“We Had a Nice Little Chat”: Age and Generational Differences in Mothers’ and Daughters’ Descriptions of Enjoyable Visits

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Mother–daughter relationships are generally characterized by frequent contact and high levels of regard. Yet little is known about what mothers and daughters find enjoyable about their contact. Forty-eight pairs of older mothers (M = 76 years) and their middle-aged daughters (M = 46 years) and 44 pairs of middle-aged mothers (M = 47 years) and their young adult daughters (M = 21 years) (N = 182) described recent enjoyable visits. Younger mothers and daughters emphasized the daughters’ entry into adulthood and the strength of their ties as agreeable, whereas older mothers and daughters focused on the larger kin network in describing their enjoyable visits. Some older mothers and daughters also made negative comments, suggesting greater individuation and less idealization of the relationship. Mothers in both age groups appeared to be more invested in the relationships than were their daughters. Implications for the strength of the mother–daughter tie are discussed.

Researchers have noted a myriad of differences in ties between mothers and fathers and daughters and sons in adulthood (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Troll & Fingerman, 1996). Two gender differences in intergenerational relationships are particularly pervasive. First, women maintain more frequent contact in their intergenerational ties than do men. Second, mothers and daughters rate the positive qualities of their relationships more highly than do men (Rossi, 1993; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Troll & Fingerman, 1996). Yet the frequency with which mothers and daughters interact does not appear to be associated with the quality of their relationships (Fingerman, 1997b; Walker & Thompson, 1983). This lack of association may reflect the fact that most mothers and daughters maintain contact on at least a weekly basis, and therefore, variation in frequency of contact is minimal (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Walker & Thompson, 1983). Yet, little is known about what mothers and daughters do when they get together, and considerable variation may exist in the nature of their interactions. Contact between mothers and daughters in adulthood is to some extent voluntary, and high rates of contact suggest these interactions are in some way enjoyable to the parties involved (Hess & Waring, 1978). Understanding what mothers and daughters find rewarding about their contact may provide insights into more global qualities of their relationships.

Existent literature indicates that mothers’ and daughters’ perceptions of their relationships vary as a function of the ages of the mother and daughter and the generational status (e.g., parent vs. child) of the reporter. Mothers and daughters of different ages report different emotional qualities in their relationship (Umberson, 1989; Weissha, 1978). Furthermore, parents of all ages tend to view their relationships more favorably than do offspring across adulthood (e.g., Fingerman, 1995; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). These differences have been examined at a global level, however, with regard to relationship quality. In this study I focused on age and generational differences at a microlevel, namely pleasant interactions. More specifically, I compared young adult daughters’ and their mothers’ descriptions of enjoyable visits with middle-aged daughters’ and their mothers’ descriptions of enjoyable visits.

Age Differences in Mother–Daughter Ties

Findings pertaining to age differences in mother–daughter ties are complex. Positive qualities of the parent–offspring tie appear to increase in adulthood (Carstensen, 1992), but negative qualities also may increase as daughters enter midlife (Fingerman, 1997b; Weissha, 1978). One difficulty in delineating age differences in mother–adult daughter ties lies in the disparate focii in the literature. Few studies have examined more than one age group of mothers and daughters in adulthood. Indeed, research pertaining to mothers and daughters has examined different issues at different points in adulthood. Feminist psychologists have looked at how young women’s entry into adulthood differs from young men’s. Such research suggests that women’s identity is embedded in relationships with others (Josselson, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). More specifically, a sense of connection to one’s mother may be an essential aspect of a woman’s self-definition (Boyd, 1989; Caffarella & Olson, 1993; Chodorow, 1978, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; Josselson, 1987; Walker, 1994).

Family sociologists who are interested in mothers and daughters in later life have focused on different issues such as kinkeeping, investment in family, and the supportive aspects of the relationship (Nydegger, 1983; Rosenthal, 1987; Troll, 1987). These interests may reflect changes in the mother–daughter tie. As women grow older, their investment in family as a whole may be more important than their sense of attachment to any particular family member (Troll, 1999). Thus, the mother–daughter relationship in later life may be characterized by less of an emphasis on the unique
relationship and more of an emphasis on the larger family. In addition, gerontologists have documented the rewards that middle-aged daughters derive from caring for elderly mothers who are in poor health (e.g., Allen & Walker, 1992; Walker, Pratt, Shin, & Jones, 1989). There is little information about whether mothers and daughters find provision of lesser forms of care rewarding when mothers are still healthy.

Little theoretical or empirical work has been done to link the psychological meaning of the mother–daughter relationship in early adulthood to the important functional roles that mothers and daughters play in later life families. It is possible that when mothers and daughters of different ages get together, their interactions reflect different aspects of their relationships.

Delineating Age Differences

An understanding of age differences in mother–daughter ties is obfuscated by difficulties in delineating the developmental tasks of different age groups. Age and developmental needs are not synonymous in adulthood (Uttal & Perlmutter, 1989). A 70-year-old woman may be healthy, active, and still employed, or a 70-year-old woman may be widowed, sickly, and in need of assistance with daily tasks. Yet certain issues do appear to be more salient at different points in adulthood. Young adults must establish themselves in the grown-up world, middle-aged adults appear to harbor a desire to assist individuals in younger generations, and older adults incur problems associated with the aging process (Erikson, 1950; Fingerman, 1996; Havighurst, 1972). These tasks may be evident in close relationships that provide a context for the manifestation of development such as the mother–daughter tie. Here, I suggest that developmental issues usually examined in one age group (e.g., mutual identification, investment in family, and provision of support) may be present in mothers’ and daughters’ interactions across adulthood. Yet the salience of each issue may wax or wane.

The mother–daughter relationship involves two parties at different points in their individual development. Researchers have yet to determine whether observed age differences in the relationship reflect the daughter’s developmental state (e.g., Fingerman, 1997b; Troll, Bengtson, & McFarland, 1979), the mother’s developmental state (Umberson, 1989, 1992), or both parties’ developmental states (Fingerman, 1996; Graber & Brooks-Gunn, 1996). It is possible that the importance of a given party’s developmental needs in the mother–daughter tie varies over the course of adulthood. When daughters are young adults, mothers’ and daughters’ interactions may focus primarily on the daughter’s efforts to enter adulthood, particularly given middle-aged mothers’ interest in nurturing the next generation (Stewart & Vandewater, 1998). Later in adulthood, when daughters are established as adults, both parties may share an investment in the family as a whole (Kranichfeld, 1987). In addition, as mothers enter old age, attention may shift toward their needs (Allen & Walker, 1992; Brody, 1990). Middle-aged women may be attentive to subtle changes in their mothers’ health because of their own midlife concerns with aging (Cicirelli, 1988; Fingerman, 1997b). Thus, in late life, this tie may include a greater emphasis on the mother than at prior stages of life.

Age and Social Roles

Age is a proxy not only for developmental tasks but also for social roles. At different stages of life, individuals are more likely to be parents of young children, employed, or widowed. Theoretically, changes in family roles might be expected to influence the nature of mother–daughter ties. For example, as daughters become parents they may focus on their own children and rely less on their mothers for a sense of who they are (Henwood, 1993; Ruddick, 1989). Thus, in addition to age differences based on differences in developmental perspective, variation in mother–daughter ties might be based on family roles.

Research on how mothers’ and daughters’ social roles shape their relationships has revealed mixed results. Some researchers have argued that as daughters progress into adulthood, they share more roles with their mothers and this role convergence generates increased positive regard (Fischer, 1981, 1986; Hess & Waring, 1978). Yet, Walker, Thompson, and Morgan (1987) did not find clear associations between shared social roles and degree of attachment in mother–daughter ties in adulthood. Generational Status

To fully understand mother–daughter relationships, researchers must take generational status into account. Mothers always occupy the parental role and daughters always occupy the child role in their relationship, no matter how old they are (Troll, 1987). Generational status may be associated with differences in what makes the relationship enjoyable.

Parents consistently view relationships with offspring in a more positive light than do offspring (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971; Fingerman, 1995; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Sussman, 1985). A mother is likely to view her descendants as a continuation of herself (Troll, 1988; Troll & Fingerman, 1996). Such generational differences may be evident, regardless of a mother’s or a daughter’s age. For example, a middle-aged daughter’s perspective on her relationship with her mother differs from her perspective on her relationship with her own daughter (Walker & Thompson, 1983).

Many prior studies have been limited to either the parents’ (e.g., Aldous, Klaus, & Klein, 1985; Huyck, 1991; Talbott, 1990) or the offsprings’ (e.g., Fingerman, 1997b; Suitor, 1987; Welsh & Stewart, 1995) perceptions of the relationship. This study relied on mother–daughter dyads, allowing greater insight into relationship patterns than is the case when information from only one party is used (Kenny, 1988; Thompson & Walker, 1982). This study builds on prior studies involving three generations within the same family (e.g., Hagestad, 1984, 1987; Roberts & Bengtson, 1990; Thompson & Walker, 1984), but it also addresses limitations in these studies. In multigenerational studies, the individual in the middle generation must complete the same questionnaire twice, and it is unclear whether this repetition induces contrasts that women do not actually make in their relationships. Moreover, multigenerational studies cannot control such factors as health status of the oldest generation or...
the age range of each generation (Hagestad, 1984). The use of two independent groups in this study allows greater control over such within-generation variables.

In summary, this study looked at age and generational differences in a microcosm of mother–daughter relationships, namely in their perceptions of pleasant interactions. Mothers and young adult daughters were expected to focus on issues related to the daughter and her goals as a young adult. Older mothers and daughters were expected to focus more on their larger family, based on their shared sense of investment in these ties, and to give greater consideration to the mother and her needs (Stewart & Vandewater, 1998; Troll, 1988, 1999). Mothers overall were expected to be more positive about their ties than were daughters, regardless of age. Finally, daughters who were themselves mothers were expected to focus less on their mothers and more on their own children in describing their relationships, regardless of their age.

Methods

Participants

The sample consisted of two sets of mother–daughter pairs (N = 184). Forty-eight older mothers (mean age = 76.01 years, SD = 5.22) and their middle-aged daughters (mean age = 44.02 years, SD = 7.03) and 44 middle-aged mothers (mean age = 47.25 years, SD = 4.45) and their young adult daughters (mean age = 21.77 years, SD = 1.84) participated. For the sake of convenience, the first group is referred to as older mothers and daughters and the second group as younger mothers and daughters. The mothers in the younger group and the daughters in the older group were closely matched in age. All but 8 of the women were Caucasian; the remaining 8 women were African American. Table 1 contains other demographic information.

The two subsamples were comparable across a variety of demographic features. All of the women resided in separate households. Women rated their health as very good on average, regardless of age. There were no age group differences in mothers’ education. There were age group differences in daughters’ education level; younger daughters were generally in the process of obtaining an education. Thus, many younger daughters lived farther away from their mothers than did older daughters because they were in college; frequency of interactions was used rather than location in analyses. The younger daughters’ distance from their mothers did not appear to be permanent; most daughters indicated that they intended to return to their home region after they completed their education. Most of the women had worked at paying jobs, though most older mothers were now retired and most younger daughters worked at part-time jobs.

Older mothers were more likely to be widowed than were younger mothers, χ²(3, n = 92) = 28.43, p < .001, and younger daughters were more likely to be single than older daughters, χ²(3, n = 92) = 35.39, p < .001. Younger mothers, older mothers, and older daughters had a similar number of children: M = 2.89 (SD = 1.01) for younger mothers, M = 3.06 (SD = 1.82) for older mothers, and M = 2.45 (SD = 1.33) for older daughters. However, only 9 of the 44 younger daughters had children. By contrast, only 10 of the older daughters did not have any children. Of the 9 young women with children, 4 were married, 1 was divorced, and 4 were single or never married. Among older daughters with children, 33 were married, 4 were divorced, and 1 was never married. There were also group differences in religious affiliation, χ²(4, n = 184) = 19.95, p < .001; a greater proportion of older mothers and daughters listed their religious affiliation as Jewish and a greater proportion of younger mothers and daughters listed their religious affiliation as Catholic.

The homogeneity of this well-educated, Caucasian sample limits generalizability of the findings. Researchers have pointed out that mother–daughter ties may vary as a function of ethnicity and social class (Blieszner, Usita, & Mancini, 1996; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). A homogeneous sample is often useful, however, in initial efforts to examine patterns of association between psychological variables (Labouvie-Vief, DeVoe, & Bulka, 1989).

Procedure

The older and younger samples were recruited separately. Older mothers were found through senior activities, churches and synagogues, groups such as the Older Women’s League, newspaper advertisements, and word of mouth. Mothers provided the name of a daughter who resided in the area. Mothers did not seem to select favored or least favored daughters when more than one daughter resided in the area. Mothers did not appear to be permanent; most daughters indicated that they intended to return to their home region after they completed their education. Most of the women had worked at paying jobs, though most older mothers were now retired and most younger daughters worked at part-time jobs.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Younger Dyads</th>
<th>Older Dyads</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughters (n = 44)</td>
<td>Mothers (n = 44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>.11 .85 .83 .40</td>
<td>Married or remarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>.00 .05 .02 .56</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>.87 .00 .07 .00</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Protestant .29 .40 .31 .34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>.38 .38 .14 .22</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>.06 .04 .34 .31</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.17 .08 .20 .11</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>.11 .09 .00 .00</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of Education</td>
<td>.00 .05 .03 .10</td>
<td>Some high school .07 .25 .04 .23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>.80 .38 .15 .31</td>
<td>High school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>.13 .21 .42 .17</td>
<td>Some college</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>.00 .11 .37 .18</td>
<td>College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>.37 .71 .74 .09</td>
<td>Graduate school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Status</td>
<td>.37 .71 .74 .09</td>
<td>Has worked for pay .60 .29 .23 .80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently works for pay</td>
<td>.37 .71 .74 .09</td>
<td>Never worked for pay .03 .00 .03 .11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The older sample of mothers and daughters completed an individual interview, a questionnaire, and a joint interview. The descriptions of enjoyable visits were obtained early in the individual interviews. Ratings of the relationship and demographic variables were obtained in the questionnaire. In the younger sample, daughters completed a questionnaire on their own and then took home a questionnaire with a stamped envelope for their mothers to complete and send back within 4 weeks. In this manner, the younger sample included mothers and daughters who saw each other on a frequent basis. All participants answered the same questions, but discrepant methods of collecting data may limit interpretation of the data. Interviews are preferable for gathering information about relationships between older parents and offspring (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989; Mangen, 1994). Because many younger mothers lived at a distance from the study site, however, a questionnaire methodology was utilized for this group.

Measures

Background information.—Mothers and daughters provided information about their age, education, health, family structure, and other demographic variables. They also indicated the frequency with which they saw the other person or visited with her by phone, letters, or e-mail.

Quality of relationship.—The Positive Affect Index (PAI) assessed mothers’ and daughters’ global regard for their relationships (Bengtson & Schrader, 1982; Mangen, 1994). This instrument is composed of two 5-item subscales that assess perceptions of trust, respect, understanding, fairness, and affection held by self and by other on 5-point Likert scales. The two subscales can be combined into a unitary index of regard for the relationship. Alphas for the total scale ranged from .91 for younger daughters to .82 for older daughters.

Descriptions of enjoyable visits.—Participants responded to the following question: “Think about the last time you had a particularly enjoyable visit with your daughter/your mother. By visit I mean a time when you got together, went to the other’s house (or your daughter came home from college), or talked on the phone. Tell a little about what went on. Please provide as much information as you can about the visit, what happened, and why it was particularly enjoyable.” Qualitative data are useful for understanding women’s life experiences (Thompson, 1992) and for capturing complexities of parent–child relationships in later life (Mancini & Blieszner, 1989). In addition, mothers and daughters indicated when that visit had taken place, using a 5-point scale (1 = “this week” and 5 = “in the past few months”), and how often they had visits as pleasant as that one (1 = “once a week” and 5 = “once every few months or less often”). Items were then reverse-scored so that the high end referred to more frequent enjoyable contact.

Content Codes

Descriptions of positive visits were coded using transcriptions from the interviews and questionnaires. The issues described previously (e.g., “investment and connection,” “family,” and “nurturance”) were referred to as content domains. Two post-hoc content domains were included on the basis of women’s responses: “interacting” and “negative comments.” Subthemes that fit under the content domains were derived from mothers’ and daughters’ responses.

A coding scheme was initially developed through repeated iterations in which two raters coded each response for each subtheme. When the raters’ codes did not coincide, clarifications in the directions were made. In the next stage, two new independent raters coded the protocols using the revised procedures. The content domains and subthemes are found in Table 2 and are described below. A given response could fall under more than one subtheme. Interrater reliability was established across 10 younger and 10 older dyads (n = 40). Cohen’s kappa, which takes into account the probability of interrater agreement by chance, was estimated and ranged from .83 for the subtheme “something about her” to .96 for “family mentioned.”

Investment and connection.—The first content domain revolved around the sense that the other party and the relationship were special and unique, and that was why the visit had been enjoyable. One subtheme involved descriptions of a desirable trait the other party had, such as her sense of humor. Another subtheme involved enjoyment of the other party’s presence or her pleasure (e.g., “I’m happy when she’s happy”). References to the relationship itself or a belief that mother and daughter shared a special bond were also included in this domain.

Interacting.—The second content domain pertained to interactions during the visit rather than to the other party or the relationship. One subtheme included activities such as shopping, attending a concert, or going to lunch. Another subtheme involved conversations, for example, “We had a cup of tea and talked about things that were going on with

Table 2. Proportions of Mothers and Daughters Whose Responses Fit Each Code

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Younger Dyads</th>
<th></th>
<th>Older Dyads</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger Dyads</td>
<td>(n = 44)</td>
<td>(n = 44)</td>
<td>(n = 48)</td>
<td>(n = 48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment and Connection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something about her</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being with her</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our special relationship</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared activity</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talked</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family mentioned</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter’s children</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She did something for me</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did something for her</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of something bad</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratuitous negative comments</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.23</td>
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</table>
Hannah [another family member].” Visits that took place by phone were not automatically coded under the subtheme “talked”; the participant had to explicitly state that a conversation made the visit pleasurable. This content domain was distinct from the “investment and connection” domain in that the emphasis was on activities rather than on the other party. For example, the statement “I just love being with her” was coded under the “investment and connection” domain. The statement “We baked cookies together. I love doing that” was coded as “interacting with her.” Although the other party was clearly a part of the activity, the shared activity itself brought joy.

Family.—When mothers and daughters described situations involving one family member, such as a sibling or the daughter’s husband, other family members (e.g., other siblings, daughter’s father) were usually involved. Thus, family as a whole was a subtheme. Some mothers and daughters described situations involving mother, daughter, and daughter’s children, with no other family members. A separate subtheme was included for such situations.

Nurturance.—This content domain included subthemes in which a participant indicated that the other person did something for her or that she did something for the other person. Examples include fixing lunch, offering advice, or buying a special present.

Negative comments.—Two post-hoc subthemes encompassed negative comments that mothers and daughters made. The first subtheme referred to situations in which a participant was happy because something negative was absent. Statements such as “I used to fight with my mom a lot when I was a teenager. It’s much nicer to hang out with her now” and “I’ve been really down. I felt better with her around” were included under this subtheme. The second subtheme involved gratuitous negative comments, such as “She is not an easy person, but we had a nice visit this time.” These two subthemes involved a sense that the visit was pleasant not solely because of the joy it invoked but rather because of a contrast to something unpleasant.

Results

Analyses focused first on global aspects of the mother–daughter tie such as frequency of contact and quality of the relationship. Next, age, generational, and family context differences in mothers’ and daughters’ descriptions of enjoyable visits are considered. Finally, patterns of association between enjoyable visits and global aspects of relationships are considered.

Global Aspects of the Relationship

Frequency of contact.—Most mothers and daughters reported frequent contact. Nearly all younger mothers and daughters saw each other at least once every other month, and more than 90% of younger mothers and daughters reported phone contact two to three times a week. Three fourths of older mothers and daughters saw each other at least once a week, and nearly all spoke on the phone at least once every 2 weeks. Correspondence between mothers’ and daughters’ reports of contact was .90 for the younger dyads and .84 for the older dyads. This level of agreement about contact is higher than that found in prior research (Walker & Thompson, 1983).

Differences in rates of contact between the older and younger dyads were examined using independent t tests. As might be expected because of geographic proximity (Climo, 1992; Moss, Moss, & Moles, 1985), younger dyads claimed to see each other in person less often than did older dyads. t (89) = −4.92, p < .001, for daughters; and t (89) = −1.89, p < .05, for mothers. Phone contact did not differ by age group.

Relationship quality.—Most mothers and daughters rated the quality of their relationships highly. On a scale of 1 to 5, mean item ratings on the Positive Affect Index were 4.10 for daughters and 4.30 for mothers in the younger dyads and 4.13 for mothers and 4.27 for mothers in the older dyads. Despite mothers’ and daughters’ shared high regard for their relationships, mothers rated the relationship more highly than their daughters did. On paired t tests, t (45) = 2.76, p < .01, for younger dyads; and t (47) = 2.63, p < .05, for older dyads.

Descriptions of Enjoyable Visits

Next, I focused on the microcosm of the mother–daughter tie: their enjoyable visits. The proportions of mothers and daughters who described enjoyable situations fitting each code are found in Table 2. A given response could fall under more than one subtheme, and therefore, the total proportions do not sum to 1.00.

Age and generational differences in descriptions of enjoyable visits.—To examine age and generational differences in descriptions of enjoyable visits, a partitioned likelihood-ratio chi-square test was implemented. The likelihood-ratio chi-square, which is recommended for use in the partitioned chi-square, is similar to the more familiar Pearson chi-square test for deciding whether observed frequencies in a table correspond to what would be expected if a hypothesized model were true (Rindskopf, 1996; Wickens, 1989). The partitioned chi-square includes subgroup comparisons, and thus provides information not available from an omnibus chi-square (Rindskopf, 1992, 1996). First, a global chi-square was estimated for each subtheme comparing all four groups: young daughters, young mothers, older daughters, and older mothers. For each subtheme, a dichotomous variable was used (1 = “fit subtheme,” 2 = “did not fit subtheme”). Although this estimation provides information about whether groups differ, it does not show where differences lie (Rindskopf, 1996). Thus, three additional chi-square statistics were calculated. The first chi-square examined age differences by comparing responses of older versus younger dyads. The second chi-square examined generational differences by comparing responses of mothers versus daughters (see Appendix, Note 1). The final chi-square involved an aggregation of the younger mothers and the older daughters into one group. This analysis took into account the fact that younger mothers were the same age as older daughters and thus created a comparison between young adult, middle-
Investment and Connection

- **Something about her**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 23.79***
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 4.56*
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: 20.20***

- **Being with her**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: ns
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 6.65*
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: ns

- **Our special relationship**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 16.65***
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 15.28***
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: ns

Interacting

- **Shared activity**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: ns
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 4.41*
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: ns

- **Talked**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 19.67***
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 16.76***
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: 12.99***

Family

- **Family mentioned**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 13.48**
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 7.98**
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: 4.21*

- **Daughter’s children**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 19.95***
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 15.72***
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: ns

Nurturance

- **She did something for me**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 10.87*
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: ns
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: 8.69*

- **I did something for her**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 12.78**
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: ns
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: 11.43**

Negative Comments

- **Absence of something bad**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: ns
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: ns
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: ns

- **Gratuitous negative comment**
  - Younger Versus Older Dyads: 13.42**
  - All Mothers Versus All Daughters: 11.61***
  - Middle-Aged Women Versus Younger Daughters, Older Mothers: ns

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Aged, and older women. Table 3 contains findings from these partitioned chi-square analyses.

A second series of partitioned chi-square analyses examined the daughters’ parental status and mothers’ and daughters’ descriptions of enjoyable visits. These analyses revealed few significant group differences with the exception of mentioning other family members. Therefore, these analyses are not presented.

**Investment and connection.**—The findings with regard to the first content domain are complex. Mothers differed from daughters ($G^2 = 4.56$, $p < .05$) and middle-aged women differed from the other two age groups ($G^2 = 20.20$, $p < .001$) in their likelihood of discussing the other person as a source of pleasure. Younger mothers were more likely to describe such issues. Qualitative data reveal the pride these mothers took in their daughters’ achievements and emergence as young women. For example, a younger mother (see Appendix, Note 2) described a sense of connection through her daughter’s interests:

Jennifer loves to read, loves literature. She reads books and talks about the ideas—she’s a very deep thinker, very articulate, we have wonderful discussions. I took a hike with her . . . and we took turns reciting poems that fit the experience perfectly. She has a funny sense of humor—she just does funny things. She’s very good at asking questions and really respects me as a mom. She shares so much.

Only 1 younger daughter mentioned something special about her mother. By contrast, in the older dyads, daughters were more likely to describe their visits in terms of something special about their mothers than were mothers, although only one fifth of older daughters did so.

Younger dyads were more likely to discuss unique aspects of the relationship ($G^2 = 15.28$, $p < .001$). Middle-aged women also differed from younger and older women ($G^2 = 16.65$, $p < .001$) in their likelihood of discussing the strength of their tie, but this difference stems from the large number of younger mothers who described the strong bonds they had with their young adult daughters. A younger mother interspersed the following comments in her description, “She was able to read so many of my unspoken thoughts . . . . I enjoy the depth of love we have for each other.” Moreover, several younger daughters described their mothers as their “best friend.” Older mothers and daughters did not often comment on the depth of their relationship.

The omnibus chi-square for enjoying being in the daughter’s presence was not significant, but there were generational differences in the distribution of these responses ($G^2 = 6.65$, $p < .05$). Mothers were more likely to express a sense of enjoyment simply from their daughters’ presence. Older mothers generally described their feelings, however, in simpler, less effusive terms than did younger mothers, “I feel happy when she’s here,” and “Just being with them. Because there’s always affection” interspersed their descriptions of pleasant visits.

In summary, younger mothers generally expressed greater enjoyment of their daughters as individuals than did other women. Women in the younger dyads enjoyed the special bonds that they shared. Many mothers described a sense of pleasure just from being with their daughters. Thus, mothers derived pleasure from their daughters’ presence, but that enjoyment was enhanced as daughters entered adulthood.

**Interacting.**—The majority of participants mentioned situations involving activities or shared discussions. Although the overall chi-square did not reveal group differences, mothers were more likely to discuss activities as a source of pleasure than were daughters ($G^2 = 4.41$, $p < .05$). Younger mothers tended to focus on activities in which they took joy in their daughters’ emergence as a young adult. For example, a younger mother explained:
My show dog ran off. One evening, my daughter and I went dog hunting where he was last seen. It was late at night, with two feet of snow and still snowing. My daughter and I went laughing through the woods, falling, carrying a flashlight, frightened, possibly seeing a mountain lion or a bear. Then we walked back to a friend’s house and my daughter and I stayed over night. We slept in the same bed, we shared stories, and I scratched her back like I did when she was little.

Older mothers tended to focus on the activity itself as a source of pleasure. One older mother explained, “We were both Theta’s in college. We went to the Founder’s Day picnic together last week. We had a very happy time there together.” Another older mother commented, “She belongs to this farm where they raise food without any insecticides and we both went and picked tomatoes. She picked two bushels and I picked a bushel of tomatoes. We had a good time.”

Younger dyads were more likely to mention talking with the other party ($G^2 = 16.76, p < .001$), whereas older daughters were least likely to mention a conversation ($G^2 = 12.99, p < .01$). Eighty percent of younger daughters mentioned some sort of discussion with their mothers. Conversations seemed to serve as a highly valued way for younger daughters to gather their mothers’ input into their lives. They commented on discussions involving problems that they had, advice they sought about boyfriends and careers, and sharing their lives. One younger daughter explained, “We talk for one to two hours at a time. We tell each other everything. I fill her in on everything that’s happened in my life since we last spoke.” That younger daughter indicated that she spoke to her mother several times a week.

Although many older mothers and daughters also valued discussions, they did so to a lesser extent than did younger mother and daughters. Moreover, the reasons why older mothers and daughters enjoyed conversations appeared to differ from the reasons why younger dyads did. Older mothers seemed to enjoy hearing about the daughters’ lives without a sense that they, the mothers, were to provide input. For example, an older mother explained:

She knows I like to hear about [her job in] the English department and the people there. And she makes it a point to come in and tell me what all is going on. She tells me, you know, how she handles some problems. She discusses her daughter with me and her husband’s kids and it’s just as though they were her own. And that, to me, is very enjoyable.

Another older mother put it more succinctly, “She tells me about her work, and sometimes her problems, which includes me in her world.”

When older daughters described activities with their mothers, they tended to do so in terms of holidays. Older daughters enjoyed getting together with the larger family to celebrate anniversaries, Christmas, and birthdays. Traditions and a tie to the past were emphasized in their descriptions of their activities. One older daughter explained:

In our family tradition, we used to go out every Friday night—fish fry sort of thing. Because we were big time Catholics and in the old days we used to not be able to eat meat on Fridays. . . . We sort of tried to carry that tradition through and still do it occasionally.

Other older daughters described times when their mothers taught their own children to do things that they had previously taught them to do, such as knitting, reading, or baking. Their sense of joy lay in seeing experiences from their own childhood carried into the next generation.

In summary, mothers particularly enjoyed interacting with their daughters around different types of activities. For daughters, enjoyment of visits differed by age group. Younger daughters derived pleasure from having their mothers around as sounding boards, whereas older daughters appeared to derive pleasures from the link to the past that their mothers represent.

Family.—There were considerable differences in the likelihood of describing other family members as part of the enjoyable visit with regard to age ($G^2 = 7.98, p < .01$), generation ($G^2 = 4.21, p < .05$), and middle-aged versus other groups ($G^2 = 13.12, p < .01$). In essence, older women were more likely to discuss these issues than younger women, particularly those women in older dyads. Many older daughters and nearly two thirds of older mothers described situations involving the daughters’ children, siblings, father, husband, or the family in general. For example, an older mother began:

All the times that our family gets together, we always have a real good time. . . . We’re always together for Sunday dinner either at her house or over here at my house. Last Sunday was a little unusual, Jenny [target daughter] and Laura [her sister] came over from church.

Younger mothers and daughters were more likely to stick to their own relationship and to discuss situations in which the two of them had enjoyed a special event. Even when they mentioned family members, these women were more likely to focus on the young adult daughter. For example, one younger mother included her daughter’s baby in her description:

I really like the way Ashley cares for the baby. She is very loving. I always tell her how proud I am of her as she has a lot of responsibility and she handles it so well. . . . I wouldn’t change one thing about her!

The distribution of responses concerning daughters’ children reflects the fact that few younger daughters had children. Indeed, younger daughters were at least as likely to include available children in their descriptions as were older daughters (half of younger daughters who had children included them in descriptions of enjoyable visits, whereas only a third of older daughters with children did so). There were qualitative differences in the way that they included these family members, however. Older daughters with children were more
likely to discuss things that their mothers did for those children, such as teaching them a new activity or taking interest in their lives. Younger daughters were more likely to discuss support that their mothers provided to them as mothers.

**Nurturance.**—Younger daughters and older mothers were more likely to report pleasure from having the other party help them in some way than were middle-aged women ($G^2 = 8.69, p < .05$). Younger daughters mentioned their mothers’ help in passing, but seemed to consider this an inherent aspect of the relationship. By contrast, older mothers expressed deep appreciation for their daughters’ efforts. An older mother explained, “She fixed me lunch. It was a really wonderful soup. She’d gone to a lot of trouble to think of what I might like.” Five older mothers described instrumental assistance their daughters provided, but no women in any other group discussed such issues.

By contrast, the middle-aged women were more likely to describe pleasure from the support that they provided in their relationships than were young adult daughters or older mothers ($G^2 = 11.43, p < .01$). Older daughters described visits in which they provided assistance with mundane tasks such as writing letters, baking, and shopping. One older daughter explained:

Most of the times when I see her, she comes to visit at my house and we feed her and she loves my husband’s cooking. And it’s nice to see her get fed. She’s fed everybody so much. She really appreciates how much we put in. She’s very appreciative.

Thus, part of older daughters’ enjoyment in doing things for their mothers may reflect a desire to please their mothers, even in midlife. Only 2 younger daughters mentioned doing something for their mothers. These young daughters provided emotional rather than instrumental support.

**Negative comments.**—There were no group differences in the distribution of responses involving a sense that the visit was enjoyable because something bad was absent; relatively few women in any group raised these issues. Mothers and daughters in the older dyads were more likely to say something negative than were younger mothers and daughters ($G^2 = 11.61, p < .001$). These comments were still rare, with fewer than a third of older women making such statements, but the nature of these comments was direct. For example, an older mother commented, “She likes to plan your life for you, if she can.” A middle-aged daughter lamented, “I think, well, maybe when she was younger and she was more capable of listening to me and understanding me on some level [she could make me happy]. I don’t feel anymore she can really do that.” Another older daughter commented, “She complains about being tired, and so I try to encourage her to change her eating habits or try to exercise, but that’s a waste of time.”

**Frequency of Positive Visits, Feelings About the Visits, and Quality of Relationships**

Next, analyses focused on the question of whether the nature of enjoyable visits was associated with more global relationship indicators. Repeated measures ANOVAs were estimated to examine age and generational differences, with generation (mother vs. daughter) treated as a repeated measure to take into account the dyadic nature of the data. The ratio of frequency of pleasant visits divided by frequency of visits was used in analyses. No significant age or generational differences existed in the proportion of pleasant visits.

Patterns of association between participants’ descriptions of enjoyable visits, the frequency with which they had such visits, and their ratings of the quality of relationship were examined next, using Spearman’s $r$’s estimated separately for each subgroup (younger daughters, younger mothers, older daughters, and older mothers). The frequency of enjoyable visits was associated with ratings of the relationship for older daughters, $r (46) = .33$, for younger mothers, $r (42) = .56$, and for younger daughters, $r (42) = .39$. The frequency of enjoyable visits was not associated with older mothers’ ratings of overall relationship quality. Patterns of association between the content domains, frequency of enjoyable visits, and regard for the relationship were sparse. These findings are not presented.

**Discussion**

Mothers’ and daughters’ perceptions of their enjoyable visits appear to reflect a combination of their individual developmental needs. Generational differences were consistent with other findings about the mother–daughter relationship. The focus of mothers’ and daughters’ relationships may change, but mothers appear to be more invested in daughters than the reverse throughout adulthood. When daughters are young adults, the imperatives of the younger generation appear to dominate, with both parties focusing on the daughters’ entry into adulthood. Daughters’ needs at this stage appear to match with their mothers’ desire to nurture them and to witness their emergence as young women. When daughters reach midlife, activities with mothers seem to reflect a shared investment in their own children, siblings, and family. Older mothers are able to benefit from their daughters’ maturation. They continue to take pleasure from being with their daughters, but increasingly focus on the larger family constellation rather than the individual daughter. Moreover, even when mothers are still healthy in late life, daughters begin to provide nurturance.

The nature of mothers’ and daughters’ interactions was not correlated with global features of the relationship such as frequency of visits or the quality of the tie. As expected, however, there was little variation in these global indicators. Thus, the lack of association between these indicators and descriptions of visits may reflect a ceiling effect in mothers’ and daughters’ frequent contact and high ratings of the tie. Indeed, the microcosm of the relationship, mothers’ and daughters’ pleasant visits, revealed greater variation than the global indicators.

**Limitations of This Study**

The findings of this study are consistent with the sparse longitudinal data available on relationships between mothers and daughters (e.g., Weisshaus, 1978). Findings must be considered with caution, however, given the cross-sectional nature of the data. Age differences are considered in the fol-
lowing text, with recognition that cross-sequential data are needed to understand change in the relationship over time.

The homogeneity of the sample also places limitations on the ability to generalize about the themes examined here. For example, issues such as investment in the relationship and nurturance may be more dominant in cultures where autonomy is less emphasized (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Furthermore, future research might reveal different patterns in ethnic groups where the mother–daughter relationship has even greater prominence within the family (e.g., Fingerman, 1999).

In addition, the European American women in this study may differ from other European American women. All daughters resided near their mothers or hoped to do so after completing their education. Daughters whose relationships with their mothers are particularly troubled might move away from their mothers (Bedford & Blieszner, 1997). Alternately, distance may serve as a source of tension (e.g., Halpern, 1994) or as a buffer against problems (Climo, 1992). Nonetheless, the majority of older mothers do have at least one offspring who resides within an hour’s drive (Sweet, Bumpass, & Vaughn, 1988), and daughters who live nearby are most likely to provide care to their elderly mothers should they require it (Brody, Hoffman, Kleban, & Schoonover, 1989). Moreover, parents and offspring residing at a distance report levels of affection similar to those reported by parents and offspring residing in proximity (Moss et al., 1985). Thus, although these relationships may not be representative of the full range of mother–daughter ties, they represent an important segment of those ties.

Mothers’ and Daughters’ Investment in Their Relationship

The findings of this study suggest that the mother–daughter relationship shifts from a dyadic interest in the daughter’s individual psychological development in young adulthood to a context for shared investment in a larger network of relationships in later life. Moreover, mothers and daughters of different ages enjoy particular features of their relationships that appear to reflect their developmental needs.

When daughters are young adults, mothers and daughters focus on the daughters’ lives. Younger mothers took pride in their daughters’ newfound abilities, as well as the enhanced sense of connection to their daughters that they viewed as an outgrowth of these changes. The mother’s satisfaction may stem from a sense that the daughters’ entry into adulthood is a reflection of her own hard work as a parent (Ryff, Lee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994). By contrast, younger daughters appeared to be self-absorbed and did not recognize their mothers as individuals. Only 1 younger daughter mentioned something about her mother as a source of pleasure, and only 2 younger daughters described something they had done for their mothers. Instead, these younger women looked to their mothers for help and guidance. For daughters, establishing autonomy may involve assistance from the mother in figuring out adult roles (Cohler, 1983, 1988).

Overall, older dyads focused less on the individual or their relationship than did younger dyads. Some middle-aged daughters described situations that involved a sense of connection, but they focused on their mothers, rather than on themselves. By midlife, adults seem to recognize their parents as individuals (Blenkner, 1963; Fingerman, 1997b). Part of this recognition may involve a shift toward the larger family as well as toward assisting and supporting the mother. It is unclear whether older daughters are, in fact, doing more for their mothers than the reverse, but it is clear that they enjoy doing things for their mothers.

The findings pertaining to negative comments provide further support to the premise that middle-aged daughters and their mothers experience greater differentiation in their tie than do young adult daughters and their mothers. The inclusion of negative material may stem from individuation that allows both parties to move beyond idealizing the relationship in later life. Although the women in this study generally did not make negative comments, older dyads were more likely to mention some unpleasantness than were younger dyads. These findings may reflect differences in data collection; something about the interview may have evoked negative comments (see Appendix, Note 3). Yet some younger mothers and daughters included negative comments in the questionnaires, indicating that they did not feel hindered from doing so.

In this study, age group differences did not seem to reflect increased negativity in the relationship itself. Both groups of mothers and daughters described positive visits and rated their relationships highly. In prior research, older mothers and their middle-aged daughters indicated that conflict in their relationship peaked during the teenage years, with continual improvement across adulthood (Fingerman, 1997a). Thus, mothers and daughters may come to view their relationships more favorably across adulthood by accepting the other party’s faults, and may feel free to voice these faults. Once daughters are fully established in adulthood, mothers and daughters appear to be able to tolerate multiple aspects of the other party.

The groups did not differ completely in their sense of what makes their visits pleasant, however. Most participants described enjoyable activities and interactions, regardless of generational status. Respondents may have understood the phrase “describe a recent enjoyable visit” to mean “describe an enjoyable activity,” despite instructions to the contrary. Nonetheless, considerable variation occurred in the types of activities that women described, suggesting that their responses were not merely an interpretation of response demands. Rather, women appear to enjoy interacting with their mothers and daughters throughout adulthood.

By later adulthood, mothers’ aging appears to play an important role in the relationship as well. Older mothers were more likely to enjoy special things their daughters did for them than were younger mothers. This finding is notable because other studies have suggested that receiving assistance from offspring can be problematic for aging parents (Fingerman, 1996; Smith & Goodnow, 1999). In this study, 5 older mothers described situations in which they took pleasure in their daughters’ willingness to provide instrumental care. Yet, given the healthy nature of the sample, the older mothers in this study were not presently in need of day-to-day aid. Cicirelli (1988) coined the term “filial anxiety” to refer to middle-aged offspring’s worries about their parents’ eventual needs for assistance while the parents are still
healthy. Mothers may experience “parental anxiety” over their own future needs and find their daughters’ willingness to care for them reassuring. In their own turn, older daughters enjoyed feeling appreciated. Prior studies have revealed that mothers and daughters alike experience positive feelings as well as stress in the caregiving situation (Allen & Walker, 1992), and the precursors to these situations were evident in this study when older mothers were still healthy.

Mother–Daughter Ties in the Context of the Family

At a psychological level, it appears that when mothers and daughters are freed from their focus on the individual daughter, they shift to enjoyment of the larger family, and particularly the daughters’ children. The shift toward a familial focus appears to begin in early adulthood, but it was more common for middle-aged daughters and older mothers. It should be noted, however, that this pattern may be specific to enjoyable aspects of their relationships. Data from the same sample of older mothers and daughters revealed that older mothers included other family members in their descriptions of unpleasant visits, but middle-aged daughters focused on problems only within the dyad (Fingerman, 1996). In midlife, daughters enjoy favorable situations that include other family members, but their mothers annoy them individually.

Responses involving other family members may reflect age-associated changes in the presence of children in the home and available leisure time. Midlife is a period of competing demands that might prevent older daughters from being able to spend enjoyable time alone with their mothers. The younger mothers were selected to be the same age as the older daughters, however, and they had a comparable number of demands from other children, work, and activities. Yet these mothers still appeared to be highly focused on the target young adult daughter. Therefore, competing activities do not hinder a middle-aged woman in all relationships. Rather, mothers appear to be invested in younger generations.

A daughter’s status as a mother herself did not appear to greatly shape her tie to her mother. The only way in which younger daughters who had children differed from their peers in this study was in their likelihood to include family members in their enjoyable visits. Yet these daughters’ visits with their mothers still revolved around themselves as individuals rather than around their child or other family members. These younger daughters and their mothers described assistance mothers provided or pride that mothers took in their daughters as mothers. Of course, relatively few young women were mothers, and perhaps a larger sample would reveal more varied patterns. Moreover, many of these young women were unmarried or had experienced a difficult transition into young maternity. Therefore, the meaning of maternity for these young adult women may be distinct from the meaning of maternity in midlife. Furthermore, all the younger daughters who were mothers had small children, whereas few of the middle-aged daughters had small children. It is conceivable, therefore, that the age of these small children and the relative novelty of these daughters as mothers helped shape their interactions with their own mothers. Nonetheless, in reality, younger women are more likely to have small children than middle-aged women. Thus, the age differences observed here may be part of the nature of the mother–daughter tie that focuses on daughters when they are young.

Additional research looking at women in their 30s and their mothers is needed to understand how the mother–daughter tie is transformed from one that centers primarily around the daughter and her entry into adulthood to one that focuses more broadly on family ties. As daughters grow older, they may begin to feel a sense of investment in the larger family. Mothers and daughters establish a pattern in young adulthood of sharing thoughts and feelings that are important to each party. This pattern may be transformed into a shared investment in the family as daughters grow older.

Furthermore, future studies might focus on the issue of how the mother–daughter tie fits into the larger extended family. Elsewhere, Fingerman and Bermann (in press) have proposed that a family’s specific patterns of belief and behavior carry over from childhood into adulthood. The findings of this study, however, suggest that the importance of the larger family system to the mother–daughter tie may vary with age. The younger daughters in this study and their mothers found enjoyment in each other, rather than in the larger family. In the present study I did not specifically ask how mothers and daughters felt other family members fit into their relationship, but future studies might do so.

In summary, mothers and daughters appear to be strongly invested in one another and to enjoy their social contact. The nature of their contact evolves over time, however, and women move beyond themselves to take on the concerns of the next generation of the family. As old age encroaches, mothers may shift their concerns toward their own future needs and seek reassurance in the daughters they have raised and in the family that will outlive them.

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**APPENDIX**

1. Mothers’ and daughters’ responses involved nonindependent observations or matched pairs. McNemar’s tests, which look at matched pairs in two-by-two tables, were estimated to compare mothers and daughters. The pattern of findings was identical to that obtained using the likelihood-ratio chi-square. Only the likelihood-ratio chi-squares are reported here for consistency in the partitioned chi-square.

2. Participants’ names and minor details have been altered in all quotations to protect the confidentiality of participants.

3. Mothers and daughters were later asked to describe visits when they were irritated, hurt, or annoyed with the other party. These data have been published for the larger sample of older mothers and daughters (Fingerman, 1995, 1996, 1997a). The questions about enjoyable visits preceded the questions about problems, however, and participants had no reason to assume that they should be thinking about difficulties in the relationship at this point in the interview.

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