognitive development.

Narrative Summary

As the novel opens, Lily is on her way to Bellomont, a palatial Long Island estate, for a weekend visit. She accidentally meets Lawrence Selden (a young attorney without independent means) at the train station and goes to his apartment for tea. At Bellomont several key events occur which set the stage for Lily's social demise: she begins to fall in love
with Selden, misses an opportunity to marry the wealthy Percy Gryce, and asks Gus Trenor, her host, to invest some money for her.

Upon her return to New York she is approached by a charwoman who wants her to purchase love letters written by Bertha Dorset, a member of the social elite, to Selden. Trenor makes a great deal of money for Lily but expects sexual favors in return. Some time later when he attempts to seduce her, she realizes that he has been giving her his money rather than investing her own, and she is horrified. Selden, who has fallen in love with Lily, sees her coming out of Trenor's house one evening and inaccurately assumes that rumors about an affair between them are true. Lily wants to tell Selden the truth, but he avoids her. Simon Rosedale (a wealthy young social climber) asks her to marry him, and she refuses.

Lily is invited by Bertha Dorset to accompany her to Europe in order to keep her husband occupied while Bertha conducts an affair. Lily becomes trapped in Bertha's intrigues and returns to New York, her name further besmirched. In the meantime her aunt and benefactress has died, leaving Lily only a small legacy rather than the fortune which she had been led to
expect. Lily has been exiled from her former social set due to rumors, and estranged from Selden, who believes the gossip. She makes friends with his poor cousin Gerty Parish, whom she had earlier dismissed as "dingy." Lily tries working as an advisor to women attempting to enter society, and is dismissed as each one moves closer to Lily's former circle of friends. No longer able to support herself, she tries unsuccessfully to work as a milliner. Rosedale suggests to Lily that she use the letters to blackmail Bertha Dorset so that she can reestablish her social standing, at which point she will once again be useful to Rosedale as a prospective wife. Lily decides to take Rosedale's advice but, on the way to see Bertha, she visits Selden, realizes that she cannot resort to blackmail, and burns the letters. Returning home, she receives a check for the amount of her legacy. Determined to repay the money she took from Trenor, Lily writes him a check and pays all her bills, leaving her destitute. She then takes a fatal overdose of sleeping medicine.
Cognitive Characteristics of Lily Bart

Lily was raised to marry money. Her moderately wealthy father died of hard work, attempting to keep his family in the lavish manner that his wife expected. Lily is beautiful, refined, and adept at all the subtlest of social graces. When the novel opens she is twenty-nine years old and unmarried. She has had opportunities for wealthy marriages of which she has evidently refused to take advantage. Wharton suggests to the reader that Lily has remained single long after what was considered at that time a marriageable age because she has not found a suitor who fits her taste.

The reader's first view of Lily is provided primarily through the eyes of Lawrence Selden who observes "that she always roused speculation, that her simplest acts seemed the result of far-reaching intentions" (p. 2). Seeing Lily at the train station as the novel opens, he compares her with the other women he sees: "the dinginess, the crudity of this average section of womanhood made him feel how highly specialized she was" (p. 4). Selden exists on the fringes of the social class inhabited by Lily's friends, but he participates in the activities of that
society and subscribes to many of its values. While he considers himself an observer of society, he actually serves as its spokesman and behaves according to its assumptions. Therefore the objectivity of his observations of Lily and of her class are suspect.

Selden is fascinated by Lily, and his attempts to analyze her provide the reader with keen insights into her character which are, however, somewhat distorted by his own preconceptions:

Everything about her was at once vigorous and exquisite, at once strong and fine. He had a confused sense that she must have cost a great deal to make, that a great many dull and ugly people must, in some mysterious way, have been sacrificed to produce her. He was aware that the qualities distinguishing her from the herd of her sex were chiefly external: as though a fine glaze of beauty and fastidiousness had been applied to vulgar clay. Yet the analogy left him unsatisfied, for a coarse texture will not take a high finish; and was it not possible that the material was fine, but that circumstance had fashioned it into a futile shape? (p. 4)

Selden's assessment of Lily provides the reader with several key insights into both her character and her situation. His use of the adjectives "vigorous" and "strong" suggests that she possesses vitality as well as beauty. However, he also implies that her appearance has been produced and is thus artificial. Her "beauty and fastidiousness" appear to be external
characteristics, and Selden raises the question of whether Lily's existence serves any purpose beyond the ornamental.

A more penetrating analysis of the imagery in this passage, however, reveals as much about Selden as it does about Wharton's protagonist. First of all, while Lily's beauty is undoubtedly striking, Selden is unable to draw any conclusions about her character. Both the image of production and the analogy of a "fine glaze" applied to "vulgar clay" indicate Selden's confusion about concepts of value and worth. He senses that Lily has been manufactured at great "cost," comparing her to an object which has a high value in the marketplace. He is dissatisfied with his analogy because he does not want to believe that she has been fashioned from "vulgar clay."

Wharton uses the contradiction implicit in Selden's description to reveal to the reader a fundamental theme in the novel: superficial or market value as opposed to personal worth. Selden has subscribed to two assumptions which typify the attitudes of the upper classes: first, the belief that appearance is paramount, that one is what one appears to be; second, the aristocratic notion that the purpose
of the lower classes is to serve the wealthy upper crust. His confusion results from his equation of vulgar (or common) origins with coarse behavior. Selden fails to recognize that, while members of his class may present a "fine" appearance, they nonetheless behave in accordance with "vulgar," coarse, and self-serving rules of conduct. He does not subscribe to the democratic, even biblical notion that all people derive from "vulgar clay," and that what distinguishes one individual from another is a combination of environment and how one reacts to circumstance. One of the great themes in American literature is the struggle of the downtrodden protagonist who is able to transcend circumstance through strength of character. In Lily Bart, however, Wharton has created a protagonist who, far from being downtrodden, has many material advantages but lacks the ability to develop a personal system of values according to which she can act and maintain a sense of personal integrity.

Selden recognizes that Lily's beauty is external. Her fastidiousness, which suggests a form of behavior rather than appearance but which is rooted in her learned concept of taste, is also produced, derived
from the value system of a society which does not perceive internal personal worth separately from external appearance. He attempts, in his assumption that appearance is indicative of internal worth, to inject Lily with strength of character, thus raising a central question for the reader: does Lily possess internal characteristics which will enable her to learn and develop? Selden implies through omission that Lily is an essentially useless person who has no real control over her own life and who lives a derivative existence. He later describes her as a "victim of the civilization which had produced her," observing that "the links of her bracelet seemed like manacles chaining her to her fate" (p. 6). These links represent those elements which have combined to make Lily Bart an artificial beauty who is at the mercy of the "civilization which produced her" because she has assumed the value system of that civilization. In order to break free, she must develop her own. Lily, however, tells Selden, "I am horribly poor--and very expensive. I must have a great deal of money" (p. 8). She views marriage as her "vocation," and speaks of it as a "partnership" and a "business" (pp. 10-11), indicating acquiescence to the standards which "chain"
her. Lily does indeed need to be involved in an open, caring relationship, but Selden is too closely tied to the values of his class to be a real friend to her. A further example of Wharton's subtle rendering of both these characters is the fact that, while Lily and Selden believe they are being honest with each other, they are not able to communicate their actual thoughts or feelings.

The cognitive characteristics of Lily that Wharton reveals in the opening pages of the novel indicate that she has a vitality which she might be able to translate into personal strength of character. She also has some insights into her own needs although, for the most part, these perceptions relate to her financial need for a wealthy husband. Lily, however, is essentially superficial; Wharton provides the reader with little evidence that she has the potential for cognitive growth. Her reaction to Selden's books is indicative of her predisposition for superficial inquiry; the look and feel of the volumes please her aesthetic sense, but she evidences no interest in their content.

Lily's primary goal is to live in luxury; her means to that goal, determined and reinforced by her
training, is to marry a wealthy man. She tells Selden, in contrasting herself with Gerty Farish, that "she [Gerty] likes being good, and I like being happy" (p. 6). Lily has equated happiness with wealth, dismissing Gerty's lifestyle because she sees no personal value that can be derived from "being good." On the train to Bellomont Lily discovers that Percy Gryce, the wealthy young bachelor whom she has determined to marry, is traveling with her. She takes advantage of this opportunity to organize "a plan of attack" (p. 16). Lily succeeds in enchanting Gryce, and feels "the pride of a skillful operator" (p. 18). This situation indicates Lily's ability to set an objective and to formulate and implement a plan of action through which she can achieve that goal. However, she is entirely unaware of Gryce as an individual; she manipulates him because her goal is entirely self-serving. Selden's description of Lily as "highly specialized" suggests that her training has prepared her for only one role in life. When she later confronts personal crises, she is unable to draw on these strategic skills.

At Bellomont Lily continues to charm Gryce, manipulating him into a situation in which she is sure
that he will propose marriage. Having perceived already that he "lacks imagination" (p. 18), Lily finds him increasingly boring. She is frustrated by the situation in which she finds herself and curses the "hateful fate" which has given her only two choices: to be herself or Gerty Farish (p. 24). Lily believes that "fate" has actually given her no choice, for she cannot abide the "the squalid compromises of poverty" (p. 24). Lily is, in fact, unable to make compromises of any sort. She lacks the ability to view her own situation objectively and confuses ends (wealth and ease) with means (the tools to live a life of personal integrity).

Lily's reservations about marriage with Gryce cause her to behave impulsively. She neglects to keep an appointment with him because Selden has unexpectedly arrived at Bellomont. Lily's behavior in this instance typifies her inability to take decisive action, resulting from a contradiction in her nature of which she is only dimly aware. She questions whether her failure to secure a suitable husband "was her own fault or that of destiny" (p. 25), and "was beginning to have fits of angry rebellion against fate, when she longed to drop out of the act and make an independent
life for herself" (p. 36). Lily is confused about the role of fate (the agent which has prevented marriage or which causes her to need a husband), but blames this elusive external force for her troubles, unable to either accept responsibility for her own actions or take independent action.

Wharton suggests that there are two sides to Lily's nature: one which demands a life of luxury and ease and another, submerged self which yearns for independence. In spite of her resolve to fight dinginess, Lily acts on impulse rather than following her carefully designed plan to catch Percy Gryce. "Her intentions in short had never been more definite; but poor Lily, for all the hard glaze of her exterior, was inwardly as malleable as wax. Her faculty for adapting herself . . . hampered her in the decisive moments of life." (p. 50). Lily's ability to adapt herself to her audience has served her well in maintaining her position among her wealthy friends. Here, however, using a variation on the clay image, Wharton suggests that beneath the "hard glaze" of surface, Lily is insubstantial; she lacks the internal fortitude and conviction to follow the plans devised by her external self. She thus acts here upon an impulse that comes
from her inner self (which has different goals from her exterior self).

The part of Lily that wants luxury is very goal-directed, the result of all her training to be an ornamental wife. Her inner self, however, rebels against her "destiny;" what this Lily wants is virtually indefinable at this point, although Wharton gives her reader a number of clues. What Lily's external nature fears is dinginess—a life which is not bright, glossy, and easy. What her inner nature appears to rebel against is a dinginess of the spirit, represented by the superficial existence of her friends and the unimaginative Gryce. She does not consciously decide to reject Gryce, rather "the whole current of her mood was carrying her toward Lawrence Selden" (p. 50). Lily unconsciously distinguishes between the people she likes and the people she wants to please; her attraction to Selden and her impulses are rooted in her inner self. She likes him because he has what Gryce lacks—wit and imagination. In addition, he:

preserved a certain social detachment, a happy air of viewing the show objectively, of having points of contact outside the great gilt cage in which they were all huddled for the mob to gape at. How alluring the world outside the cage appeared to Lily, as she heard its door clang on her! In reality, as she knew, the door never
clanged: it stood always open; but most of the captives were like flies in a bottle, and having once flown in, could never regain their freedom. (p. 51)

Selden fosters in Lily a sense that freedom is possible for her. As she waits for him to join her on a walk, she feels:

there were in her two beings, one drawing deep breaths of freedom and exhilaration, the other gasping for air in a little black prisonhouse of fears. But gradually the captive’s gasps grew fainter, or the other paid less heed to them: the horizon expanded, the air grew stronger, and the free spirit quivered for flight. (p. 61)

The captive represents Lily’s external self which exists only within the limited arena of her wealthy friends and prospects. As she awaits Selden she is outdoors, removed from the trappings and confinement of the "great gilt cage," and her inner self emerges. The images of freedom and entrapment contained in these two passages appear to represent Lily’s two selves. Her outer self is trapped by her training, which has instilled in her the values of a trivial and closed system. Her inner self, which rebels against the requirements of that system, however, is indistinct. It appears to have its source in Lily’s fastidiousness and taste, her aesthetic sense. She in effect rejects Gryce because, while he represents all that her external self wants, he fails to measure up to her
internal standards of taste. However, these standards lack definition and substance because her sense of her own worth is derived from others. Thus, while she is attracted to Selden, she relies upon his observations and finds herself "scanning her little world through his retina" (p. 51).

The cognitive characteristics Lily has revealed indicate that her goals and decisions are dictated by the artificial world to which she wants to belong and from which her external self and her concept of self-worth are derived. Lily's inner self, however, is also derivative. Her impulses are the responses of an aesthetic sense that is a version of her trained fastidiousness heightened by her intelligence. Her desire for independence is internal, but she relies upon Selden to direct her because she has no substantial value system to guide her. Lily believes that she is at the mercy of fate, which excuses her from formulating goals or plans for herself beyond what her training has taught her. Her introspective and imaginative abilities allow her to glimpse other possibilities and to perceive the contradictions in her behavior, but she is unable to analyze her motives. Because she has learned that evasion is the foundation
of communication, she is able to articulate only disconnected feelings to Selden, and then only rarely. The art of evasion allows her to avoid assuming any responsibility for either her actions or her impulses.

When Lily and Selden next meet, the intimacy and honesty they had established on their walk at Bellomont has gone, replaced with superficial banter. Although Lily "longed to be to him something more than a piece of sentient prettiness" (p. 90), her flippancy generates a sarcasm in Selden which hurts her.

It was as if the eager current of her being had been checked by a sudden obstacle which drove it back upon itself. She looked at him helplessly, like a hurt or frightened child: this real self of hers, which he had the faculty of drawing out of the depths, was so little accustomed to go alone! (p. 90)

Lily’s reaction here indicates her vulnerability, her need to be cared for, and a capacity to care for others. She is helpless, reacting like a "frightened child," because her "real" self has no foundation of self-worth or personal identity. Her inner self, Wharton suggests, is more complex than the heightened aesthetic sense (that appears to be the source of her impulses and instincts) can account for. Lily’s inner self appears to have two aspects. One is her sense of taste, which is ultimately derivative and of which she
is vaguely aware. It is her ability to care for others, however, that makes her truly vulnerable and is responsible for her appeal to the reader. It is this attribute which, because it is the source of her "helplessness," most clearly distinguishes Lily from the people who inhabit the "gilt cage" of her chosen circle, and thus ultimately leads to her tragedy.

The first indication that Lily's inner nature also includes a moral sense occurs when a charwoman presents her with love letters written by Bertha Dorset (one of her wealthy married friends) to Selden. Lily's external self understands immediately that these letters will give her the power to "overthrow with a touch the whole structure of [Bertha's] existence" (p. 100). Her initial feeling is "a confused sense of triumph. But the disgust prevailed—all her instinctive resistances, of taste, of training, of blind inherited scruples, rose against the other feeling. Her strongest sense was one of personal contamination" (p. 100). Had Lily truly subscribed to the superficial, acquisitive values of her wealthy friends, her reaction would have ended with her feeling of triumph. Wharton clearly indicates here, however, that Lily's confusion results from the instincts of her
inner nature. Her disgust arises from her sense of fastidiousness. The "blind inherited scruples" are rooted in Lily's humanity—in her capacity for care—and thus in a sense of responsibility toward other people. Her reaction to the charwoman's request for money, however, is equivocal. She purchases the letters but, instead of either using them or destroying them, she simply puts them away, indicating once again that she is unable to take decisive action based either on the code of her social group or on her own instinctive revulsion.

The high point of Lily's career as a beauty occurs at a party in which she participates in a series of tableaux vivants, paintings acted out by people in elaborate costume. She uses her "vivid plastic sense," her "dramatic instinct," and her "imagination" (p. 126) to produce an image that frames her natural beauty. Whereas participants in other tableaux had selected paintings in which costume and setting were the focus,

Lily had shown her artistic intelligence in selecting a type so like her own that she could embody the person represented without ceasing to be herself. It was as though she had stepped, not out of, but into Reynolds's canvas. . . . The impulse to show herself in a splendid setting . . . had yielded to the truer instinct of trusting to her unassisted beauty, and she had purposely chosen a picture without distracting
accessories of dress or surroundings. Her pale draperies, and the background of foliage against which she stood, served only to relieve the long dryad-like curves that swept upward from her poised foot to her lifted arm. The noble buoyancy of her attitude, its suggestion of soaring grace, revealed the touch of poetry in her beauty that Selden always felt in her presence, yet lost the sense of when he was not with her. Its expression was now so vivid that for the first time he seemed to see before him the real Lily Bart, divested of the trivialities of her little world, and catching for a moment a note of that eternal harmony of which her beauty was a part. (p. 129)

Lily's purpose is to display her beauty to its greatest advantage. She succeeds because she relies on the instincts of her inner self--her aesthetic sense, her "artistic intelligence"--and strips herself of the trappings of fashion. Selden believes that he sees the "real Lily Bart," when he actually sees only a pose. Here Lily is merely emulating; she has become Mrs. Lloyd, the subject of Reynolds's painting. Thus in revealing her natural beauty, she also reveals herself as an ornament, an objet d'art, rather than as a real person. The image she chooses and creates suggests freedom. Ironically, however, the pose is frozen; the nymph never takes flight, and the "real" Lily is as trapped in the painting as her external self is trapped in the "great gilt cage." The "touch of poetry" Selden perceives comes from her inner
nature, from the vulnerability that is part of her natural beauty. However, this sense of the "real" Lily dissolves when Selden is not with her because it is rooted in her inner self, and is thus transitory and insubstantial. Lily's talent for decoration is evident here, but Wharton indicates that her aesthetic sense is insufficient to allow her to free herself from her desire for wealth. Lily has simply constructed for herself another sort of trap, one in which, while she appears to catch the admiration of others, she ultimately becomes their prey.

Wharton has created a protagonist whose desires—to be wealthy and thus accepted into a trivial social caste, and to "make an independent life" for herself—reveal a fundamental contradiction. Lily lacks the cognitive tools necessary to extricate herself from a world ruled by artifice and exist outside of the "great gilt cage," and the impulses of her inner nature prevent her from taking the action that will ensure her acceptance into society. All the characteristics that provided the other protagonists in this study with potential for cognitive growth—native intelligence, the ability to be introspective, imagination—exist in Lily, but are stunted.
The values of the social class to which Lily has been trained to belong center around wealth, which is gained and held by vulgar rules of deception and selfish acquisitiveness. The skills in which Lily has been trained are decoration, manipulation, and evasion. Had she been able to use these skills unequivocally, she would have married a wealthy man and been accepted into the inner circle. However, Lily's inner nature rebels at these values. Her impulses arise from her trained fastidiousness, enhanced by her intelligence and sensitivity, which allows her to glimpse the shallowness of her desires. Her sensitivity, her vulnerability, have their source in her deeper nature, which is characterized by her need to be cared for and her capacity to care for others. Care suggests responsibility; however, Lily's self-concept is derivative. She is unable to assume the responsibility for her own actions because her self-esteem is derived from superficial admiration. She relies upon and curses fate as an uncontrollable source of authority at the same time that she willfully insists upon her need for a life of luxury. Lily's inner self is indistinct because all her training has been directed toward the survival of her external self. When moral
responsiveness is required, Lily's behavior appears erratic because she has no conscious, learned resources to draw on in a crisis; everything except her training and her desire for wealth is essentially abstract, unconnected to what she has learned. She personalizes an externally created social role but is unable to internalize that role; she cannot match her external self with the emerging demands and instincts of her inner self.

Gus Trenor: "That's dodging the rules of the game"

The conflict between Lily's external and inner natures causes a progressive decline from her tenuous position in society. A series of errors in judgment and action results in a crisis which threatens her survival. Lily's first mistake is asking Gus Trenor to invest her small annuity for her. Lily deceives herself when she assumes that she and Gus have made a business arrangement.

She was too genuinely ignorant of the manipulations of the stock-market to understand his technical explanations, or even perhaps to perceive that certain points in them were slurred. . . . She understood only that her modest investments were to be mysteriously multiplied without risk to herself. (p. 80)
Lily does not allow herself to contemplate the possible personal debt which Trenor might assume. She views his leaning "a little nearer" and resting "his had reassuringly on hers" as license which is "part of the game" (p. 81).

Instead of investing Lily's money, Trenor gives her his own—a sum which eventually totals nine thousand dollars. He becomes increasingly adamant about being alone with her, a situation which she continually puts off. She begins to realize that he expects sexual favors in return for his "investments."

Wharton tells the reader:

"Miss Bart had in fact been treading a devious way, and none of her critics could have been more alive to the fact than herself; but she had a fatalistic sense of being drawn from one wrong turning to another, without ever perceiving the right road till it was too late to take it."

(p. 123)

While Lily has flashes of insight into her own motives and those of others, she uses fatalism as an excuse for self-deception. While her inner self persistently jars her external self with glimpses of potential danger, she willfully ignores these warnings. When "she made a tour of inspection in her own mind there were certain closed doors she did not open" (p. 78). Lily's awareness of the possible consequences of her
liaison with Trenor remains "vague" and the points of transaction are "slurred," but she is unable to take any action which might jeopardize her social standing. Wharton also suggests that her protagonist doesn't really understand the acquisitive rules of Trenor's world. While this is further evidence of Lily's naivete and vulnerability, it also indicates her willful insistence upon luxury at the expense of understanding.

Her relationship with Trenor reaches a climax when he lures her to his home on the pretext of having dinner with his wife. Judy Trenor is not at home, and Gus makes clear to Lily that the money he has given her was his own. He accuses her of "dodging the rules of the game" and insists that she's "got to pay up" (p. 140) by sleeping with him. As Lily realizes the gravity of her situation, she feels humiliation: "the moral shame was one with the physical dread. It seemed to her that self-esteem would have made her invulnerable--that it was her own dishonour which put a fearful solitude about her" (p. 141). Without giving in to his demands, Lily rushes from Trenor's house. She "seemed a stranger to herself" and felt that "there were two selves in her, the one she had always known,
and a new abhorrent being to which it found itself chained" (p. 142). Lily's humiliation results from her unfounded assumption of guilt--that it is she, not Trenor who has erred. She realizes that the sense of identity upon which she has relied is false--derived from a superficial world of wealth and fashion. Because she has no real self-esteem, no sense of personal integrity upon which to draw, she assumes personal responsibility for this situation.

Lily is most frightened by the loneliness she feels. She senses that her refusal of Trenor's advances will result in social ostracism. Even more terrifying, however, is her dim realization that she is "a stranger to herself," that she is faced with a situation in which she can no longer rely upon the old, comfortable, learned standards of behavior. Lily has internalized her skill at manipulation and evasion, using them to avoid recognizing her own motives and the possible consequences of her actions. In terror of being alone, Lily desperately needs a friend. Pride won't allow her to approach Selden. Fearful of going home where she would have to confront herself, Lily instinctively turns to the "good" Gerty Farish for solace.
"She had never learned to live
with her own thoughts"

The twenty-four hours following her confrontation with Trenor are tumultuous for Lily as she wrestles with her fears and the possible consequences of her situation. Selden, Gerty, and Simon Rosedale (a young Jew who because of his ethnicity and, ironically, his business acumen, is considered "odious") each play a role in her actions and perceptions during this brief period. Having realized that each time the opportunity for a "conventional rich marriage" presented itself, Lily "had always shrunk from it" (p. 150), Selden tells Gerty that Lily "has it in her to become whatever she is believed to be" (p. 150), and sets out to find Lily to help her. Having traced her to Trenor's house, he sees her rush out. Assuming that the rumors he has heard about Lily are true and that she is having an affair with Trenor, "a clogging morass of old associations and habits" will not allow him to speak to her. He realizes that this inaction is "pitiable" ("how could he lift Lily to a freer vision of life, if his own view of her was to be coloured by any mind in which he saw her reflected," p. 153), but he is unable
to overcome the "clogging morass" of convention and rumor. Instead of calling on her the following day as he had promised to do, he leaves on a cruise in an attempt to escape the affection which he has come to feel for her as well as his concomitant responsibility.

When Lily arrives distraught at her door, Gerty, who possesses an unselective capacity for care, responds unreservedly to Lily's obvious need.

Lily has never before confided her real thoughts and fears to anyone, but in Gerty she finds a receptive listener. She tells Gerty that she fears the "furies" who make the dark "dreadful" (p. 157); she "can't bear to see [herself] in [her] own thoughts"; she has "always had bad people about [her], . . . but now she's "on their level" (p. 158). Lily compares herself to the "bad" girls to whom Gerty's charity work is directed, asking her "do they ever pick themselves up? . . . Don't they always go from bad to worse? There's no turning back--your old self rejects you, and shuts you out" (p. 158). Lily admits to Gerty that "I am bad through and through--I want admiration, I want excitement, I want money--that's my shame" (p. 159), and asks her if she thinks Selden would help her: "if I told him everything would he loathe me? Or would he
pity me, and understand me, and save me from loathing myself?" (pp. 159-160).

This emotional outpouring reveals a great deal about what for Lily is more a crisis in self-concept than in social standing. Her fear of the "dark" represents her terror of the "real" world and her own inner nature, both of which are alien to her. Trenor's behavior causes her to judge him and, by extension, all the other members of his social caste, as "bad." She includes herself in this judgment because she has derived her sense of worth from them. As she shifts blame for the incident to Trenor, she generalizes his behavior to his social set and to her environment. Lily distinguishes no difference in the "badness" of her former friends, herself, and Gerty's "cases" because she has no foundation of human values on which to base distinctions in their behavior and motives. She fears being rejected by her "old self" because she will lose her only source of self-esteem. Lily is neurotic here, overreacting to a situation that she has never had to confront before. She is honest enough with herself to realize that her desires for admiration, excitement, and money have brought her to this crisis, but in recognizing her own motives she is
unable to judge them objectively. Because she lacks
the skill to sort out the factors which led to her
"shame," she assumes that she herself is entirely to
blame. Ironically, Lily has done nothing that should
cause her shame. What she has done is to break one of
the rules; she has "taken what they take, and not paid
as they pay" (p. 159).

Lily believes only Selden can save her. She has
lost even the superficial veneer of self-esteem that
her social success had given her. Her fear of
alienation is enhanced by a self-deprecat ing conviction
that rehabilitation is impossible for her unless Selden
can understand her and save her "from loathing" herself
(p. 159). Lily has accepted Selden's judgment that she
"has it in her to become whatever she is believed to
be" (p. 150). She has no faith that she can save
herself, but relies upon the care of another for
salvation. Tragically, Selden is entirely unable to
help her. Not only is he unable to extricate himself
from the rules and values of society, but he does not
believe that Lily has the capacity to help herself.

When Lily wakes up the next morning in Gerty's
bedroom, her "old self" has reemerged. She feels some
confidence that she can "find her way out of the slough
into which she had stumbled." But "it was weariness to think connectedly" (p. 161), and the "winged furies were now prowling gossips who dropped in on each other for tea" (p. 162). When she returns home, Lily asks her aunt to give her enough money to repay Trenor, explaining that she needs the money to pay gambling debts instead of telling her the truth. Horrified that the rumors that her niece gambles at bridge appear to be true, Mrs. Peniston refuses to lend her any money, and Lily feels that "the last door of escape was closed" (p. 166).

Her last hope is Selden's love, and "as she sat alone with her wretchedness the thought of confiding in him became as seductive as the river's flow to the suicide" (p. 166). Selden had agreed to call on her at four o'clock, but by six he has not arrived. Instead, Rosedale appears and asks Lily to marry him. "Even through the dark tumult of her thought, the clink of Mr. Rosedale's millions had a faintly seductive note," but "the contrast [with Selden] was too grotesque" (p. 169). Lily puts him off, but by the time Rosedale leaves, she has realized that Selden is not coming. "Her confession would have to be postponed; and the chill of the delay settled heavily on her fagged
spirit" (p. 171). What Lily hopes to gain from confiding in Selden is not clear, except that Wharton suggests that Lily hopes his faith in her will regenerate her belief in herself. She is thrust on her own resources, but she "had never learned to live with her own thoughts" (p. 171), and when an invitation to accompany Bertha Dorset and her husband on a Mediterranean cruise arrives later that evening, Lily takes advantage of the opportunity to resume relationships with her former friends and puts aside her dilemma.

Lily's skill at manipulation, evasion and decoration, motivated by her desire for luxury, have caused her personal crisis but are insufficient to solve her dilemma. Because she knows no other system of values she has no other basis for self-esteem, and thus judges herself vicariously through the eyes of others. Lily's attempts at analyzing her situation are neurotic and immature, resulting in self-deprecation rather than introspection; as she is forced back upon herself she finds no personally derived standards against which she can measure her actions. While Gerty's friendship enables Lily to articulate her fears, in the clearer light of morning they disappear
and she attempts once again to rely upon a value system which she herself has perceived as insufficient and upon Selden, who cannot extricate himself from those same values. Although Lily's inner sense of taste prevents her from taking one means of escape (marriage to Rosedale), as soon as a more palatable avenue presents itself (Bertha's invitation), Lily accepts without hesitation.

"Poised on the brink of a chasm"

In Europe with the Dorsets, Lily gains a temporary respite from her problems. She mixes with essentially the same group of people who comprised her social set in New York. Selden, who has accidentally encountered these people in Monte Carlo, perceives that Lily has changed. The last time he had spoken with her followed her tableau; now he sees that

a subtle change had passed over the quality of her beauty. Then it had had a transparency through which the fluctuations of the spirit were sometimes tragically visible; now its impenetrable surface suggested a process of crystallization which had fused her whole being into one hard brilliant substance. (p. 182)

He sensed that Lily "was on the edge of something. He seemed to see her poised on the brink of a chasm (p. 183), suggesting that both her appearance and her
manner indicate that she has not really escaped from her crisis with Trenor. Selden perceives that Lily's vulnerability is no longer apparent, and that the "fine glaze" of her beauty has hardened. In the apparent absence of vulnerability, however, he finds desperation.

Lily is unaware of the impression she has made on Selden. In Monte Carlo she has cast off the terrors and doubts which plagued her in New York:

Her faculty for renewing herself in new scenes, and casting off problems of conduct as easily as the surroundings in which they had arisen, made the mere change from one place to another seem, not merely a postponement, but a solution of her troubles. Moral complications existed for her only in the environment that had produced them; she did not mean to slight or ignore them, but they lost their reality when they changed their background. (p. 186)

Lily is indeed as "malleable as wax" (p. 50). Her external self once again appears to be in control; old habits have forced her personal crisis below the surface. Wharton clearly indicates that Lily's ability to deceive herself, to ignore the impulses and needs of her inner nature, is superficial only. The observations of Selden indicate that, while Lily may have succeeded in hiding her problems from herself, they have taken their toll on her appearance. She has
not hidden her fears from others, which makes her more vulnerable than before.

Bertha invited Lily to join her party for the purpose of entertaining her husband, George, while she carried on an affair with Ned Silverton. Lily's naivety causes her to become trapped in a situation that destroys her remaining social standing. Bertha orchestrates a liaison with Silverton which Lily perceives as harmful to Bertha's reputation. However, when she seeks out Bertha to help her (because "all the disadvantages of such a situation were for the woman," p. 195), she finds that Bertha has managed to make it appear that Lily and George had spent the night together. Understanding Bertha's intention, "a chill of fear passed over" Lily, "a sense of remembered treachery that was like the gleam of a knife in the dusk. But compassion, in a moment, got the better of her instinctive recoil" (p. 198). (It was Bertha Dorset who had convinced Percy Gryce that Lily was not an appropriate wife for him, out of jealousy for Lily's friendship with Selden.) Bertha viciously rejects Lily's offer of help and, by publicly denouncing her, destroys Lily's already tarnished reputation and saves her own marriage.
When Lily returns to New York she discovers that her aunt has left her fortune to another niece. Lily inherits only a legacy of ten thousand dollars, setting up a key situation of choice. She renewes her friendship with Gerty Farish, who suggests that Lily could achieve "social rehabilitation" (p. 216) if she told her "friends the whole truth." Lily responds by asking "What is truth? Where a woman is concerned, it's the story that's easiest to believe" (p. 215), indicating cynicism and confusion about the value of telling the truth. Lily realizes that her reputation has been ruined, that she has "been ruthlessly sacrificed to Bertha Dorset's determination to win back her husband" (p. 217); it is "half pride and half humiliation" that prevents her from defending herself to Gerty.

Once again the impulses of Lily's inner nature have thwarted her desire for acceptance by a social group whose standards are determined by selfishness and greed. Whereas Bertha Dorset is ruthless and aggressive, Lily is compassionate. She does not allow herself to analyze Bertha's motives until it is too late. Lily cannot be honest with herself, but in her naivete she still assumes that others are motivated by
good faith. Her capacity for care, which resides deep in her inner self, is the source of her compassion for Bertha. Lily’s belief in Bertha indicates that she has begun to develop a system of values based on care. She is entirely vulnerable because her real self lacks the resources or the insight to recognize Bertha’s vile motives. Lily is not adept at the deceit and subterfuge that characterize the people with whom she wants to associate; she can neither see it in others (except in retrospect) nor engage in it herself. Tragically, however, her "pride" and "humiliation" will not allow her to tell either Gerty or Selden the truth, which might have strengthened her relationships with them and provided her with an alternative she could come to accept.

Rosedale: "You’ve had the power
in your hands"

Carrie Fisher, a divorcee who lives on the fringes of society, takes an interest in Lily’s "social rehabilitation" and finds several jobs for her: social advisor to the Gormers, social secretary to Norma Hatch (all of whom are attempting to enter society) and, finally, as a milliner’s worker. Lily fails at the
first two because she is too successful; as each employer is accepted by the world of the Trenors and Dorsets, Lily is again rejected. She fails at the last because she has no practical skills: she can trim hats brilliantly, but she cannot make them. Because her aunt’s legacy cannot be paid until the estate is settled, Lily is close to poverty, reduced to rooming in a "dingy" boarding house. Her only friend is Gerty Farish; Selden has "perpetually missed seeing her" (p. 258). In addition to her financial worries, she has trouble sleeping; the "furies" haunt her waking hours and her dreams.

In desperation Lily begins to consider marriage to Rosedale as a solution to her troubles. She realizes that "all he now needed was a wife whose affiliations would shorten the last tedious steps of his [social] ascent" (p. 230). She offers herself to Rosedale in marriage, but he refuses her: "I’m more in love with you than ever, but if I married you now I’d queer myself for good and all, and everything I’ve worked for all these years would be wasted" (pp. 245-246). However, Rosedale does offer Lily a solution to her dilemma. He suggests that by using Bertha’s letters for blackmail she could regain her social position.
Rosedale is candid with Lily, putting her situation and her opportunity in a clear light. He tells her that she has "simply been sacrificed to their laziness and selfishness," and suggests that she "take a purely business view of the question" (p. 247). Lily is appalled at the idea of blackmail, but she begins to see some potential in Rosedale's proposition because it "reduced the transaction to a private understanding" between herself and Bertha (p. 248), whom she still does not want to hurt.

Put by Rosedale in terms of business-like give-and-take, this understanding took on the harmless air of a mutual accommodation, like a transfer of property or a revision of boundary lines. It certainly simplified life to view it as a perpetual adjustment, a play of party politics, in which every concession had its recognized equivalent: Lily's tired mind was fascinated by this escape from fluctuating ethical estimates into a region of concrete weights and measures. (p. 248)

However, Rosedale's calling "things by their right names" (p. 248) is dishonest; blackmail is not a business transaction, but a violation of another's trust. Seeing through him, Lily realizes "that the essential baseness of the act lay in its freedom from risk" (p. 249). She refuses Rosedale's offer because she has learned, from her experience with Trenor, that her earlier mistake had been to "not pay as they pay."
However, her increasing destitution draws her closer to his machinations until she comes to consider his proposition seriously. She begins to realize that "there had been nothing in her training to develop any continuity of moral strength: what she craved, and really felt herself entitled to, was a situation in which the noblest attitude should also be the easiest" (p. 251).

The format of Rosedale's straightforward business proposal appeals to Lily because it provides an avenue through which she can escape the contradiction between her own nascent standards of care and the acquisitive value system of the society she wants to rejoin. She still desires social rehabilitation, but she has begun to see the fundamental vulgarity of the rules of this society. While Rosedale is very honest, this proposal ultimately offends Lily because her emerging inner nature senses a flaw in his system of "concrete weights and measures." The value system of her former world is based upon a cynical business philosophy—that what one can get is what one deserves, suggesting a fundamental pessimism about the value of people who may be harmed. Lily initially rejects Rosedale's proposal of blackmail because of its lack of risk (she must "pay her dues").
However, the real flaw in Rosedale's logic is that it eliminates responsibility for personal consequences. In spite of Bertha's treachery, Lily doesn't want to hurt her. She is confused here, but is wrestling with a concept of values which is inconsistent with her capacity for care, and she is beginning to act more consistently in accordance with the impulses of her inner nature. However, Lily is still willful, still enamored of the potential for wealth. She wants the right decision to be the easy one; she wants life to be simple because, while she senses the complexity of human motives and consequences, she has neither the experience, the training, nor the desire to deal with such complications.

Lily did not "consider the question very closely"

Lily's feeling of obligation to repay her debt to Gus Trenor forces her to consider seriously Rosedale's proposal of blackmail and marriage. She continues to be torn between her desire for luxury and the emerging values of her inner nature. Wharton consistently suggests that Lily has legitimate alternatives; that her friendship with Gerty Farish and Lawrence Selden's
love for her provide an optional lifestyle which would be consistent with the needs of her inner nature. Gerty tells Selden that Lily could survive and be happy "if someone could reach out a hand and show her the other side—show her how much is left in life and in herself" (p. 259). Gerty attempts to do this, but doesn't understand the real source of Lily's conflict. Selden—who could have helped Lily—is unable to "reach out a hand" to her because "it was much simpler for him to judge Miss Bart by her habitual conduct than by the rare deviations from it which had thrown her so disturbingly in his way" (p. 260).

Thus isolated, Lily continues to struggle over both Rosedale's proposal and her options for using her aunt's legacy. This conflict evidences itself in her desire for sleep which is confounded by a persistent insomnia, representing both her desire for escape (or rescue) from her dilemma and her need to make choices. Lily becomes addicted to a sleeping draught, counteracted by an addiction to strong tea, a "temptation she was always struggling to resist. Her craving for the keen stimulant was forever conflicting with that other craving for sleep—the midnight craving which only the little phial in her hand could
still" (p. 278). This conflict represents Lily’s personal dilemma: she wants both escape from her troubles and the means to deal with them. At a chance meeting with Rosedale Lily tells, for the first time, the full truth of her involvement with Gus Trenor and that she plans to use her aunt’s legacy to repay the debt:

She made the statement clearly, deliberately, with pauses between the sentences, so that each should have time to sink deeply into her hearer’s mind. She had a passionate desire that some one should know the truth about this transaction, and also that the rumour of her intention to repay the money should reach Judy Trenor’s ears. (p. 280)

Although she tells the truth to Rosedale, her honesty is qualified by ulterior motive—a faint hope of reconciliation with her former friends. Furthermore, Lily chooses to confide in Rosedale (whom she dislikes) rather than Selden or Gerty (for whom she cares and has respect). She understands that one of her motives for repaying the debt arises from pride, which "would be crushed under the weight of an intolerable obligation." She realizes that this, however, is a "superficial consideration," that under it lurked the secret dread that the obligation might not always remain intolerable. She knew she could not count on her continuity of purpose, and what
really frightened her was the thought that she might gradually accommodate herself to remaining indefinitely in Trenor’s debt. (p. 283)

Lily is still unable to separate her self-concept from her desire to belong to the inner circle. She connects pride with social rehabilitation, continuing to blame herself for being ostracized. Her fault was in playing the game without understanding the rules, in allowing her external desires to dictate her actions, and in failing to examine either her own motives or those of Trenor and Bertha. Lily’s pride is false because it is derived from her need for acceptance rather than based on a concept of personal dignity.

When Lily accidentally meets Rosedale on the street, he is horrified by her obvious poverty and the fact that she has been working for a milliner. He offers to lend her the money to repay Trenor. Lily rejects this option because she can offer no security for the loan and views such a business arrangement as similar to that which she thought she had made with Trenor. After Rosedale leaves, however, she considers her situation in the "crude light" (p. 288) which he had shed on it:

What debt did she owe to a social order which had condemned and banished her without trial? She had never been heard in her own defence; she was
innocent of the charge on which she had been found guilty; and the irregularity of her conviction might seem to justify the use of methods as irregular in recovering her lost rights. Bertha Dorset, to save herself, had not scrupled to ruin her by an open falsehood; why should she hesitate to make private use of the facts? (p. 289)

Here, for the first time, Lily views her dilemma in an objective light. She does, indeed, owe no debt to the society which has cast her out. However, she is unable to accept the truth here because it is "crude"; the same fastidiousness which causes her to want the honorable act to be the easy act causes her to confuse the unvarnished truth with vulgarity. She uses self pity to excuse herself from moral obligation to herself: "was it her fault that the purely decorative mission is less easily and harmoniously fulfilled among social beings than in the world of nature? That it is apt to be hampered by material necessities or complicated by moral scruples? (p. 289). Sitting in a restaurant considering her options, Lily "felt a sudden pang of profound loneliness;" she craved "a responsive glance" from other diners, "some sign of an intuition of her trouble," but realized that she "alone [among the diners] was stranded in a great waste of disoccupation" (p. 290). Walking home, she realized that she had unconsciously arrived at a final decision.
She was "frightened and yet stimulated," and "seemed encased in a strong armour of indifference, as though the vigorous exertion of her will had finally benumbed her finer sensibilities" (p. 291).

Lily makes her decision to agree to Rosedale's proposal out of fear of alienation and out of desire to escape her moral dilemma. In doing so, she becomes "indifferent," emulating the business-like values of a decadent system and ignoring the impulses of her inner nature because they are difficult to examine and accept. Lily has based her decision upon Rosedale's pragmatism: she feels no moral responsibility to the society that treated her unjustly so she chooses the option which will reinstate her in that society.

As Lily walks toward Bertha's home to confront her with the letters she passes Selden's apartment building. She "seemed suddenly to see her action as he would see it--and the fact of his own connection with it, the fact that, to attain her end, she must trade on his name, and profit by a secret of his past, chilled her blood with shame" (p. 292). With an impulse rooted in memories of her previous visit, Lily knocks on Selden's door. His behavior, while kind, is somewhat superficial, and, "in her strange state of
extra-lucidity," his "light tone . . . jarred on her passionate desire to be understood" (p. 294). She senses that his love for her has died, but she wants to "make him understand that she had saved herself whole from the seeming ruin of her life" (p. 295). Lily attempts to tell him what his friendship has meant for her: "Some women are strong enough to be good by themselves, but I needed the help of your belief in me" (p. 296). In an effort to explain her need to regain her previous social standing, Lily says "What can one do when one finds that one only fits into one hole? One must get back to it or be thrown out into the rubbish heap" (p. 296).

Selden again misconstrues her statement and assumes that the purpose of her visit is to announce her marriage to Rosedale. Lily reacts with inner sadness: her "eyes did not falter, but a look of wonder, or puzzled self-interrogation, formed itself slowly in their depths" (p. 297). She realizes that he has misunderstood entirely what she had been trying to tell him, which reinforces her decision to confront Bertha. She tells Selden that she will leave "the Lily Bart you knew" with him when she goes. "I have kept her with me all this time, but now we are going to
part, and I have brought her back to you" (p. 297).

Selden reaches out to her, but his previous behavior has indicated that he no longer loves her. As she resists him, she realizes that she is in love with him.

In this light everything else dwindled and fell away from her. She understood now that she could not go forth and leave her old self with him: that self must indeed live on in his presence, but it must still continue to be hers. (p. 297)

Before Lily leaves Selden she unobtrusively drops Bertha’s letters into his fire.

The shame Lily feels here is real, resulting from her realization that to gain social rehabilitation she may harm Selden. Pride, however, still prevents her from being truthful with him, assuming that if he "believed" in her, Selden would somehow automatically understand that she is innocent. She continues to rely on his judgment of her, and so they talk at cross-purposes, neither able to accurately perceive the motives, needs, or feelings of the other. Realizing that she loves Selden causes Lily to make the grand, quixotic gesture of destroying the letters. Here again she acts on impulse. Her action destroys her hopes for social rehabilitation, and is motivated by a sense of moral responsibility toward Selden which has its source in care. Lily has recognized the characteristics of
her external and inner selves, and believes that this action has preserved her integrity. She still believes, however, that she fits into only "one hole" and that her only alternative is "the rubbish heap." Thus her gesture is empty, revealing little real understanding of self because she views herself as having only one choice, ruled, once again, by fate.

Lily actually had a number of choices: to use Bertha’s letters to achieve social rehabilitation; to follow the dictates of her conscience and repay Trenor out of her inheritance which would provide a slight chance of reinstatement in society but, realistically, would probably mean a life of poverty; or to ignore her debt and use the legacy to open a business, a practical solution which would provide a future for her. A fourth choice is to consider Rosedale’s offer of a loan. In destroying Bertha’s letters she has eliminated the only choice that would have harmed others. Using her legacy to repay Trenor would harm only herself. She has two choices remaining, either of which would enable her to survive and develop a true sense of personal dignity: she can use her legacy, or she can borrow from Rosedale and, with his help, open a business.
On her way home she meets Nettie Struther, one of Gerty's "cases" whom Lily had taken an interest in. She finds that Nettie (who had been seduced by a former employer) is married and has a baby. Her husband, she tells Lily, "cared enough to have me as I was" (p. 303). Lily spends a few moments in Nettie's apartment and holds her baby, who at first "seemed as light as pink cloud or a heap of down, but as she continued to hold it the weight increased, sinking deeper, and penetrating her with a strange sense of weakness, as though the child entered into her and became a part of herself" (p. 304). Wharton indicates here that a marriage based on care rather than convenience may be a real option for Lily; beyond that possibility, however, she further suggests Lily's need to be part of a world in which she can care and be cared for.

Her encounter with Nettie has a strong impact on Lily. When she returns home, she feels "stronger and happier," and decides that "since it was her fate to live in a boarding-house, she must learn to fall in with the conditions of the life" (p. 304). However, Lily is less in control of herself than she appears to be as she "systematically" examines "the contents of
her drawers and cupboards" (p. 304). Each dress
brings back memories of when she had worn it, and she
realizes that "she was like some rare flower grown for
exhibition, a flower from which every bud had been
nipped except the crowning blossom of her beauty"
(p. 305).

When a maid delivers a letter containing a check
for $10,000 from her aunt's solicitors, Lily is "still
in a state of highly-wrought impressionability"
(p. 305). She examines her accounts and realizes that,
once all her debts are paid, she will be reduced to a
life of bare subsistence. However, it was no longer
"from the vision of material poverty that she turned
with the greatest shrinking. She had a sense of deeper
impoverishment--of an inner destitution compared to
which outward conditions dwindled into insignificance"
(p. 306). Her fear now is of solitude, of a
"rootless," "ephemeral" existence.

As she looked back she saw that there had never
been a time when she had had any real relation to
life. . . . In whatever form a slowly-accumulated
past lives in the blood--whether in the concrete
image of the old house stored with usual memories,
or in the conception of the house not built with
hands, but made up of inherited passions and
loyalties--it has the same power of broadening and
deeplening the individual existence, of attaching
it by mysterious links of kinship to all the
mighty sum of human striving.
Such a vision of the solidarity of life had never before come to Lily. . . . All the men and women she knew were like atoms whirling away from each other in some wild centrifugal dance; her first glimpse of the continuity of life had come to her that evening in Nettie Struther's kitchen. (p. 307)

Throughout the course of the evening, in her meeting with Selden and her encounter with Nettie, Lily has gained insight into her dilemma, her options, and her insufficiencies. Although she sees her old life as superficial and disconnected, she is still unable to take the final step necessary to her survival by renouncing it. She recognizes that her life lacks context, but is so controlled by the superficial self-concept her beauty has given her that she cannot internalize that recognition, cannot achieve real self-understanding. Lily ultimately fails to realize that she herself is responsible for creating continuity in her life.

Lily systematically pays all her debts, including that to Trenor, and takes a sleeping draught. In a state of depression in which she sees herself "alone left sentient in a lifeless universe" (p. 309), she takes more than the prescribed amount, knowing that it is potentially dangerous. "If sleep came at all, it might be a sleep without waking. But after all that
was but one chance in a hundred: the action of the drug was incalculable. . . . She did not, in truth, consider the question very closely" (p. 309). As she falls asleep, Lily imagines that she is holding Nettie's child. Lily's desperate need for sleep both causes and results from her choices and her insights. Her rationalization as she takes the overdose, however, is ironically reminiscent of her earlier socially fatal unwillingness to face the possible implications of her actions.

Lily's tragedy is the result of a series of complex and interrelated factors. On the surface, she willfully refuses to make a conscious choice because she is unable to relinquish her hope for a life of luxury, ease and irresponsibility. Lily's willfulness, however, is a defensive reaction to her inability to comprehend and assert a coherent personal identity. In the end she is overcome by alienation and despair because she finds self-esteem only in her beauty, which is external. She is unable to perceive her inner "beauty," and thus has no sense of internal worth. Her sense of self remains fragmented because she does not believe that the standards of her inner consciousness, based primarily on her ability to care, are more
valuable than the accepted standards of society. While she is morally responsive to others (Selden, Bertha, Trenor), Lily never connects physical survival with responsibility for self. She never understands that there is continuity in her, and that only she can formulate a coherent system of personal values.

An Evolving Theory of Cognitive Development

Lily Bart is similar to the protagonists of the two other novels included in this study who are unable to attain a level of cognitive development that would enable them to lead productive lives. Like Pecola Breedlove, Lily's only source of self-esteem lies in the perceptions of others. Like Edna Pontellier, Lily is willful and self-destructive. Lily, however, is more complex than Edna; the essential difference between the two lies in their inner natures. Whereas Edna becomes obsessed by her emerging eroticism, Lily becomes confused by contradictions posed by her sense of moral responsibility and her capacity for care. Like Esther Greenwood, Lily struggles to formulate a coherent identity from a divided self.
In *The House of Mirth* Wharton explores each of the cognitive characteristics found in the other five novels. The role of authority is a critical factor in Lily's inability to trust the impulses of her inner nature. Her external self has been created by and continues to be controlled by the conventions of a specific, narrow social group. Lily's introspection is limited by her lack of self-esteem and by her desire for security and adulation. While she is receptive and imaginative, she is unable to either internalize new knowledge or learn from experience. Lily's inability to articulate the truth to anyone but Rosedale results from her habit of evasion, from cynicism rooted in society, from her pride, and from her lack of belief in her own worth. Lily is also plagued by a divided self. Her external self is controlled by the expectations of others; her inner self, also divided, is characterized by an aesthetic sense (which combines her trained fastidiousness with an innate intelligence and imagination) and by a deeply rooted capacity for care which is the foundation for moral responsibility. Lily's capacity for care also suggests a need to be cared for, and a primary complication in her dilemma is a progressive sense of alienation and isolation.
Wharton focuses on three primary factors that inhibit Lily's cognitive development. First, her self-esteem is derived from her external appearance; she is unable to forge a coherent concept of identity from the emerging characteristics of her inner nature. Second, she is therefore unable to rely upon self-esteem as a basis for self-understanding and survival. Lily prefers to rely upon the abstractions of the inner circle, setting their rules and manners as her ideal. Third, she is unable to use personal experience or to examine the impulses of her inner nature because they create difficulties for her. Ironically it is her inability to use concrete experience to create a bridge between her inner nature and the real world which is responsible for her tragedy.

The theme that gives this novel its complexity is the role personal and social values play in cognitive growth. Lily has been raised to rely upon a system of values that are essentially sterile, cynical, and self-serving. Her primary conflict arises from the juxtaposition of societal values with the vague and unformed values that arise from her inner nature and are rooted in her capacity for care. Wharton suggests
that Lily's survival depends upon the understanding that moral responsibility must include responsibility to self as well as to others.

Finally, a theme involving a discrepancy between training (learning skills which can be applied only in limited situations) and education (a broader learning which would enable her to transfer knowledge from one context to another) is evident in Lily's tragic end. Lily's training has been directed toward one narrow goal: to use her beauty to catch a wealthy husband. She has learned that skills of evasion, manipulation, deception, and decoration are what she needs to survive in the "gilt cage." When the impulses of her inner nature interfere, however, she is unable to formulate a plan of action that incorporates them, thus leaving herself open to victimization. Lily is unable to consciously contrast the emerging values of her inner nature with the value system of the society to which she has been trained to belong. Wharton suggests that Lily cannot formulate a personal system of values because she lacks experience or understanding of any alternative systems. Gerty Farish and Nettie Struther find productive lives even in poverty, but in the end Lily is unable to view these models as practical,
acceptable alternatives. Throughout the novel one element of culture that is conspicuously lacking is education. Lily is fascinated by the leather-bound books in Selden's parlor, but she is incurious about what they might contain. She carries a copy of Omar Khayyam's poetry on her travels; but Khayyam wrote superficial romantic verses, and Lily never reads. Moreover, the reader is given no indication that Lily has been exposed to any formal or informal education aside from her training to be a rich man's wife. Perhaps by omission Wharton is suggesting that exposure to other elements of society—through reading, experience, or formal education—could have provided Lily with greater confidence in the real world (where her natural talents and instincts for introspection and imagination could have developed) rather than in the artificial and abstract world to which she is bound and which dooms her.
Analyzes of the six novels included in this study revealed complex patterns of cognitive development in each protagonist. Following analysis using the method of constant comparison, the researcher returned to the broad operational definition of cognitive development derived primarily from the work of Rest (1974) and Knefelkamp, Widick, and Parker (1978). In Chapter II cognitive development was defined as the interaction of the individual with his or her environment by creating progressively complex organizing structures which are used to solve problems and guide behavior, fusing intellectual and moral development. In applying the general findings derived from analysis of the novels to this definition, the researcher refined the working definition as follows:

1. Environment included cultural setting, social convention, and other characters who interacted with the protagonist.

2. Each protagonist used cognitive strategies to attempt to solve problems; her ability to employ these
strategies to develop "progressively complex organizing structures" depended upon both innate or previously developed cognitive characteristics and the nature of her interaction with complex environmental factors.

This discussion of the findings includes (a) comments reviewing general features of the novels and the protagonists; (b) personal characteristics indicating potential for cognitive growth, most of which are common to all six protagonists; (c) a set of propositions outlining primary cognitive themes common to the novels; and (d) a discussion of the grounded theory derived from analyses of the novels.

General Features of the Novels

Of the six novels included in this study, only two protagonists (Celie in *The Color Purple* and Thea Kronborg in *The Song of the Lark*) attain a level of cognitive development that enables them to enjoy a mature, creative adulthood. Esther Greenwood (*The Bell Jar*) develops cognitive characteristics indicating that she has the potential to achieve maturation. The remaining three protagonists, while they achieve varying degrees of cognitive development, are unable to combat powerful internal and environmental factors
which inhibit their growth. Edna Pontellier (The Awakening) and Lily Barth (The House of Mirth) commit suicide; Pecola Breedlove (The Bluest Eye) becomes insane.

A comparison of the temporal structures of the novels reveals a direct relationship to the level of cognitive development of the protagonists. The development of Celie and Thea is revealed from adolescence to adulthood (Celie, from age 14 to approximately 40; Thea, from age 11 to 30). On the other hand, Chopin, Morrison, Plath, and Wharton restrict the time frame of their novels to less than one year, although the ages of their protagonists vary (Edna is 28; Pecola, 11; Esther, 19; and Lily, 29). This observation suggests that whereas Walker and Cather were interested in the full range of cognitive development in their protagonists, the other four authors were more concerned with how their protagonists fared during a limited period of extreme crisis. In addition, the two older protagonists may have already achieved a level of development which the younger women (particularly Pecola) lack. However, among these four writers, only Plath implies the possibility of development in her protagonist beyond the temporal
confines of the novel. Chopin, Morrison, and Wharton have created protagonists who either destroy themselves or are destroyed by factors beyond their control.

Two important distinctions among the novels included in this study which could influence the conclusions are the ethnicity of the writers and their protagonists and the cultural or temporal context in which the novels were written. While these distinctions appear to reveal more similarities than differences in terms of the cognitive development of the protagonists, they raise questions. The Color Purple and The Bluest Eye were written by Black women and are set within the confines of Black culture (although, in Pecola’s case, the influence of the larger white society is critical). Celie and Pecola are subjected to physical brutality, live in poverty, and are not considered by society as individual, intelligent persons. Each is thrust into an early adulthood by rape suggesting that, at least within the contexts of these two novels, Black men devalue Black women. The theme of care is stronger in these novels than in the others: Celie is able to develop because of the care of other strong women (Nettie, Sofia, and Shug); Pecola becomes insane because she is
consistently denied love. Both protagonists possess a strong instinct for survival, and both are curious, characteristics which may be the result of their youth rather than of their ethnicity. The white protagonists in the other four novels are controlled by social convention. Rather than subjected to physical brutality they are protected by society, resulting in enforced cognitive and emotional dependence which restricts development. They begin to rebel against the established social order as they come to desire independence. While the theme of the divided self is present, it is less prominent in *The Color Purple* and *The Bluest Eye*, suggesting that, if these novels are typical, Black female characters experience less conflict with social conventions than white female characters.

An examination of the eras in which these six novels were written reveals few important distinctions in terms of the cognitive development of the protagonists. *The Awakening*, *The House of Mirth*, and *The Song of the Lark* were written near the turn of the century; *The Color Purple*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *The Bell Jar* are contemporary novels, although *The Color Purple* opens about 1920 and *The Bluest Eye* is set in the
1940s. The primary difference between those novels written early in the century and those written later has to do with the degree of social conformity expected of the protagonists. Edna and Lily exist in upper-class societies where women are traditionally oppressed; both are subjected to the role expectations of rigid conventions, making their efforts to achieve independence and autonomy particularly difficult. Thea is also subject to externally controlled role definition, although her society—a small frontier town—is less rigid and easier to escape from than the entrenched conventions of the urban upper classes of New York and New Orleans. While Esther is unquestionably in conflict with social expectations, she has more freedom of thought and movement than Edna or Lily. Perhaps the most significant temporal difference among the six novels is that contemporary women writers—particularly Black writers—have more freedom to deal with items of oppression, both sexual and racial, than did women writing early in this century.
Characteristics of Cognitive Potential

Each of the six protagonists possesses characteristics that indicate her potential for cognitive development. The characteristics they all have in common as their respective stories open are a native intelligence; receptivity to natural forces, ideas, or other people; and a natural curiosity or desire to learn. Celie, Pecola, Thea, and Esther possess a strong instinct for survival which Edna and Lily appear to lack, although at the age the reader is introduced to them this instinct has been weakened by the development of complex habits of conformity.

Each protagonist is intense, although this characteristic reveals itself in different ways. Pecola’s and Esther’s intensity is linked with their instinct for survival and evidenced by the determination with which each pursues her respective goal (Pecola’s fantasy of blue eyes and Esther’s desire to be a poet). In Edna and Lily intensity has been transformed into willfulness—a self-centered and ultimately self-destructive insistence upon unrealistic goals. The intensity possessed by Celie and Thea,
however, evidences itself as a drive which appears to focus their efforts at cognitive development. Finally, each protagonist possesses the capacity for care, although this characteristic is less evident in Edna and Esther than in the other protagonists. Each is also vulnerable, a characteristic related both to her need to be cared for and to her receptivity.

Another unique characteristic that all six protagonists have in common is their potential for creative production and action. Celie becomes a maker of "folkspants"; Edna has the talent and the ambition to become a painter; Pecola's intense imagination, which gave her the potential for artistic endeavor, is transformed into an equally intense belief in fantasy and, ultimately, in magic; Thea becomes an opera star; Esther becomes a writer (if not a poet); and Lily's aptitude for decoration could have been translated into substantive artistic achievement. Each writer is, to one degree or another, concerned with the nature of art and with the capability of her protagonist for creative action.
Propositions Relating to the Cognitive Development of Women

Four propositions applicable to all six protagonists were identified during the process of theory development:

1. Personal development (how women solve moral or interpersonal dilemmas) is dependent upon and interrelated with cognitive development.

2. Women are in conflict with their environments and with themselves, and thus perceive their identities as divided. A critical task in their cognitive development is to merge the divided self into a coherent whole.

3. The following abilities are essential for cognitive development in women: (a) the development of self-esteem, (b) the use of concrete personal experiences as a medium for reflection upon and understanding of abstract concepts, and (c) the perception of the self as part of an identifiable universal context.

4. The development of self-esteem and cognition are dependent upon relationships of care.
A Theory of the Cognitive Development of Women

The researcher used five primary sources of knowledge as a framework for outlining a theory of cognitive development derived from analyses of the novels included in this study. The sources of knowledge identified in *The Color Purple* (external, personal experience, caring others, abstract others, and self and others) were used as labels to distinguish elements of a construct of development. The cognitive categories (roles of authority, introspection, imagination, and articulation) and cognitive themes (formation of identity and the ability to make choices) which have been addressed throughout the analyses of the individual novels have also been incorporated into this discussion. In addition, variations of these categories and themes and new concepts of development have been included as they were revealed. While this theory does not constitute a series of Piagetan stages of cognitive development, viewing the development of the six protagonists in terms of sources of knowledge acquisition did reveal an identifiable sequence in cognitive growth.
External Sources of Knowledge

For each protagonist external authority, in the form of other people and social convention, constitutes the primary early source of knowledge. Social convention and prescribed rules control behavior and dictate values. Other people serve as arbiters of the social order, imposing control either by applying physical force (as in the cases of Celie and Pecola) or by ensuring emotional and/or cognitive dependence. These women are unable to take independent action; their behavior is determined by the expectations of others and controlled by rules of conduct that they perceive as omnipotent, abstract, and separate from themselves.

Celie’s world is controlled by her stepfather, her husband, and God, all of whom impose specific rules of conduct. Edna is subject to the dictates of both her rural Southern heritage and the conventions of the New Orleans aristocracy of her husband. Pecola has been rendered helpless by a complex array of external controls: the brutality of her parents and the conventions of her own Black culture, which are in turn dictated by the larger white society. While Thea
appears less controlled than the other protagonists, she nonetheless relies upon external sources for knowledge. Her behavior is subject to the social conventions of Moonstone, to the values taught her by her parents, and to the artistic discipline demanded of her by Professor Wunsch. Esther's illness is precipitated by conflicting external expectations: general societal demands (represented by her mother and Buddy Willard) that she fulfil the traditional role of wife and mother, and the demands of professional women (represented by Jay Cee) that she make use of her intelligence and her talents. The power of these contradictory influences is compounded by the implication that the purpose of higher education is to enhance her ability to use her mind. Lily is subject to the arbitrary rules of conduct imposed by the social class she has been trained to join. Educational institutions, experienced by five of the six protagonists, do not aid in cognitive development. Schools serve as arbiters and reflectors of cultural conventions and social values in these novels, either inhibiting or having no impact upon the cognitive development of the protagonists. As each novel opens,
the protagonist is unable to take independent action because she relies upon external sources for guidance. Because their behavior is externally controlled, these characters do not perceive themselves as separate individuals but rely on the perceptions of others for their sense of identity. However, others view them as individuals only according to specific, isolated, readily apparent characteristics such as appearance (Celie, Pecola, and Lily), conformity to prescribed social roles (Edna and Thea), and academic achievement (Esther). Because they have no separate sense of identity, these women have little or no self-esteem except as derived from their ability to fulfill external expectations.

The result is that each of these protagonists experiences a sense of divided self. Nettie serves as Celie's alter ego, representing characteristics that Celie does not view herself as possessing, such as beauty and intelligence. While Celie's divided self is largely symbolic, the other protagonists experience the dichotomy within them in a more personal sense; most, in fact, identify for themselves an external and an inner self. Edna distinguishes between her "outer life" which conforms and her "inner life which
questions." Pecola wears a mask of ugliness (imposed by the perceptions of others) which hides her internal worth from all but Claudia, who sees it only in retrospect. Thea's "companion" is a secret part of herself, of whom she is aware only when she is alone; it is separate from her public self. Esther's divided self is most obvious, symbolized by her schizophrenia and represented by her perception of a dichotomy between her mind and her body (and, by extension, the social order which seeks to control her). Esther's divided self includes her external self (her body) and an inner self (her mind) which seeks to rebel against the imposition of external social roles. Lily's external self conforms to social expectations, but is hampered by the impulses of her inner self (represented by her aesthetic sense and her capacity for care) which are in conflict with the rules and values of society. Thus each protagonist possesses an external self which conforms to the expectations of external controls, and an inner self of which society is unaware.

In *The Awakening*, *The Song of the Lark*, *The Bell Jar*, and *The House of Mirth*, intelligence and mental discipline are associated with the external self, and imagination with the internal self. Thea learns piano,
Esther becomes a superior student, and Edna and Lily have learned all the social graces required by their respective cultures. However, these abilities suggest training rather than the use of intellect to understand meaning, to find truth, or to develop a system of values. Introspective and imaginative abilities, as well as other characteristics providing each woman with the potential for cognitive development, reside within these inner selves.

Because the inner selves are neither recognized nor accepted by the external world, the protagonists experience a sense of isolation and alienation. Because each desires self-esteem, she attempts to conform to social expectations and assumes imposed social roles. When sources of knowledge are entirely external—untempered by undervalued and therefore hidden inner cognitive qualities—they appear to be abstract and unconnected to the self. As a result, the women feel powerless and often (in the cases of Celie, Edna, Pecola, Thea, and Lily) believe themselves to be controlled by fate, thus unwilling and unable to assume responsibility for their actions. They are largely unable to distinguish fact from opinion or truth from falsehood, relying entirely on the judgments of others.
In addition, because they depend solely on external sources for knowledge, they are immobilized (unable to take independent action) and silent. Celie and Pecola suffer enforced silence. Edna is forbidden to discuss her thoughts and feelings with her husband. Thea does communicate with others, but seldom reveals her personal perceptions. Esther manipulates, and Lily evades.

**Personal Experience as a Source of Knowledge**

It is at the point when each protagonist begins to recognize and use personal experience as a source of knowledge that discernible cognitive development begins. First of all, recognition of personal experience as a potential source of knowledge signifies a primitive perception of self as separate from others and from prescribed social roles. The cognitive quality of receptivity enables women to become aware of personal responses and experiences that differ from expected responses. For the protagonists in this study, sources of personal experience are feelings, including sensuality, which appear to come from the inner selves and aid in developing a conscious
awareness of the divided self; and personal responses to nature or to natural forces outside the self.

Celie's receptivity to nature stimulates her imagination; she is thus able to internalize her knowledge of trees, for instance, and identify with their qualities. Edna's receptivity to her awakening eroticism forces feelings of oppression to the surface, signaling a recognition of and dissatisfaction with the imposition of familial and cultural roles. Pecola's responsiveness to the dandelions indicates a powerful imaginative ability in that she is able to perceive herself, for a moment, as part of a larger world. Thea's receptivity to and love of the sand hills stimulates her imagination and provides a foundation for her later experience among the Arizona cliff-dwellings. While Esther is responsive to her own feelings, they terrify her; her inability to trust the validity of personal experience conspires with other factors to cause her illness. Lily responds to the feelings that begin to surface from her inner self; she is most honest with both herself and Selden when she is in a natural setting, removed from the "gilt cage" of convention.
Reliance upon personal experience as a source of knowledge, however, makes these women vulnerable because it signals the emergence of an inner self unprotected by a personally derived and thus cohesive system of values. Whereas the external self is generally characterized by a public image and by adherence to the values imposed by authority, the inner self is characterized by an emerging receptivity to self and to nature (an element of the external world which is concrete and non-threatening). In order to learn from personal experience, the protagonist must have internal resources, or a sense of self to which she can attach experience and through which she can begin to interpret that experience. At this level personal experience is concrete, and thus perceived in contrast to authoritative controls and rules of convention which appear abstract. The perception of self as separate from authority and the new reliance upon personal, concrete experience creates rebellion against the abstract rules imposed by authority. Celie considers "fighting" Mr.____ and his children, but cannot act. Edna refuses to conform to her husband's expectations. Pecola's indulgence in fantasy is an unconscious form of rebellion against the harsh
realities of her world. Thea resents those who control the petty social priorities of Moonstone. Esther is in a constant inner state of rebellion, both questioning and mocking social and academic conventions. Lily allows her impulses rather than her training to control her actions. Each author implies that rebellion against conformity (perceived as abstract rules of conduct) is related to the desire for autonomy and necessary for cognitive growth. In addition, they all suggest that women must learn to internalize concrete experience in order to develop.

Critical factors at this stage have to do with a sense of security; learning must take place in a non-threatening environment in which the protagonist can begin to explore her new perceptions internally without fear of interference from authority. The awareness of concrete and personal experience is signaled by a retreat into self, often caused by learned reactions to treatment by others that teach avoidance behaviors. Celie communicates her internalization of natural symbols and forces only to God. Pecola, in reaction to the shopkeeper's rejection of her as a person, retreats into herself. Edna becomes immersed in eroticism. Thea discovers her inner self (her "companion") when
she is given a room of her own. In spite of her brilliance as a student, higher education is essentially an alien environment for Esther. She begins to consider the value of personal experience only in the depths of her illness, when she has shut herself off from any connection with the real world and from academia. Lily's reactions to the impulses of her inner nature result in her progressive alienation from society. Lily never trusts personal experience as a source of knowledge and is therefore unable to use it to provide a foundation for cognitive development.

The level of cognitive development at which personal experience becomes a legitimate source of knowledge is also characterized by inaction. Choices are based upon impulse rather than upon considered decisions and are motivated by self-protection. While recognition of personal experience as a source of knowledge precipitates introspection, the desire to understand the self is primitive at this point, limited by the need for security and protection of a nascent sense of self. The primary dangers at this level are (a) that women may not emerge from the retreat into self, and (b) that the imaginative capacity which emerges here may evolve into a reliance upon fantasy if
the protagonist is unable to use her imaginative power to translate concrete experience into learning. Edna and Pecola succumb to these dangers and are thus essentially unable to move beyond this level in their development. Lily willfully prefers to rely upon abstract rules and manners as an ideal. As a result, she never learns to trust the impulses of her inner nature; while she often acts upon these impulses, her actions are never the result of considered choices.

Caring Others as a Source of Knowledge

Caring, nurturing relationships constitute the most critical factor in the cognitive development of the protagonists considered in this study. The presence and acceptance of care stimulates and nurtures cognitive growth by leading to an expanded world view and increased self-esteem. The absence of or the inability to accept care from others inhibits and misdirects development, leading to alienation and a constricted world view. Pecola’s desperate search for someone who will love her is consistently thwarted; the constant pain of rejection thrusts her back upon herself. Because her only concept of self is that imposed by others (her "ugliness"), she lacks any
sense of personal identity and is unable to use her native intelligence, curiosity, and receptivity to build a bridge between her inner nature and the real world. Thus she lives only within herself, relying upon fantasy and magic rather than cognition to make sense of her world; the connections she forges remain exclusively internal, resulting in madness.

Unlike Pecola, Edna is surrounded by people who care for her: Adele, Robert, Doctor Mandelet and Mademoiselle Reisz. However, she is able to accept only Robert’s love, and that only on her own terms. She rejects Adele’s friendship, refuses to respond to Mademoiselle’s efforts to help her consider her actions and her alternatives, and refuses Mandelet’s offer to help her understand and solve her dilemma. Edna willfully insists upon making her own decisions without the benefit of consideration and advice from her friends. She suffers from self-imposed alienation, thus cutting herself off from others as a source of knowledge. Lily, who has an enormous capacity for love, also finds herself alienated. Her isolation, however, is imposed both by her own inability to communicate substantively with Selden and Gerty and by their inability to care for her unreservedly. These
three protagonists are unable to establish relationships of care, and are thus prevented (or prevent themselves) from learning from others. Their ultimate reliance entirely upon self destroys them.

Relationships of care create for the other three protagonists—particularly Celie and Thea—an atmosphere in which their cognitive development is nurtured. The reciprocity of care is key to understanding the power of this level of growth. Lily and Pecola both possess a tremendous capacity for care, but are not cared for. Edna is loved, but her care for others is constricted by her sensuality. Celie and Thea, however, are able to develop sustained and intense relationships based on mutual care. While Esther’s ability to care for others is questionable, she is able to establish the relationship with Doctor Nolan that precipitates her recovery.

In terms of cognitive development, relationships of care create for each of these three protagonists an atmosphere in which they can develop and externalize personal experience. In an environment made safe by care they begin to expand their cognitive capacities. Self-esteem increases in the presence of care, providing them with a foundation upon which they can
rely as they examine themselves in relation to others. At this level the protagonists are involved in relationships upon which they are dependent, but they are able to use others who care to help them identify alternatives, set priorities, and make choices. This level is characterized by supported rather than independent action. Care implies responsibility, and actions are based upon care of another rather than of self and indicate the emergence of conscience (Celie’s admission of guilt to Sofia; Thea wrestling with the problem of the tramp). In addition, the ability to articulate becomes a primary means of understanding oneself and provides a means of connecting the self with specific caring others, forming a foundation for later forging connections with the larger world. Celie’s conversations with Shug, Thea’s talks with Ray Kennedy and Doctor Archie, and Esther’s sessions with her therapist are critical to the development of each protagonist.

By fostering self-esteem, relationships of care strengthen the sense of identity discovered through using personal experience as a source of knowledge and serve as a precondition of further development. Thus the protagonist becomes increasingly independent of
authoritative controls while relying upon the caring person—a beneficent authority—as a source of both knowledge and security. In this secure environment, where external sources of authority are diminished, the inner nature begins to emerge and develop. At this level the protagonist begins to distinguish fact from opinion, to consider knowledge derived from a variety of sources, and to view herself as an individual separate from, but connected to, others.

Abstract Others as Sources of Knowledge

The expanded concept of self that arises from relationships of care facilitates women's ability to understand and incorporate previously abstract concepts into their cognitive repertoire. This level of development is characterized by internal rather than observable action, as women use introspection to organize imagination and articulation to formulate a new internal authority. Within the novels considered in this study, ideas that have their sources outside of the self constitute abstractions. Sources of abstractions are other cultures and traditions, rules and conventions of one's own culture, previously formulated ideological constructs, and formal
education. Celie begins to see a link between herself and her African heritage through Nettie's letters and wrestles with Shug's concept of God. Thea begins to see a link between herself and a broad, multi-cultural artistic tradition in the museum, the concert hall, and finally in Arizona. For both these protagonists, however, it is caring relationships which enable them to begin to consider concepts they had previously regarded as abstract and alien to themselves. Celie relies upon Nettie and Shug, Thea has the support of Harsanyi, Doctor Archie, and Fred. Esther, on the other hand, has great difficulty with abstractions. She not only resists chemical symbols and tight couplets, but has difficulty formulating a connection between herself (and her desire to be a poet) and the society in which she lives. Her distinction between observation and experience implies that knowledge (associated with academia and therefore abstract) is also separate from experience (concrete).

The other three protagonists are unable to use abstract concepts as a source of knowledge. Pecola is trapped by her own culture and relies on personal experience as a sole source of knowledge. Edna divorces herself from tradition and friends and is
therefore unable to envision any source of knowledge beyond her own emotions and eroticism. Like Pecola's, Lily's entire world is abstract to her. Because of her desire for wealth and ease, her narrow training, and the lack of a caring relationship or beneficent authority, she is unable to force a relationship between her inner self and any social echelon. Life itself remains an abstraction to Lily.

Both Celie and Thea learn to use personal experience as a foundation for constructing an increasingly complex world view. They are able to view themselves as part of a universal context which goes beyond the boundaries of their respective cultures. The formation of belief depends upon this ability to connect abstract concepts to personal experience. Celie and Thea, through use of imagination and introspection, learn to identify and examine a wide range of choices, including those which may not be safe, which imply risk. They are also able to consider the value systems of other cultures and to relate them to themselves, thus enabling them to eventually develop their own moral constructs. In addition, they begin to develop a respect for tradition. Whereas at earlier levels convention was viewed as a form of authority,
here women learn to consider convention as part of a long human tradition, distinguish and evaluate elements of convention, and distinguish between oppressive and facilitative elements. Thus tradition becomes accepted as a viable source of knowledge, rather than as a didactive and rigid system. Through this process of connecting personal, concrete experience with abstract concepts, the divided self begins to become whole. Celie finds Nettie's letters. Thea finds that her voice, not the piano, is her best instrument because it comes from her inner self. She had learned artistic discipline at the piano, as Esther learned academic discipline in college. But Thea is able, through her voice, to move beyond mere discipline to creative action. The reader has the product of Esther's creativity in her novel, although Plath suggests rather than shows that Esther had to learn to reintegrate herself and to forge connections with the broader world in order to tell her story. The ability to view oneself as part of a universal context precipitates the formulation of a moral construct upon which choices can be made and action based. Learning to incorporate abstract sources of knowledge into personal cognitive constructs increases independence, self-esteem, and
confidence in one's ability to act responsibly and freely.

Self and Others as Sources of Knowledge

In addition to learning to use abstract concepts as a source of knowledge, Celie, Thea, and Esther each learns that she herself is a reliable source of knowledge. While the development of self-esteem is dependent upon caring relationships, release from these beneficent but dependent relationships is necessary for independence. Celie learns that she can be "content" without Shug, Thea succeeds without marriage to Fred, and Esther leaves the hospital and Doctor Nolan to return to college. Freedom to enter into or to leave relationships of care signals a degree of self-confidence that enables women to make decisions and to assume responsibility for them. Celie and Thea have learned to identify and examine their alternatives, set priorities, and make choices based on a personally derived moral construct that includes care for self as well as care for others. Once women are able to translate thought into action based on personal, cognitively derived decisions, using concrete personal experience, abstract ideas, and the knowledge
and understanding of others, the divided self becomes whole. Nettie, Celie's symbolic other self, comes home. Thea becomes an opera star, merging her voice (her inner self) with her understanding of the multicultural context of which she is a part. Each has learned to use imagination, introspection, and articulation to interpret her world and to understand her place within that world. They have become artists (Celie with her needle, Thea with her voice) because they have used their skill and discipline to communicate their understanding, their connectedness, to their respective audiences.

Closing Images

The level of cognitive development achieved by each protagonist is revealed through the image with which each novel closes. Edna and Pecola are wounded birds, trapped by their self-perceptions and their cultures. The bird image is also used by Cather and by Wharton: Thea identifies with an eagle in the Arizona cliff-dwellings, indicating personal and spiritual freedom. Lily remains trapped in her "gilt cage," unable to fly out the open door. At the conclusion of the three novels in which cognitive development is not
inhibited, the final vision of the protagonist attests to the degree of her learning. Celie is united, strong, greeting Nettie and her children. Thea is triumphant on stage as a leading Wagnerian soprano. Esther tentatively walks into her exit interview at the hospital on her own, possessing the potential to become an artist and an independent, responsible woman. Whereas Esther's potential is unrealized within the confines of the novel, Celie and Thea learn to interact with their respective environments by creating progressively complex organizing structures which they use to solve problems and guide their behavior. They develop moral constructs which incorporate knowledge from all sources; their cognitive development has enabled them to achieve independence while maintaining connection with others. Moreover, for them learning is dynamic: Celie is able to learn from Mr.____, and Thea learns from her singing.

Conclusions

The primary findings derived from the theory-building process are as follows:

1. Viewed in terms of sources of knowledge, the cognitive development of women follows an identifiable pattern, moving from dependence to independence.
2. The inability to cope with conflicts between personally derived and externally imposed values or expectation restricts development.

3. The perception of self as a distinct individual develops from questioning external expectations and seeing the difference between externally imposed and personally derived values.

4. Women must break away from or rebel against imposed controls, but must not divorce themselves from the context provided by tradition.

5. Women must be able to reflect upon convention and understand the purposes of tradition in order to build their own value systems. They must be selective and base moral constructs on personal constructs.

6. In order to avoid alienation and achieve full development, divided selves must be recognized and merged.

7. Relationships of care are essential for cognitive development to occur. These relationships create an incubator in which introspection and imagination can develop and provide an "other" with whom women can learn to communicate. Relationships of care enable women to make personal choices and take action.
8. The formation of belief relies upon the ability to use concrete personal experience as a foundation for understanding abstract concepts. The formulation of moral constructs enables women to translate inner experience into observable and responsible action.

The cognitive development of women—which precipitates their personal development—appears to proceed according to a pattern in which the individual moves from blind acquiescence to external sources of knowledge, through rebellion against imposed controls and expectations, to cognitive independence. However, the protagonists included in this study who do develop understand that cognitive and personal independence is characterized by viewing themselves as part of a larger whole. Learning, therefore, implies understanding ideas from a variety of sources and identifying and maintaining ongoing relationships with other people (including cultures), and freedom implies responsibility.
This chapter includes a discussion of the theory derived during the course of the research as it relates to previous research on the cognitive development of women and an analysis of the findings as they relate to higher education. In addition, this chapter includes suggestions or implications for further related research studies and the significance of the study.

Comparison of the Findings to Previous Related Research

The findings of this research study resulted in a theory of cognitive development of women derived from fiction. Described in terms of five sources of knowledge, the primary elements of the theory include (a) that reliance upon external sources of knowledge controls and silences women, (b) that personal experience is a valid and necessary source of knowledge for women, (c) that relationships of care are essential to facilitate learning, (d) that connecting abstractions with concrete experience is required for understanding, and (e) that the first four elements in
this construct provide a foundation upon which women learn to think and act independently.

The results of the research study on the cognitive development of women conducted by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) were found to be the most comprehensive of all the studies considered in the review of literature. Belenky et al. not only incorporated the primary findings of the other research studies, but the focus of their study was to determine how women learn, and they specifically related their findings to higher education. Thus the researcher concentrated on comparing her findings with those of Belenky and her colleagues. However, an analysis of major findings of the research of Ortner (1974), Chodorow (1978), Miller (1978), and Gilligan (1977, 1979, and 1982) in terms of their application to the findings of this study served as an introduction to comparisons with Belenky et al. In general, the researcher concluded that the findings of this study support the results of previous related research.

Ortner (1974) concluded that women are psychologically closer to nature, whereas men create symbols, technologies, and structures which preserve society. The present study found that the protagonists
were in conflict with authority and with cultural constructs of convention. Resolution of this conflict was found to be a key to cognitive development, a critical step in which was the ability to respond to natural perceptions and impulses as sources of knowledge rather than directly to artificial and abstract constructs. Chodorow's (1978) assertion that the feminine personality develops in terms of relationships and connections with others is strongly supported by the powerful role of supportive relationships in the development of cognitive independence of the protagonists.

Miller (1978) found that pressure to conform to conventional feminine roles hindered women's abilities to develop distinct identities. Combined with her additional conclusion that women have constructed an "inner person" who is different from the person valued in society, her findings are consistent with the concept of the divided self (an inner, private self and the external, socially accepted self) experienced by each of the six protagonists. In addition, Miller's definition of personal creativity ("breaking through to a new vision") as a major component in the learning process of women is evident in the cognitive
development of the two protagonists (Celie and Thea) who develop the most fully. Thus several of the primary findings of the present research study were consistent with major findings of previous anthropological and psychological research.

Comparison with Gilligan's Research

Gilligan's (1977, 1982) primary finding was that women base moral judgments on an "ethic of care," rather than on Kohlberg's (1971) "ethic of justice." According to Gilligan, the fundamental conflict in the cognitive development of women is between responsibility to self and other; women must achieve a reconciliation between femininity (behavior based on conventional concepts of feminine goodness characterized by self-sacrifice) and adulthood (behavior based on responsibility characterized by care for self and others). Gilligan also perceived the difference between women's inner and outer "voices," and found that when women learn to replace externally imposed concepts of morality with truth derived from the internal voice, they are freed from coercion and are able to assume responsibility for choice. In
addition, she found that the development of self-concept is directly related to how women make choices.

The results of the present research study are consistent with each of Gilligan's major findings. The key to the cognitive growth of the six protagonists is the ability and the opportunity to develop relationships of care, which are necessary for the emergence of identity and result (at least in the cases of Celie and Thea) in the ability to consider both self and others in making choices. Celie is ultimately able to let Shug go because she loves Shug and perceives herself as a whole, independent person. Thea makes the decision not to leave her career in Germany to return to her dying mother not because it is best for either, but because she has learned to choose based on consideration of both herself and her mother. Neither choice is motivated by either self-sacrifice or selfishness, and each involves assumption of responsibility for choice.

Lyons' (1983) empirical study substantiated Gilligan's findings and resulted in a terminology which provides further insight into the present comparison. Lyons found that "connected" individuals base moral judgments on care and relationships, whereas
"separate/objective" individuals base decisions on universal concepts of justice. Celie and Pecola both seek connection; Celie finds relationships of care, and Pecola is denied them. Edna wants only one kind of connections and separates herself from all other relationships. Thea develops relationships and uses them to forge connections with the larger world. Lily wants connection, but clings to a world which not only excludes her, but which ensures her separation from her inner self. A primary problem for Esther is that she favors separation over connection. She has great difficulty both in understanding her need for relationships of care and in accepting such relationships. She refuses, for instance, to see any connection between her own illness and that of Joan Gilling. Esther is, however, able to free herself from relationships with people (such as Buddy) who threaten identity development. A primary problem for each of these protagonists involves separating herself from authoritative controls, forging connections with others who foster development, integrating her inner and external selves, and viewing herself as a distinct individual within a universal context with which she is
connected and within which considerations of self and others can be weighed in formulating decisions.

**Comparison with the Research of Belenky et al.**

Whereas the findings of the present research study have been discussed in terms of *sources* of knowledge, the "perspectives" discovered by Belenky and her colleagues represent *forms* of knowledge. This distinction is mainly semantic as these perspectives are described as "mediums for learning" which include sources of knowledge. The authors of the six novels included in this study are concerned primarily with higher order cognitive skills. Comparisons of the derived theory of cognitive development with the first two perspectives are therefore brief, relating primarily to Celie and Pecola. In addition, although Belenky et al. do not discuss the role of relationships of care as facilitators in the learning process, their finding that women who are "connected" learners move more easily to their highest position suggests strongly that relationships are important in cognitive development.

External forms of authority are the primary sources of knowledge for women at the first two
perspectives identified by Belenky et al.: silence and received knowledge. At the first perspective silence is imposed; the woman appears "mindless and voiceless," she is isolated, and she has no introspective abilities. Received knowers are characterized by the belief that knowledge is absolute, controlled, and inaccessible to them; they are intolerant of ambiguity, confused by conflict, and believe themselves to be incapable of creating knowledge. While Celie and Pecola suffer enforced silence, the other protagonists possess only an external voice which reflects the expectations of authority; their inner voices are silenced because their only sources of knowledge are external.

The awareness of personal experience as a source of knowledge is roughly comparable to the position of subjective knowledge. Here, according to Belenky et al., the knower becomes aware of her inner voice, but knowledge is private and intuited. Women want freedom from external authority but are reluctant to risk open expression, fearing that they will disrupt relationships. When each protagonist becomes aware of personal experience as a source of knowledge, she is a subjective knower. This position can be viewed as a
cognitive transition between personal experience and caring others as sources of knowledge. Relationships of care provide an environment in which women can safely explore their own thoughts and perceptions, although self-sacrifice is perceived as necessary for the preservation of the caring relationship. Those protagonists who grow beyond subjective knowing develop imaginative and introspective skills, and learn to articulate through communication with a caring other. Those who do not move beyond this perspective either lack relationships (Pecola and Lily) or become trapped in subjectivism (Edna).

The ability to consider abstract concepts begins at the position of procedural knowledge; it is at this point that more complex comparisons can be made. Here the inner voice becomes critical and independent reasoning begins to emerge. Belenky et al. distinguish between separate knowers (who learn from separating themselves from the object and achieving mastery over it) and connected knowers (who learn from becoming intimate with the object). Connected knowing is characterized by belief rather than doubt, integration between thinking and feeling, and the belief that the most trustworthy knowledge comes from personal
experience rather than from external authorities. The ways in which the protagonists react to abstract sources of knowledge can be viewed according to these concepts of separate and connected knowing. A comparison of the only two protagonists who are involved in formal education (Thea and Esther) reveals fundamental differences in how they learn from abstractions. Esther is a separate knower; her brilliance in academia is characterized by her ability to manipulate higher education and by her distaste for abstract concepts. She insists on labeling chemistry as abstract and biology as concrete, failing to see any relationship between the two disciplines. Her learning is characterized by doubt and by persisting in her efforts to attain mastery over (rather than understanding of) those subject matters which she perceives as abstract. Her attempts to control her body with her mind symbolize these self-defeating academic efforts.

Thea is a separate knower who becomes a connected knower. Her efforts to discipline herself as a pianist suggest that she perceives herself as separate from the music. For her, the piano is an instrument which she must master, and she proceeds as she does with a
"difficult problem in arithmetic." Her voice, however, is an instrument which she feels no need to master; it is part of, rather than separate from herself. Thea’s experience suggests that women may effect a transition from separate to connected knowing. Belenky et al. state that connected knowers become constructed knowers more easily than separate knowers because connection of self with object reduces conflict. Celie is also a connected knower who struggles to arrive at a concept of God through relating an abstract concept to personal experience. An enforced (Pecola) or chosen (Edna) separation between the self and the larger world retards cognitive development. Pecola’s experience with the dandelions indicates that she had the potential to be a connected knower; Lily sees a connected world in her encounter with Nettie Struther, but is unable to perceive herself as being a part of it.

The ability to use self and others as sources of knowledge corresponds to the final position identified by Belenky and her colleagues: constructed knowledge. Constructivists are able to integrate knowledge derived from self and others, rational and emotive thought, and objective and subjective knowing. They have
identified a core self, have developed a high 
tolerance for internal contradictions and ambiguity, 
and believe that truth depends upon context rather than 
upon externally derived ethical standards or 
constructs. Celie and Thea become constructivists; 
Esther has begun to move into this position as The Bell 
Jar ends. In each of these three novels the divided 
self becomes integrated and the protagonist is able to 
rely on herself as a source of authority. In addition, 
the self is perceived as part of a universal context in 
which all sources of knowledge are considered in making 
decisions and in discovering truth. This concept is 
critical to an understanding of the cognitive 
development of Celie and Thea. Celie constructs a 
concept of God which includes herself, other people, 
nature, and other cultures; once she is able to do this 
she is reunited with Shug, Mr.____, Nettie, and her own 
children. Thea’s experience among the cliff-dwellings 
of Arizona culminates in a similar experience. Once 
she learns to view herself as part of a multi-cultural 
continuum she is able to make the decision to risk her 
security, her future, and Dr. Archie’s money to study 
voice in Germany. Esther begins to become a 
constructivist once she is able to accept the
"landscape" of her past, and realizes that her future holds questions which only she can answer (as opposed to the answers which she had previously demanded of herself and of others). The concept of the self as part of a universal context is important in all six novels. Pecola begins to see herself as part of a larger whole in her experience with the dandelions; Lily perceives context in her encounter with Nettie Struther but fails to envision herself as part of that "continuity of life." Edna perceives herself as connected with part of her past but is unwilling to acknowledge that this continuity might extend into the future.

In their discussion of constructed knowing, Belenky et al. state that the constructivists in their study found devaluation of authority to be a powerful learning experience. Each protagonist (including Pecola, with her fantastic story of love and her belief that she has blue eyes) rebels against authority. However, only Celie, Thea, and Esther are able to extend that rebellion into a true questioning of the value of authority. Neither Edna nor Lily gains the courage to "dare and defy" which Mademoiselle insists is the primary prerequisite for artistry. Whereas
Belenky and her colleagues do not discuss artistry as a form of constructivism, creative production is clearly a theme in all six novels. While each of the protagonists possesses talent and the desire for creative achievement, only those who become constructivists become artists. However, the key to constructing knowledge—the ability to integrate concrete personal experience with abstractions as a means to understanding and creating knowledge—is the major element which enables Celie and Thea to attain a high level of cognitive development.

The primary findings of the present study are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Gilligan and Belenky et al. in their respective studies. While few new conclusions have been drawn as a result of this study, several findings enhance previous efforts at theory building, particularly in terms of the work of Belenky et al. In addition, the present study has shown that analyses of female fictions of development can both substantiate and enrich more scientific methods of investigation.
Women and Higher Education

The primary purpose of this study was to derive a grounded theory of the cognitive development of women from fiction. Because the study has been conducted within the context of higher education, application of the theory to higher education and, specifically, to the education of women is discussed.

Formal education is addressed in five of the six novels included in the study, although higher education appears as a primary force in cognitive development only in The Bell Jar. In each novel, however, formal education is a negative force, an inhibitor rather than a facilitator of cognitive development. Celie and Pecola are both expelled from school because of pregnancy. Celie loved school and struggled to continue her education with Nettie as her teacher. Pecola, on the other hand, was an outcast because of her "ugliness," ridiculed by classmates and teachers alike. Edna attended what appears to be a finishing school. In the only reference to this experience in the novel, she recalls a friend with whom she had discussions about exalted ideas and romantic novels, and whose "fine sounding" essays she attempted to
emulate. Within the context of the novel her formal schooling appears to affect Edna's cognitive development only insofar as it aids in establishing a history for her propensity for romantic fantasy and unreality.

Thea's attitude toward her early formal schooling is negative; at the opening of the novel she is bored with school because she already knows more than her teacher. She is happy to leave school early in order to teach piano. The remainder of Thea's education (and this may be classified as "adult" or "professional" education) is specifically related to music. She learns discipline from Wunsch, expands her appreciation and her technique with Harsanyi, and begins to understand the complexities of music as an art form through her visits to the museum and the concert hall. When she recognizes that voice and not piano is her metier, however, Thea learns technique from Bowers, but must teach herself how to use and develop her voice. Esther, the only protagonist who experiences traditional higher education is in conflict with academia. For her, college is also an inhibitor of cognitive development; she learns to master her subjects and to manipulate the system, but her learning
is reflected in her ability to conquer abstractions, not to understand them and relate them to herself. Lily is the only protagonist who has had (as far as the reader knows) no formal education at all. She has been trained by her mother in the social graces and forms of manipulation and evasion necessary to secure a wealthy husband. By omission, Wharton suggests that Lily's lack of exposure to books, ideas, or teachers contributes to her inability to appreciate life beyond her "gilt cage" and her failure to discover a lifestyle which would enable her to survive. Thus for the protagonists of these six novels formal education (including training, in Lily's case) alienates women and inhibits cognitive development. The two protagonists who achieved the highest level of cognitive development—Celie and Thea—did so through self-education and self-discovery, rather than through exposure to education as an institution. In these novels education is viewed as a social institution which, like other institutions which adhere to and preserve social and cultural conventions and values, inhibits rather than fosters learning.

An analysis of the major findings of the study in terms of higher education as a social institution
reveals ways in which colleges may contribute to (or deter) the cognitive development of women. The finding that personal development is dependent upon and interrelated with cognitive development is consistent with the findings of Kolb (1981), who discovered that how one learns determines the course of personal development, and Kelly (1955), who believed that learning "is synonymous with any and all psychological processes" (p. 75). This conclusion supports the holistic approach to student development to which most contemporary colleges ascribe.

Traditional student development activities, however, are generally designed for and are most readily available to the "traditional" student who enters college directly from high school. According to Bernard (1981), from 1960 to 1972 the number of women enrolled in college tripled, including significant numbers of older women. An increasingly large population of female college students is classified as "non-traditional"—those women who either enter or return to college after having been away from formal education for some years. These women are often part-time students and, even if they are able to attend on a full-time basis, have other responsibilities which
prevent them from participating fully in the college community.

According to Mines (1986) and Kitchener (1986), students are not prepared to deal with higher level cognitive skills until their mid-twenties, which suggests that different strategies may be required in student development, teaching methodologies, and academic requirements for these two groups of female students. Both cognitive preparedness and the need to integrate personal with cognitive development must be considered in the education of women in either undergraduate category. For the younger student the college years may serve as a foundation upon which cognitive skills may later be built; the older woman, on the other hand, enters college with greater receptivity to higher cognitive demands.

However, Bernard (1981), in her study of women in college, found that older female students need moral support the most. In discussing her conclusion that colleges need to pay more attention to women's life cycles, Bernard contended that women have been socialized to be defensive and immature, that "sex-role socialization of girls has been 'counter-developmental'" (p. 261), and that social standards for
adult women have encouraged "developmental arrest" (p. 261). Bernard stated that academia needs to adjust to the needs of women, particularly to the family and academic obligations of older female students.

Many colleges offer services specifically designed to provide support for female students. In order to be truly effective, these women's centers and programs should recognize the different cognitive and personal needs of younger and older female students. In addition to helping women develop strategies for adjusting to college life, women's center staff need to facilitate the learning of female students.

The hierarchy of needs discovered by Maslow (1954) bears a direct relationship to the findings of the present study. Maslow identified basic human needs (physiological, safety, belonging and love, esteem, self-actualization), each of which must be satisfied before the individual can proceed to the next level in the hierarchy. In addition, he identified basic cognitive needs: the desires to know and understand (or curiosity), and aesthetic needs. Each of these needs can be related to the theory of cognitive development derived in the present study, although the order of Maslow's hierarchy does not correspond
directly with the findings. Women, for example, appear to derive self-esteem from safe environments created by caring relationships, and the process of self-actualization involves consideration and integration of a variety of sources of knowledge. The fundamental cognitive characteristics of each protagonist, however, correspond to Maslow's "basic cognitive needs": curiosity, which each protagonist possesses (at least early on in development) and an aesthetic sense (which is most prevalent in Lily, who cannot move beyond the need for aesthetic satisfaction).

Self-esteem was found to be a prerequisite for the cognitive development of women. Esther was a brilliant student, but Plath does not equate her achievement in academia with developing self-confidence. In fact, college undermined her self-esteem. Belenky et al. (1986) suggest that women often view academic success as accidental—as something which they do not deserve; higher education may thus increase self-doubt. They further suggest that women need approval in order to develop self-esteem. Edna, Pecola, and Lily found no approval, no support in their efforts to learn. Celie, Thea, and even Esther, however, found mentors who
provided them with a safe environment in which they could begin to explore themselves and their worlds through imagination and introspection, and provided someone with whom they could communicate throughout this phase of development.

Thus the need for caring relationships, which is critical for the development of self-esteem, is also a necessary ingredient for cognitive development to occur. A sense of community within the college environment and within the classroom may facilitate the learning of women. The value of mentors to the cognitive development of women is reinforced by the assertion of Belenky and her colleagues that women respond best to the "midwife" model of education, in which the teacher draws learning out of the student. Without Shug, Celie would have remained essentially a non-person, submitting to the demands of her husband. Without Doctor Archie, Harsanyi, and Fred, Thea would have returned to Moonstone to teach piano, having never discovered the power of her voice. Without Doctor Nolan, Esther's illness would have increased in intensity. Women in higher education need to be accepted by their teachers as intelligent individuals, capable of substantive thought.
Feminist educators are experimenting with new pedagogies designed to integrate the ways women learn with academic content and discipline. According to Schniedewind (1983), an "emphasis on democratic classroom processes" (p. 262) is implicit in feminist pedagogy. The educational processes that she has found to be particularly effective are characterized by a collaborative classroom atmosphere in which leadership is shared and a sense of community is fostered. Schniedewind's teaching methodologies support the concept that relationships of care, the development of self-esteem, and an integrated approach to learning facilitate the cognitive development of women.

Contemporary higher education's emphasis on specialization in general and professional curricula compounds the problems which women face in undergraduate education. Women tend to be in conflict with their environments--particularly those environments which expose them to the traditional values and conventions of society. While higher education provides a somewhat sheltered environment in which diversity is acknowledged and exploration of ideas is fostered, colleges themselves remain repositories for the values of the larger society, and
their ability to reflect changes in societal values is slow. Both Kolb (1981) and Bloom (1987) contend that academic specialization is counterproductive to learning, a concept that is impacted by the identification by Belenky and her colleagues of the concepts of separate (or specialized) and connected (or contextual and integrated) knowing. Our society divorces higher education from daily experience, particularly from the traditional female experiences of housewifery and child rearing. As younger college women develop, they may feel increasingly alienated from the learning environment, and thus from learning itself. Older women, who bring with them more extensive life experience, will tend to feel even more alienated unless they feel that higher education is not divorced from real life and accepts their experience as providing a valid foundation for academic achievement. Thus women may feel alienated from higher education unless the academic environment creates a true sense of community in which knowledge is shared, not dictated. As long as women feel at odds with academic environments they will have difficulty merging their inner selves with their external persona, which
conforms to the expectations of society and, therefore, of traditional academia.

Another major finding of this study is that women use personal experience to understand abstract concepts. Kolb's (1981) theory of experiential learning further informs the concept of concrete personal experience as a source of knowledge. According to Kolb, concrete experience becomes the source of observations and reflections which constitute a foundation for formulating abstract concepts and generalizations. The concept of reflection, which suggests consideration of externalized objects and experiences, was not identified as a distinct factor in cognition in the theory-building process of the present study. However, it is related to the quality of receptivity; as each protagonist receives perceptions, she reacts to and reflects upon them. Those who attain the highest levels of development use reflection as a cognitive bridge to reflection upon self, or introspection. If the personal experience of women is undervalued, self-esteem will be undermined. Women need to be permitted, even encouraged, to use personal experience as a basis for learning. Kolb also identified three stages in the human growth process:
acquisition (which extends from birth to adolescence), specialization (which extends through formal education into mid-career), and integration (which begins at some time during the individual's career and extends throughout life). The findings of the present study suggest that integration (defined here as the ability to learn contextually) is more necessary for women than specialization, and may need to occur earlier in the life cycle. In relating his theory to higher education, Kolb asserts the need for an integrated curriculum and for the university to view itself as a center for lifelong learning. Women learn by making connections between themselves and what they know and external sources of knowledge. Belenky and her colleagues suggested a model of connected education for women in which the student sees herself and her experience as a part of a larger whole. Celie and Thea achieved a high level of cognitive development because they discovered a universal context for learning, of which they themselves were an integral and necessary part. If higher education stresses the contextual nature of learning, the cognitive development of women will be facilitated rather than inhibited.
Implications for Further Study

This study has two primary implications for further research. The first has to do with the use of discrete categories of fiction; the second, with applying theories derived from fiction to other sociological, anthropological, and psychological research studies.

This study was limited to only six novels, a small representation of the wealth of literature available to the scholar. The methodology of deriving a founded theory from fiction could be employed using a variety of more discrete categories of fiction. Such categories could include fiction by Black women or women of other ethnic or cultural minority groups; contemporary novels, or works of fiction selected according to another temporal context; novels of development written by men with male and/or female protagonists; novels whose protagonists are categorized according to age (adolescent women, young women, middle-aged women, older women). In addition, the researcher could select novels on the basis of time frame, studying the development of protagonists during a short period of time, or over the span of a lifetime.
Novels could also be selected on the basis of subject matter; the present study, for instance, might have been easier to relate to higher education had the selection criteria for the novels stipulated works of fiction set in colleges.

Researchers could also compare a theory of cognitive development grounded in fiction to the works of other scholars of cognitive development—particularly to those which do not distinguish between the development of men and women. The theories of such figures as Perry (1970), Kohlberg (1971), Piaget (1964), Kolb (1981), and Chickering (1984) could be enriched or qualified through application of development as viewed by the artist.

In addition to various combinations of comparison using the methodology of grounded theory, the results of the present study are limited by the relatively small data base used. Further study could help determine to what extent this theory applies to women and whether it reveals that women do indeed develop according to different criteria from men. Furthermore, the purpose of developing a grounded theory is, according to Conrad (1982), to derive a theoretical framework which can then be empirically tested. The
theory derived in the present study could be tested using more traditional scientific methodologies.

Significance of the Study

This study revealed that works of fiction constitute a vast and valid data base for research on cognitive development. Literature can be used for primary theory building which is subsequently tested either in a related study using a different methodology or through comparison with previous related research studies. The methodology of constant comparisons to derive a grounded theory could also be used to enhance a theory building process in which another methodology is employed.

The interdisciplinary nature of the study is also significant, particularly in light of a recent focus on the value of interdisciplinary research in higher education. This study employed a methodology developed in the social sciences and adapted for use in higher education to derive a theory for examining works of literature. The use of an inductive approach, moreover, was consistent with the methodology of literary analysis. One of the findings of this study, when related to higher education, is that a contextual
or integrated approach to learning is consistent with women's need for connected education. The purpose of interdisciplinary research is to view a subject from a variety of perspectives through applying alternative methodologies—an approach to research which supports the concept of integrated learning.

The findings of this study have substantiated and provided new insight into psychological and learning theory on the development of women. In addition, an analyses of six novels of female development have contributed to literary scholarship, particularly to the study of female Bildungsroman.

For scholars of higher education, however, the primary value of this study lies in the process. The successful use of fiction to derive a grounded theory, the interdisciplinary nature of the study, and the implications this process has for future research will have more long-term value than the findings of the study.


APPENDIX A

MATERIALS SENT TO PANEL MEMBERS
As part of my doctoral research in Higher Education at Iowa State University, I am conducting a study in which I am evaluating the results of recent research studies on the intellectual and moral development of women in relation to the development of major characters in novels written by women.

You have been identified as an expert in the area of Women's Literature. I need your help in selecting the works which I will subject to analysis.

Enclosed are (1) an explanation of the purpose of this study, the methodology which will be used, and the criteria for selection, and (2) a selection form. I know that you are busy, but would appreciate your taking 20 to 30 minutes to complete the selection form. I will be asking you to make subsequent ratings, which will take less time. Your responses to all communications will be kept confidential.

I would value any comments or suggestions you might have on either the selection process or the research project itself. You will receive a copy of the results of the study when it has been completed.

Please return the selection form to me in the enclosed envelope. Your assistance in this endeavor will be greatly appreciated.

For many years I have believed that women think and learn differently from men, and am excited by the opportunity to use my background in literature to conduct a formal investigation of this issue.

Thank you for your help and support.

Sincerely yours,

Harriet Howell Custer
1108 Morton Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50316
**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine selected works of fiction written by women, to identify the developmental patterns of central female characters, and to then determine whether or not these patterns are consistent with theories of female development.

**Selection Method**

A Delphi technique comprised of two or three rounds of response will be used to achieve consensus on the novels which will be subjected to analysis. The goal is to arrive at a list of the 5-15 works which, in the view of a panel of experts, are most appropriate for consideration in this study.

In the first round, panel members will be asked to list 10 to 15 novels or novellas which meet established criteria. Responses will be tabulated and a compiled list formulated based upon the frequency with which each work appeared on the first response. In the second round, panel members will be asked to respond to the ranked list by reevaluating their original responses (if necessary), and to indicate the 10 novels which they believe are most appropriate for use in this study. If a third round is necessary to achieve consensus, it will be conducted in the same manner as round two.

**Criteria for Selection**

The works should be novels or novellas written by American women during the twentieth century. Panel members should select works based upon the following criteria:

1. The central character(s) should be female.

2. A major theme in the novel should be the cognitive development of the central female character. "Cognitive development" may include intellectual growth or the ability to solve problems and make decisions in any (conventional or unconventional) learning situation.
Selection Form

Please list 10-15 novels or novellas which you believe meet the criteria established for selection and return this form in the enclosed envelope by March 20, 1987.

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I appreciate your agreeing to participate in the process of selecting the novels which I will include in my research study on women's development.

Round one in the Delphi process is now complete, resulting in a list of 77 works by 55 different women mentioned by 12 panel members. The purpose of the second round is to approach consensus on 8-10 novels which you and the other panel members believe are most appropriate for use in my study.

I have enclosed the following materials:

1. A list of the novels selected in round one; these works are ranked according to how many times each was listed by a panel member.

2. A copy of your original selection form.

3. A new selection form with instructions for completing round two.

4. The selection criteria.

While I am not familiar with all the works listed by panel members, I have eliminated those works which I know do not meet the selection criteria. I am certain that works such as Atwood's Surfacing, Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, and Kingston's The Woman Warrior would provide valuable insight to my study; I have, however, with great reluctance, eliminated them because they do not meet the criteria which I established at the outset of this process. Should my findings prove valuable, novels by non-American writers and autobiography as a genre would provide rich sources for further study.

I realize that this process is time consuming, and sincerely appreciate your willingness to help. Many of you have made valuable comments and suggestions, which I have taken into consideration as my research has progressed.

Sincerely yours,

Harriet Howell Custer
Note: Novels by men and non-American women have been excluded.

NOVELS LISTED BY PANEL MEMBERS  
(Prioritized According to Number of Times Mentioned)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Artist</th>
<th>Title (Times Mentioned)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice Walker</td>
<td>The Color Purple (10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toni Morrison</td>
<td>The Bluest Eye (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sylvia Plath</td>
<td>The Bell Jar (7)</td>
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<td>Willa Cather</td>
<td>Song of the Lark (6)</td>
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<td>Lisa Alther</td>
<td>Kinficks (5)</td>
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<td>Kate Chopin</td>
<td>The Awakening (5)</td>
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<td>Toni Morrison</td>
<td>Sula (5)</td>
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<td>Edith Wharton</td>
<td>The House of Mirth (5)</td>
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| Carson McCullers         | A member of the Wedding (4)  
The Heart is a Lonely Hunter (3) |
| Toni Morrison            | Song of Solomon (3)     
                          Tar Baby (3) |
| Katherine Ann Porter     | Old Mortality (3)        |
| Agnes Smedley            | Daughter of Earth (3)    |
| Edith Wharton            | Summer (3)              |
| Zora Neale Hurston       | Their Eyes Were Watching God (2) |
| Gloria Naylor            | Women of Brewster Place (2) |
| Joyce Carol Oates        | Them (2)                |
| Alice Walker             | Meridian (2)            |

THE FOLLOWING NOVELS WERE MENTIONED ONCE

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<tr>
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<td>Mary Hunter Austin</td>
<td>A Woman of Genius</td>
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<td>Doris Betts</td>
<td>Heading West</td>
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Marion Zimmer Bradley  Mists of Avalon
Rita Mae Brown  Rubyfruit Jungle
Rosellen Brown  Civil Wars
Willa Cather  My Mortal Enemy
              O Pioneers!
              Shadows on the Rock
              Sapphira and the Slave Girl
              My Antonia
Sandra Cisneros  House on Mango Street
Louise Erdrich  Love Medicine
Marilyn French  The Women's Room
Zelda Fitzgerald  Save Me the Waltz
Charlotte Perkins Gilman  The Yellow Wallpaper
Ellen Glasgow  The Sheltered Life
              Barren Ground
Rebecca Goldstein  The Mind-Body Problem
Mary Gordon  Final Payments
Lois Gould  Final Analysis
              A Sea Change
Doris Grumbach  Chamber Music
Judith Guest  Ordinary People
Joyce Johnson  Minor Characters
Gayle Jones  Eva's Man
Erica Jong  Fear of Flying
              Parachutes and Kisses
Florence King  Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady
Harper Lee  To Kill a Mockingbird
Audre Lorde  Zami: A New Spelling of My Name
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<td>Anzia Yezierska</td>
<td>Bread Givers</td>
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Selection Form: Delphi Round Two

Instructions: Using the full list of novels, please reevaluate your original selections. List the 10 novels which you believe are most appropriate for inclusion in my study, and rank them by assigning points to each novel (10 points for the most appropriate, 1 point for the "least" appropriate).

If a third Delphi round is necessary to achieve consensus, I will furnish you with a list of novels compiled according to your combined rankings.

Please return this selection form in the enclosed envelope by May 1, 1987.

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APPENDIX B

PANEL MEMBERS
Patrice Caldwell
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Cornell College

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Cleveland State University

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University of Nebraska

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Department of English
Drew University

Nancy Walker
Chair, English Department
Stephens College