

Transition from the Early 40s to the Early 50s in Self-Directed Women

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ABSTRACT How does personality type moderate personality change in middle age? Answers to this question were sought with three observer-based measures of self-directedness (autonomy, hypersensitivity, and willfulness) scored from the California Q-set when the participants in the Mills longitudinal study were age 43. From their early 40s to early 50s, high scorers on autonomy (healthy self-directedness) increased on California Psychological Inventory measures of impulse control and agency, and continued their involvement in high-status occupational careers. Despite increases in impulse control, the hypersensitive women had not increased in agency and expressed boredom in major social roles. In their early 50s, high scorers on willfulness increased in agency but not impulse control. In social roles, they perceived themselves as stimulating and creative.

The transition from the 40s to the 50s heralds major changes in the life of the individual. Middle adulthood has been described as a season of social and personal dominance and power (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978), and a time of heightened sense of control, competence, and expertise (Neugarten & Datan, 1974). Dubbed as the "decade of reminders," the 50s are also a time of increased awareness of aging and limits to one's accomplishments (Karp, 1988) and of reorganization of long-term goals in terms of time left (Neugarten, 1968).

In a study of personality change from the early 40s to the early 50s, Helson and Wink (1992) found that female participants in the Mills Longitudinal Study increased on California Psychological In-

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ventory (CPI; Gough, 1987) measures of responsibility, self-discipline, and relational smoothness. These increases in the control domain were accompanied by a drop on the Femininity/Masculinity scale indicative of greater decisiveness, initiative, and action orientation (agency). The above changes were unaffected by menopausal status, children leaving home, or involvement in care for parents. In this article, personality change for particular groups of women during the transition from their 40s to their 50s is investigated with three self-directedness scales (Wink, 1992a) scored from the California Q-set (CAQ; Block, 1978) for women at age 43.

The issues, central to the 50s, of power, agency, control, limits, and aging are of direct relevance to individuals who construe their identity in terms of self and self-esteem. The differential effects of healthy and less healthy levels of self-investment on the transition from the 40s to the 50s are of importance to the theory of narcissism, and also address the larger and relatively unexplored issue of the moderating effect of personality type on adult development.

Narcissism (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971, 1977), introjective personality configuration (Blatt & Shichman, 1983), self-directedness (Wink, 1991a), or agency (Bakan, 1966) address the fundamental issue of self-definition, self-regulation, personal worth, and self-esteem.¹ Wink (1991b, 1992b) has proposed a threefold classification of healthy and less adaptive self-directedness or narcissism.² The healthy, self-directed or autonomous type is characterized by independence, high aspirations, and intellectual interests. Among the two less healthy types, willfulness (overt narcissism) is associated with outer-directed exhibitionism, dominance, sense of entitlement, and rebelliousness, and hypersensitivity (covert narcissism) is associated with self-defensiveness, overconcern with one's own adequacy, sensitivity to slight, and a general overabsorption with the inner self. The two less adaptive forms of self-directedness share a defensive grandiosity, underachievement, and craving for stimulation which arises from a fragmentation (splitting) of the self (Kohut, 1971, 1977). They are also characterized by self-

1. The second fundamental issue of how we interact with others is addressed by other-directedness, the anaclitic personality configuration (Blatt & Shichman, 1983), object-directedness (Kohut, 1971), and communion (Bakan, 1966) (see also Wink, 1991a).

2. Initially, the autonomy, hypersensitivity, and willfulness scales were all developed from a single CAQ narcissism prototype. However, since they refer to both healthy and less adaptive levels of functioning, the term "self-directedness" rather than "narcissism" seems more appropriate when describing the three scales as a whole.

indulgence, negative affect, and general undercontrol of impulses. In particular, narcissistic individuals are prone to experience envy and resentment (Kernberg, 1975), which frequently manifest themselves in the more socially acceptable feelings of boredom.

The next three sections outline the patterns of adult development and hypotheses for change from the 40s to the 50s specific to the three types of self-directedness.

Autonomy

According to Kohut (1966, 1971), healthy narcissism or self-directedness results in a robust self-concept and well-modulated ambitions and ideals that facilitate the maximization of one's intellectual potential. It also leads in adulthood to the development of empathy, creativity, humor, and wisdom. While empathy and creativity originate in the ability to transcend boundaries between self and object or other, humor and wisdom result from an acceptance of limits to one's physical, intellectual, and emotional powers, or a transcendence of the infantile sense of omnipotence (Kohut, 1966). An association between narcissism and creativity was supported empirically by MacKinnon (1965) in his study of architects and in Helson's studies of Mills College women (1985).

In the Mills study, from their late 20s to their early 40s, women classified as autonomous on the CAQ (Wink, 1992b) grew in confidence, social poise, understanding of self and others, and effective functioning. Throughout the first half of adult life they proved to be more creative, personally complex, and open-minded than the rest of the women. At age 43, autonomy was associated with the attainment of high status at work and cognitive complexity (Wink, 1992b). In their strong career orientation, agency, and instrumentality, high scorers on autonomy resembled Stewart's (1978) self-defined women.

It is hypothesized that from the 40s to the 50s, women high in autonomy will continue their involvement in high-status, creative careers. On the CPI they should show evidence of the increases shown by the whole sample in both impulse control and agency that seem to accompany the move to positions of maximum responsibility and power in the 50s. Compared to the rest of the Mills women, the autonomous group is expected to be characterized by a high level of functioning, which should manifest itself in a strong sense of social poise and assurance, good impulse control, and, just as at all previous times of testing, a high level of personal complexity and open-mindedness. If, as argued

by Kohut (1966), healthy narcissism leads to the acceptance of limits, this should be reflected in the autonomous women's changed ideals of physical attractiveness.

Hypersensitivity

Psychoanalytic researchers have associated narcissism with deterioration at mid-life (Kernberg, 1975, 1980; Kohut, 1971). According to Kernberg (1980), the realization of one's mortality, physical aging, and the limitations to one's accomplishments potentiate feelings of envy and resentment in narcissistic individuals. A defensive devaluation of others and one's own accomplishments eats away at external and internal sources of support and leads to increased social introversion. As a result, narcissistic individuals inhabit a world that is progressively more hostile and more devoid of meaning, nourishment, and goodness.

The above clinically based portrait of narcissism fits the pattern of empirical findings associated with hypersensitivity at mid-life (Wink, 1992b). At age 43, Mills College women with high scores on the CAQ Hypersensitivity scale were buffeted by impulse, showed signs of psychological distress (vulnerability of the self), reported conflict in home and marriage, and lacked enjoyment of work. Compared to the rest of the women, they were lower in functioning on all of the CPI's three main factors, that is, they lacked interpersonal skills and were less controlled and open-minded. In college, however, these women had been virtually indistinguishable in personality from their classmates. For the hypersensitive women, the first real signs of vulnerability became evident in their late 20s and were accompanied by a steady decrease in impulse control and an increase in negative affect.

Research on the antisocial and borderline personality disorders, which are conceptually related to narcissism, appears to be relevant in predicting mid-life changes among the hypersensitive women. Individuals over the age of 45 who have either of these two personality disorders show gradual, if partial, improvement in functioning associated primarily with fewer problems of aggressive (acting out) behavior. Problems in interpersonal relationships tend to persist, however (Gelder, Gath, & Mayou, 1989; Gunderson, 1988; McGlashan, 1986; Paris, 1988). In their longitudinal study of psychological health in men, Vaillant and Vaillant (1990) conclude that "personality disorders . . . may sometimes be a self-limiting disorder" (p. 37).

Viewed as a "self-limiting" disorder, hypersensitivity should lead to

increases in impulse control from the 40s to the 50s. If Kernberg (1980) is right, however, in depicting the middle-aged narcissistic individual as basically vulnerable, envious, and resentful, this should manifest itself in conflict with others and negative perceptions of self and others. Compared to the rest of the Mills women, the hypersensitive women should continue to experience a lack of poise and assurance in interpersonal relationships. Greater impulsivity, though less pronounced, should still be evident.

Willfulness

Unlike hypersensitivity, willfulness is associated with an exuberant and expansive sense of the self, abundance of vigor, craving for excitement, and self-assurance, which hide deep-seated feelings of insecurity (American Psychiatric Association, 1987; Kernberg, 1986; Kohut, 1977). In interpersonal relations, overtly narcissistic individuals tend to use others for self-stimulation and as mirrors of their own feelings of grandeur (Kohut, 1971, 1977).

In the Mills study, women with high scores on willfulness were characterized at age 43 by high energy level, enjoyment of work, and conflict in relationships. Compared to the rest of the sample they showed greater rebelliousness throughout the first half of adult life (Wink, 1992b). The shift from the early to the late 20s was a time of increased social poise and assurance as the willful women appeared to relish the novelty and excitement associated with entry into the adult world. By age 43, however, high scorers on willfulness were no longer pursuing an upwardly mobile occupational career and their personality did not differ from that in college.

In *Lives through Time*, Block (1971) describes personality development in a group of dominantly or overtly narcissistic women who, from the age of 18 to their early 30s, increased somewhat in socialization and consideration of others, but otherwise retained their overtly egotistical, dominating, and exploitative tendencies.

The willful women are expected to respond to the new privileges associated with the early 50s with an increased sense of agency or power. Since rebelliousness and lack of self-discipline have been core and stable characteristics of willfulness since the early 20s, they should continue to be so in the 50s. However, it is possible that the middle-age gains in impulse control evinced by individuals with antisocial or borderline personality disorders may also apply to high scorers on will-

fulness. The willful woman's expansive sense of self is expected to manifest itself in feelings of physical attractiveness and the perception of self as attractive and stimulating in relationships with others. Compared to the rest of the Mills women, high scorers on willfulness are expected to show greater social poise and assurance and, just as at all other times of testing, lower impulse control.

In summary, from the 40s to the 50s, high scorers on the CAQ Autonomy scale should, just as the entire Mills sample, increase their scores on CPI measures of impulse control. They should also increase in agency, that is, decrease their scores on the Femininity/Masculinity scale. High scorers on CAQ Hypersensitivity should increase in impulse control only, and high scorers on CAQ Willfulness should increase in agency only, but some gains in impulse control cannot be ruled out.

Compared to the rest of the sample, it is expected that (a) the two more dysfunctionally narcissistic groups of hypersensitive and willful women will exhibit greater undercontrol of impulse, (b) the autonomous and willful groups will show higher levels of social poise and assurance, and (c) the healthily self-directed autonomous group will be distinguished by higher levels of personal complexity and openness.

Finally, in the early 50s, high scorers on autonomy should derive their sustenance from involvement in high-status occupational careers, high scorers on hypersensitivity should find neither work nor others particularly sustaining, and high scorers on willfulness should derive self-esteem from their physical appearance and stimulation in interpersonal relationships.

METHOD

Participants

In 1958 and 1960 a representative two-thirds of the senior class ($N = 141$) at Mills College participated in a study of personality characteristics and plans for the future among college women. Further information was obtained by mail when the women's average age was 27 ($N = 99$), 43 ($N = 111$), and 52 ($N = 106$) (Helson, 1967; Helson & Wink, 1992). A core of 76 women completed the CPI at all four time periods and provided sufficient information to be sorted on the CAQ at age 43.

Q-Sort Data and Measures of Self-Directedness

Q-sort. Life data provided by 105 of the 111 participants in the 1981 (age-43) follow-up were studied by three to six raters, who then formulated person-

ality descriptions of each woman by means of Q-sorting the CAQ (Block, 1978). Raters were confined to the questionnaire material available for the 1981 follow-up. The alpha reliabilities for the 105 CAQ composites ranged from a low of .65 to a high of .90, with a mean at .75 (for details see Wink, 1991a).

CAQ Autonomy, Hypersensitivity, and Willfulness scales. Nine expert judges sorted the 100-item CAQ for a prototypic narcissist using their own understanding of the construct and *DSM-III* criteria for narcissistic personality disorder as guidelines. The nine individual Q-sorts were aggregated to form the CAQ narcissism prototype (alpha reliability = .91) (Wink, 1991a). The top (most characteristic) items of the CAQ narcissism prototype were subjected to a principal components analysis which resulted in the extraction of three orthogonal factors: hypersensitivity, willfulness, and autonomy (Wink, 1991a). Subsequently, factor scores for the above three dimensions were used as markers for the development of scales in the Mills sample and a cross-validation sample of 350 males and females (Wink, 1992a).

The Autonomy scale consists of 11 CAQ items reflecting independence, high aspirations, unconventional thought processes, and breadth of aesthetic and intellectual interests. The Hypersensitivity scale includes 13 items indicating sensitivity to demands and criticism, self-defensiveness, hostility and irritability, and concern with one's own adequacy. The Willfulness scale comprises 10 items measuring self-indulgence, condescension, manipulateness, impulsivity, self-dramatization, and tendencies to eroticize situations.

The alpha measure of internal consistency for the three scales ranges from .87 to .92, and intercorrelations among them range from a low of $-.19$ between hypersensitivity and autonomy, and a high of .27 for hypersensitivity and willfulness (Wink, 1992a).

The 76 participants for whom CPI data were available at all four times of testing were used to provide three nonoverlapping self-directed groups based on their age-43 scores on autonomy ($N = 25$), hypersensitivity ($N = 18$), and willfulness ($N = 11$). In order to assure an adequate number of cases and to optimize differentiation, the following criteria were set for group membership: (a) a z score on the criterion scale above the group mean, and (b) a z score on the criterion scale greater than scores on the other two scales by one-fifth of a standard deviation or more (Wink, 1992b). A total of 22 women (the rest of the Mills sample) were not assigned membership in any of the three self-directed groups. The fact that the majority of the Mills College women were classified as self-directed (particularly as autonomous) may be in part because the Mills study was originally presented to prospective participants as being concerned with creativity, leadership, and future plans of modern women. The values of the college also encouraged individuality (Helson, 1993).

Measures Used in Analyses of Change over Time

Personality measures. The 20 folk concept scales of the CPI (Gough, 1987) provide a comprehensive set of personality measures.

The analyses of change over time for the three self-directed groups are based on the four CPI scales, which showed normative change from age 43 to 52 for the Mills sample as a whole (Helson & Wink, 1992). The Responsibility scale measures an analytic and reflective mode of impulse regulation; the Self-Control scale indexes one's discipline and ability to control impulses; and the Good Impression scale measures relational smoothness and the willingness to create a favorable impression on others. All three scales belong to the CPI's Normative Control of Impulse cluster. High scores on the Femininity/Masculinity scale are indicative of a sympathetic, fearful, and other-oriented attitude to life, whereas low scores imply toughness, action orientation, and initiative (Gough, 1987). This scale, therefore, reflects the agency/communion dimension (Bakan, 1966).

Eleven of the 20 CPI scales were chosen to compare the means of the autonomous, hypersensitive, and willful groups and the rest of the Mills women. These scales were selected on the basis of their conceptual relevance to self-directedness and findings from similar comparisons carried out in a previous study of change in self-directedness from the 20s to the 40s (Wink, 1992a). In this article the 11 scales are grouped into three summary indices representing the CPI's three main factors (Gough, 1987). The *Social Poise and Assurance* index consists of an average score for each participant across the Dominance, Capacity for Status, Social Presence, and Empathy scales; the *Normative Control of Impulse* index is the average score on the Responsibility, Self-Control, and Good Impression scales, and the *Personal Complexity and Openness* index is the average score on the Tolerance, Achievement-via-Independence, Intellectual Efficiency, and Psychological Mindedness scales. All scale scores were standardized before averaging.

Life Variables

All the life data were derived from the women's questionnaire material filled out during the age-52 follow-up. Variables in the marriage and work categories address issues previously considered in the age-43 study of self- and other-directedness (Wink, 1991a). The feelings of attractiveness variables were first used at the age-52 time of testing, and are included because of their particular relevance to narcissism. Unless otherwise indicated, all variables are based on self-report ratings using 4- to 7-point scales.

Marital relations. The marital satisfaction variable is the sum total of ratings

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by the woman of how much both partners understand each other, enjoy spending time together, agree on decisions, and express overall satisfaction with the relationship. Frequency of partner's troubled times were rated retrospectively by the women participants.

Work. Status level in work was rated reliably by two independent judges on a 7-point scale, anchored at the low end by jobs requiring a minimum of skill, independence, complexity, or having little prestige, and at the high end, by work requiring talent, training, autonomy, and either responsibility for other adults and/or recognition by informed others over a wide area (Helson, Elliott, & Leigh, 1989). Importance of work for own sense of self was rated by the participants on a 4-point scale, and "continues to build a career" was scored using a 0/1 dummy code.

Feelings of attractiveness. Frequency of feeling unattractive, contribution of attractiveness to self-esteem, and changed ideal of attractiveness since college were all rated on a 5-point scale (Kaner, 1993).

Feelings experienced in major social roles. Each woman described herself at age 52 in the role of daughter, partner, worker, and parent on 16 adjectives using a 5-point rating scale (Roberts & Donahue, 1994). In the present study, the quality of role enactment, averaged across the four roles, is described with four adjectives: bored, stimulating, creative, and supported. Each of these adjectives was included in the original list of 16 because of their connection with psychoanalytic object relations theory.

Plan of Analyses

The developmental implications of self-directedness were investigated with typological (group) and individual difference (correlational) analyses.

To show the extent to which each of the three self-directed groups changed from their 40s to their 50s, separate two-way (Time \times Measure) multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were performed using the four CPI scales that showed normative change for the Mills sample as a whole. To show how each of the three self-directed groups differed from each other and the rest of the Mills women at age 52, separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were done comparing the means for the four groups on the CPI's indices of Social Poise and Assurance, Normative Control of Impulse, and Personal Complexity and Openness.

Correlational analyses were used to show the implication of individual differences in autonomy, hypersensitivity, and willfulness on life outcome variables in the areas of marital relations, work, physical attractiveness, and feelings experienced in major social roles.

RESULTS

Life Circumstances at Age 43 and 52

To contextualize the changes in the three groups of self-directed women, data on life circumstances at age 43 and age 52 are presented first.

Age 43. As shown in Table 1, at age 43, the modal self-directed woman was working, married, and had on average between 1 and 2 children, the majority of whom lived at home full-time. The incidence of divorce was highest among the willful women (40%).

Age 52. At age 52, the majority of the autonomous, hypersensitive, and willful women continued to be employed and married, but ceased to have their children at home full-time. The autonomous women were most often employed in the arts (32%) and psychology (20%). For high scorers on hypersensitivity the most common jobs were those of administrator or manager (28%) and teacher (22%). Among the willful group, 5 of 11 (45%) were not in steady employment and 4 (36%) were in high-status occupations.

Mean Changes on the CPI

Table 2 reports means and standard deviations at ages 43 and 52 for the three self-directed groups on the four scales that changed significantly for the Mills sample as a whole. These data were analyzed with a two-way (Time \times Measure) MANOVA. It is the two-way interaction that is of interest, as no hypotheses were made about the two main effects.

For the autonomous group, the two-way interaction for the four CPI scales and the two times of testing was significant, $F(3, 72) = 6.47$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 2, follow-up repeated measures t tests indicated that, as hypothesized, the autonomous group increased in scores on the Responsibility and Good Impression scales, an index of relational smoothness and responsiveness to others. The group dropped on the Femininity/Masculinity scale, indicating an increase in agency (Gough, 1987). From the early 40s to early 50s, the autonomous women changed in the same ways as the Mills sample as a whole except that increase on the Self-Control scale was not significant.

The two-way interaction term for the four CPI scales and the two times of testing for the hypersensitive group was significant, $F(3, 51) = 5.09$, $p < .01$. Follow-up repeated measures t tests indicated that the

Table 1
Demographic Background and Role Involvement of High Scorers on
Autonomy, Hypersensitivity, and Willfulness at Age 43 and 52

Variable	Autonomy	Hypersensitivity	Willfulness
Age 43			
Paid worker ^a	83%	86%	73%
Currently married ^b	76%	72%	73%
Ever divorced	23%	25%	40%
Never married	16%	11%	9%
Children at home ^c	68%	78%	82%
Number of children (mean)	1.80	1.65	1.73
Age 52			
Paid worker	96%	78%	82%
Currently married	64%	78%	72%
Children at home ^c	24%	39%	18%

Note. $N = 25, 18,$ and 11 for autonomy, hypersensitivity, and willfulness, respectively.

a. Ten hours of paid employment or more.

b. Includes marriage and marriage-like relations.

c. Full-time.

group of high scorers on hypersensitivity increased on CPI measures of responsibility, self-control, and good impression (control), but they did not drop on femininity/masculinity.

For the willfulness group, the two-way interaction was significant, $F(3, 30) = 4.34$, $p < .05$. The only change for this group was a drop on the Femininity/Masculinity scale.

CPI Comparisons with Other Women at Age 52

As shown in Table 3, the one-way ANOVA comparisons of the three self-directed groups and the rest of the Mills women resulted in significant mean differences at age 52 on all three indices of the CPI: Social Poise and Assurance ($p = .002$), Normative Control of Impulse ($p < .05$), and Personal Complexity and Openness ($p = .002$). Follow-up planned comparisons indicated that, as hypothesized, the autonomous and willful women scored higher than the hypersensitive group and the rest of the Mills women on Social Poise and Assurance, $t(74) = 3.80$, $p < .001$; the two more dysfunctional narcissistic groups (hypersensitivity and willfulness) scored lower than the autonomous

Table 2
CPI Changes from Age 43 to 52 for the Autonomous, Hypersensitive, and Willful Groups

CPI scales	Autonomy		Hypersensitivity		Willfulness				
	Age 43	Age 52	Age 43	Age 52	Age 43	Age 52			
<i>Normative scales</i>									
Responsibility		<i>t</i> (24)		<i>t</i> (17)		<i>r</i> (10)			
<i>M</i>	55.77	57.51	2.30*	49.76	53.55	3.73**	54.91	53.87	-1.26
<i>SD</i>	5.6	3.7		8.2	6.5		6.1	6.6	
Self-Control									
<i>M</i>	53.76	55.16	1.09	47.33	50.19	2.16*	47.32	48.15	.40
<i>SD</i>	8.6	7.9		9.6	8.9		7.7	7.3	
Good Impression									
<i>M</i>	49.60	53.08	3.39**	43.88	47.08	2.12*	48.01	49.29	.86
<i>SD</i>	9.8	8.7		8.6	7.8		6.5	8.4	
Femininity/Masculinity									
<i>M</i>	50.89	46.79	-2.14*	53.38	50.53	-1.39	52.04	47.96	-3.32**
<i>SD</i>	8.6	11.0		9.7	7.3		9.4	7.9	

Note. *N* = 25, 18, and 11 for autonomy, hypersensitivity, and willfulness, respectively. Scale scores are standardized against a normative sample of 1,000 women (mean = 50). CPI = California Psychological Inventory. *t* = paired *t* test.

**p* < .05

***p* < .01, two-tailed.

Table 3
One-Way Comparisons of Mean CPI Scores of the Autonomy, Hypersensitivity, and Willfulness Groups and the Rest of Mills Women at Age 52

CPI index	Group				<i>F</i> (3, 72)	<i>p</i>
	Autonomy	Hypersensitivity	Willfulness	Rest		
Social Poise and Assurance						
<i>M</i>	61.10	54.55	63.16	57.70	5.37	.002
<i>SD</i>	5.5	7.4	4.8	7.6		
Normative Control of Impulse						
<i>M</i>	55.25	50.27	50.44	54.81	3.27	.026
<i>SD</i>	5.8	6.6	6.5	6.7		
Personal Complexity and Openness						
<i>M</i>	61.82	55.92	57.91	58.10	5.45	.002
<i>SD</i>	4.5	6.4	3.9	4.5		

Note. CPI = California Psychological Inventory. The CPI Social Poise and Assurance index consists of average scores on the Dominance, Capacity for Status, and Empathy scales; the Normative Control of Impulse index consists of average scores on the Responsibility, Self-Control, and Good Impression scales; and the Personal Complexity and Openness index consists of average scores on the Tolerance, Achievement-via-Independence, Intellectual Efficiency, and Psychological Mindedness scales. The *M*s for the Autonomy, Hypersensitivity, Willfulness, and Rest (women not classified as narcissistic) groups are 25, 18, 11, and 22, respectively.

Table 4
Correlations between Autonomy, Hypersensitivity, and Willfulness
and Measures of Work and Physical Appearance

Variables	<i>N</i>	Autonomy	Hypersensitivity	Willfulness
<i>Work</i>				
Status level in work	94	.50**	-.10	.14
Importance of work for self	86	.32*	.12	.17
Continues building career	86	.36**	-.32*	.08
<i>Feelings of attractiveness</i>				
Often feels unattractive	92	-.20	.24	-.24
Contribution of attractiveness to self-esteem	92	.14	-.11	.22
Changed ideals of attractiveness since college	92	.24	.00	-.01

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

group and the rest on Normative Control of Impulse, $t(74) = 3.04$, $p < .01$; and the autonomous group scored higher than the other three groups combined on Personal Complexity and Openness, $t(74) = 3.70$, $p < .001$.

Life Outcomes

Whereas the preceding sections focused on group differences among the three types of self-directed women, the following two sections report on the individual differences associated with healthy and dysfunctional narcissism. For this purpose, the Mills sample was scored on all three measures of self-directedness and these scores were subsequently correlated with an array of life outcome and feelings in major roles variables. Table 4 presents data on the relationship between the three types of self-directedness as scored from the Q-sort at age 43, and work and physical attractiveness variables at age 52 for the entire Mills sample. Table 5 presents data on marriage and feelings experienced in social roles. To avoid chance findings the significance level was set at the .01 level.

Table 5
Correlations between Autonomy, Hypersensitivity, and Willfulness
and Measures of Marriage and Feelings in Social Roles

Variables	<i>N</i>	Autonomy	Hypersensitivity	Willfulness
<i>Marriage</i>				
Marital satisfaction	66	.01	-.38*	-.22
Partner's troubled times (frequency)	66	.11	.41*	.30
<i>Feelings experienced in social roles</i>				
Bored	66	.12	.46**	.28
Stimulating	66	.27	.02	.48**
Creative	67	.16	-.02	.34*
Supported	65	-.04	-.24	-.10

* $p < .01$

** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

Work and Physical Attractiveness

As shown in Table 4, in the area of work, autonomy correlated significantly with status level in work, importance of work for self, and continuing to build one's career. Hypersensitivity was associated negatively with continuing to build one's career.

In the area of physical attractiveness, none of the r coefficients reached the .01 level of significance, but several theoretically meaningful trends were noted. As expected, autonomy correlated negatively with feeling unattractive and correlated positively with a changed ideal of attractiveness since college. Hypersensitivity correlated positively with feeling unattractive. Willfulness correlated negatively with feeling unattractive and positively with contribution of attractiveness to self-esteem (all $ps < .05$).

Marriage and Social Roles

The N s in Table 5 are reduced since the data are restricted only to women who were involved at age 52 in marriage or marriage-like relationships. In the domain of marriage, hypersensitivity correlated negatively with marital satisfaction and positively with frequency of partner's troubled times.

The next set of variables consists of a composite of feelings ex-

perceived across four major social roles: partner, worker, parent, and daughter. In their major social roles, the hypersensitive women reported feeling bored, and the willful women saw themselves as stimulating and creative.

DISCUSSION

This study originated with the question "How does self-directedness moderate personality change from the early 40s to the early 50s?" An answer to this question was sought with three observer-based measures of self-directedness scored from the CAQ when the participants in the Mills Longitudinal Study were age 43.

From the 40s to 50s, women high on autonomy, just as the whole sample of Mills women (Helson & Wink, 1992), increased on the CPI Responsibility and Good Impression scales and decreased on the Femininity/Masculinity scale. In other words, they became more measured, more facilitative in their interactions with others, and more decisive and action-oriented or agentic. Compared to the other women, the autonomous, just as the willful women, scored higher on the CPI index of Social Poise and Assurance, which consisted of the Dominance, Capacity for Status, and Empathy scales. In distinction to the willful and hypersensitive women, the autonomous group scored higher on the index of Normative Control of Impulse. Finally, the autonomous women scored higher than all the other Mills women combined on the index of Personal Complexity and Openness. In other words, they were more tolerant, achievement-oriented, and psychologically minded and tended to use their intellect more efficiently than the remainder of the participants in the Mills study.

The above findings at the group or type level were also reflected in individual difference analyses. In particular, at age 52, high scorers on autonomy tended to be involved in high-status jobs, most typically in the arts and psychology. They also continued to build and derive personal importance from their occupational career.

In sum, the personality and life changes manifested by the autonomous women are in harmony with the view of the 50s as a time when, for middle-class individuals, social and personal influence is at its peak. A long-term investment in challenging and creative careers and a strong sense of personal agency, combined with psychological and intellectual interests, are all indicative of healthy self-directedness or narcissism (Kohut, 1966, 1977).

Would the shift from the 40s to the 50s result in further deterioration among high scorers on hypersensitivity, as hypothesized by Kernberg (1975), or would it bring an improvement in functioning, as suggested by longitudinal research on personality disorders (McGlashan, 1986, Paris, 1988)? The findings of this study offer a partial confirmation of both these views.

As expected from research on individuals with borderline and anti-social personality disorders, high scorers on hypersensitivity gained on all three CPI measures of Normative Control of Impulse, i.e., the Responsibility, Self-Control, and Good Impression (relational smoothness) scales, but did not show the normative drop on the Femininity/Masculinity scale; that is, they did not increase in initiative or agency. The increases in impulse control reverse a steady decline on the CPI from the early 20s to early 40s (Wink, 1992b). Despite these gains, however, the hypersensitive women, along with the willful women, continued to score lower than the remaining Mills women on the index of impulse control and, unlike the willful women, they also scored lower on measures of social poise and assurance. Jointly, the relative deficits in areas of control and assurance confirm clinical findings indicating that among individuals with personality disorders, interpersonal problems persist well into the 50s (Gunderson, 1988; McGlashan, 1986).

Some possible explanations as to why the hypersensitive women as a group continued to experience difficulties at age 52 can be derived from the analyses of individual differences. High scores on hypersensitivity in the subsample of the Mills women in stable relationships were associated with a lack of marital satisfaction and frequent experiences of troubled times by their partners. In the context of this study, it is impossible to determine whether this rather bleak assessment of the marriage reflects the hypersensitive woman's tendency to devalue the other, an accurate perception of a troubled and unsupportive partner or, most likely, a combination of both these factors. Irrespective of which of these interpretations is true, the hypersensitive woman finds herself at mid-life cut off from the security and comfort of being involved in a satisfying intimate relationship.

Although in steady and relatively well-paid employment, primarily as administrators, managers, and teachers, the hypersensitive women reported not continuing to build up their occupational career. It is unlikely, therefore, that work offers adequate compensation for these women's unrewarding personal relationships.

In previous research (Wink, 1992a), I have related the hypersensitive

women's problems in adulthood to their failure to develop a resilient and cohesive sense of self. The evidence for this claim was a steady decline in personality resources since college, a troubled childhood, and lack of trust in relations with parents. The fact that at age 52 the subsample of the hypersensitive women who occupied the roles of partner, parent, daughter, and worker reported feeling bored adds further weight to this assertion. According to Kohut (1971, 1977), boredom is a marker of the lack of tension or synchrony between a person's ambitions (sense of drive) and ideals or goals. Such misalignment among the various parts of the self, Kohut (1971) argues, is a sign of unhealthy narcissism and is the product of inadequate mirroring (affirmation) and idealization (security through merger) in early parent-child relations. According to Kernberg (1975), feelings of boredom are evidence of devaluation of self and others as a defense against envy.

As hypothesized, from the 40s to the 50s, high scorers on willfulness decreased on the CPI Femininity/Masculinity scale, that is, they increased in their action orientation, initiative, and agency. They did not change on any of the three CPI measures of Normative Control of Impulse. In this sample of normal women, the positive gains associated with greater responsibility and stronger emphasis on making a good impression on others were confined to autonomy, and, among the less healthy self-directed types, to hypersensitivity only.

The similarities and differences in how the autonomous and willful groups compared with the other Mills women point to some important distinctions between healthy and less healthy self-directedness. Both groups scored higher than the hypersensitive group and the rest of the Mills women on CPI measures of Social Poise and Assurance, but only the autonomous group scored higher on Normative Control of Impulse and Personal Complexity and Openness. For the autonomous women, high levels of interpersonal energy, initiative, and resourcefulness are paired with a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, relational smoothness, tolerance, intellectual achievement, and an interest in understanding of others. For willfulness they are not.

A comparison of the adjustment of hypersensitive and willful women at age 52 illuminates some of the similarities and differences among these two less healthy forms of self-directedness. On the CPI, both hypersensitive and willful women scored lower than the autonomous and the rest of the Mills women on Normative Control of Impulse, but willful women scored higher than the hypersensitive women on Social Poise and Assurance. While the two less functional groups of narcis-

sistic women share the tendency toward undercontrol of aggressive and sexual impulses and a relative lack of concern for the impression they make on others, in the case of willfulness there is also an indication of a strong sense of interpersonal poise, self-assurance, and assertiveness. In previous research, this expansive view of the self has been linked to childhood identifications with equally willful fathers (Block, 1971; Wink, 1992a).

Another difference between the hypersensitive and willful women is evident in their report of feelings across major social roles, although once again these results need to be interpreted with caution since they apply only to the subsample of women who were involved in marriage or marriage-like relationships, had children, and were currently working. Whereas the hypersensitive women expressed feelings of boredom in their relationship with others and in their role of worker, the willful women expressed feelings of being stimulating and creative. High scorers on willfulness clearly perceive themselves as special and valuable contributors to their relationships or roles. While such a perception, in the absence of any objective evidence of success in the area of love or work, may connote conceit and ego inflation, it can also be a source of self-satisfaction, confidence, and vitality (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971, 1977).

In conclusion, the results of this study contribute to the theory of narcissism by showing a predictable yet distinct pattern of change from the 40s to the 50s among the three types of self-directed women. The present findings also address the more general issue of personality change in adulthood. The different patterns of change among the three types of self-directed women highlight the need for specificity in the study of narcissism and of adult personality development more generally. Clearly, not all people respond to transitions in adulthood in the same way, and antecedent personality is important when attempting to explain why this may be the case. Conversely, a similar pattern of change in one personality domain (for example, the common increases in impulse control for autonomy and hypersensitivity, or the shared increase in agency for autonomy and willfulness) can have very different implications depending on other personality changes, the individual's past history, role involvements, and personality type. As our understanding of global or normative personality development in adulthood increases, questions concerning the specific and conditional nature of any such change must inevitably gain in prominence.

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