

On the Life of Betty Friedan: A Narrative Study of an Aging Woman

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This paper is meant to be an exploration of the use of narrative in the study of an aging woman. I have chosen to examine narratives constructed by Betty Friedan both in her autobiography and in various interviews and writings. Friedan is a logical candidate for this examination not only because she lived a long life, but also because she, herself, became interested in aging, especially as it related to women, as she completed her passage through middle age. In the book she wrote as a result of that interest, *The Fountain of Age*, Friedan used many of her personal experiences to illustrate her thoughts and feelings about aging in America. Thus, much of Friedan's life narrative can be found in her books as well in her autobiography and interviews.

Friedan's rich life, prolific writing, and celebrity status, which exposed her to numerous interviewers over the years, have produced a large body of literature by and about Betty Friedan. The selection of relevant text segments to examine as narrative poses some difficulty. First is the question of whether using several different narrative forms—autobiography, interview transcripts, and Friedan's other writing—confuses the narrative analysis. After reading Friedan's three major books—*The Feminine Mystique* (1963), *The Second Stage* (1981), and *The Fountain of Age* (1993)—in addition to her autobiography, *Life So Far* (2000), and several interviews, I found consistency throughout all of these in Friedan's thoughts and ways of expressing her feelings and ideologies. Consequently, I will use all three forms to illustrate Friedan's constructed life history as a narrative of her personal experience, especially related to aging.

Narrative Forms and Considerations

Autobiography and Memory The autobiographical form has its special advantages as well as drawbacks for the study of a life narrative. Friedan subtitled hers "A Memoir." That term, of course, connotes memory and all the foibles inherent in the human memory. In a life as long as Friedan's (1921–2006), the danger of memory failing with age is a potential concern. However, with a life as well documented as Friedan's—she is known as the mother of the second wave of the feminist movement and has been a public figure since 1963 when she published *The Feminine Mystique*, a book that changed the lives of millions of women—there is less possibility of life events being lost. However, the debate over whether a life story being told in retrospect is a construction or a reconstruction is relevant in the consideration of

Friedan's life. Others find Friedan's life story intensely interesting because she has been such a widely known public figure, with a strong and demanding personality, who made a tremendous impact on the lives of twentieth century American women.

In the introduction to *Life So Far*, Friedan (2000) writes, "I never intended to write a memoir about my so-called life" (p. 13). She protests that she did not yet feel at the end of her life or career, that she was still going strong, and that she preferred to look forward, not backward. However, she felt that her hand was forced when her family, friends and colleagues were "contacted for interviews for books *other* [emphasis in the original] people were writing about *my* life" (p. 13). Friedan wrote *Life So Far* to respond to these unauthorized biographers and set the record straight.

What I have done with my life is already history. I can't control what historians or sensationalists do with it. But I could—and I did—decide, before it's too late, to put down my life the way I experienced it. (p. 14)

It is the telling of the story from personal experience with which one of her biographers takes issue. Horowitz (1996) argues that *The Feminine Mystique* was a result of Friedan's life experience as an intellectual and radical, first at Smith College, then as a labor union journalist, *not* as a suburban housewife trapped by the feminine mystique. Horowitz viewed Friedan's portrayal of herself as a suburban housewife as a reinvention of herself, developed so her readers could identify with her, thereby enhancing her book's appeal to them.

Short of accepting Horowitz's notion of Friedan's purely crass motives to sell her books, how does the reader determine whom to believe? Since subjectivity is privileged in personal narrative (Reissman, 2002), we can believe that Friedan's rendition is at least as valid as Horowitz's. A fellow feminist and friend of Friedan's, who is also a narrative researcher, considers the shortcomings of memories and weighs those against our current idea of who we are or what we think others may believe of us and concludes, "Our versions are probably as good as, and as true as, those of any other observer" (Epstein, 1990, p. 349). Epstein also notes, when thinking back on her own years in the women's movement, that while all memories are suspect, "the 'truth' is more complicated than the version usually reported by ideological purists or those whose writings are aimed to 'sell'" (1999). We might accuse Horowitz of being an ideological purist—placing Friedan in the tradition of Old Left radical politics from which, he argues, her feminist ideology sprang—while he accuses her of slanting her writing in order to "sell." And the "truth" is certainly more complicated than either or both.

Self-construction If we take the view of narrative theorists, the construction of the self is the task of narrative, be it through construction or reconstruction through memory (Freeman, 1992; Goetting, 1995; Linde, 1993; McAdams, 1989; Reissman, 1992). Horowitz's accusation of Friedan's reinvention of herself to sell books is a story he tells about Friedan, not one she tells herself; while it is intriguing, it is not a story relevant to this examination of Friedan's own narrative of her life. Friedan, while not known as a narrative inquirer, shares the view that personal truth comes from life's experience.

What I am sure of, though, is that ideology has to come from personal truth, has to test against real life. Personal life, personal truth is not an abstract concept; the life it comes from and feeds back into is real. (Friedan, 2000, p. 13)

Feminist scholars might point out that Horowitz, a man, does not believe Friedan when she described her experience as a suburban housewife trapped by the feminist mystique because he cannot perceive the truth of her gendered experience. Women's narratives alone can expose women's experience and negotiation of their "exceptional" [emphasis in the original] status in the gendered social order (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). To construct their identity, women must construct a gendered self-identity (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). So the invention of self that Friedan reveals in *The Feminine Mystique* is her gendered self—powerless in the world of patriarchy—whom Horowitz can't believe because as a man he cannot perceive that personal truth.

Life Purpose and Coherence In addition to providing a sense of identity or constructed self, narrative also provides a sense of unity or coherence and a sense of purpose to lives (Linde, 1993; McAdams, 1989). Friedan's life story as told in *Life So Far*, her interviews, and other writings offer a clear picture not only of unity or coherence but also consistent purpose. Horowitz identified her early commitment to causes of social justice in the Old Left and labor union movement and demonstrated that commitment throughout her life. Friedan (2000) describes that purpose and commitment:

...in the Sixties and early Seventies....you were also aware in that era of a better world and a better society, of your duty to make it happen. It was like you were driven by some larger morality....it was also quite wonderful to be part of a movement to make society better....That larger morality, that feeling of being part of something larger than yourself, is what carries social evolution and human evolution forward. (p. 373)

Friedan also told an interviewer that such a purpose continued into her own aging: "And I think there is a great need to continue in terms of purposes that go beyond yourself. I see that in my own life" (PT, 1993).

Friedan's other biographer goes so far as to say, "In the final analysis, the great overarching cause of her life was not feminism but social justice" (Hennessee, 1999, p. xvii). The struggle for equality for women was certainly one type of social justice to which Friedan devoted her life, giving it coherence and purpose. As she aged along with her movement, she expanded her personal experience and activism to fight for justice for others, including older persons.

Interviews In the introduction to a volume of interviews with Betty Friedan, Sherman (2002) also recognizes the lifelong consistency of Friedan's commitment to social justice: "The logic of her arguments for equity and fairness, and the remarkable consistency of her views about men, women, and the American family, provide a rich resource for scholarly research" (p. ix). Though Friedan's arguments were logical and her views consistent, Sherman notes that those who wished to write about Friedan's

life were as interested in her physical and personality characteristics as in her ideology. This could have been because Friedan gave few interviews in the 1960s or perhaps because of her renowned abrasive personality. Sherman reports that all of the interviewers in her volume had strong feelings about Friedan, many of them negative. The list of negative descriptions includes “she is messy, imperious, self-serving, aggressive, demanding, temperamental, and rude” (p. xi). Hennessee (1999) also characterizes Friedan as rude, nasty, self-serving and imperious, but moderates that description as follows:

But power has to be taken and used, and she had the major ego and drive—the sheer nerve—to do it: she was outspoken, aggressive and demanding; she had electric energy and a catalytic presence. The very qualities that allowed her to launch her crusade, to found NOW and lead the movement through its crucial early years—the qualities that made her a leader—alienated women from her. (p. xvii)

Perhaps because of these leadership qualities, especially those on the more authoritarian side, she alienated men as well, as Sherman noted about the interviewers. But Sherman recognizes the danger in that because interviewers can shape the interviews by the questions they ask, basing them on personal views or those for whom they work. Ultimately, the interviewer must step aside and allow her to speak for herself from her own experience. The narrative Friedan produces is where we find her personal truths, even if they are elicited by unsympathetic questioning.

It is important to assume that Friedan gave her personal truths in these interviews, even if they were constructed in a much different format than that of the research interview. The interviews I have reviewed were performed for a public purpose—for the media, not as a narrative inquiry. Thus, some of the considerations about the coconstruction of knowledge in the dialogic process (Paget, 1983) will not be necessary because the purpose and product of these interviews is different. However, the consideration of the interviewer’s part in shaping the interview through use of questions, probes, etc. is consistent in both the media interview and in the narrative inquiry. Beyond that, the advantage of using interviews to accompany Friedan’s own writing is that these expose us to a form of her narration about her thoughts and her life, as she spoke it. Although they have been transcribed into written form, they allow for interpretation, not by the interviewer but by the reader. This is a clear advantage over the biographies by *other* people of *her* life.

Other Writing Finally, I have chosen to consider Friedan’s other writings, primarily her books and especially *The Fountain of Age*, because of her writing style. Throughout her work she make her arguments from a personal perspective. And although her books are well researched and documented, she does not present them in a formal academic style.

Beginning with *The Feminine Mystique*, after a brief description of “the problem that has no name” (Friedan, 2001, revised edition, p. 19), Friedan shifts to the first person and explains how she came to realize that the problem was shared by

countless American women, including herself: “I think I understood first as a woman long before I understood their larger social and psychological implications” (p. 20). Although Horowitz didn’t believe this was how she got this truth, the countless women who shared her gendered consciousness did.

In both *The Second Stage* and *The Fountain of Age* she begins her first sentences in the first person and out of her own experience. From *The Second Stage*:

I did not intend to write another book on the woman question. I have already started a major new quest that is taking me way beyond my previous concerns, opening strange doors. I am tired of the pragmatic, earthbound battles of the women’s movement, tired of the rhetoric. I want to live the rest of my life. (p. 3)

In *The Fountain of Age* she begins the preface with a very personal story:

When my friends threw a surprise party on my sixtieth birthday, I could have killed them all. Their toasts seemed hostile, insisting as they did that I publicly acknowledge reaching sixty, pushing me out of life, as it seemed, out of the race....I was almost taunting in my response, assuring my friends that they, too, would soon be sixty if they lived that long. But I was depressed for weeks after that birthday party, felt removed from them all. I could not face being sixty. (p. 13)

She also begins the first chapter on a personal though less intimate note: “At the start of my quest, I sat at my desk trying to make sense of some strange discrepancies between image and reality in the pile of clippings and studies I had been accumulating about age” (p. 35).

Thus, although edited and perhaps contrived to sell books, Friedan’s choice of a personal writing style provides a rich resource of narrative in which to explore her life and personal truths.

Betty Friedan’s Life

Because of the sources that are available to me and because this is not an original narrative study based on my own in-depth interviews with Friedan, what I am actually examining is a composite narrative of Friedan’s life. Chanfrault-Duchet (2000) defines the autobiography as a literary genre that focuses on the inner self and the life story as that which is produced in the social situation of the interview, so it focuses on the social self. Yet both “narrativize” life experiences in the process of self-construction. In an earlier paper I discussed various scholars’ definitions of the terms *life history* and *life story* (see overview paper, June 21, 2004, pp. 12–13). In this case, I will use the term *life* or *life story* because of the diverse sources from which I draw the narrative. I do not intend to recount the events or relationships of Friedan’s life, especially her early life, in chronological order. Rather, I will use examples to demonstrate the process of self-construction, showing coherence and consistency

across the life cycle. In order to explore Friedan's later life, I will use her later interviews as a way to focus the paper.

In 1993, after the publication of *The Fountain of Age*, Friedan gave several interviews about the book and her life. Although she was 72 when it was finally published, she had sown the seeds for it as early as 1963, when in the last footnote of *The Feminine Mystique* she wrote the following:

The new studies of aging in humans indicate that those who have the most education and who live the most complex and active lives, with deep interests and readiness for new experience and learning, do not get "old" in the sense that others do. (p. 421)

At that time, she may not have thought about aging in a personal sense, but she was beginning to think about it as a human process that might merit her attention at some point:

...the years that followed the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*, when I went through my forties and into my fifties with all the zest and exhilaration of reborn women for whom the movement opened up a whole new future. I forgot about growing older. Age didn't concern me, personally at all. But, even in those heady years, I did notice something out of the corner of my mind's eye that got me thinking about some change in the aging process that might take place as a result of what was happening to women. (Friedan, 1993, p. 13)

Small Stories—Outward Bound So beyond her theoretical interest in aging, what caused Friedan to reckon with the aging process in her own life? The small story of the 60th birthday party, recounted above, is clearly one significant event in her process. She recounts a second small story in *Life So Far* and also discusses it in a 1993 interview. The "Outward Bound story" describes an Outward Bound trip for people older than 55 that Friedan took when she was in her early 60s:

I had always been envious of people who went on Outward Bound. It was just the sort of wilderness hiking thing I would have loved to do when I was younger, but Carl [Friedan's husband] was not that interested. It was so stupid that I never went and did things by myself; we're so socialized to this two-by-two. (Friedan, 2000, p. 324)

This passage speaks from Friedan's gendered consciousness about her "exceptional" status of not having the sense of herself or self-confidence to do something alone, without her husband.

She explains further in this story that she did the trip for professional, as well as personal, reasons. She was looking for those people who she first referred to in the last footnote of *The Feminine Mystique*—those with deep interests and readiness for new experiences who do not get "old"—to interview for her book on aging. She speaks about her ambivalence over writing the book:

...the research on aging was so depressing that I dreaded writing the book. Maybe I was secretly afraid of getting older. "I'm not interested in age," I kept saying to myself at the endless conference sessions on "The Problems of Older Women" or "Loneliness." "Why am I doing this?" Then I would go out in the field to interview healthy, vital older people... and come back energized. (Friedan, 2000, p. 322)

In this passage when Friedan asks herself, "Why am I doing this?" she reveals to us her denial of fears about her own aging, which she also acknowledges in the "60th birthday party story" and in her author's note at the beginning of *The Fountain of Age*:

I started this search in what I thought was merely theoretical excitement when I saw that first clue that didn't fit the accepted truth about women on the brink of age—those women who "didn't have menopause." I pursued that clue in growing personal dread, because in my fifties I didn't even want to think about age. I was locked in my own denial. (p. 9)

In her description of the Outward Bound story, Friedan tells the interviewer that she told herself she was doing the trip as research for the book but that she really wanted to do it for herself. "And then, of course, what it became was a metaphor of the whole search for the fountain of age" (Lamb, 1993, p. 131). Although Friedan does not say that the Outward Bound trip became a metaphor for *her* search for the fountain of age, she implies it. All of the quoted passages regarding Friedan's ambivalence, dread, and denial of old age illustrate the process she experienced in coming to terms with her own aging.

Metaphor Metaphors are useful because they help us understand something not well known or understood in terms of something else that is more familiar (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors originate in cultural and physical or bodily experiences. In using the Outward Bound trip as a metaphor for her search for the fountain of age, Friedan's narrative engages all three. Friedan's metaphor involves our culture against which she is rebelling when she searches for the fountain of *age* rather than youth:

Everybody in America is obsessed with the Fountain of Youth....And what I saw...that's what's wrong—a mystique of age more pernicious, pervasive than the feminine mystique—is somehow a definition of age only in terms of decline from youth and not as what it is, a period of human life that most people didn't even used to have, that should be seen as a new period of human life in its own terms, hence *The Fountain of Age*. (Lamb, 1993, p. 130)

Friedan explains that a friend, who was writing poetry even in the hospital after a heart attack in his 70s, coined the term when she explained that she was looking for "...something else that can happen in age—if you let it, but it's not holding on to youth" (Friedan, 1993, p. 27). Next Friedan engaged the physical in her

metaphor because the Outward Bound trip was a wilderness survival trip that involved physical feats such as whitewater rafting and mountain cliff rappelling. However, her body brought her to reality and self-doubt when, camping on the top of a mountain, she saw four moons—a reminder that she probably had a cataract:

How in all honesty could I go on speculating about the fountain of age when I was losing my own eyesight? Cataract means old. Cataract means deterioration. And I wasn't even sixty-five! Who was I kidding about growth in age? (p. 28)

By engaging all three possible origins of the metaphor, Friedan provides a powerful narrative device that illuminates her struggle to integrate the element of aging into her identity and life story.

McAdams (1985, 1989) argues that our life story is our identity. He contends that we may rewrite our narrative in order to accommodate the growing realization of our finitude (McAdams, 1989). Although Friedan does not speak of death, but of aging as decline and deterioration, these are signs of finitude. I interpret Friedan's effort to find the fountain of age as her attempt to rewrite her narrative to provide a positive prospect for her old age. She had enjoyed such an exciting, productive, and vibrant life thus far that she sought reassurance she could continue in that way. Finding engaged, energetic older people who use the last third of life as a time of growth, not decline, encouraged her to believe that she, too, would be able to drink from the fountain of age.

Womanstories Beyond the use of metaphor, Friedan's Outward Bound story is important from another narrative perspective. This story can be characterized as what Mary Gergen (1992) names a "womanstory." Gergen contends that the first mark of our identity is gender, so we tell our stories from that perspective. Gergen differentiates a manstory—which demands an end point or goal, usually with crises, antagonistic encounters, and climaxes along the way—from womanstories, which may involve goal achievement, but usually in the interdependent nature of shared goals with others, showing a slow progressive process. Following Gergen's framework, if a man had told the Outward Bound story, it would probably have been rich in detail about the challenges he faced and how he had conquered each feat, ultimately achieving victory over nature and becoming a hero. Friedan's rendition is quite different. When she talks about whitewater rafting, she discusses her group:

...seven of us in our 55-plus group pulled together so well that our river guides said that we did it better and with fewer casualties than younger groups....I wondered whether age contributed to an ability to work together or whether it was a lack of competitiveness that made the more mature group different from the macho college kids. (Friedan, 2000, p. 324)

In this womanstory, Friedan attributes the cooperative nature of the group to maturity, but she considers the important element of the story the group, not the challenge or the goal. She might have attributed this more feminine characteristic to what her friend David Gutmann and other developmental gerontologists have identified as a counter-sexual or crossover in sex roles that occurs after parenting is

complete (Friedan, 1993; Gutmann, 1990). Gutmann posited that once men no longer need to assert themselves to protect their families and once women no longer need to be tied to nurturing their young, they can reclaim the traits that were repressed during parenting. Of course these strict sex roles are no longer necessary in modern society, as Friedan has argued (1993), yet she sees the last phase of life as an evolution when people can reclaim those missing pieces and live more fully in an evolving social structure. So perhaps in her story about the whitewater rafting trip she was experiencing the crossover of new forms of engagement by men and assertiveness by women to achieve a shared goal.

In the chapter of *The Fountain of Age* titled “Going Beyond”—the name of the Outward Bound program she went on—Friedan uses the term *going beyond* as a label for the concept she is formulating that characterizes what happens with the fountain of age. In the style of a journal or diary recounting that trip, Friedan (1993) describes how the trip helped her to go beyond the old games of youth and competitiveness:

...after this first adventure in “going beyond” I began—more or less consciously, with a shifting mixture of exhilaration and fear, spurts of ease, bogs of dreary doubt—to move onto new trails in my own life. I certainly didn’t “retire.” I didn’t actually even say to myself: *Face it, after sixty, sixty-five, it’s a no-win proposition, to keep on playing the old games, trying to beat the odds, to stay on top, in the old way, in work or women’s movement politics—or in search of love partners, or dinner party invitations* [emphasis in original].” (p. 325)

She goes on to acknowledge that sometimes she still got caught up in those games, but the more she listened to other women and men who were going beyond those games, in work and love, the clearer it became to her that she, too, could give them up. She sums up: “Of course, that is the real liberation of age: the amazing lightness and solidity of no longer feeling the need to prove oneself, to be the best, to outdo the others to compete—and of being able to fail” (p. 326).

Moral Language This feeling of needing to measure up, to be on top, relates to another means of narrative analysis. As someone tells her life story, she compares what she has done to standards that society sets for her (Jack, 1991). For women, the standards set by patriarchy do not fit with a woman’s experience but cause her status to be viewed as not the norm or exceptional (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). Friedan recognized that; she also identified that in our culture of youth, older persons are viewed as on the margins, also an exceptional status: “Given this absolute lack of any positive image of age, no wonder we all deny our age and say ‘I may be 65, but inside I am only 17’” (Friedan, 1994).

Friedan argues that the result of this denial leads to feelings of rage directed against the self: “Denial results in increasing rage at ourselves because we are not young” (Friedan, 1994). Friedan describes the rage she felt herself in the 60th birthday story when she uses powerful language connoting hostility, such as, “I could have killed them all,” “Their toasts seemed hostile,” and “taunting in my

response”(Friedan, 1993, p. 13). She then describes how she turned her rage in on herself and “...was depressed for weeks after that birthday party” (Friedan, 1993, p. 13).

This denial of one’s true status causes a person to use self-evaluative statements that indicate the gap between societal or cultural norms and how one perceives oneself (Jack, 1991). This moral language indicates the standards or values a person believes she is supposed to achieve, but also how she finds herself falling short. In Friedan’s case, we have already seen some examples of such language in this paper. First, in her introduction to her memoir, *Life So Far*, Friedan says she never intended to write a memoir of “...my *so-called* [emphasis added] life”(p. 13), implying that her life does not measure up to the (male) standards of our society for a life worthy of a memoir. She repeats this phrase at the very end of her book—a proxy for the end of her life—where we might expect her to use a more positive and affirmative phrase after she has told the rich story of her life.

Another place she uses moral language is in her castigation of herself for not going on an Outward Bound trip as a younger person—calling herself stupid for not doing things by herself. She returns to this also on the last page of her memoir with an explanation (and perhaps self-exculpation) when she says, “Getting divorced was the hardest thing I ever did. I was so terrified of being alone” (p. 380).

Finally, a third example of self-critical language in *Life So Far* occurs much earlier in her life, but Friedan notes that this self-judgment continues into the present. She first describes her gendered consciousness of feelings of shame or guilt as a young woman who wasn’t doing the big things people expected of her, “with my brilliant Smith education—giving up the fellowship in psychology, getting fired...for being pregnant, writing too many mundane, inane women’s magazine articles” (p. 97). She further explains the deeply embedded feeling of shortcoming:

It wasn’t just a shame at not living up to others’ expectations of me. It was also, I now believe, an *existential guilt* [emphasis added], which I have to this day when I’m coasting and not using my powers to meet serious new challenges. (p. 97)

This, too, she returns to on the last page, not to discuss the existential guilt, but just to list it among the many experiences of her life: “...my education that I never thought I used in a real career” (p. 380). Again she measures her work—organizing, writing, lecturing, and teaching—and the amazing efforts she made to change life in America, as not measuring up to being a “real” career. Perhaps this is a throwback to a distinction she made in *The Feminine Mystique* between career and job: “...career meant more than job. It seemed to mean doing something, being somebody yourself, not just existing in and through others” (p. 40). Surely Friedan’s life has been a stunning example of being somebody herself, yet she still feels an existential guilt that she has somehow not measured up. Whether this arose from her gendered consciousness or basic insecurities from imperfect early nurturing, her moral language voices it.

The Generativity Script McAdams (1989) names his notion of rewriting one’s life story in order to accommodate the realization of finitude and provide an appropriate

narrative ending the generativity script. He holds that the generativity script is a key life story component that is likely to occupy one's storytelling during middle age and beyond. According to McAdams, the generativity script extends one's life story into the future because it provides a plan for how one expects to leave a legacy for the next generation.

Friedan also came upon the concept of generativity as she studied adult development and aging. She focused on the aspect of generativity beyond midlife and came to a new concept of the generativity of age. In *The Fountain of Age* Friedan titled her last chapter "Generativity," in which she writes, "...so it seems to me age can free us all, personally—and our aging society politically—to a new wholeness, previewing in the serious or seemingly irrelevant efforts of our late years new dimensions of life for the next generation"(Friedan, 1993, p. 613). Friedan argues that the longevity revolution that happened during the twentieth century—taking women's life expectancy from 46 to almost 80—has given us an additional life portion of several decades that can now be used in vital aging, not in denial and decline. She sees this extra period as a stage of evolution, the generativity of age.

Friedan (1993) sees the generativity of age as an evolutionary stage for human society because she bases her understanding on the feminist maxim that the personal is political. She theorizes that the evolution to the generativity of age must include societal changes that allow society to productively use the wisdom and generativity of age. Those changes in social structure must come, Friedan argues, from a new political movement. In that new movement, Friedan would have older persons, like women in the 1970s, engaging in a new form of consciousness raising: "We have to tell each other *the way it really is, growing older*, [emphasis in original] and help each other name the possibilities we hardly recognize or dare to put a name to when we sense them in ourselves" (p. 620). She then asks, "How do we find ways, as we feel we must, to use the wisdom we have derived from the painful, joyful experience of our lives as we have lived them, *in society*, [emphasis in original] so that we may live out our generativity?"

In these two passages Friedan uses the accumulated wisdom from her own painful, joyful experience of life to echo her experiences regarding the value of sharing with others to discover new possibilities and the duty one has to society. It seems to me that the key phrase in the second text segment that reveals Friedan's drive toward generativity is "as we feel we must" coupled with her own emphasis on "in society." This passage takes us back to the idea of life-story narrative as providing purpose and a sense of coherence or unity to a life. Friedan's call for a political movement to change the structures of society, a sharing to help others name the possibilities, and a duty to use the wisdom we gain from living in society—all reflect coherence and unity in her life's purpose of fighting for human dignity through social justice.

Friedan's two aging stories that I have discussed, the 60th birthday party and the Outward Bound stories, are illustrative of how she has written her generativity script to answer her own question of how to live out her generativity. In her study of aging, Friedan learned about and sought out a form of folk literature: "elder tales," stories of psychological growth in later life that go beyond the usual life events to

describe personal self-confrontation and transformation (Friedan, 1993). Friedan's two anecdotes might be considered elder tales that describe her own process of self-confrontation and transformation. Both portray her denial of aging followed by self-confrontation. Her personal transformation results from the process of that confrontation and the new strengths she recognizes on that metaphorical journey.

In addition to elder tales, Friedan discusses the process of life review used by older people (1993):

Yet this mysterious internal drive, perhaps propelled by one's no longer to be denied awareness of the imminence of death, almost insists on a new more intense meaning to one's life in age, some new direction leading into the future, but to be acted upon in one's community now. (p. 628)

Here Friedan seems to be describing her own personal transformation, once she decided that aging was not necessarily a process of denial, rage, and decline but can be a time of generativity to act on in her community now.

Relying on the purpose of social justice that gives coherence to her life and a process of life review encompassing her elder tales, as well as many more stories in her memoir, Friedan writes her generativity script (1993):

It is only by continuing to work on the problems confronting our society right now with whatever wisdom and generativity we have attained over our lifetimes that we leave a legacy to our grandchildren, helping to shape that future, expressing and conserving the generativity of the human *community* [emphasis in original]. We have to live our own age generatively, as part of the community. (p. 637)

When Friedan was in denial about her own aging, she could not write a generativity script that fit her life and provided an appropriate narrative ending. In fact, Friedan writes that she began to think about a project on aging when a friend, a gerontologist, introduced her to the idea when she was only 57, with no thoughts of aging herself (Friedan, 2000). Intrigued by the fact that all aging theories and policies were based on data about men, even though women made up the majority of the over-65 population, she decided to take on the new project out of theoretical curiosity, not personal relevance. However, because she found what she learned from the gerontology establishment so depressing, she decided to put the project on hold in order to write a book about the second stage of the women's movement. *The Second Stage* received much criticism from radical feminists as a revisionist text. It also articulated Friedan's thinking about evolutionary stages in social change—an idea she was able to bring to fuller conceptualization when she finally reckoned with aging.

Friedan closes *The Fountain of Age* by acknowledging that she began her metaphorical journey of "going beyond" in denial and fear of aging but that she ended it with acceptance, affirmation, and celebration. She then narrates a conclusion to her rewritten life story, based on personal truths grounded in experience:

I recognized [that] my need to reconcile feminism and families comes from my own generativity, my personal truth as a mother to my children, and my commitment to the future through the women's movement. The unexpectedness of this new quest has been my adventure into age. I realized that *all* [emphasis in original] the experiences I have had ...[are] part of me now: *I am myself at this age*. It took me all these years to put the missing pieces together, to confront my own age in terms of integrity and generativity, moving into the unknown future with a comfort now, instead of being stuck in the past. I have never felt so free. (p. 638)

With the italicized phrase *I am myself at this age*, Friedan brings forth the totality of her identity, her life story. She also ends *Life So Far*, her memoir, in a similar way, listing the roles and life events that make up her identity. The memoir also acknowledges how historical context shapes how a life is constructed:

In retrospect, I think how lucky I am that my life should have converged on history the way it did. The adventure of being able to use my life to transform society in a way none of us then would have ever dreamed possible is gratifying beyond measure. Whatever experiences I've had in my life...all of this I've used finally. I've used it all. Who knows how I'll use it next?" (p. 380)

Here, at age 78, Friedan allowed for more revisions to her life story as her generativity script projected her life into the future and toward its narrative ending.

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