For the main study an anonymous, numbered questionnaire was distributed which asked the subjects to describe and rank their three most important meanings and a concrete experience associated with each. If they felt life had no meaning, they were to say so and express why that was so.

These categories, with brief, clarifying examples used for the final rating, are listed below:

1. Understanding: Concrete examples of trying to gain more knowledge, e.g.. "My meaning is to learn all I can about the subject that interests me."

2. Relationship: An interpersonal orientation including family, friends, and romantic relationships, e.g., "Spending time with my friends and boyfriend is most meaningful to me."

3. Service: A helping, giving orientation dealing with people in the abstract, e.g., "My meaning is to help children learn."

4. Belief: Living according to one's beliefs (religious, political, or social). e.g., "Now I have found God my life is full of meaning.''

5. Expression: Concrete expressions of self through such things as art, athletics. music, writing, etc.. e.g., "When I see my artistic talent expressed by making something with my hands I feel full of meaning."

6. Obtaining: Emphasizes obtaining possessions, respect, and responsibility, e.g.. "I want to make as much money as possible so that I feel secure."

7. Growth: Emphasizes a striving towards developing potentials, obtaining goals, e.g., "I believe I was born to find our about myself and to develop my talents. That's what life is about: change, growth, and obtaining goals."

8. Existential-Hedonistic: Includes general expressions that pleasure and daily life are most meaningful, e.g., "My meaning is to enjoy each day as fully as possible."