

STUDY THREE: Psychology And The Independent Woman

I asked a friend who is a psychologist if single women above 35yo are happy. He told me: in general, they are delusional and totally emotionally unstable until they are in their 50s because they think to become old (sic) and they want to have the maximum number of men they can, thinking to be happy by having and not being. Then some of them settle down and others can remain delusional until they are in their 60s. In their 60s they discover to have wasted their best years (sic) doing silly things and they realise to be alone (sic) for the first time. They become sad and die in sadness

The above comment was a post to a 15 February 2010 on-line News Limited item that reported an increasing number of independent women buying real estate. Its relevance is twofold: first, it illustrates the authority accorded the practice of psychology in our culture by specifying the source - a psychologist - to validate the comment; second, whether it actually was said by a psychologist, it is congruent with long-standing criticism of negativity towards independent women in psychological theory (e.g., Adams, 1976; C. Anderson, et al., 1994; Baumbusch, 2004; R. Bell & Yans, 2008; Byrne & Carr, 2005; Carr, 2008; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; K. Lewis, 1994; Oram, 1992; Penman & Stolk, 1983).

In this chapter, addressing my third objective, which is to critique the role of psychological theory in legitimising cultural constructions of women's independence, I will consider the role of psychology in our culture, with particular reference to developmental psychology and women's independence. Following the paradigmatic shift from religion to science as the holder of knowledge (Section 8.1) (Adams, 1976; C. Anderson, et al., 1994; Baumbusch, 2004; R. Bell & Yans, 2008; Byrne & Carr, 2005; Carr, 2008; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; K. Lewis, 1994; Oram, 1992; Penman & Stolk, 1983), psychology emerged as a science in the nineteenth century (Section 8.1.1), quickly colonised by societal institutions as the authoritative force for social control.

Because science is a cultural construct, created discursively (Section 8.1.2), a discipline's "truths" are embedded in the host culture, supporting and supported by institutions and ideology and intolerant of diversity (Roughgarden, 2004).

Psychology's technologies of measurement support narratives of social norms against which individuals are assessed for compliance and possibly remediation. Generally unacknowledged is that psychosocial development is culture-specific (Section 8.1.3), with behaviours observed in most people in a population becoming moral-laden expectations of all people of that culture. Developmental psychology plays a fundamental role in validating normative policies and institutional practices supportive of dominant social institutions.

As discussed in Chapter 4, women in the nineteenth century were defined by their maternal potential, previously determined by the church and confirmed by the new science, the corollary of which was the pathologising of independent women (Section 8.1.4 and 8.1.5). Discussion in Section 8.1.6 is of major development theories as they relate to independent women, finding greater nuance in those commonly used to marginalise non-conformance than might be expected and others that were developed to encapsulate women's experience.

In this study, two editions, a decade apart, of two developmental psychology textbooks were examined as a mechanism for critiquing the role of psychology in the discursive construction of independent women (Section 8.2). The years the textbooks were published corresponded with those of the newspapers analysed in Chapter 6 to compare public and academic discourse (Section 8.3); three were available on the shelves of my university's library, indicating their currency for psychology students (Section 8.3.1). The process of data collection and analysis is described in Section 8.3.2. I had decided to use the method of discourse analysis from Chapter 7, albeit without any predetermination of major interest areas, and found four interpretative repertoires in the data, reported in Sections 8.4.1, 8.4.2, 8.4.3, and 8.4.4.

The findings are discussed in Section 8.5 where the limited theoretical underpinning of content about independence in the textbooks is noted, including omission of theory specific to adult women's development and that of independent women.

Comparisons are made with the findings of Chapter 6 (Section 8.5.1) and Chapter 7 (Section 8.5.2) before I consider evidence for transition in the academic discourse of the textbooks (Section 8.5.3). I conclude by reflecting on the missing theory about

women's independence in introductory textbooks, which may be the only exposure to adult development theory for many future practitioners.

8.1 Background

From the Enlightenment, the role of religion in regulating society waned as science moved truth from faith to fact. Science transcended the church as the holder of knowledge, ostensibly free of moral, political and social values (Riger, 1992), albeit with a new form of "fathertongue" (Smith, 1990) that continued to subjectify populations into familiar positions. For example, women's function as breeders and carers physiologically and psychologically unsuited for public life was legitimised (Morrow, 2000), predominantly by medical science (Harrison, 1995) that inflicted treatments that now might be regarded as punishment for women who failed to embrace their assigned roles (Ehrenreich & English, 1978). As with religion, science assumed power over our everyday lives through its technologies (Walsh, 1988), discounting our experiential knowledge (L. Phillips & Jørgenen, 2002) by becoming the holder of truths, the new religion and justifier (Sampson, 1977).

8.1.1 Psychology's normative function. The conditions to be satisfied for professional validation are (i) the development of a technical basis; (ii) the creation of an exclusive jurisdiction; (iii) the establishment of training standards relating to (i) and (ii); and (iv) achieving public trust (Wilensky (1964) in De Paolis, 1990).

From its separation from philosophy and emergence as an autonomous discipline in the nineteenth century, psychology's evolution has honoured these requirements. Using and legitimising technologies such as statistics, experimentation, and professional discourse protocols, psychology captured the human mind and behaviour as its *raison d'être*. Students attracted to this new discourse of humanity increasingly were and are prepared for practice through extensive gradationed educational programs, affording graduates expertise in human affairs that transcends knowledge gained by lay experience. Perhaps the most successful achievement has been the authority, if not always trust, psychology has assumed in Western culture.

With its focus on measurement and norms of human behaviour, labelling difference deviant or pathological, psychology became a fundamental force of social regulation (Alldred, 1996; Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008; Foucault, 1980; Harris, 1997;

Osterkamp, 1999; Parker, 1992, 2002; Prilleltensky, 1994; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Rose, 1996; Venn, 1984). The normative function of the *psy* disciplines (e.g., psychology, psychiatry) proved useful to social institutions such as education, penal systems, the marketplace, organisational management and practice, social relationships, the law, the defence forces, and so on. As Rose (1996) notes, *psy* has been generous with its vocabularies, explanations, judgements and truths, allowing their use by other professional groups so that ‘personhood’ is now only visible through *psy* lens. From infancy through education, training and employment to seniority, contact with health and welfare systems, and the consumption of consumer goods and services, we are subject to surveillance and monitoring made possible by psychology’s scientificity.

With common sense perspectives of social structure reinforced by scientific authority, ideologically dominant values and behaviours are rendered normative through “a complex network of agents, sites, practices and techniques for the production, dissemination, legitimation, and utilization of psychological truths” (Rose, 1996, p. 60). Further, “over the course of the twentieth century, psychological norms, values, images, and techniques have increasingly come to shape the ways in which various social authorities think of persons, their vices and virtues, their states of health and illness, their normalities and pathologies... the strategies, programs, techniques and devices, and reflections on the administration of conduct... term(ed)... governmentality or simply government have become psychologised” (Rose, 1996, pp. 61, 62). This should not be thought a conspiracy between the discipline and the state (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2008), rather as unchallenged appropriation of psychology’s “expert knowledge” by regulating social institutions (Alldred, 1996).

8.1.2 Discursive construction. The emergence of modern scientific disciplines might be thought of as discursive formations, the product of a merging set of relations (Foucault, 1969). In the case of psychology, its subjects, technologies, methods and theories are cultural constructions (Harris, 1997) concerned more with moral and mental phenomena than with nature (Rose, 1996; Shotter, 1993; Venn, 1984).

In Foucault’s theorising, there are four thresholds to be crossed during scientific discourse formation: that of positivity (when a discursive practice, or a system of

statements achieves autonomy), epistemologisation (essentially, the colonisation of strategies for knowledge validation), scientificity (compliance with methodological convention) and formalisation (the formative elements that can be defined and practiced) (Foucault, 1969). A discipline's discourse constructs its truths within the general regime/polity of truth/ideology that structures a society's institutions and power relations (Foucault, 1980).

It follows from this that psychology's objects are discursively constructed (Venn, 1984) through "truth techniques" (Rose, 1996) originally designed to establish the new discipline's scientificity. In psychology's drive to normativity, human behaviour is simplified for ease of explanation and modification although the methodological procedures employed to create norms are, in fact, creating objects of knowledge that are statistical artifact rather than reality (Harris, 1997), an iconic perpetuation of a social model (Burman, 1990) that remains unquestioned (Venn, 1984).

With psychology's theory and practice discursively constituted by and formative of cultural practice, and its narratives readily adopted in the public sphere (Goldberg, 1996), its influence for social conformity is by and large unquestioned (Prilleltensky, 1994). Discourse so embedded in social structure works to support (and is supported by) institutions and ideology (Parker, 1999), and to reproduce power relations, rendering deviations from a 'norm' individualistic, exclusionary and pathological (Goldberg, 1996; Parker, 2002).

Psychology's technical bases of normative measurement were developed and applied in a framework of objective value-neutrality and control (Morrow, 2000) that took human behaviour from the street to the laboratory in its claim to scientificity. Yet psychology's institutional alliances meant its constitutive discourses were embedded in the complex of dominant discourse that structures society (Henriques, et al., 1984). That is to say, the practice of psychology reflects the values and interests of its culture – "there is, quite simply, no such thing as a value-neutral, culture free psychology" (Christopher & Hickenbottom, 2008, p. 565). Its purported objectivity gives authority to psychology's place in maintaining the ideological status quo (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002) with implications for our common sense understandings of social relations, our internationalisation of "truth", and how we relate to it (Alldred, 1996).

8.1.3 Developmental psychology. From the most recent editions of the two textbooks selected for analysis below, the psychology of human development is the scientific study of systematic and continuous age-related changes in physical, cognitive and psychosocial development from womb to tomb (Boyd & Bee, 2009; Sigelman & Rider, 2009). That is, it is the construction of sequential, age-related norms to be achieved as children mature and, latterly, for adult functioning. The norms are constructed through observation of what is generally the case so that, for example, individual children's proficiency with speech or fine motor control may be measured against what are the known capabilities of most of their age cohort. From this, the child's development may be labelled normal, early or late. If the achievement of a skill is significantly later than the norm, the child may become subject to interventions to ameliorate, or compensate for, developmental difference.

A problem with the construction of norms from observation of what most people do is that what *is* or *has been* becomes normalised to *ought to*, so that performance of what most people do, other than achieving physiological and physical milestones, is determined by moral judgement about what they *should* be doing (Alldred, 1996; Boyd & Kohlberg, 1973; Crysdale, 1987; Sugarman, 2001). The subjectivity of *ought* is elaborated thus "a moral ought never emerges until one adds a little bit of his (*sic*) self, until one commits himself (*sic*) to an act or state of affairs and is willing to support it publicly" (Boyd & Kohlberg, 1973, p. 370). Once beyond the measurement of childhood development such as learning to walk, hand-eye coordination, speech development, or pencil grip, human development enters the realm of individuals being measured against dominant 'common sense' social values and norms (the *oughts*), with interventions devised to bring nonconformers closer to "the achievement of that set of characteristics that the culture values" described as the endpoint of developmental psychology (Bronfenbrenner, Kessel, Kessen, & Sheldon, 1986, p. 1223). Formal educational practices produce a model of normative child development (Walkerdine, 1984) unknown in cultures that value other routes to adulthood or in Western cultures of earlier times. In our society, children's progression through the educational system is closely monitored through measurement against value-laden norms that have a significant impact on life outcomes. Their subjectification through judgements about their compliance with or

deviance from culturally-constructed developmental norms not only affects individual children but also reinforces and validates the values of dominant ideology.

Developmental psychology is highly influential at both political and personal levels, informing and reinforcing, as it does, normative policies and institutional practices that produce the citizenry most adaptive for perpetuation of power relations that support prevailing institutions (Alldred, 1996). Adherence to social expectations of age-specific behaviours, learned through observation of and comparison with peer behaviour, is rewarded by indices of social achievement; conversely, nonconformity is pathologised because of the risk it presents to social stability (Helson, Mitchell, & Moane, 1984; Rook, Catalano, & Dooley, 1989). The lifespan perspective normalises age-specific behaviours and expectations, although these are contingent on sociopolitical circumstances and vary by generational cohort, with potential to constrain individual potential (Neugarten, 1979; Riley, 1978). Other approaches to human development argue for contextualisation that understands that life-long continuous, interdependent influences of both biology and sociocultural contexts on development are integral to theory (e.g., Baltes, Reuter-Lorenz, & Rösler, 2006; Li, 2007).

8.1.4 The independent woman. Given psychology's emergence in a milieu of nineteenth century Darwinian determinism, burgeoning industrialisation and male privilege, it is unsurprising that its views on women, in particular independent women, were limited. Matrimony and maternity were scientifically confirmed as women's natural destiny with concomitant pathologising of independent women in psychological discourse (Oram, 1992). Despite resistance to this position from mainly female activists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including from among the few in the sciences, psychology's continued reinforcing of independent women's compromised status has been criticised for applying labels of deficiency or deviance to women living without a romantic partner or being childless (e.g., Adams, 1976; Byrne, 2008; Carr, 2008; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; K. Lewis, 1994; Stein, 1976), with calls to recognise a bias (R. Bell & Yans, 2008) through research of relevance to single women (K. Lewis & Moon, 1997). Similar calls have been made by psychotherapists who recognise the source of their clients' distress is significantly related to social discourse rather than exclusively to personal inadequacy (e.g.,

Amador & Kiersky, 1998; C. Anderson, et al., 1994; Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987; M. Hill & Ballou, 1998; Schwartzberg, et al., 1995; M. Taylor, 1990; J Ussher, 1990).

Earlier papers identifying bias against women *per se* spoke about ideologically-shaped technologies, including exclusion of social environments from research design whose goals and results assumed gender norms, that perpetuated cultural perceptions about appropriate roles and behaviour (Sherif, 1979; Weisstein, 1968). More recently, Bella DePaulo traced references to original sources, widely cited to support single women's deficiency, and found qualification and nuance that are missing from what has become 'truth' that privileges coupledness (DePaulo, 2007; DePaulo & Morris, 2005).

8.1.5 Women's development. Practices developed to normalise and simplify understanding of human behaviour, by definition, do not illuminate that which is deemed deviant. Instead, non-conforming populations are represented as socially deficient, potentially amenable to rehabilitation, or are missing completely from the record. This is demonstrably so for the independent woman although an emerging field of singles studies (R. Bell & Yans, 2008) may herald a transition to greater interest by psychology as a discipline in the experiences of this significant section of the population.

Models of women's development have reinforced era-specific gendered role expectations, pathologising and marginalising those who do not conform (Alldred, 1996) and even those who do. For example, in the early part of the twentieth century, psychoanalytic theory considered feminine development, although more advanced prepubertally than the masculine, ceased before women reached age 30, exhausted by the difficulties associated with coming to terms with their lack of a penis (Freud, 1973). Freudian theory was grounded in sexual and gender development and predicated on inequality that privileged masculinity, so being a case study of how gender norms are reproduced - and how they might be resisted (Chodorow, 1989). Psychoanalytic theory acknowledged that cultural influences, internalised for perpetuation by the moralistic superego, limited women's choices and aspirations but Freud was candid about the science of the day having little to say about the construction of femininity beyond sexual function, conceding "we do not overlook the

fact that an individual woman may be a human being in other respects as well” (Freud, 1973, p. 169).

Developmental psychology has been criticised for taking the baton from earlier religio-political prescription by ratifying marriage and maternity as necessary for women’s healthy progression through life (Amador & Kiersky, 1998; C. Anderson, et al., 1994; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Baumbusch, 2004; Burman, 1996; Byrne, 2003; Carr, 2008; K. Lewis & Moon, 1997; Penman & Stolk, 1983; Riley, 1978; M. Taylor, 1990). The criticism is perhaps unfair to the many theorists whose work supports a wide range of developmental options that do not enter the cultural domain in the same way as have those that describe majority experience (e.g., Sheehy, 1976). Much of the criticism has come from therapists whose personal experience and that of their clients is quite different to that posited by popular culture and dominant theory. A major component of their work with independent women is to challenge the social lifespan script that is causing their clients’ distress, through in/voluntary non-compliance, then reframe perceived problems within an alternative narrative (Amador & Kiersky, 1998; C. Anderson, et al., 1994; Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987; M. Hill & Ballou, 1998; K. Lewis & Moon, 1997; Parent & Moradi, 2010; Schwartzberg, et al., 1995). The influence of lifespan psychology’s script is such that some women sought therapy to deal with perceived abnormality *because* they prefer independence, or because they experienced post-interdependence grief at the adjustments they had made, with associated loss of self, to sustain their relationship (C. Anderson, et al., 1994). Other women sought professional support to better locate and strengthen themselves in their chosen independence (Byrne, 2003).

8.1.6 Major theories.

8.1.6.1 Stage theories. Two of the most influential models, regularly cited to promote marriage and maternity as indices of women’s psychosocial wellbeing, do not seem so prescriptive at their source. Erik Erikson’s theory of identity developmental has been accused, with Freud’s, of demonstrating always-single women’s arrested development (Penman & Stolk, 1983) although, as noted above, Freud did not limit this to only single women. In Erikson’s formulation, a woman’s identity is made complete by

absorption of the traits of her husband and children necessary to best fulfil her nurturing destiny (Erikson, 1968, in Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

This proposition was not repeated in his later work on identity and the life cycle, written in the masculine that did not differentiate genders so rendering the feminine invisible, that described eight sequential dichotomous crises to be resolved, three of these in adulthood: Intimacy vs Isolation; Generativity vs Stagnation; and Integrity vs Despair (Erikson, 1980). Clearly, these three crises relate to life stages of partnering, parenting and probity. But, for Erikson, intimacy was more than just the sexual, it also included “friendship, combat, leadership, love and inspiration” (Erikson, 1980, p. 101), achieved through trusting self-revelation to others.

Generativity related to production and creativity as well as procreation. Its function was producing the next generation, a task not exclusive to biological parenthood, and included other forms of altruism and vocational and artistic endeavour. The final crisis, corresponding with the advent of old age, is that of Integrity vs Despair. Integrity might be understood as having a sense of acceptance, coherence and wholeness about one’s life and community, and a love for the irreplaceable few who have been there when needed or wanted. The antithesis of this is a condition of despair stemming from lost opportunities and lack of time to redress that loss. Erikson was very clear about situating identity development in biology, biography, history, and social and economic conditions (Erikson, 1978, 1980), and that it is a lifelong process. He also cautioned against interpreting the ‘positive’ crisis resolutions of his developmental framework as a series of ideal achievements “for which the proper prescription should and must be found” (Erikson, 1978, p. 23), explaining that his formulation encompassed all developmental potential albeit with the “dystonic aspect of each stage remain(ing) related to the potential for a major class of disorders” (Erikson, 1978, p.22). While assuming that most people will form romantic relationships, Erikson did not pathologise those who do not.

Following publication of *The seasons of a man’s life* (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978), cognisant of gendered life experience that he termed gender-splitting, Daniel Levinson wrote *The seasons of a woman’s life* (Levinson, 1996) that, to some degree, compared and contrasted women’s and men’s lives but

which found the same pattern and sequence of “seasons” held for both. Adult development was conceptualised as having three age-linked eras: early adulthood (22-40 years of age), middle adulthood (45-60 years) and late adulthood (65 years onwards) linked and overlapped by transitional periods and containing entry and culminating phases within each era.

As with Erikson’s theory of identity development, Levinson’s model described developmental crises although these did not stimulate progression through the eras but occurred when there is obstruction to completing the tasks of an era and/or transition that threatens continued evolution of the life structure. For women, a fundamental life task is striving for balance between two internal figures. These are the Traditional Homemaker Figure and the Anti-Traditional Figure, corresponding to drives for domestic and occupational satisfaction, respectively. The lives and decision-making of Levinson’s two contrasting cohorts - Homemakers and Career/Academic Women - on which he based his theory of women’s development were analysed in terms of how a balance is sought, within and across eras, between these dichotomous roles. The development of life structures and the self were quite distinct in Levinson’s framework. For example, the structure giving prominence to a domestic life was thought to be an obstacle to the development of the self, which needs engagement with the public sphere to thrive. A major crisis for women whose priority had been their paid employment was coming to terms with the probability that balancing this with their other life structure aspirations of marriage and maternity would not happen, and what this might mean for personal growth.

As with Erikson, Levinson situates the life of each generation in its historical context so that, while the women quoted in *The seasons of a woman’s life* might reflect attitudes and the ethos of the early 1980s when he gathered his data, the theoretical framework itself might apply to any point in time. As in current times, singleness attracted some negativity; for example, some members of the Homemaking cohort chose to stay in unsatisfactory and even violent relationships because they were “terrified” (Levinson, 1996, p. 184) of being alone. The always-single women, at midlife, reported continued hopes and active pursuit of romantic commitment. One woman spoke of earlier fears of being a single successful career woman, characterised as having a high-achieving public persona but “who goes home and cries at night

because she has no friends and no family, nothing, the bitter pinnacle of success” (Levinson, 1996, p. 54), an image described, by Levinson, as oppressive. Singleness was also portrayed as a goal for some women, such as when the Homemaking woman moves beyond that phase to focus more on her own needs and aspirations. Levinson believed that, at this stage, widow fantasies about building an independent life with Self at the centre are not uncommon in wives.

While marriage was assumed by both Erikson and Levinson to be common to the life structure of most people, their theories carried no developmental imperative to do so. Separation and divorce, for Levinson, exemplified self-development rather than failure, as did adjustments to life structures for the always-single who had expected to marry. The developmental crises and their resolutions encompass both independence and interdependence. In this theoretical framework, all women address issues of intimacy, generativity and integrity, with individual identity developing in directions influenced by familial, social, historical, economic and other significant environments.

8.1.6.2 Attachment theory. Originally developed from observations of the distress exhibited by children separated from their parent(s) during and after WWII, Attachment theory is to do with the affectional bonds of pair proximity that provide security for an individual’s interaction with the world (Bowlby, 1979). The protective and supportive qualities of attachment may have an evolutionary biological function for species survival by nurturing children to reproductive age, this task shared by caring biological parents committed to each other (Belsky, 1999; Bowlby, 1979; Simpson, 1999). Successful attachment is demonstrated by a child’s increasing ability to leave the security of maternal proximity on the road to self-reliance, unsuccessful attachment is linked to maternal behaviour such as insensitivity to her child’s needs that induces insecurity with lifelong implications (Ainsworth, 1991; Bowlby, 1979).

The three attachment characteristics of proximity seeking, a secure base, and separation protest are thought to influence behaviour across the lifespan (Ainsworth, 1991; Bowlby, 1979; Hazan & Shaver, 1994) and have been applied to adult domestic interdependence with deviation from the marriage/maternity norm attributed to poor

childhood attachment (Hazan & Zeifman, 1999; Rholes, Simpson, & Stevens, 1998; R. Weiss, 1991). Bowlby (1979) and Ainsworth (1991) are clear that adult attachment is not necessarily with a romantic partner, and that romantic partnership does not necessarily include attachment. Later theorists, however, have suggested the evolutionary purpose of adult attachment is pair-bonding for procreation, suggesting those enjoying domestic independence have internalised attachment models incompatible with interdependence (Buss & Kenrick, 1998; Feeney, 1999; Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Hazan & Zeifman, 1999) or have suppressed the attachment process (Rholes, et al., 1998). Other theorists have argued that attachment occurs with a wide range of adults (e.g., Oswald, et al., 2004; Sable, 2000) and even pets although “while it might be argued that close same-sex friends represent attachment figures (though this is a thorny theoretical issue in its own right), surely pet dogs cannot reasonably be construed in this manner” (Kirkpatrick, 1998, p. 381). Further, attachment patterns change across the lifespan, possibly because a preoccupation with romance diminishes over time (Klohn & John, 1998) or they reflect a repertoire of behaviours from which patterns develop that respond to culturally-variable (Morelli & Rothbaum, 2007), temporally-located needs (Belsky, 1999).

8.1.6.3 Women-based theory. Because of the lack of fit of theory with their clients’ lives, Schwartzberg and colleagues (1995) and Lewis and Moon (1997) devised alternative developmental models for adult singlehood that included compensatory tasks for those associated with marriage and maternity, indicating presumption that independent practice follows the interdependent model.

Jean Baker Miller was another therapist whose clinical practice generated a seminal contribution to bringing the feminine to human development theory with her book *Toward a new psychology of women* (Baker Miller, 1976). Believing that 1970s’ feminism was misguided in seeking to adopt masculine indices of success (J. Miller & Welch, 1995), she instead argued that women’s perceived deficiencies of affiliation and relational regard should be reframed as strengths; further, that denigration of feminised affiliative skills reflected a limited masculinity that was socially, environmentally and personally damaging. In her argument, once the component of servitude was removed from their social and intimate relationships, women found joy in authentic self-expression (Baker Miller, 1976).

Fundamental differences in women's and men's development were also discussed in *In a different voice*, a very influential text that highlighted the inadequacies of developmental theory that ignored the feminine (Gilligan, 1982). Again, women's affiliative strengths were shown to impede their development in male theorising that privileged individual differentiation, autonomy and abstract logic over interconnectivity, responsibility and care. Gilligan concluded that their life experiences should be researched in women's own terms, echoed in this century (Rosser & Miller, 2003), so to develop two complementary models of adult development that "see(s) the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognize(s) how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 174).

Baker Miller and Gilligan were not alone in criticising masculine bias of dominant development theories. Era cohort specificity and associated male work structures reflected in lifespan stage construction have been cited as methodological flaws (Rossi, 1980; Sugarman, 2001) as have patriarchal assumptions about what in development should be studied, and how, and the exclusion of historical/cultural contexts, class, race, and ethnicity as well as gender (Rosser & Miller, 2003).

Concerns have been raised, in turn, about defining women's identity in terms of relational affiliation where being or becoming independent again may be perceived as failure with concomitant psychological costs (Becket, 1986; Carr, 2008). It also risks perpetuating misconceptions about women's abilities and aspirations (C. Anderson, et al., 1994; Burman, 2008b; SE Taylor, et al., 2000), although both Baker Miller and Gilligan assumed women maintained a broad range of attachment and affiliation not limited to marriage or family.

8.2 Rationale

The breadth of developmental psychology meant that trying to assess an aggregated position on women's independence status through individual approaches, across time, was impossible. However, one might reasonably expect to find comprehensive discussion in textbooks that would indicate what issues are regarded as salient, and their history within the specialty. It is likely that textbooks are the major exposure some psychologists have to developmental psychology during their degree course,

before their interest takes them in other study and practice directions, making textbook content very important in shaping their professional views and opinions about human behaviour (Chancey & Dumais, 2009).

This study was guided by a major objective of the overall project, to critique the role of psychological theory in legitimising cultural constructions of independent women. That is, what would emerge from comparing the results of Studies 1 and 2 with those of this chapter? Would there be a balance between public (newspaper) and private (discussants) discourse as might be expected from a pool of knowledge that draws from the various sub-disciplines of psychological science and practice? Would I have confirmed criticisms such as those above that psychology performs a normative function for dominant social institutions? What possibilities would be allowed independent women? How is she constructed by developmental psychology?

8.3 Method

To compare the results of this chapter with those of the newspaper analysis, I decided to search for developmental textbooks that were published in the same years as those of the newspapers. Acknowledging that the publication process for textbooks means their preparation would most likely have occurred prior to the publication year, nonetheless their release would mean both the academic and mass media discourses would be available to readers in the same years. Not only would this sampling method provide comparison with the results of Chapter 6, it would also enable comparison of issues in the editions of the textbooks to see how they had incorporated theoretical evolution of understanding independent women's development.

Reflecting on analysis, I decided that the framing method appropriate for newspaper analysis, because of the simple content style that draws on cultural discursive constructs to shape a message within tight space limits, would not fit the expected complexity of textbook discourse. Instead, an analysis similar to that of Chapter 7 that focused on patterns of discourse, explicating the construction of independent women as subjects from a Foucauldian perspective, was a better fit with the study's objective.

8.3.1 Materials. A search of Western Australia's university libraries databases found two textbooks that matched my selection criteria, *Lifespan development* 2nd and 5th editions (Bee, 1998; Boyd & Bee, 2009) and *Life-span human development* 3rd and 6th editions (Sigelman, 1999; Sigelman & Rider, 2009), with some flexibility to accommodate the first book's 1998 publication. Serendipitously, the formats of the textbooks corresponded to the two constructions of lifespan theory (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006): person-centred, that is, age-staged (Bee, 1998; Boyd & Bee, 2009) and function-centred, e.g., perception, learning (Sigelman, 1999; Sigelman & Rider, 2009).

8.3.2 Procedure. To be consistent with the independence categories in Chapter 6, the textbook indexes were searched for listings related to singledom, divorce, widowhood and marriage. The preliminary search brought a long list of possible data under headings as diverse as *menopause, sexuality, family relationships, gender roles, parenting, culture, social status* and so on as well as reference to specific developmental theories such as those of Bandura, Vygotsky, Maslow, Erikson, Levison and psychoanalysis. A table was compiled of results from a preliminary search of the indexes that recorded possible data text and page numbers. The identified content was then examined for relevance and fit with the selection parameters, which were (i) reference to in/ter/dependence in (ii) content about adult development. A second table was then developed of confirmed data text, grouped under headings of *marriage, partnering, cohabitation, always single, divorced, and widowhood* (see Appendix G). This table retained page numbers and expanded to include the amount of discussion space measured in pages and lines. To enable graphic representation, the number of pages and lines in each group category were converted to percentage decimals for an Excel spreadsheet (e.g., 2 pages, 23 lines = 2.41 pages). The format of three of the textbooks was 56 lines per page, that for Bee (1998) was 55 lines. I chose the macrometric page/line count because I intended scanning only the independent content for discourse analysis, which would have enabled an electronic word count for independence but an onerous manual count of the interdependent content. As well, page/line count enabled assessment of in/ter/dependent as a proportion of each textbook, the word count of which was unavailable.

Confining relevant content to that identified by index listing had limitations. On the one hand, it afforded systematic identification of content across the textbooks and brought to attention content that would be found by readers interested in those topics. On the other hand, any reference to relevant content that was not listed in the indexes missed making a contribution to analysis of discourse about independence in the textbooks from which readers might form their views, including that from substantial discussion of “family”.

A particular problem was finding no listings in Sigelman and Rider (2009) for any of the indexed subjects grouped into *partnering* or *widowed* that were in Sigelman (1999). A manual search found corresponding content only for *death of a spouse* in *widowhood*. This posed a dilemma between maintaining data selection transparency and my research interest in transition in theoretical discourse about independent women. After some reflection, I decided the text should be included because it replicated much of the 3rd edition’s copy so that its exclusion would reduce potential for comparing representation of a dependence status across time. However, consultation with colleagues drew attention to the issues surrounding deviation from my data selection rationale for this case; essentially that rigour would be compromised unless I applied the same process to all adult in/ter/dependence references. Recognising the improbability of accurately capturing all such references in a manual search of the four textbooks, I reluctantly excluded the 2009 extract from analysis, very aware of the impact of the exclusion on comparison findings.

Exclusion of some content related to in/ter/dependence that was located in adolescent development, such as *relationships* (romantic or sexual) (Bee, 1998; Boyd & Bee, 2009) and *dating* (Sigelman, 1999; Sigelman & Rider, 2009) also followed some reflection. I decided that, while this content related to interdependence, the keyword themes are unlikely to have significance for in/ter/dependence as subject positions for adults. Comparably few adolescents marry, divorce, or are widowed; it is likely that few would even identify as being single. Discussion in the textbooks located these experiences in adolescent development, by definition pre-adult¹.

¹ The New Elizabethan reference dictionary defines adolescence as the period between childhood and adulthood.

I began the analysis by aggregating measurement of the captured in/ter/dependence content, and converting the quantitative data to graphical representation (see below) of the weighting of in/ter/dependence in the textbooks.

Having entered the texts to NVivo8, I began coding thematic commonalities with no prior determination of master files such as the transition and resistance interest areas of Chapter 7, discursive repertoires instead emerging from the raw data. As in the previous chapter, it became apparent that early thematic nodes (e.g., mental/physical health, parenting) were building dominant interpretative repertoires (e.g., deficit, development) from the texts. This process also brought together text that made evident contradiction not so much between as within content of the books.

Coding from the separate texts also enabled identification of similarities or repetitions of content from 1999 to 2009 to allow illustration of transition in, or expansion of, theory and any shift in discursive construction of the independent subject.

8.4 Results

Two dominant and two less prominent repertoires were identified in the texts. These were *difference*, *deficiency*, *development* and *theory*. The results of the quantitative analysis contributed to the repertoire of difference.

8.4.1 Difference. Discourse about difference positioned interdependence as the norm, with the categories of independence likely to be found in sections labeled *individual differences* or *diversity in family life*. Corresponding with characteristics of group membership that privilege ingroups (Deschamps, 1982; Loseke, 2007; Mehan, 2001), discourse about relational independence was less nuanced than that about interdependence, which was located in more sections with greater discussion of variability (see Table 8). So difference, then, related both to situating independence as Other, and allowing it fewer dimensions than interdependence.

Possibly because of its format that included romantic relationships and partnering in all its stages of adult development chapters, interdependence weighted heavily in the editions of *Lifespan development* (see Figure 8.1), more so in 2009 with significantly increased content related to Partnering (see Figure 8.2). Omission of content relating to this sub-category in the later edition was responsible for the reversed weightings

between 1999 and 2009 in *Life-span human development* where dependence status was predominantly limited to a chapter on the family.

Disaggregating the in/ter/dependence variables (Figure 8.2) found most of the discussion about interdependence centred on marriage and partnering; with divorce then widowhood dominating independence. In *Lifespan development*, marriage, partnering and cohabitation were located in *social and personality development* chapters related to relationship formation in early, middle and late adulthood. Single and divorced discussion were found in *individual differences* sections following content about nuclear and extended family arrangements, indicating deviance from the norm. Most of the 76 lines dedicated to *those who do not marry* contrasted the advantages enjoyed by interdependent couples with physical and emotional disadvantages of the independent, undifferentiated by gender, in the earlier edition (Bee, 1998). This comparison was missing from the later edition, which now included some brief discussion about methodological inadequacy in gathering data about individuals who are in committed romantic relationships yet living apart (Boyd & Bee, 2009). Widowhood was an example of the epidemiology of grieving in *dying, death and bereavement* (Bee, 1998), but was a dedicated sub-section in an *experience of grieving* section in the *late adulthood* chapter in the 5th edition (Boyd & Bee, 2009).

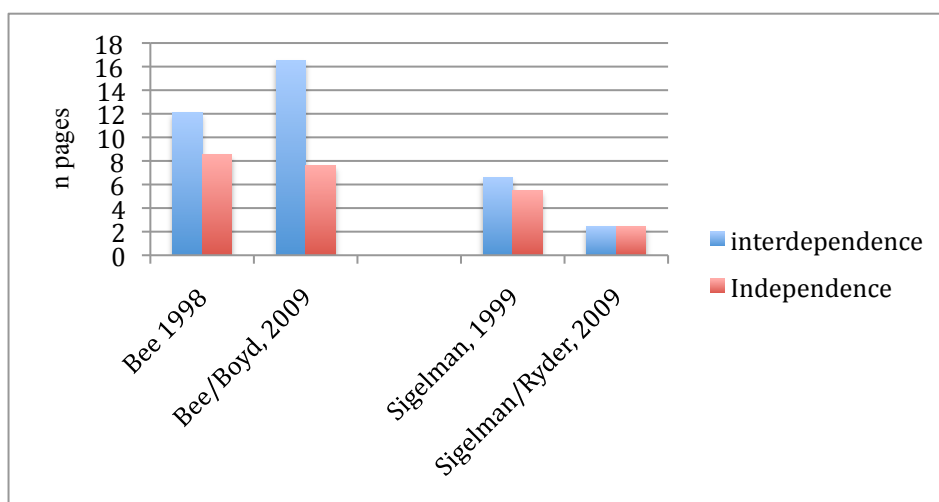


Figure 8.1. In/ter/dependence in *Lifespan development* (1998, 2009) and *Life-span human development* (1999, 2009) x space (pages)

In Life-span human development, interdependence was located mainly in the family chapter (1999) with some reference also found in chapters on gender roles and sexuality, intelligence and creativity, understanding development, and attachment and social relationships (2009). Singles was a dedicated sub-section of diversity in family life in the family chapter in both editions, taking 30 lines in 1999 and 29 lines in 2009. Of these, 17 and 12 lines, respectively, were discussion of cohabitation, leaving 13 and 17 lines, respectively, dedicated to the experience of living single in textbooks of 500+ pages, excluding appendices. Discussion of divorce was also found in diversity in family life, with some limited reference in understanding family life elsewhere in the family chapter, and death in the family in the final challenge chapter where most reference to widowhood was located. It should be noted that childless couples were also discussed in the diversity of family life section of the family chapter, indicating deviance of all living arrangements different to a two-parent, biological child(ren) norm.

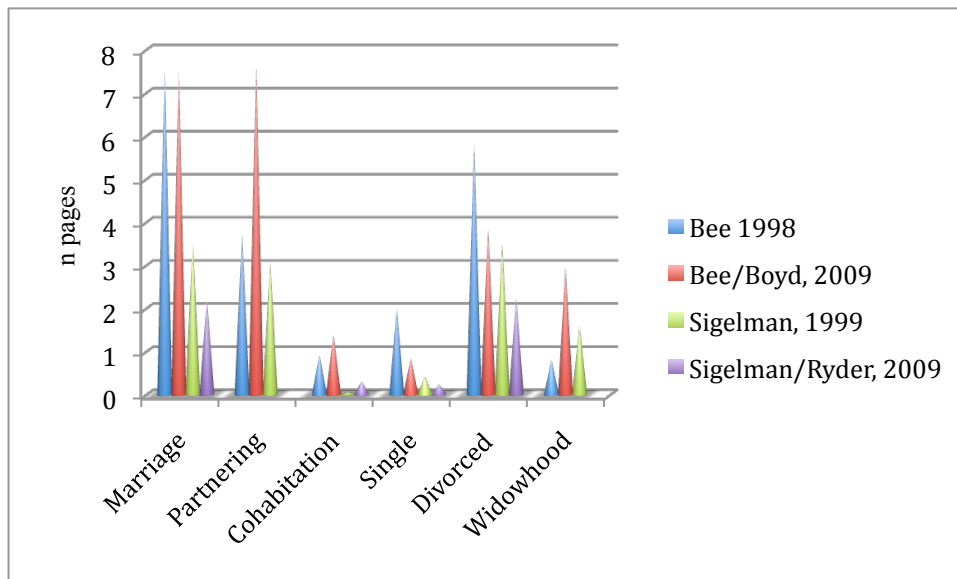


Figure 8.2. Disaggregated in/ter/dependence in *Lifespan development* (1998, 2009) and *Life-span human development* (1999, 2009) x space (pages)

“Individual difference” and “diversity” were code words in the texts for deviance from optimal adult living arrangements. Under these headings could be found discussion about *single adults*, *married but childless adults*, *gay and lesbian adults*, and *divorced* and *remarried adults* (Sigelman, 1999) expanded to include *dual-career*

families in the later edition (Sigelman & Rider, 2009) that implied interdependent women's paid employment is both a recent and a novel development. Of interest, Bee's earlier definition of difference included those who do not adopt all the "big three" adult roles of marriage, parenthood *and work* (Bee, 1998)[emphasis added], although whether work was paid or domestic was not clarified. In 1999, widowhood was described as an extension of marriage, a natural phase of family life where "even after a spouse dies, the marital relationship often remains centrally important to many adults" (Sigelman, 1999, p. 414). In both 1999 and 2009, a prototype of a single adult was thought impossible because of the various models of independence; for example, the identity of young single adults who were postponing marriage while establishing careers might better be understood as spouse-in-waiting than single.

As can be seen, the repertoire of difference was used to demarcate the categories of independence, reinforced by there being no discussion of interdependence which further demonstrated distance from a relational norm. Similarly, reference to single or divorced mothers and their children found deviance from a happy, adjusted norm, "(N)ever-married mothers, divorced mothers or fathers who have not remarried, and step-parents are frequently linked to less positive outcomes" (Bee, 1998, p. 208; Boyd & Bee, 2009, p. 229). Yet the putative norm was contradicted by statistics.

What may shock you is just how rare it is in the United States today for a youngster to spend her entire childhood and adolescence living with both natural parents. Donald Hernandez, in his remarkable book, America's Children (1993) estimates that only 40 to 45 percent of the children born in 1980 - today's teenagers - will spend all their years up to age 18 living with both natural parents. Among African Americans, Hernandez estimates this figure is only 20 percent, while among Euro-Americans it is about 55 percent (Bee, 1998, p. 208)[emphasis added].

This passage is remarkable for the author's assumption that readers will share her ideologically-generated "shock" at the diversity of her nation's domestic arrangements as well as its arguable demonstration of a norm of diverse rather than nuclear family arrangements.

8.4.2 Deficiency. This repertoire drew from scientific discourse about the deleterious impact of independence on the health and wellbeing status of this demographic and their children. The use of "nonintact", "blended" or "reconstituted" families or, colloquially, "broken homes" demonstrates the power of ideological

discourse to position difference and diversity as inferior to the dominant model of domestic life through literal and metaphoric signifiers of damage, repair and deficiency.

The indices of difference above were states of physical and mental health, and parental competence. The texts reported immediate and, in some cases, long-term adverse health effects, for example, a depressed immune system leading to more frequent illness, cancer, heart disease, even death, suffered by people rendered independent by widowhood or divorce. Both textbooks drew attention to men's greater physical and mental vulnerability post-marriage, suggested to be due to dependence on their wives for nurturance and social support; and their, possibly consequentially, higher incidence of remarriage.

For those who do not marry, in 1998, readers learned that

Marriage or long-term cohabitation brings certain advantages. Married young adults are happier, healthier, live longer, and have lower rates of a variety of psychiatric problems (Coombs 1991; Glenn A Weaver 1988; Lee, Seccombe &, Shehan, 1991; Ross, 1995; Sorlie, Backlund & Keller, 1995) than do adults outside a committed sexual relationship. Linda Waite, in her 1995 presidential address to the Population Association of America (1995) concluded that "being unmarried is more dangerous than being over-weight, having cancer, or cigarette smoking and - for men - more dangerous than heart disease" (Bee, 1998, pp. 384-385).

In 2009, self-affirmation of their independence was thought to provide the always-single protection "from some of the negative health consequences associated with singlehood that you read about earlier" (Boyd & Bee, 2009, p. 416). An index-assisted search found only the first sentence of the 1998 quote above, at the end of a section on marriage, in 2009. This re-positioning may have reduced the relevance of the quoted Waite comment, hence its deletion, of the unnuanced threat to health of independence. A boxed research report on sex differences and the impact of marriage reported minimal difference between in/ter/dependent women but maximum advantage to interdependent over independent men. Sigelman's brief discussion of the always-single refuted stereotypes that they are "miserably lonely and maladjusted" (Sigelman, 1999, p. 457; Sigelman & Rider, 2009, p 418) describing compensatory relationships with siblings, friends and younger people who become

surrogate children. Noting the possible lack of carers in their old age, nonetheless “it is the divorced (or widowed) rather than never-married singles who tend to be the loneliest and least happy of all” (ibid).

The association of interdependence with positive states and independence with negative states, even when these are being disputed, continues to situate the independent adult within repertoires of difference and deficiency. Describing the always-single as the least miserable independence category and their social relationships in terms of substitute interdependence reinforces that positioning by a compensatory tone that privileges interdependence as the preferred social status. It seems unnecessarily value-laden, and perhaps demonstrating bias, in a human developmental textbook to dedicate significant space in sections on singlehood to the benefits of marriage, to comment that many identified by census as single are in fact in committed romantic relationships, and to assume that independent social relationships are imitative of interdependence. It also indicates subjectification of independence to allow its inclusion in normative theorising that, by definition, cannot accommodate diversity.

Discussion of divorce was where notions of should were most apparent, in terms of parenting, although there were similar connotations for the independent in general, in the Waite quote above that aligned independence with behaviours that should be changed to prevent ill health. Similarly, a corollary of associating never-married or divorced mothers, fathers who have not remarried, and step-parents with poor parental outcomes (e.g., Bee, 1998; Boyd & Bee 2009), and divorce as a “disruption of orderly progress” through the family cycle (Sigelman, 1999, p. 419; Sigelman & Rider, 2009, p. 457) is that parents should remain married in the interests of their children’s wellbeing and maintenance of the ideologically mandated social order.

Many of the harms associated with divorce were of parental deficiencies resulting in their children’s poor behaviour, delinquency, compromised educational outcomes and emotional distress that could continue into their adult years, linked to higher rates of domestic independence and interdependence failure. Citing adult independence as a negative outcome of parental divorce is clear indication of developmental

psychology's assumption that interdependence should be a developmental goal, signifying stability and social adjustment.

Remarriage also carried higher rates of failed interdependence and parental incompetence.

Within three to five years of a divorce, about 75% of single-parent families will experience yet another major change when a parent remarries and the children acquire a stepparent – and sometimes new siblings as well (Hetherington, 1989). Imagine the stresses for adults and children who find themselves in a recurring cycle of marriage, marital conflict, divorce, single status, and remarriage. Indeed, the more marital transitions elementary school children have experienced, the poorer their academic performance and adjustment (Kurdek, Fine, & Sinclair, 1995) (Sigelman, 1999, p. 421; Sigelman & Rider, 2009, p. 460)

The association of remarriage with continued domestic instability, a “recurring cycle” that implies no end to a pattern of making and breaking households so prejudicing child development, confers a deficiency on those attempting interdependence subsequent to their first attempt by suggesting an innate inability to achieve their goal. “Imagine the stresses” infers remarriage is an experience readers have not had, rendering the remarried as Other to a unmarried norm as the phrase signifies the distress of relational instability. However, the 2009 edition continues with discussion of the variability of family reconstitution concluding that it is family process rather than structure that determines a child's developmental outcome.

Another strand of the deficiency repertoire was that of *predisposition*, where individuals' emotional traits, temperament, or personality contribute to their independence or the degree to which they are affected by loss of interdependence through divorce or widowhood. In the below example, found in a section dedicated to *singles*, slight changes are denoted by (ˆ) for deletion from or (ˆ+) added to the 2009 edition from that of 1999.

Yet couples who live together and then marry seem to be more dissatisfied with their marriages (Thomson & Colella, 1992) and more likely to divorce (DeMaris & Rao, 1992) than couples who do not live together before marrying (especially if they have had multiple cohabitation experiences before they marry (Teachman, 2003)^ˆ). (Why is this?) It is unlikely that the experience of cohabitation itself is responsible (Booth & Johnson, 1988). Instead, it seems that the kinds of people who choose to (live together^ˆ) (cohabit with multiple

partners⁺) may be somewhat more susceptible to marital problems and less committed to (the institution of⁺) marriage than (the kinds of) people who do not. They tend, for example, to be less religious, less conventional in their family attitudes, less committed to the idea of marriage as a permanent arrangement, and more open to the idea of divorcing (Axinn & Barber, 1997; DeMaris & MacDonald, 1993; Newcomb, 1979) (Sigelman, 1999, p. 418; Sigelman & Rider, 2009, p. 457).

These extracts not only point to the individual inadequacy, lack of commitment to a lover and to the institution of marriage and moral dereliction in terms of religiosity and family attitudes of those who choose informal marriage but also to the author(s) affording less value to interdependence by choice than that by law. They do not quantify the incidence of dissatisfaction by cohabiting couples, instead imply that all, rather than some or even many, are incapable of successful interdependence. By 2009, their inadequacy and moral turpitude are emphasised by replacing 1999's living "together" with living serially "with multiple partners", although this may be a better summary of the relevant research than in the earlier edition. Of interest to this project is the addition of "the institution of (marriage)" in the later edition preceding the list of attributes of those who might be thought to be resisting the power relations sustaining the institution rather than interdependence *per se*. Similarly, "(susceptibility) to marital problems" could also be reframed as an unwillingness to manage negative affect in the interests of institutional support, where the institution is more important than individual wellbeing.

The same conclusions about cohabitation are drawn in *Lifespan development* however cultural differences such as those of race, religion, education and socioeconomic status in marriage are suggested to contribute to relationship instability, so warning against intimate intergroup association. Boyd and Bee (2009) note criticism of researchers who aggregate cohabitation types, so obscuring any differences between couples committed to their relationship and eventual marriage and those of serial interdependence (Boyd/Bee), the latter tacitly indicative of identity aligned with difference and independence that preclude permanent romantic partnership. Serial cohabitation preceding marriage was associated with increased risk of divorce although the best single predictor was reported to be high levels of neuroticism in either spouse (Bee, 1998; Boyd & Bee, 2009), an intrinsic personality trait bringing reduced opportunity for relationship permanence. While the diversity of possible

causes of unsuccessful interdependence also draw from a discourse of difference, their location in notions of susceptibility, lack of commitment and religiosity, reduced conventionality and commitment to relationship permanence, and demographic difference as a code for other, draw more strongly on discourses of deficiency in comparison to the white heterosexually-partnered, middle class American norm.

8.4.3 Development. Discourse about developmental potential for the independent and their children characterised this repertoire. I had reviewed content on theories of human development and found discussion of variables such as genetics, physiology, cognition and physical development were prominent in discussion of early childhood development. From late adolescence, however, development seemed analogous with socialisation (see Bronfenbrenner, et al., 1986) into the ideologically dominant lifespan template of mate selection and nuclear family creation that both supports and is supported by participation in the economy. As discussed above, life patterns that deviated from that norm were quarantined in sections on adulthood, and labeled different or diverse that signified negative comparison.

Representation of the independent adult did not carry an overall developmental framework other than her difference from a family-cyclic norm. However, “to offset the gloomy picture” (Sigelman, 1999, p. 421), both textbooks generally concluded sections on the differences and deficiencies of independence with comments such as

On a more positive note, not all families experience divorce as a major crisis; of those that do, most parents and children rebound from their crisis period and adapt well in the long run, sometimes even undergoing impressive growth as a result of their experience (Sigelman & Rider, 2009, p. 460).

Boyd and Bee (2009) recognised, however obliquely, that attitude to independence is a major factor for its developmental potential. In the following extract, continuous singlehood seems assumed to result from choice rather than marriage dissolution.

For those who remain single, the impact of singlehood on their lives depends on the reason for their relationship status. For instance, continuous singlehood is associated with greater individual autonomy and capacity for personal growth than is a life path that has included divorce or loss of a spouse (Marks & Lamberg, 1998) (Boyd & Bee, 2009, p. 416).

Again, even while allowing “autonomy and capacity for personal growth” for the independent, the qualifier “greater” draws from a repertoire of deficiency that assumes developmental impediment, possibly not quite so marked in those who have not married. Interdependence, thought by some discussants in the previous chapter to inhibit personal growth, is missing from that comparison. Despite their intended positivity, these extracts reinforce the deficiencies of independent living through the qualifiers “not all families” and “of those that do”; and presumably the growth potential of those who voluntarily adopt a single identity, so implying inhibited development of those whose return to independence is marked by loss.

Both textbooks offered evidence-based advice to facilitate adjustment to independence, and to minimise the impact on children as well as adults. Developmental potential for the independent was acknowledged for those who make the transition from anticipating or losing interdependence to adopting a self-affirming independent identity. For widows, that transition sees disinclination to remarry, in stark contrast to widowers for whom interdependence confers the same advantages as for men of all ages, patterns observed earlier from centuries past. Both textbooks reported the gendered experience of interdependence that brings greater benefit to husbands, for a range of emotional and social reasons, than to wives. Both nominated the financial support brought by interdependence as a major benefit for wives, the loss of which was described as having a major deleterious impact on women made independent again by divorce or widowhood.

8.4.4 Theory. As noted above, I reviewed content about major developmental theories, most of which focused on infant and childhood development with no application to adult development. Analysis that identified this repertoire was limited to discussion of adult development theory as the authors drew on it in sections discussing independence.

Of all the theories discussed in the textbooks, only those of social timing and event sequencing, and Erikson’s stages of psycho-social ego development informed content about independent living, and these were limited to *Lifespan development*. While the many studies referenced in these sections illuminated in/ter/dependence, their theoretical innovation was an elaboration of these two approaches.

Erikson's eight developmental crises over the lifespan (see Section 8.1.6.1) have dichotomous potential outcomes where the individual's personality is more or less adapted to social integration and productivity, that is, Freud's love and work. Being dichotomous, the outcomes are interpretable as positive or negative, risking an application of value recognised by Erikson when he cautioned against the positive aspects being formalised into a prescriptive list of ideal developmental achievements.

Illustrating the legitimacy of his concern, Boyd and Bee's (2009) learning objective 14.8 asked readers to consider how singles accomplish Erikson's development task of intimacy, the obverse of which is self-absorption, so imposing a value judgement privileging intimacy. The related section discussed informal sexual relationships, and friends and families of origin as sources of psychological and emotional intimacy. This marked a major shift from the earlier edition where there was little suggestion that the always-single shared a common developmental framework with the interdependent. It also implied an assumption that the independent were not precluded from intimacy by their dependence status.

During discussion of Erikson's generativity/stagnation stage of middle adulthood, Bee (1998) reported a 1987 study that had found "childless women, like unmarried women, are much more likely to have full-time continuous careers and to be more committed to the goal of career success than are women with children" (Bee, 1998, p. 386). The 2009 edition augmented this finding with survey results showing there was no career advantage for single, childless women: "... single, childless women had no higher rates of managerial advancement than mothers (Tharenou, 1999). Thus, one of the disadvantages associated with childlessness may be that it is always socially a bit risky to be seen as 'different' from others in any important way (Mueller & Yoder, 1999)" (Boyd & Bee, 2009, p. 419). Interestingly, given psychoanalysis' determination of women's nurturing destiny, there was no application of Erikson's theory to childless or independent women. Equally interesting was acknowledgement of disadvantage brought by deviation from norms important to the social order, albeit an acceptance of, rather than protest against, the risk of penalty for difference.

Related to staged development is the social clock theory that is "a set of age norms defining a sequence of life experiences that is considered normal in a given culture

and that all individuals in that culture are expected to follow” (Boyd & Bee, 2009, p. 8). In essence, the theory describes compliance with behaviours of social value expected of individuals at their stage of life (see also Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Again limited to *Lifespan development*, deviance from the social clock was reported to increase risk for individual distress (Bee, 1998). This would mean, in the context of this study, that lack of interdependence or parenting, or renewed independence, is more or less problematic, for the individual and society, depending on cohort norms. For example, “if the acquisition of the ‘big three’ roles in early adulthood - marriage, parenthood and work - are central to the rhythm and shape of this period of life, then we have to ask what happens to people who do not adopt all three roles, or who do not adopt them at the normative times. How do adults who do not marry (or cohabit) or those who do not have children differ from those who adopt these roles?” (Bee, 1998, p. 384). This extract exemplifies the problem of always-fallible theory being afforded authority in human affairs. There is an assumption that marriage and parenthood are incontrovertibly essential to adult development, rather than being commonly shared experience, and identification of those who do not follow a current behavioural pattern of the majority as problematic and somehow excluded from the mainstream. The later edition reported greater salience of educational, economic, and social status than age for behavioural compliance in Western cultures (Boyd & Bee, 2009).

8.5 Discussion

Despite the review of literature describing psychology’s normative function for dominant ideology (e.g., Henriques, et al., 1984; Prilleltensky, 1994; Rose, 1996) and the conservative structuring of text books that is uniform, ahistorical and culture-free as well as normative (Burman, 1993; Hollway, 2006), the overwhelmingly negative subjectification of independent adults in these textbooks was startling, and disappointing, given the wealth of literature offering a much more nuanced understanding of adult development.

Perhaps it was because of the person-centred structure of *Lifespan development* that repertoires of theories of staged development were identified in discussion of independence but it does not escape notice that both the application of Erikson’s theory of identity development and notions of compliance with common, age-specific behaviour were congruent with the behaviours expected by dominant values of social

culture. Yet, Erikson situated identity development in temporal, economic and social contexts, as did Neugarten (1979) when she argued for the timing of life events to be regarded as fluid rather than rigid. She also noted that major developmental ages, such as adolescence, identified in developmental psychology are of comparatively recent origin (Neugarten, 1979), further emphasising the field's cultural embedding by its presumption that current experience has always been thus.

While there was discussion of the gendered experience of the always single, the divorced, and the widowed, the silence about theories for women's development, independent or otherwise, in the sections under analysis was deafening. These may have included *The seasons of a woman's life* (Levinson, 1996), *Toward a new psychology of women* (J. Miller, 1976), and *In a different voice* (Gilligan, 1982) although the first of these was included in the reference list of both textbooks and the last in *Lifespan development*, indicating inclusion elsewhere in the texts. There was no reference to the work of Karen Lewis (1994, Lewis & Moon, 1997) and Schwartzberg and colleagues (1995) who devised life cycle tasks and stages for independent women complementary to those reported for generic application; nor, in later editions, to the growing numbers of scholars seeking to bring independent women's experience to the attention of established psychology (e.g., Byrne, 2003; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). On the other hand, attachment theory, generally applied negatively to independence (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1994; Klohnen & John, 1998; Rholes, et al., 1998; White, Hayes, & Livesey, 2005) by associating it with inadequate attachment models, an association contested by others (e.g., Belsky, 1999; Oswald, et al., 2004; R. Weiss, 1991), was also missing from relevant discussion.

Discourse about the independent woman and her development in the textbooks positioned her, if not totally invisible, problematic and deficient, even as the authors revised their texts in response to social change and her demographic growth. It seems that, while the timing and sequencing of lifespan events shift across generations in response to constant interaction between the individual and her environment (Baltes, Rösler, & Reuter-Lorenz, 2006; Dannefer, 1984; Erikson, 1982; Helson, et al., 1984; Levinson, 1996; Neugarten, 1979; Riley, 1978), there is a risk that theory about independence, or at least the textbooks that select theory for student consumption,

remain rooted in the ideology of past inter-cohort generations rather than encompass social change (Rossi, 1980). For example, psychoanalytic theories such as Erikson's dominated what theoretical underpinning there was in discussion of independence although, some decades ago, developmentalists had "dismembered, discarded, or reconfigured" (Scholnick & Miller, 2000, p. 242) this approach in their search for more inclusive theory that might match changes in cultural profiles with understanding of heterogeneous life trajectories (Carr, 2008). Even though textbooks are known to be conservative (Hollway, 2006; Squire, 1990), even reactionary (Burman, 1993), in their coverage, omission of theory that does not label difference as deviance, or indeed applies no value hierarchy to in/ter/dependence, seems negligent.

8.5.1 Newspaper frames and adult development discourse. Distinctions between categories found in media framing of independence were found formalised in indexes and under headings of *singles*, *divorce*, and *widowhood* in the textbooks. To some degree, this contradicts social identity theory that argues that members of an out-group are perceived as unidimensional (Deschamps, 1982; Loseke, 2007; Mehan, 2001), undifferentiated by identity nuance. It could equally be argued that the categories of independence interest the interdependent, and ideologically-embedded behavioural sciences, by their degree of deviation from, and support by negative comparison with, the coupled norm. As with its cultural construction evidenced in the print media, the widowed identity of the textbooks was commonly presented as an extension of the married one, independence a function of chance rather than intention, and located in sections describing the family life cycle. At the end of the decade separating both the media sampling and the textbooks editions, espousal of independence by some widows, contextualised as a survival mechanism, was noted in both sources.

The incidence of widowhood and divorce in the print media were inverted in the textbooks, which took greater interest in the latter because of its impact on family function. The discourse of disapproval found in media framing of the divorced woman was paralleled in the textbooks by a focus on the deleterious, long-term impact of divorce on her children coupled with scientific discourse about inherent personality predisposition to troubled interdependence. What might have been included were "traits that reflected a desire for autonomy, direct achievement, and

assertion of individual priorities” found in divorcing women in the 1980s (Helson, et al., 1984). Notions of development following a return to independence found in 1999 were missing from 2009’s newspapers but had increased in the later editions of the textbooks, which also contained advice as to how the divorced and their children might adjust to independence.

The positive shift in media framing of always-single women from 1999 to 2009 had some correspondence in the textbooks in that much of the adverse comparison with the interdependent had been edited out of the analysed sections. Latterly included was comment about the inadequacy of census data to report the incidence of people in committed romantic relationships who maintain separate households; that is, statistical data showing growth in the independent demographic was suggested to be flawed by methodological inadequacy rather than reflecting a real trend.

Similarly, a hyperbolic generalisation about the health dangers of independence was not repeated in 2009. By 2009, the always-single were found to have greater capacity for growth and development, and experience less angst, than other independent categories.

I suggested that their demographic growth had contributed to a more positive framing of the always-single woman in the 2009 media, not only as a market segment but also because increasing numbers of independent women in the media were in positions of editorial influence that overwhelmed lazy stereotypes. It may be that the growing numbers of independent women in science are bringing their gendered experience under a metaphoric microscope for theoretical discovery and inclusion in bodies of knowledge so achieving shifts in scientific discourse about women’s independence. Certainly, the burgeoning field of singles studies is explicating the experience albeit much more rapidly than is evident in the above textbooks.

Noted in both editions of *Life-span human development* was the inadequacy of “the concept of a family life cycle to capture the diversity of adult lifestyles and family experiences” (Rider & Sigelman, 2009, p. 457), and “(W)e must stop talking about *the* family life cycle and start talking about many such cycles (Rowland, 1991)” (Sigelman, 1999, p. 421). There may be theorists who have taken up that challenge

but, if there are, their work made little contribution to the sections on adult independence in these textbooks which, with some minor qualifications, supported a heterosexually-coupled, family-generative norm as the aspirational model for adult development characterised by the acquisition of the “big three” roles of marriage, parenthood and work (Bee, 1998).

8.5.2 Resistance and adult development discourse. Quarantining textbook discussion of independence from marriage to sections headed *difference* and *diversity* mirrored women’s embodied experience of social inclusion or exclusion determined by their dependence status. It also draws from institutional discourse where personal data collection includes reporting dependence status around an interdependent norm; that is, ticking a box nominating marital status where, by definition, marriage is the default category.

There was no discussion of the impact ascription to a social out-group might have on those so labeled, including on their development. Indeed, there was only one reference to this process in the textbooks, in relation to early childhood (Sigelman, 1999), despite its developmental implications including those of resisting negative ascription. The dominant repertoires of difference and deficiency implied maladaptive development for most of those deviating from an uninterrupted marriage, maternity and parenting pattern although there was increasing acknowledgement that some independent people enjoy opportunities for growth.

Contradicting this “expert” discourse, discussants spoke of their irritation with being ascribed behavioural and social traits associated with stereotypes of their independence. They also spoke of the opportunities independence offered for development and growth previously unavailable to them when interdependent, and which they now observed in the interdependent, that mitigated against their ready return to romantic commitment.

The comparisons discussants drew of independence and interdependence described differentiated experience unlike those in the textbooks where independent experience sought substitution for, rather than separation from, interdependence. The notion of independence as imitative interdependence was particularly fraught for single mothers

whose reluctant financial dependence on the state was described by them in patriarchal terms of father or husband substitute. That is, their deviance from an ideologically prescribed model of maternity brought scrutiny, surveillance and institutional control along with financial support. If discussion of parental outcomes in the textbooks is indicative of mainstream developmental psychology, as must be suspected from their purpose in educating tomorrow's professionals, scientific discourse that focuses on developmental disruption and disadvantage for children in one-parent households will be what shapes public discourse and policy that privileges two-parent households while maligning those managed by one parent (Alldred, 1996; Burman, 2008a; Usdansky, 2009).

Relationships substitutive of interdependence were actively avoided by some discussants whose nurturing behaviour was not to do with raising children but supporting themselves and other women in their chosen independence. This, when related to Erikson's developmental theory, of significant influence in the textbooks, would be deemed a resolution of adulthood's generativity/stagnation crisis that indicated an unhealthy personality because it did not contribute to establishing and guiding the next generation, so supporting a discourse of deficiency that separates the independent from the interdependent.

One theme on which there was accord was the independent-again woman's reduced financial security. Both textbooks discussed this as a negative factor of divorce and subsequent child-rearing and it was a recurring qualifier of independent discussants' otherwise positive assessment of their current lives, as well as a variable in comparisons of their in/ter/dependent experience.

Adequate financial support was listed as a factor of adjusting to a "good" divorce (Sigelman & Rider, 2009, p. 461) as was additional social support and minimising domestic and environmental change, as well as positive parenting strategies. In this conceptualisation, adjustment brought no developmental opportunities such as those described by discussants, focusing instead on short-term harm minimisation to a damaged family.

8.5.3 Transition. "To tackle the ideological functioning of a science in order to reveal and to modify it is... to tackle... the system of formation of its objects, its

types of enunciation, its concepts, its theoretical choices. It is to treat it as one practice among others” (Foucault, 1969, p. 205).

Dominant psychological narrative that reflects and forms social norms, i.e. the common sense that is accepted doctrine, is difficult to infiltrate (Goldberg, 1996; Kitzinger, 1990; Wilkinson, 1986, 1989), particularly by researchers whose work contradicts established theory or supports change in social arrangements. For example, notions of independent living representing competent, responsible management of life’s vicissitudes (La Barre, 1972) are absent from discourse drawn from repertoires of difference, diversity and deficiency. As a corollary, dominant models that include sexual bonding as a necessary component of adult development are unchallenged with concomitant devaluing, and ignorance, of independent experience (Adams, 1976; Byrne, 2003; DePaulo & Morris, 2005; K. Lewis, 1994).

Yet, even here, it is compliance with ideological norms that validate interdependent choices, as was noted above in the list of personal characteristics of *de facto* couples that implied unfavourable comparison with the formally married. They were reported to be less religious, less conventional in family attitudes, less committed to the idea of marriage as an institution, more open to the idea of divorcing and, if they marry, more dissatisfied with their marriages and more likely to divorce (Sigelman, 1999; Sigelman & Rider, 2009). Perhaps the key trait here to excite a discourse of deficiency is an observed resistance to marriage as an institution, indicating threatening societal change away from a patriarchal model of social organisation.

Individual choice to remain independent, particularly by women (Frazier, Arikian, Benson, Losoff, & Maurer, 1996) is unacceptable in such a narrative, interpreted instead as deviance, while motivation for interdependence, which might include strong dependency needs or fear of solitude (Nadelson & Notman, 1981), is unconsidered because interdependence is a “natural state” that needs no motivation. Deviance as represented by the independent woman brings a wide range of judgments “(F)rom one extreme point of view, she is merely yet another Oedipal loser. From the other, she is bold and impressive, gifted with a stout heart, a strong spine, and an artist’s spirituality” (Clements, 1998, p. 322), both atypical of an interdependent feminine norm centred around domestic nurturing.

It seems that social change precedes its institutional recognition in public discourse, followed some way behind by the authoritative practices of scientific and public policy discourse; the “cultural lag” posited by Tuchman (2000/1978) and Byrne and Carr (2005). The textbooks evidenced some attitudinal shift towards the independent person between earlier and later editions, more so for the always-single, although independence remained subordinate to interdependence, the *Other* that validates the *I* of the ideologically approved.

It would be rash to extrapolate from these two textbooks THE narrative about human development in psychology. After all, other textbooks take a different approach. For example, the introduction to a chapter on emotional and social development in early adulthood describes the doubt felt by a prospective bride (who subsequently separates from her husband) before applying major developmental theories to a variety of related circumstances (Beck, 2007). There is also recognition that contemporary notions of romantic love as the basis for marriage is a recent innovation, embedded in ideological values of individuality that are foreign to other cultures. A chapter on early adulthood and psychosocial development in another book begins “In terms of psychosocial development, the hallmark of contemporary adult life is diversity... Almost every adult everywhere has close friends who follow other paths – including marrying and divorcing several times, adopting children, avoiding parenthood, entering a homosexual partnership, or living happily alone” (Berger, 2005, p. 459) which implies value neutrality although the “every adult” would seem to be on a “normal” path that includes lifelong marriage and biological parenthood with “close friends” exemplifying the diversity of *Life-span human development* (Sigelman, 1999; Sigelman & Rider, 2009).

Other theoretical approaches argue against human development being defined as prescribed sequential life cycle events or the general experience of the majority being prescribed as the model to be aspired to by everybody. Instead, humans enjoy lifelong growth, responsive to individuals’ environments and interventions (Sugarman, 2001). Baltes and colleagues proposed a biocultural co-constructivist metatheory of human development. That is, “brain and culture are in a continuous, interdependent, co-productive transaction and reciprocal determination” (Baltes, Rösler, & Reuter-Lorenz, 2006, p. 3). While the focus of this work was fear

conditioning and culturally-acquired racial bias, it may be fruitful to speculate on its relevance to a repertoire of public discourse averse to solitary living and the possibility of modifying that discourse and aversion through reshaping related perceptions.

8.6 Comment

Burman (1993) asked why introductory textbooks are so limited and reactionary, and why is it assumed that professional audiences are uncritical of their contents. One answer may be that there are few professionals in their readership. Those who are there are seeking an introduction, an overview, for neophyte professionals who may or may not progress further into the developmental field. As has been seen in this chapter, the problem with this lies in the missing detail, the absence of which skews the narrative to dominant ideological discourse, analogous to mass media's recourse to embedding its stories in commonly understood frames to facilitate message transmission.

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed the role of psychology as a fundamental means of social regulation, normalising behaviours conducive to supporting ideologically dominant values and pathologising those that might pose a risk to the status quo. The textbooks analysed for this study are a case study of *psy* in action, in their reinforcing of marriage as a norm of successful adult development and their pathologising relational independence through comparatively supplemental discussion under labels of diversity and difference.

The chapter concludes by arguing for developmental theory that interrogates the interaction between the individual and her environments to offer greater explanatory strength than decontextualised models (Dannefer, 1984; Leaper, 2000; P. Miller & Scholnick, 2000; Watts, 1992), and greater potential for adapting society for individual wellbeing rather than standardising individuals to fit prevailing social structure. Erikson himself warned of the “uncritical transfer of clinical terms, attitudes, and methods to... public problems” (Erikson, 1980, p. 174). Where independent living continues to be considered less valid than interdependence by pro-marriage research biases (R. Bell & Yans, 2008), such discourse positions the independent woman as problematic.

In the following chapter, I will consider the discursive construction of the independent woman from the three studies comprising this project and its genealogical basis. I will also discuss my methodological choices, and their limitations. I will argue that future research must contribute to the growing wealth of evidence until a critical mass is reached that will redefine diversity to mean value-free variety in adult domestic arrangements, without a default status.