

SPECIALIZED COUNSELING FOR WOMEN

by

BARBARA PENDERGAST

B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1967

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Faculty

of

Education

ACCEPTED  
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

DATE

15 May/76

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

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UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

DECEMBER 1975

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Supervisor: Dr. R. V. Peavy

#### ABSTRACT

In order to outline concerns specific to women seeking counseling, recent literature on women's social situation and biological/psychological development was reviewed and summarized. The life span was divided into stages to describe specific developmental tasks and issues. Role choices in work and relationships were described as determining the factors relevant to concerns of women in different life stages. Because choices return as life cycles, the spiral was used as a symbol to illustrate the nature of a woman's life-line.

Affirmation of self-identity was described as the most important developmental life task for women. Although development of an independent sense of self is a lifelong process, crucial periods of concern with identity were established depending on sociological and physiological changes. The need to increase self-esteem was identified as a common issue underlying many of the problems that women bring to counselors.

Four counseling approaches were described as examples of methods that have been modified to effectively counsel women. (1) All-women's groups are particularly valuable for developing a more positive attitude toward women, for acknowledging and getting rid of feelings of self-blame, inadequacy and isolation, and for sharing information and support. A sense of personal value and increased self-confidence are possible results. (2) Increased body acceptance is of particular importance because a woman's identity is often closely related to her body image. Techniques from body therapies were suggested to help a woman develop

a more favorable image of femaleness, increase her self-acceptance, and increase her awareness of body sensations. (3) Assertiveness training is a method to facilitate a woman's acceptance of her interpersonal rights and to provide skills for expressing herself without violating the rights of herself or others. Assertiveness training is valuable for a woman who wants skills to change self-defeating behaviors.

(4) Vocational counseling for the mature woman involves confidence building, inclusion of family members, and up-dating or expanding previous education. With a higher level of self-acceptance and confidence in her personal values, a woman may revitalize her daily life and feel satisfaction in either her in-home or out-of-home career.

Counselors must pay attention to the person who is experiencing each biological or sociological life change, and help that person toward a positive affirmation of her identity. Having a strong sense of self, one appreciates one's uniqueness, one's separateness and one's unity with humanity.



Dr. Vance Peavy

Dr. Rey Carr

Dr. Rodger Beehler

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

An important contribution to the content of this thesis is the experiences of women that I have worked with and women friends who have shared their concerns with me.

Discussions with Vivian Field, Jess Pendergast, and Charlotte Atlung supported and helped clarify the researched material for this thesis. As well, Vivian's willingness and patience in typing each working copy of the manuscript helped me to work quickly and efficiently. Jess's careful editorial assistance helped produce clarity in my written expression. The work with women's groups that I have done with Charlotte added much to my understanding of the concepts presented in Chapter IV.

I thank my supervisor, Vance Peavy, and my committee members, Rey Carr and Rodger Beehler, for their critical examination and helpful suggestions to improve the original manuscripts. I particularly appreciate the emotional support that I felt from Vance as I worked with my topic.

I thank Bruce, my husband, for support and encouragement to pursue my interests and for the many extra responsibilities that one takes on when one's spouse is writing a thesis.

## CHAPTER I

Specialized counseling could help women effectively deal with the recent social change that has increased the life-options available to them, the extreme amount of change in the culturally accepted roles for them, and the added stress and confusion that results from these changes. Regardless of individual interests, abilities, or opportunities, the life style of the majority of women in the past has been predictable. When the greater portion of human energy was needed simply to survive, the roles were fewer and more fixed. In the past fifty years, and especially since World War II, major social change has characterized our society. Increased alternatives to traditional roles for women is one development resulting from this social change. That women's choices are expanding is evident in the increased number of women delaying marriage and choosing when to have a smaller number of children. Also, women are obtaining more education and many are choosing out-of-home careers. By 1972, women represented one-third of the labor force in Canada (Women's Bureau, 1974).

The amount of change in what is culturally acceptable in women's roles is likely to lead to conflicts for women. Toffler (1970) states that the amount of change people are experiencing in our rapidly changing technological society causes "future shock" or extreme confusion over what people want to do and feel they should do. Since female roles are changing more dramatically than male roles, women are likely to experience added stress. The struggle to cope with these changes has led to the present day women's liberation movement which promotes examination of stereotyped images and roles in the hope that increased awareness will lead to more

personally fulfilling life goals. The increasing number of available options that a woman has could help her reflect a wider variety of interests and abilities in her life style. In order for this to happen though, she needs to be aware of her potential and the options available to her, and she needs support for her feelings and actions as well.

Gilmore (1973) writes that people seek counseling for clarification or change in areas regarding work, relationships, or aloneness. With the amount of change there has been in a woman's world recently, conflicts and confusions are inevitable. Traditionally, more women than men have received psychiatric treatment (Chesler, 1971; Gove & Tudor, 1973). With the increased conflict, pressure, and uncertainty over personal identity which is the lot of contemporary women, it seems reasonable to assume that ever greater numbers of women will be seeking counseling.

#### Statement of the problem

It is the assumption of this study that women have bio-physical and sociological reasons for seeking counseling which seldom are applicable to men.

The first question addressed in this thesis is: What developmental life tasks or issues of concern are specific to adult women seeking counseling? Counselors need to know the biological and psychological implications of the various stages in a woman's life. They also need to be aware of the various cultural and environmental determinants of the female personality and the conflicts these present.

A second question to be answered is: What are some methods that counselors are currently using that are useful in counseling women?

### Significance of the problem

Counseling journals repeatedly contain reports on the need for counselors to give more attention to the concerns of girls and women. As far back as 1965, E. Lewis claimed that the social problems of women were well documented, but that most writers did not go further by suggesting what could be done about them. He surveyed literature concerning women and jobs to show that life patterns of most women are not similar to those of men and that the kind of educational and vocational planning which suits men is of little value to women. His work showed that counselors should be alert to the special circumstances of women, but the article still concluded with the question, "What kind of counseling do girls really want and need?" Counselors need to learn more about women to counsel them more adequately.

Oliver (1975) states that counselors may be unaware of research on women and its implications for counseling. She surveys some of this research in the areas of counselor bias, demographic changes, sex differences and sex-role stereotypes, concluding with some suggestions for counselors. Although most of the suggestions aim at correcting the vocational bias that would restrict the choice of women, the underlying theme is that counselors need to be more knowledgeable about women's issues. This message has been constantly repeated. For ten years, counseling literature has again and again contained articles establishing that there are social and vocational problems to be understood and corrected for women. Many authors conclude with the demand for counselors to help break away from limiting expectations rather than perpetuate such problem-inducing attitudes. More specialized counseling is frequently requested.

However, there is an increasing number of books and articles on modern woman -- her nature, problems and destiny. Some psychologists and counselors have attempted to clarify what is needed to help a woman gain satisfaction with her life patterns. Some counselors have modified counseling methods in order to better meet the unique problems bringing women to counselors. The work already done must be recognized and used as a start to answering the repeated pleas for attention to the special situation of women. Research to better understand women's situation and to develop improved counseling techniques is still needed. However, a sample of the work recently published needs to be compiled.

#### Limitations of Study

This study is limited to the current concerns of adult women (over 18 years of age) in North America. The specific concerns presented in the study are not exhaustive of the concerns of women seeking counseling, and changing cultural expectations may alter women's situations.

This study is based on counseling-related issues and is not a comprehensive study of contemporary North American women. The analysis is made from current literature and consequently reflects the immediate social context. As new studies are made on the ever-changing situation of women, revisions and alterations to the main points of this study would be necessary.

The material presented is taken mainly from literature recently published by feminists. Culture is not static, but continually changing and forming new values. A feminist is one who advocates extension of the activities of women in social and political life. Some feminists maintain that social change for women will also help free men from restrictive sex role expectations.

### Specific purpose and framework of study

Purpose. This study outlines some concerns of women seeking counseling and gives examples of current counseling methods that have been adapted to meet those concerns.

Framework. First, a review of recent literature in both psychology and counseling for women is given to provide background for the study.

Then, information from literature describing modern woman's situation is summarized to outline relevant life issues that might bring a woman to counseling. The concept of identity stressed by Erik Erikson (1959) and the life task areas of work, relationships and aloneness described by Susan Gilmore (1973) are used to form a framework to organize the life issues. The concerns of adult women are identified as depending upon factors in different life stages, which in turn depend on the important role choices that have been made. The spiral is used as a life-line symbol to illustrate the recurring nature of many of the choices and concerns of women. Affirmation of self-identity is described as the most important underlying developmental task, and several crucial periods affecting identity formation are described. The need to increase self-esteem is identified as a common theme running through many of the problems that might bring women to counselors. Several factors and situations are described as contributing to the low self-esteem felt by some contemporary women.

And finally, examples of all-women's groups, body therapy techniques, assertiveness training, and vocational counseling for mature women are described as counseling approaches which have been modified to meet the concerns of modern women.

A summary of some of the current information regarding life issues of importance for women should enable counselors to better understand the

unique situation of women clients. Further, knowledge of some methods currently used should help counselors to increase their effectiveness with women clients.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

Since the method of research is analysis of recent literature, this chapter is a review of representative literature to provide the background and rationale for the remainder of the thesis. To provide coherent and systematic treatment of the data from published studies four categories are used: (1) sex bias in personality theories, (2) psychology of women, (3) sex bias in counseling, (4) women writing about women.

#### Sex bias in personality theories

Personality theories offer the rationale on which counselors often base their principles and methods for assisting clients. Sherfey (1966), Millet (1970), Weisstein (1971), Doherty (1973), and Mander & Rush (1974) have examined personality theories to show how these have led psychologists to regard women. Doherty (1973) claims that psychologists are becoming aware of the generalization bias as it affects other social classes and cultures, but they have overlooked the "generic bias" which seeks to understand the behavior of humans in terms of "man". Male characteristics are often used as the prototype of humanity, and the female is understood in relation to that. Secondly, in our culture a dichotomy between cognition and affect is often established when human characteristics are described. More positive value is given to the cognitive or rational than to affective or sensual behavior. In light of these two themes, Doherty urges psychologists to examine the basic premises from which their understanding of people has developed.

Weisstein (1971) also questions the validity of theories on the

psychology of women. Often they are based on "years of intensive clinical experience" which is not the same as empirical evidence for drawing conclusions about human behavior. When humans are reporting on the behavior of others distortion of actual cause and effect is likely. Because perceptions are personal, the expectations of the observer can interfere with the subjects' performance; and the behavior of the observed can be influenced by the situation. A value judgement is often made on whether a person's behavior is good or normal. In order to correct such distortions, empirical studies that are repeatable with consistent findings are needed.

She claims that studies that set out to demonstrate that women are "different but equal" usually end up in a comparison that once again uses the male as the prototype. A dichotomy of good and bad is often implicit and women end up where society expected them to be - on the negative side. She concludes that until social expectations for women and men are equal, studies on human potential will simply reflect social prejudices.

Although this thesis may also reflect social prejudices, its purpose is to broaden counselors' understanding of the potential of women so that clients would be encouraged to widen their perspectives in regard to their abilities and the options available to them.

Since theorists formulate their theories from what they see in their time and culture, it is the counselors' responsibility to examine their descriptions in terms of the contemporary situation. Increased sensitivity to sex bias in personality theories would enable counselors to become more critical of the descriptions regarding a woman's nature and to challenge the assumptions that may be drawn from those descriptions.

The purpose of this section is not to discuss or compare personality

theories, but to examine one of the theories in order to illustrate the questions that need to be asked of all personality theories. Erik Erikson's (1950, 1959, 1964) psychosocial theory will be examined because it is a currently popular theory that is widely referred to among counselors. A second reason is that he is a current North American theorist, making the time and culture that he is describing close to ours. A third reason for choosing Erikson's theory is that he describes some of the important factors in feminine identity formation and his description could influence counselors' understanding of the "natural" developmental stages that a female experiences. Also, Erikson is one of the few theorists to have explored adult development. This thesis attempts to outline some concerns of adult women and draws from his general concept of identity formation as being the most important developmental task for the individual. Even though the concept of identity formation used is similar to Erikson's, the basis described for woman's identity is not the same, and an examination of Erikson's theory would clarify my position in relation to his.

While the following discussion of Erikson's theory may appear to be predominantly negative, it is only because Erikson attempts to discuss identity formation for women at all that his theory can be examined so closely. Erikson's theory will be examined with the assumption that questions asked can be applied to other personality theories as well.

Erikson (1959) sees the stages of life as: infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adult, adulthood, mature age. The passage from each stage, according to Erikson, depends on reasonable resolution of stage-specific crises: in infancy, trust vs. mistrust; early childhood, autonomy vs. shame, doubt; play age,

initiative vs. guilt; school age, industry vs. inferiority; adolescence, identity vs. identity diffusion; young adult, intimacy vs. isolation; adulthood, generativity vs. self-absorption; and mature age, integrity vs. despair. Physical changes occur along a continuum. Psychological changes are triggered by biological changes but are also shaped by interaction with environment. An individual's needs and the solutions available to him are dependent on the culture within which he is operating. The complex relationship between inner and outer worlds of the individual indicates some explanation for the variety of observable response patterns. However, Erikson's model follows male developmental patterns more closely than female ones (Doherty, 1973; Matthews et al., 1972).

Erikson himself comments on the differences in woman's development. The stage-specific crisis in adolescence is identity vs. identity diffusion in his "general description of identity" and includes the tangible promise of a career. However, in describing the development of identity in the young woman, he writes the following:

Young women often ask if they can 'have an identity' before they know whom they will marry and for whom they will make a home.

Granted that something in the young woman's identity must keep itself open for the peculiarities of the man to be joined and of the children to be brought up, I think that much of a young woman's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and in the selective nature of her search for the man (men) by whom she wishes to be sought (Erikson, 1968, p. 283).

This certainly reflects a cultural stereotype that a woman is defined by her ability to attract men. But this seems very unlikely to really be the criterion for one's developing an identity if born female.

Erikson (1964) maintains that the young woman achieves her identity not prior to the stage of intimacy, as does the male, but during this stage she "relinquishes the care received from the parental family and the extended care of institutions of education in order to commit herself to the love of a stranger and to the care to be given to his and her offspring" (p. 585). The main reason given for this difference in timing and formation of identity is that a woman has an 'inner space' designed to bear the offspring of chosen men, and biological, psychological and ethical commitments to take care of those offspring.

The purpose, at this point, is not to discuss the validity of Erikson's description, but to question Erikson's attempt to point out the differences in woman's personality development. The above example is an illustration of a theory that is presented as one of human development, but is really one of male development. Any theory that uses masculinity as the criterion for measurement can only consider woman in contrast. Women are not men, and are described as 'different from men'. Is that to say different from the norm? This can be seen in other considerations of feminine characteristics that describe women as 'less objective', 'more emotional'. One can only ask, less than what, more than what? Normal? A theory of personality that is based on the development of men, that considers the development of women only in contrast to that, raises questions as to the appropriateness of the theory for understanding women's concerns.

### Psychology of women

Numerous writers have contributed to the development of a separate study of the psychology of women. This section will first, examine the psychology of women according to Erikson (1964), and then give examples of more

recent attempts to understand the psychological nature of woman in terms of her social situation.

According to Erikson (1964) the concept of an 'inner space' is important throughout the feminine life cycle. He describes female depression in terms of emptiness. Women fear being left alone, because to be alone is to be left empty, to be drained or to fear drying up. Having an 'inner space' also influences a woman's view of the world and her ambitions for living. He draws on his observations from a 1951 study of play configurations of pre-adolescents to support this claim. In play, girls constructed scenes showing "goodness indoors" while boys constructed scenes showing "caution outdoors". The organization of play space, Erikson (1964) says, parallels the morphology of genital differentiation: "in the male, an external organ, erectible and intrusive in character, serving the channelization of mobile sperm cells; internal organs in the female, with vestibular access, leading to statically expectant ova" (p. 591). The underlined words are the main qualities that he observed in the play configurations. His conclusion is that because males and females see the world differently, women have found their identities in goodness of the indoors and left the outer world space to be taken care of by men.

As support for his theory, Erikson (1964) points out that all primates reflect innate sexual differences in body size, development and social patterns. He refers to baboon behavior to illustrate body differences and social patterns that support his inner/outer space observations. He also says that because primate females must carry the unborn child and feed and carry the newborn child, strengths and weaknesses of the sexes are understandable. Males are physically larger and stronger in order to

protect the female and her young. Similarly, women are stronger in ways that help them carry out their "biological task of reacting to the differential needs of others, especially infants" (Erikson, 1964, p. 598). And a girl learns to be easily content within a limited circle of activities because of her 'purpose in life'.

According to Erikson, anatomy, history and personality are our combined destinies, and a woman's unique job is to allow for conception and then to complete the development of that child. But she need not live only in that sphere, Erikson states. She must adapt the jobs of the world to suit her qualities. "The influence of women will not be fully actualized until it reflects without apology the fact of the 'inner space' and the potentialities and needs of the feminine psyche" Erikson (1964, p. 604) claims. Understanding the ego identity of a woman must start with the undeniable fact that a woman is never Not-a-woman. Erikson (1964) writes that he is not "dooming" every woman to perpetual motherhood, nor denying her equivalence of individuality and citizenship. But since she is never "not-a-woman", she cannot ignore her natural dispositions. Thus, the qualities that women have always stood for (practicality in household management, responsibility in child rearing, resourcefulness in peacekeeping, and devotion to healing) would be added to compliment the masculine qualities that are shaping society's image and future. His message is that women should stress and develop the qualities that they have, that is, to cherish their uniqueness, rather than to concentrate on what they have not got, that is to try to gain what a man has. To Erikson, equality of opportunity means that each person would be encouraged toward individual fulfillment and thus could make a unique contribution to society's development.

I have five main criticisms of Erikson's theory on the psychology of women. First, for Erikson (1962), mature womanly fulfillment rests on the assumption that "a woman's somatic design harbors an 'inner space' designed to bear the offspring of chosen men and with it, a biological, psychological and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy" (p. 586). To me, any person's fulfillment must be considered in the terms of total life style, not merely in terms of ability to produce children. It is imperative for the species to reproduce, but can this be the base on which personal fulfillment rests? It is not the importance of producing children that I question, rather that any person's identity would be solely dependent on the production of offspring.

Second, Erikson says that because women have an 'inner space', they have a biological, psychological, and ethical commitment to take care of human infancy. Of the three "commitments", the biological deserves the most attention. In order to define the psychology of womanhood, a theorist must do more than assert that women have a psychological commitment to do a particular thing. Since the ethical commitment to raise children reflects a culture's standards of right and wrong, it can not be the basic formulating factor of all women's psyche. For example, in an Indian culture it was ethically right to kill the first born when female. Here the mother's ethical commitment was to allow infanticide. When trying to establish the biological commitment for females to care for infants, theorists often refer to the fact that in all primates the young require extended care and this is usually provided for by the female. However, Mitchell (1969) from his studies in comparative and physiological psychology points out that primate observations probably best show examples of how diverse sex-role behavior is. "Natural"

female and male behavior varies all the way from females who are much more competitive and aggressive than males (Tamarins), to male "mothers" (Titi monkeys, night monkeys, and marmosets), to submissive and passive females and male antagonists (baboons, rhesus monkeys). The studies of primates cited usually exhibit the kind of behavior that the proponents of the biological basis for female behavior wish were true for humans. It is not surprising that Erikson chose baboons to support his theory of "natural" behavior, rather than marmosets. In marmosets, the male carries the infant at all times except when it is feeding.

Third, Erikson demonstrates how males and females see the world by studying play configurations of pre-adolescents and drawing a comparison between the genital differentiation and the "inner"/"outer" preoccupation of the two sexes. He refers to "statically expectant ova". This ignores the way the egg explodes from the ovary and travels the length of the oviduct and the short time that it is available for fertilization. To ascribe characteristics such as static or still, expectant or waiting to an ovum is false. To describe a person's personality according to the assumed characteristics of the sperm or ova is absurd.

Even if one could accept that a person's genitalia might have some relationship to her or his world view, Erikson's consideration of female genitalia falls short. He defines the female genitalia as the reproductive parts, and from this builds his theory. Females have sexual organs outside their bodies too. Their primary organ for sexual pleasure is outside the body (Masters and Johnson, 1966). How careless of Erikson to ignore it! One can only speculate how the psychology of women would have been described if the uniqueness of the female had been explained from the initial observation that females had a sexual organ designed solely

for pleasure. He seems to be concerned not with sexual but with reproductive differences. If one defines the area to be considered as "reproductive space" to begin with, any conclusions are merely the result of this definition.

Fourthly, Erikson refers to the qualities for which women have always stood (practicality in household management, responsibility in child rearing, resourcefulness in peacekeeping, and devotion to healing). Margaret Mead's Male and Female (1949) indicates that the behaviors we so rigidly label masculine or feminine are not always the same in other cultures; in fact, they are often opposite to ours. Sociologists have found that minority groups (with which women have much in common) are usually seen as inherently valuable for some of their qualities (Freeman, 1971). It becomes difficult to separate their "natural ability" from the limitations of their potential because of cultural expectations.

My criticism of Erikson's general position is that he supports individual fulfillment and then proceeds to stereotype fulfillments and activities for all women because they have ovaries and uteri. A woman's unique identity is considered irrelevant when considering the role she will have as an adult in society. Regardless of her interests, abilities, opportunities or circumstances, her major fulfillment will come from being a mother. For most women today, equality of opportunity does not mean modeling after men. Equality of opportunity means having choices so that their life styles can reflect a wider variety of interests and abilities. Individual fulfillment and unique contributions cannot be grouped and applied in general for half the world's population.

More recent attempts to understand the psychological nature of woman point to the social factors that influence a person's development. For example, Bardwick (1971) has written about women's self-esteem, and the

lack of it, and the resultant effects on their behavior. Although she also describes maternity as the most basic source of pleasure and gratification for women, she does state that it is self-destructive for women to perceive and evaluate their qualities totally in terms of maternity since children do leave home. She also describes the ambivalent feelings that are unavoidable when a woman chooses and values the traditional feminine qualities, but simultaneously sees them as second rate.

Esther Matthews (1972) uses Erikson's model to describe concerns of women in different life stages to provide a framework for counseling girls and women. She combines data from studies on sex differences in social functioning with Erikson's male-based model in order to show how females may experience the eight stages of development. For example, Maccoby's (1966) studies show that changes in intellectual performance between boys and girls begin in the school age stage. Matthews points out that the major developmental hurdle for this stage in Erikson's model is the issue of industry versus inferiority; this may be helpful in understanding the roots of the low opinion many women have of their abilities. In adolescence, identity versus identity diffusion is the issue. Matthews suggests that the moodiness and sadness that a girl often displays in adolescence may be understandable when one considers that she is often expected to give up a personal identity for a role identity of mother and homemaker. More attempts like that of Matthews to compile research done on women's abilities and problems are needed for increased understanding of the psychological development of women.

Others consider understanding a person's sources and expressions of satisfaction and dissatisfaction as an important key to understanding a person's psychological nature. Drawing from the data of numerous

studies on the psychological sex differences between women and men, Sherman (1971) discusses the issues of sex differences in intellectual functioning, dependency, aggression and emotionality. Only the issue of emotionality will be reported in detail here, as it has more direct bearing on this study than the other issues. Sherman discusses psychological sex differences in emotionality under three major topics:

(1) adjustment, (2) stability, and (3) fear. According to the studies that she examines, girls and women are not generally more maladjusted than boys and men. Women may talk about their concerns more, but more men commit suicide, have heart attacks and have ulcers. The way they show their stress differs. She refers to Gurin, Veroff and Feld (1960) who interviewed a large representative sample of the North American population over 21 years of age. They concluded that, in contrast with men, women's outlook on life was more negative and passive, more introspective and inwardly turned and more sensitive in relation to others. The women also showed their distress more than men. However, they were not sure if women were having more distress, were more aware of their distress, or were just more willing to express it.

Regarding emotional stability, the second area studied, Sherman points out that the definition of emotional often only includes the expression of feelings that are stereotypically feminine. To ask which are more emotionally stable, women or men, and then to eliminate the expression of angry, aggressive feelings from the definition of "emotional" gives a sex-biased consideration of the question. After comparing several studies on emotional stability of men and women, she states that examination of sex differences in expression of anxiety or fear and related symptoms was more appropriate. Women appear to be less defensive than

men about displaying fears and it is more socially acceptable for them to do so. Summarizing from the studies that she reviewed, Sherman concludes that further study of the psychology of women as distinct from the psychology of men is not only justifiable, but necessary.

Gove and Tudor (1973) examine women's sources of satisfactions and dissatisfactions in an attempt to explain psychological distress. From a survey of first admissions to mental hospitals, psychiatric treatment in general hospitals, psychiatric outpatient clinics, private outpatient psychiatric care, the practices of general physicians and community surveys, they conclude that more women than men are being treated for mental illness. They refer to Gove (1972) who reviewed studies done in industrial nations since World War II indicating that married women are more likely to have mental disorders than married men. They give five reasons to assume that, because of the roles they occupy, women are more likely than men to have emotional problems.

1. Most women are restricted to a single role - housewife - while men have two major sources of gratification (household head and worker).
2. Being a housewife does not require specialized skill. The role of housewife is often viewed as a position of low prestige.
3. The housewife's job is mainly unstructured and work is often invisible, so it is possible to put things off and have time to brood over problems.
4. Even when a woman works outside the home, she usually has a less satisfactory job than a man. Also many would then hold a dual job (home and work) which would make longer hours and greater strain for women holding out-of-home jobs.
5. Expectations confronting women are unclear and diffuse. Women's

roles are characterized by the adjusting to or preparing for contingencies. Most women see their lives in terms of a man's job and career; this presents a lack of control over their own future.

These five reasons show how female/male employment patterns could explain why married women are more likely than married men to have emotional problems. However, this considers only the limiting effects of the economic roles that men and women have. There is no mention of the dependence, the absence of autonomy that many would find just as psychologically limiting as the type and amount of work they do. Dependency and the accompanying lack of economic responsibility have been accepted as one of the "privileges" of being female in our culture. Chesler (1972) points out that cultural expectations for men and women shape individuals' expectations for themselves, the amount of satisfaction they feel, and the way they express their dissatisfaction.

According to Chesler (1972), the cultural stereotype for "normal" men includes economic responsibility, rational thinking, emotional control, and the ability to act (aggressively if necessary) on one's beliefs. As a result men are expected to feel satisfaction when they have these qualities. If they feel dissatisfaction from their living situation, they are likely to act aggressively against society. The punishment for their actions is most likely to be imprisonment in a penal institution. Although the man is being locked away from society, there are underlying or "secondary rewards" of feeling "tough", "clever", "aggressive" and being accepted as male. On the other hand, the cultural stereotype for "normal" women includes dependency, submissiveness, overt emotional displays, self-sacrifices and passive rather than aggressive behavior. As a result women are expected to feel satisfaction if they possess these

qualities - and are within a family. If they feel dissatisfaction from their living situation, they are likely to exaggerate these characteristics and rather than acting against society, direct their anxiety and stress inward, toward themselves. The punishment for this behavior is most likely to be imprisonment in a mental institution. Although the woman is being locked away from society, there are underlying or "secondary rewards" of being cared for, protected by others and being accepted as female. If one acts against the cultural expectations, one increases the risk of losing acceptance from family and friends and of having one's femininity or masculinity questioned.

To support this explanation for the way that women deal with dissatisfaction and stress in their lives, Chesler (1971, 1972) describes the neurotic symptoms of women in our present culture. Drawing upon a study by E. Zigler and L. Phillips (1960) comparing the symptoms of women and men in mental hospitals, Chesler elaborates on their findings that more women than men are diagnosed as suffering from self-depreciatory, depressed, and suicidal thoughts. From general statistics regarding patients in mental hospitals, she infers that female psychiatric symptoms, such as depression, frigidity, paranoia, suicide attempts are often "inward" expressions of anxiety rather than "outward". Depression results from loss of an ambivalently loved other, of one's ideal self, or of the meaning in one's life and the hostility that could be directed outward in response to the loss is turned inward toward the self. Inability to act aggressively is shown even in the ultimate self-destruction as women attempt to kill themselves more often than men do, but fail more often as well. Chesler explains that, "like female tears, female suicide attempts constitute an essential act of resignation and helplessness -

which alone can command temporary relief of secondary rewards" (p. 49). As described above, secondary rewards are based on stereotypical expectations for and responses to feminine behavior.

Chesler (1972) gives several case histories of women who are psychiatrically labeled, privately treated and perhaps hospitalized, but who, she claims, are not mad. They may be deeply unhappy, self-destructive, economically powerless, and sexually impotent - but the place that women are able to achieve in this society perpetuates these characteristics.

The material discussed here exemplifies the work that is developing into a separate study of the psychology of women. Three of the areas that are being studied are: the role stress that women experience, the added stress of rapidly changing role expectations and the way that women show their stress. At present, the psychology of "man" is inadequate for understanding women. Although most people within our culture experience change, anxiety, and tension, the sociological causes of stress and the ways in which women and men reveal their feelings of stress differ. The social roles and expectations for males and females differ. As the traditional role of women changes, the way they show their stress may change as well. As described in the introduction (p. 1), the increased amount of change in social expectations for women in recent years may add to the amount of stress that women feel.

#### Sex bias in counseling

A classic study by J. Broverman, D. Broverman, F. Clarkson, P. Rosenkrantz and S. Vogel (1970) supports the view that the norm for adult behavior in our society is male adult behavior. A sex-role stereotype questionnaire consisting of 122 bipolar items was given to 79 clinicians with one of three sets of instructions: to describe a healthy,

mature, socially competent (a) adult, sex unspecified, (b) man, or (c) woman. Clinical judgements about the norm of mental health expected for men and women differed paralleling the stereotypic sex-role differences. That is, women were expected to be "more emotional" than men. However, the characteristics judged healthy for an adult, sex unspecified, resembled the characteristics judged healthy for men more closely than those for women. Some of the detrimental effects of this double standard of mental health are discussed. For example, if a woman exhibits those positive characteristics considered desirable for men and adults, her "femininity" may be questioned. If she behaves in the prescribed feminine manner, she must accept second-class adult status.

The Broverman et al. study provides evidence that clinicians accept and thus help perpetuate the sex-role stereotypes. They conclude that both men and women should be encouraged toward maximum realization of individual potential rather than toward adjustment to existing restrictive sex roles.

The attempt to polarize personality traits in the Broverman study may have been a major limiting factor in the consideration of mental health. Many people have internalized the belief that life can be divided into polarities and assume that for one person to gain freedom in expression means that someone else has to give up a similar freedom. If there is a "winner", there must be a "loser". If one is rational, she/he must deny her/his emotions. Some therapists, such as Rush (1973), refer to the Gestalt premise that polarities are part of a whole and acceptance of each part leads to balance in personality. This thesis is based on the belief that a healthy adult should have some of both so-called masculine and feminine characteristics.

Studies have also been done examining counselors' attitudes toward

females and the careers that they choose. In order to test the hypothesis that counselors were biased against women entering a "masculine" occupation, Pietrofesa and Schlossberg (cited in Schlossberg & Pietrofesa, 1973) recorded interviews between counselor trainees and a coached female counselee. Results of this study indicated that counselor bias exists against women entering so-called "masculine" careers. Female counselors displayed just as much bias as male counselors. Content analysis of biased statements indicated that major stress is placed on the "masculinity" of the occupation.

Thomas and Steward (1971) report the findings of a study of the responses of 62 practicing counselors to audiotapes of structured interviews. The tapes were of two high school girls, one having a traditionally feminine, thus conforming, career goal (teaching) and the other having a traditionally masculine, thus deviate, career goal (engineering). Although there was no significant difference in the level of acceptance of the two types of clients, conforming career goals were thought to be significantly more acceptable than were deviate career goals by both male and female counselors. Also those clients having deviate career goals were thought to have a greater need for further counseling.

Schlossberg and Pietrofesa (1973) state that the counseling field has paid inadequate attention to women at several stages in a woman's life. They also examined counselors' beliefs regarding sex-appropriate behavior, the implication being that some of the counselor attitudes reflected might have great impact on the goals of female clients. Counseling materials (interest inventories, descriptions of careers, career brochures) often reinforce out-moded views of "women's place". When unaware of sexual bias that exists in popular interest inventories,

counselors limit the options available to their clients. Schlossberg and Pietrofesa suggest that the first task in improving this condition is for counselor educators to risk exploring their biases. Then a program for training counselors should be developed to help reduce sex bias. Cognitive understanding of women's roles and consciousness raising regarding sexism would have to happen on several levels so that non-biased helping skills could be acquired by counselors.

Sensitivity to bias can be the beginning of improved methods that expand rather than restrict women's horizons.

#### Women writing about women

Gradually the number of women publishing on the condition and psychological nature of woman has been increasing.

As far back as 1949, Simone de Beauvoir pointed to the facts and myths regarding a woman's potential and provided a good description of the social situation of women in The Second Sex. Germaine Greer (1971) in The Female Eunuch again examined the social expectations and opportunities for personal development for one born female. Kate Millet (1970) studied the historical background on which the sexual politics of our society rest. The years of social expectations that condition a woman to choose a secondary role are described by Sandra Bem and Daryl Bem (1971). Alice Rossi (1964) suggested a number of institutional innovations in education, residence and child care which would facilitate equality between the sexes. Others such as Margaret Benston (1971) explain that women's unpaid labor in the home and women's traditional place in society are necessary if the entire capitalistic system that we live in is to function, and nothing short of social revolution is going to end women's oppression.

One can see different levels on which the writers are focusing their attention on the condition of women. Some writers attempt to heighten the reader's awareness; others, through detailed research, provide explanation and formulate theories; and still others demand social reform and political action to change the accepted place of women in our society.

Studies are being done that are providing information about a woman's inherent functioning that are dispelling long standing myths that have perpetuated the social situation of women. For example, books such as Our Bodies, Ourselves (The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1971), The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality (Sherfey, 1966), Vaginal Politics (Frankfurt, 1972) and articles such as "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm" (Koedt, 1970) and "Organs and Orgasms" (Shulman, 1971) have been published by women on female sexuality. By gaining knowledge about their physical natures, women are able to be less dependent on established "authority sources" (roles which traditionally have been filled by men) and more self-assured in knowing what their own "normal" functioning is.

Information in other areas is increasing as well. Eleanor Maccoby (1966, 1974) has published extensively on the development of intellectual and social sex differences in male and female functioning. She maintains that the sexes do have different intellectual strengths and weaknesses, but the complex interaction between environmental and innate differences make it impossible to say which determined any particular attribute (Maccoby, 1966). Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) give a summary of evidence from over 2,000 books and articles listing the only supported intellectual and personality differences to date as : (1) Males tend

to be more aggressive than females, (2) Girls tend to have greater verbal ability than boys (differences shown only until age 11), (3) Boys tend to excel in visual-spatial ability (in adolescent years only), and (4) Boys tend to excel in math ability (difference evident from age 12 onward). Any consideration of the "natural" abilities or limitations of either sex must be examined critically when there are so few intellectual differences consistently supported by studies.

An increasing number of writers, stating that a general study of mankind is inadequate for understanding the concerns of women, are writing on the psychological nature of women as a separate study. The very number of studies that Sherman (1971) was able to draw from in her survey of empirical studies on the psychology of women is an indication of the amount of research currently being done. Other writers (such as Bardwick and Chesler, already discussed in the section Psychology of Women) are attempting to explore the particular qualities of modern living that contribute to a woman's personal satisfaction.

Phyllis Chesler (1971, 1972) writing on the current situation of women receiving psychiatric treatment, claims that the "male authority-based" system of psychiatry perpetuates the personality problems of women. Alternatives to traditional mental health care are developing. For example, Anica Vessel Mander and Anne Kent Rush (1974) describe how feminism can and does function as therapy. They question the traditional "Therapeutic mystique" and support a more communal sharing of responsibility with women helping and healing themselves.

Women counselors are publishing what they have learned working with women. Louise Owens, in a paper presented at the American Personnel and Guidance Association convention in 1970, proposed that women's failure

to plan some reasonable occupational program places increasing pressure on the counselor and the female counselee. She discussed some of the research on femininity and gave seven suggestions for the counselor.

- (1) Realize that achievement outside the home is not masculinizing.
- (2) Treat the female counselee with respect.
- (3) Forget the feminine stereotype and learn her family background.
- (4) Recognize the presence of guilt feelings.
- (5) Be aware that there is aggression in the feminine personality.
- (6) Broaden the perception of suitable goals for women.
- (7) Encourage women themselves to decide what needs changing in their behavior.

These suggestions seem to demand that counselors be free enough themselves of the traditional feminine stereotype to accept the actual situation and emotions of the individual counselee. The last suggestion is particularly important because the counselee must take personal responsibility for her change and she is not encouraged to view the counselor as an authority-figure.

Jane Berry (1972) writing for school counselors states that they may have to be resocialized so they can understand, sympathize with, and support the altered objectives, aspirations, and expectations of young women. She gives the counselor a leadership role in helping parents to understand the life perspectives of their daughters, presenting information with wider opportunities for women, helping rid school media of limiting sex-role images, planning community workshops for employers to diminish barriers that block women from top level assignments, and assisting young men in their understanding of the rising career priorities of women. She challenges counselors to examine their own understanding of the myths regarding women and work and to involve themselves in personal training programs to increase their capacity to counsel for the new womanhood.

This last point seems to be stressed by many authors: counselors need to examine first their own beliefs and then educate themselves regarding the concerns of women in order to effectively counsel them.

For more effective counseling of women, Nancy Schlossberg (1972) describes a framework drawing on Tiedeman and O'Hara's (1963) decision-making paradigm in which decisions have two major steps: (1) anticipation and (2) implementation. The counseling focus of the anticipation stage is to help the client clarify and expand the alternatives from which she has to choose and secondly, guide her toward a choice of one of the alternatives. The second stage involves helping the client to implement her choice through placement, internship, and further counseling. However, the counselor's responsibilities in both stages also involve activities in guidance programming and social activism to help change the context in which women live.

Berry (1972) and Schlossberg (1972) are just two of the writers who demand that counselors take a more active part in changing the social beliefs and expectations for women. Although this thesis is limited to describing the situation of women in order to increase the counselor's sensitivity to the background factors that may be included in the presenting problem of a woman seeking counseling, serious counselors of women must also consider the challenge of writers like Berry and Schlossberg.

Specific information has been published to aid counselors of women. In 1973, Vancouver Status of Women conducting a survey in Vancouver secondary schools, found a lack of instructional materials on the changing role of women, and published a working kit for counselors in the schools. Esther Matthews, S. Feingold, Bettina Weary, Jane Berry, and Leona Tyler

(1972) published Counseling Girls and Women over the Life Span to convey an understanding of the career counseling needs of girls and women. Much has been written concerning the unique needs of the mature woman seeking vocational counseling (Barbier, 1971; Cook, 1970; Fitzgerald, 1973). Patricia Jakubowski-Spector (1973) published materials on the adaptation of assertiveness training to facilitate the personal growth of women (described in Chapter IV of the thesis). This is only a sample of the information that is accumulating on specific counseling material to aid in facilitating a woman's ability to cope with the changing role of women.

### Conclusion

This review of the current literature on woman's nature and social condition reveals a pattern that runs through feminist literature. As stated at the first of the section, Women Writing on Women, the purpose behind the writings appears to be on different levels. The pattern in these levels can be understood by referring to the steps in the "feminist process" as described by Connell and Wilson (1974): first, awareness or consciousness-raising; second, analysis or theory and research; and third, action on a personal and political level. They point out that in reality these are not separate steps at all. There are different stages of awareness and action, and deeper involvement leads to new levels of awareness and further development. As might be expected, feminist literature also follows this process of awareness, analysis, action, with different levels of awareness continually developing.

## CHAPTER III

Describing the concerns of women seeking counseling

An attempt to outline some of the concerns specific to women seeking counseling runs the risk of being interpreted as a generalization that ignores individual differences. Also, issues that are important for some are likely to be left out of the outline. Each individual has concerns based on the specific experiences which contributed to her unique characteristics and life style.

However, many counselors and psychologists (for example, Erikson, 1959; Gilmore, 1973; Matthews et al., 1972) have reported the need for an organized way of thinking about human behavior that provides a system for sorting and evaluating the content of counseling sessions. In this chapter, several of the factors that may be related to events at a particular point in life are described.

Physiological, sociological and psychological factors all contribute to the concerns of today's adult woman, and any one factor cannot be isolated from the others. Issues at different stages will be described by giving attention to the interrelatedness of these factors. To facilitate understanding of a person's development the life span will be divided into stages: infancy, early childhood, school age, adolescence, young adult, adult, mature age, old age. Since the focus of this thesis is on adult women, emphasis will be placed on the last four stages.

Others, such as Erikson (1959), Matthews et al. (1972), Tiedeman and O'Hara (1963) have arbitrarily divided the life span into similar stages and chronologically discussed the issues of each stage. However, a woman's life pattern contains many cycles. The menstrual cycle is governed by an intricate hormone-feedback system. Bardwick (1971) and

Sherman (1971) both conclude from the evidence of several studies that emotional cycles accompany physiological cycles throughout a woman's life. Growing older does not necessarily mean that a woman is finished with certain life issues. Although a woman may choose a particular focus for the present, a pattern is not necessarily established for her entire life. Choices return as a woman's life cycles. Each stage introduces new factors which must be taken into account, factors which may be contradictory to the ones that had to be considered in the previous stage.

Consider a developmental life line in the shape of a spiral. The spiral rises in circles representing growing levels of development. The spiral returns to the same axis illustrating that life experiences may recur at new levels. For example, many women experience choice in their careers when they finish their education, when they get married, when they have children and later when children leave home. Even though experiences and choices recur, each happens at a new level of a person's development and the situational factors surrounding it may differ from previous experiences.

Figure 1 illustrates a life line in spiral shape showing the roles that help form a woman's identity in different life stages. Figure 2 shows some of the role choices and recurring concerns for adult women.

Gilmore (1973) describes three dimensions of human existence with which counselors can be of assistance: work, relationship, aloneness. Each person, at every stage in her life, strives for satisfaction in each of these areas. Each stage has its own set of circumstances. All that a person is doing with the time, energy and resources available to her forms the patterns of her work. Whether a person is moving away from, toward or along side other persons forms the patterns of her relationships.

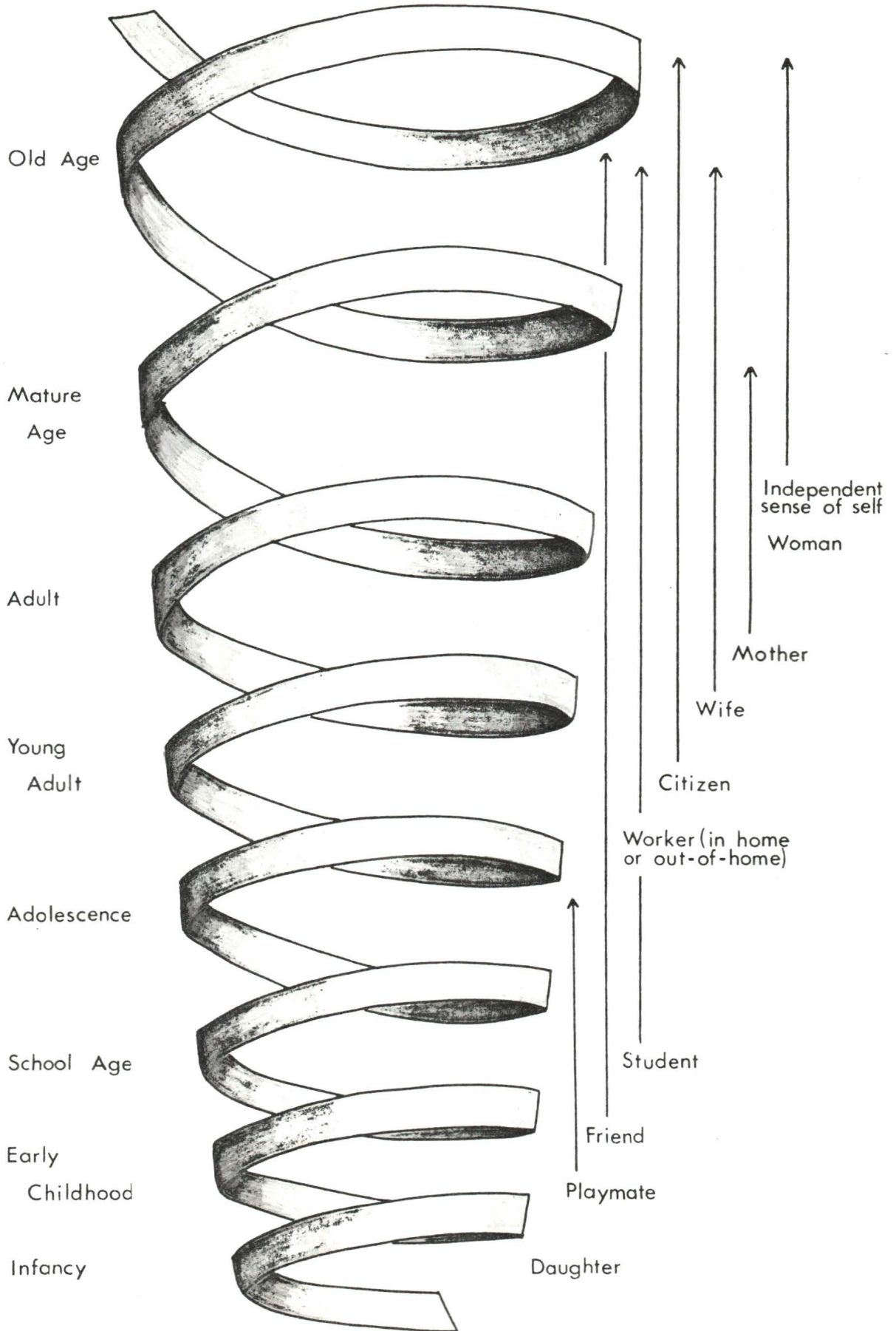


Figure 1. The staging of roles that form identity for women.

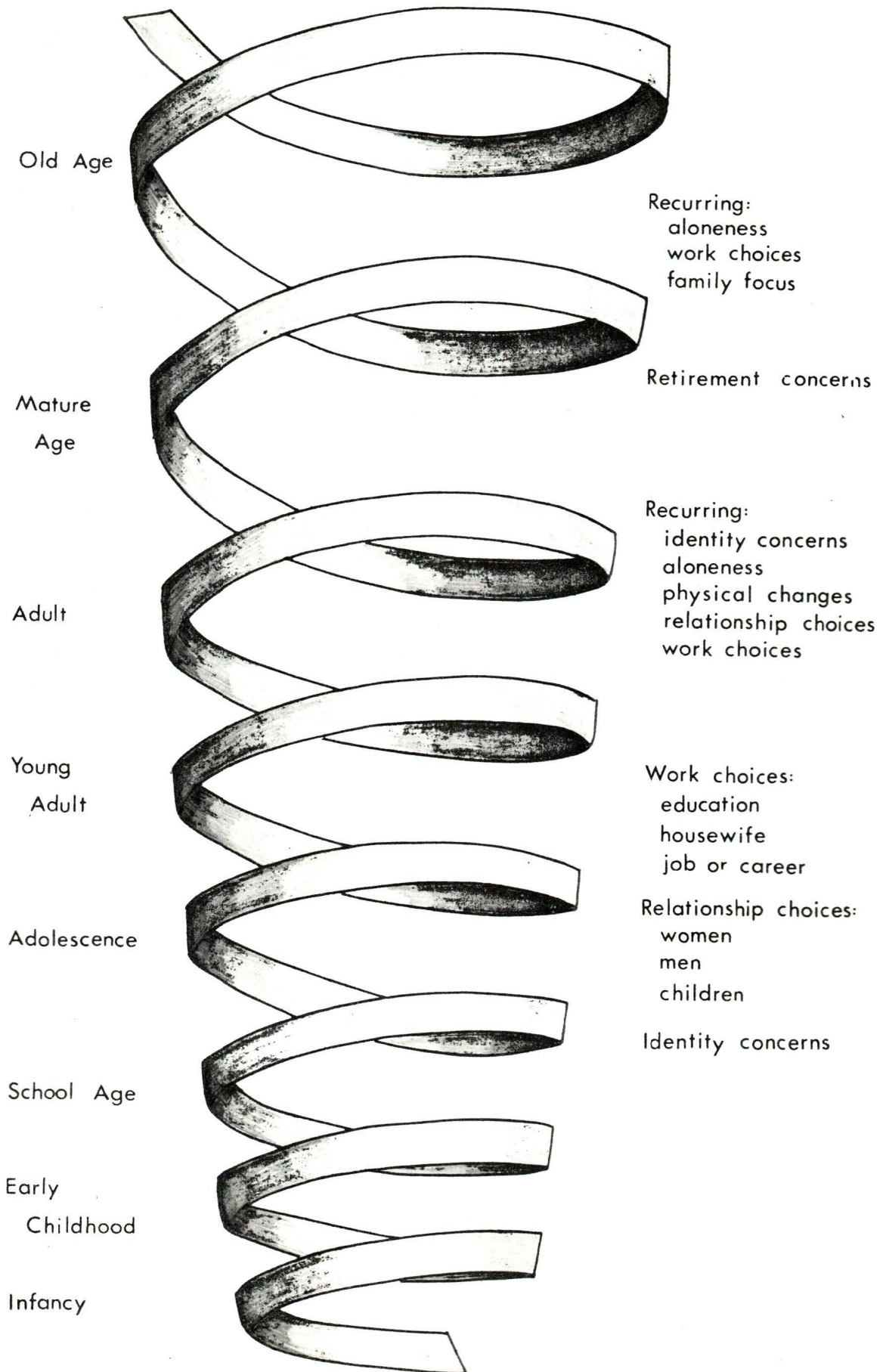


Figure 2. Role choices and recurring concerns for adult women.

The individual's responsiveness to and responsibility for being a separate and unique person constitutes her identify or aloneness. Individuals are faced with changing considerations with each of these issues throughout their lives, and the problems usually presented to counselors are likely to fall into one or more of these areas. Therefore, these three dimensions will be used to thematically group some of the concerns of adult women. Affirmation of self-identity will be described as the most important developmental task for women. A person's self-esteem is confirmed with the completion of each developmental task in life; thus self-esteem grows as one develops a defined personality (Erikson, 1959).

Recurring consideration of issues within the three dimensions of work, relationship and aloneness varies according to what a woman experiences rather than to how old she is. Examples of factors that could influence a woman's life choices are the amount of education that she has, the amount of education previous to her marriage, the existence of intimate relationships, the existence or non-existence of children, the status of her family socially and economically. By identifying some of the important life choices a woman has made, some of her specific concerns can be better understood.

#### Sense of identify

Several descriptions of mental health are based on the individual's drive toward self-actualization, fulfillment of one's potential, autonomy and self-direction, and mastery of one's environment (Erikson, 1950; Maslow, 1954; Rogers, 1951). However, many descriptions of the socialization of women in our society indicate that these goals are not possible for many women considering the background that they have (Millet, 1970; Greer, 1971). Many of the stereotypical feminine characteristics are not congruent with the ideal for the self-actualized adult.

For example, a woman is often expected to use others to define her own identity (as already described on p.10, Erikson's statement on female identity formation).

To describe how women see themselves and are seen by others, Freeman (1971) refers to several studies, all concluding with an unfavorable image of women. Some "nice" qualities were included too, but these were not the qualities for which our society gives its highest social rewards. Many women have internalized self-destructive values regarding their abilities. Some women have perceived their daily work as less valuable than the work done by men. Some women have perceived their opinions as less valuable than those of men. Some have accepted that their position in life is second-rate. Negative self-conceptions have negative effects on goal setting, quality of performance and final achievement.

Public media, schools, family and friends all encourage a girl to take care of her physical appearance. Adolescence brings body changes that many girls experience with ambivalent feelings. External changes are noticed by others and interaction patterns change. The extreme concern over one's physical appearance that many women experience is understandable considering the messages most young girls receive. For many women the greatest goal in their lives seems to be 'to look good' for the approval of others. Harmon (1973) points to the price that is paid in self-esteem by the attempts to meet an unattainable standard of physical beauty. Many women can only understand or see their 'self' in terms of how others see the appearance of that 'self'.

Women have been conditioned to base their identity and worth on their ability to elicit strong positive regard from others (Wolowitz, 1972). To meet the needs of others becomes the female need. If female

self-worth is based on interpersonal worth, establishment and maintenance of love relationships becomes a primary focus in life. Bardwick (1971) claims that women develop an independent sense of self later than men. She believes that cultural influences encourage a girl to develop such a strong need for affiliation that if a woman had internalized the general norms, she would need to establish herself in a loving, intimate relationship to be secure enough to develop an independent sense of self. Because of the importance of a woman's relationship to others, her anger is often directed at herself rather than at others who might reject her or criticize her and thus lower her self-esteem (Chesler, 1972).

Establishing a personal identity and gaining confidence in self-worth are lifelong issues. However, an independent sense of self does not develop easily from an identity that is rooted in a concern for limited and specific "others" and for what pleases a few men. For a woman to be concerned for her own potential, to strive for autonomy and self-direction can be threatening to her traditional ideas of femininity.

### Sexuality

The periods of transition from child to adult and adult to old age are more defined for women than for men because of the marked physical changes that occur. For example, the beginning and ending of menses are very definite signs of transition. Changes in the reproductive system are accompanied by both pleasure and pain. Most girls have some information about menstruation before they begin their own cycles. However, cultural myths still exist regarding activities suitable for a menstruating girl. Hormonal changes could increase mood changes. Dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation) is a monthly inconvenience for some. Years of precaution against pregnancy begin. "Becoming a woman" can

seem to have disadvantages the young girl hadn't considered.

Sexual beliefs that influence a person's life style are gradually formed. Cultural inhibitions, internalized over the years, do not disappear over night. Traditionally women were expected to be virgins when they married. They were "to save themselves" for their husbands. Many attitudes implied that women could give sexual contact as a privilege. But a woman could also give her innocence. She was not expected to be knowledgeable about her own sexuality. Many girls have been raised with the belief that having premarital sexual experience will jeopardize their happiness with the man they marry. Some of these early beliefs may still linger in the back of a person's mind even when current sexual practices would seem to indicate that there is a new sexual morality that has replaced all the traditional "hang-ups" (Masters and Johnson, 1974).

Idealized female naïveté regarding sexuality has had wide-spread influence. In the past, most literature on female sexuality was written by men. Individual women often expected their husbands to be experts. Sexual knowledge was the man's prerogative; limit setting was the woman's. Men initiated; women responded. Many women were passive sexual partners because they thought they were supposed to be, and often because they didn't know enough about their sexuality to be otherwise.

Heiman (1975), in an attempt to measure what arouses women sexually, reports that one problem with finding out what women like is that some of them don't know and others don't think they should know. In a study of 42 male and 77 female college students, she found that women like erotica as much as men do, that they are as turned on by sexual descriptions, and that their fantasies are as vivid and self-arousing. However, recognizing that sex is a matter of mind and body, she also compared

subjective reports of sexual excitement with objective physiological measures. The measures of physiological arousal and self-report correlated highly for both sexes, indicating that the majority of these students could label their arousal accurately. But women did make more mistakes than men. For example, of those who showed the largest physiological change in vaginal blood volume, regardless of stimuli, 42 percent said they felt no physical response, 54 percent reported no vaginal sensations, and 63 percent said they felt no signs of lubrication. Since the majority of the women who made such "mistakes" were responding to the least erotic stimuli of the four types used, Heiman speculates that the discrepancy comes partly from women's learned reactions to sexual excitement. As soon as the women did not have external erotic clues to legitimize their arousal, they had trouble recognizing physiological excitement. They did not have a social validation for their physical response, so their minds denied or ignored their bodies. She suggests that one of the reasons behind the problem of women who are nonorgasmic may be their inability to recognize and label the signs of arousal.

Another reason may result from a woman's lack of information regarding "normal" female functioning. Patterns of female orgasm are becoming better understood. The discussion concerning vaginal versus clitoral orgasm seems to be over because of Masters and Johnson's (1966) research. With the new information though there is a danger of a backlash in sexual attitudes. Some women are ashamed to admit that they don't experience orgasm. Others have become as orgasm-focused in their love-making as the men that they criticized ten years ago for that same over-concern. Others have fallen into a pattern of feeling entitled to rather than responsible for their own sexual satisfaction.

A serious danger lies in setting an "ideal" pattern that gives the impression that normal women have one set of body responses. For example, Bardwick (1971) describes three types of sexual response patterns. Level A describes a nice, pleasant feeling of enjoying the sensations but not reaching a high level of excitement. She claims many inexperienced women would experience this level, be satisfied with their sex lives, but not reach peak orgasms. Level B describes a multi-orgasmic response pattern similar to the one described by Masters and Johnson (1966). The woman experiences a number of orgasms varying in intensity and enjoys a gradual decline in the resolution stage. Level C describes a pattern which is compared with that reached by the male. The woman reaches a high plateau stage, swiftly reaches a maximal orgasm and experiences a swift and total resolution phase. She uses the words "skillful and experienced", "mature" to describe what she considers as the highest level of sexual satisfaction.

These labels of good or poor, mature or immature, experienced or inexperienced are not helpful for a woman who is trying to understand and accept her sexuality. The comparison with male sexual arousal and satisfaction patterns seems to imply that there should be a close parallel in ideal female response, which once again sets a male-based standard for female activity. Individual women describe their sexual responses as varying with their mood, their surroundings and the person they are with. The authority for what is being experienced surely must be the person who is experiencing it. The ability to achieve orgasm is only one link in a chain of interactions of the mind/body sets that make up female sexuality.

Pregnancy

When a woman has control over when to have children the possibility exists for flexible life planning. Between the start of menstruation and

menopause, most women are fertile. The fact that a woman's body provides the environment needed for a fetus to develop has been seen by some to determine the way she organizes and understands her world (Erikson, 1964) and to determine the most fulfilling aspect of her life (Erikson, 1964; Bardwick, 1971). That she may become pregnant can certainly influence her life choices. A consideration of whether one should have children or not and when one should have them recurs as well. "Counting the days" until the next menstrual period is a common experience for many. Women are concerned about pregnancy because it affects their other activities to such a large degree.

Becoming pregnant without the decision to do so can have different implications for different women. Some may feel inconvenienced but accepting; others may consider pregnancy as security in their role as mother. Equally possible are feelings of shame, anger, resentment, or guilt depending on social circumstances. Being pregnant and not wanting to have a child or be responsible for a child puts a woman in conflict with herself. Abortion is a possibility, but even when it is the choice of the woman, and the wisest choice for her, ambivalent feelings about herself can result (Rush, 1973). Having the child and putting it up for adoption can produce feelings of self-hate, shame, anger, and guilt. A woman often gets a cultural message that she is supposed to have children but only under certain conditions. Pregnancy is regarded by some as the highlight of womanhood, but the pregnant woman is hardly the culturally demonstrated "ideal womanly figure". The ambivalent feelings about pregnancy exist at a society level as well as at an individual level.

The Boston Women's Health Book Collective (1971) report the need for women to experience their child bearing year as a continuum, beginning

with conception, including the decision to carry the child, pregnancy, labor, delivery, the period immediately after the child is born and the postpartum period. The more a woman knows about and understands the process the more she can accept and cope with the many physical and hormonal changes that take place. Body and emotional changes are interdependent. Grete Birbring and a multidisciplinary research team (quoted in the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1971) have completed a ten-year longitudinal study of pregnant women which shows that some far-reaching psychological changes take place during and after pregnancy. They see pregnancy as a maturational crisis, an "intrinsically psychosomatic developmental step". The maturational crisis begun by pregnancy does not come to resolution with delivery but continues into the postpartum period. Many women experience an emotional upheaval in the initial stage of motherhood. Some are energetic and others are mellow; some are lethargic and depressed while others are irritable and cry easily. Many women feel they have suddenly lost control over their own lives. Feelings of inadequacy and guilt for not being as capable and fulfilled as myths surrounding motherhood promise are common.

Life changes with becoming a parent. Ideally, deciding to become pregnant would involve a conscious decision to change one's life forever. If the experiences of the childbearing year are resolved in a positive way, growth in strength and maturity will have occurred and women are likely to be able to feel positive about their new responsibilities most of the time.

### Relationships

The patterns of a person's relationships include her movement toward, away from or alongside other persons (Gilmore, 1973). Gilmore

identifies five basic dimensions of relationships as: (1) physical and emotional care; (2) support and encouragement; (3) instruction and guidance; (4) cooperation for achieving mutual goals, and (5) continuity and stability.

Being cared for and caring for others are important aspects of life. Individuals who live constructively are able to accept a dependent role and are able to be depended upon, as well as to move on their own. Dependency in healthy relationships involves commitment which means each person recognizes mutual responsibility. A blend of dependence and independence characterizes the well-functioning person.

From healthy relationships with others a person gains support and encouragement to become more independent. A person may see the important people in her life as facilitating or hindering her development. Much of being a valued and responsible individual depends upon learning from and teaching others. One important aspect of instruction and guidance in relationships is knowing oneself and being able to teach someone else about one's self. According to Gilmore, all too often, "Love is viewed as a state of knowing all about another person without having to be told." Because "being in love" often leads to this expectation, many underestimate the value of knowing oneself and sharing feelings and knowledge in a relationship. Many of the ways that people cause one another disappointment are a result of not knowing how to care in the ways that are most effective for the other person. Increased self-knowledge and acceptance of one's own needs would add to one's ability to teach the other person how to understand and show care in a way that would add to the quality of the relationship.

The patterns of "movement alongside" or together with others in

relationships illustrate the amount of cooperation that a person is experiencing. The achievement of mutual goals is necessary in a healthy relationship and demands cooperation. The person who is versatile and flexible can cope constructively with a wide range of situations that demand cooperation.

From relationships a person can have a sense of continuity and stability for her life. But, relationships are not static. Some balance in the amount of novelty and change is necessary so that an individual's life is neither chaotic nor constant, neither frantic nor dull.

As a woman examines her role expectations, she can explore how much of her social conditioning she has internalized. People in relationships can add to their personal satisfactions by sharing expectations and striving to overcome unhealthy or limiting ones. The better a woman knows herself, the straighter she is likely to be when communicating what she wants and feels. Distorted messages and hidden meanings to actions and statements are harmful to healthy relationships.

Traditionally a woman's means of supporting herself depended upon her ability to form and maintain relationships. As well, her self-worth often hinged upon her ability to establish herself in a relationship with a man. Many women seek counseling for help in maintaining the relationship part of their life rather than seeking help for personal growth (Chesler, 1972). Thus the problem that a woman would present to the counselor would often specify lack of happiness in her home rather than lack of personal satisfaction or happiness. A woman's work and identity concerns often depend upon the relationships that she is experiencing.

### Choices regarding work

In adolescence, choices exist regarding adult identity in type of career, amount of education, and whether or not to get married. How are these choices experienced by the young woman? Traditionally, a woman's career was her role in marriage. A more recent pattern has been to marry young, have an out-of-home job for a short time before and after marriage, and then to raise children. Establishing different patterns will likely require conscious decisions. The traditional feminine values are usually held in high regard by the young woman (Bardwick, 1971). In her education and career she may fear that success will lead to unhappiness (Horner, 1969). R. Laing (1961, 1964) gave many examples of mixed messages that young women receive. For example, in one context a girl may understand that she is to get as much education as she can before she marries and at the same time fear if she does too well at learning her chances for being popular (and having boys like her) are lessened. The rewards experienced for scholastic achievement may not outweigh the penalties attached to non-compliance with the "popularity model".

For some, pursuing a career seems in conflict with internalized traditional expectations that a woman should put her time and energy priorities on maintaining her husband and children. Choosing a traditionally "feminine" job can serve to lessen the role confusion that some feel. Jobs that the majority of women currently hold reflect the nurturing, tender, compassionate traits of their characters. Adams (1971) refers to this as "the compassion trap" that keeps women caring for children, caring for sick, serving men, and doing housekeeping tasks for society. The result is the utilization and exploitation of a small segment of female resources.

Even though the majority of young women consider marriage as one of their life choices, many are unprepared for the responsibilities of the traditional wife role. Many have been working or attending school rather than remaining at home learning homemaking skills. Bardwick (1971) reports that in the first two years a young couple are likely to depend on the traditional role definitions for reassurance that they are fulfilling the expectations of marriage. As a result, many young women attempt to be cook and housekeeper, work for which they have little training; and thus feelings of inadequacy, guilt and resentment are common. A newly married woman who has changed her name, her residence and perhaps her job as well, may feel confusion or mild depression not knowing what her identity is.

The daily work done in a home is not work that stays done. Clean floors soon become dirty, food is eaten and the work must be redone. Simone de Beauvoir (1964) refers to the temptation to save evidence of their efforts that some women show in restricting family access to some rooms or in saving preserves even until they are moldy. Perhaps this is one way to combat the feeling that "A woman's work is never done." Chesler (1972) describes the chronic fatigue that many housewives experience and draws a parallel to Thomas Szasz's description of "slave psychology" where the "slave" works to the point of exhaustion (real or imagined), and this fatigue is interpreted as being "on strike against one's boss."

Feeling an inner sense of accomplishment and satisfaction is difficult when work is of a tedious and repetitive nature. The work is not acknowledged by a salary. External rewards often must come from others who notice and express appreciation for the work done. Dependence

on others for feelings of satisfaction is incongruent with a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment arising from one's valuing the work for what it is. In spite of these negative aspects of the work usually done by them, women often feel guilty about any feelings of frustration and resentment that arise. These feelings of guilt or the fear of being called "a bitchy woman" often cause women to be reluctant to express their feelings of frustration with "woman's work".

Motherhood for many is seen as the most basic source of gratification for women (Bardwick, 1971; Erikson, 1964). Yet our society does not give high status or large material rewards to those who raise children. With the emotional rewards may come the accusation of being responsible for all the maladjustments of one's children (Chesler, 1972). For many, being a mother means placing one's own needs second to the needs of children and husband. Relationships with family can seem like an existence of not doing ... a series of things a mother doesn't do for herself so that members of the family can do what they have to do (Cook, 1970). Many mothers feel they are living out a life of duties, performed mechanically and frequently without joy. Many feel unappreciated. Even Bardwick (1971) who says raising children is the most fulfilling job a woman can have, fully acknowledges the daily drudgery, the low status, and the lack of intellectual stimulation that often accompany caring for young children. If women feel they have given up their choice as to how their time and energy is spent, personal dignity and chances for personal satisfaction are lessened. In spite of these factors, the power of social ideology insistentlly works to bring women to feel guilty about seeking any departure from the traditional female function of raising children and being a good wife (Bem and Bem, 1971).

However, being a mother does not have to mean being a full-time housewife. Responsibilities for child rearing can be shared. Since more women are working outside the home than ever before, the need for parents to share the labor in the home is great. Community child care facilities must be available so that choice exists regarding work outside the home or further education. Twenty-four hour care from the biological mother is not necessarily the best for the healthy growth of a child. People of other cultures know this. Rossi (1964) quotes several studies to show that in North America the children of employed mothers are as well-adjusted, intelligent, and responsible as children of mothers working at home.

Social reform and individual attitude change will have to go hand in hand to free individuals from the stereotyped role definitions that limit the options of personal choice. Combining the roles of motherhood, housewife, career person, and social being to suit one's personal choice would promote feelings of individual fulfillment.

Confusion about the importance of having a career outside of the home exists for married women in different social-economic positions. The middle class woman may have been encouraged to get an education so that she would have a career to "fall back on if anything happened to her husband", yet having found personal satisfaction in her education and career, she may feel resentful about not using her training. However, others who must work as joint or prime supporters may feel confusion because employers and society in general hold to the belief that a woman doesn't have to work outside the home.

M. Laing (1971) stated that a problem many women have is no longer being sure which part or parts of themselves to fulfill now that they

have a wider range of possibilities in both career and domestic spheres or in any combination of the two. Janeway (1971) uses a "part-time" concept to understand the diversified nature of woman's work world. Women are often part-time cooks, part-time intellectuals, part-time workers but with full-time responsibilities in each position.

The multiple roles many women fulfill do not have to conflict, but since they traditionally have not co-existed smoothly, a woman's identity is not easily integrated into a wife/mother/career person. Without personal redefinition of the responsibilities of wife and mother roles, the woman with a career may be attempting two full-time jobs. M. Laing (1971) reports that women, in trying to demonstrate the whole range of their talents and personalities (professional, domestic, and social) often wonder if they are using any of them satisfactorily, and even if they are, may feel too exhausted to really enjoy their very full lives. Such attempts to be "Superwoman" are unlikely to allow space for a personal peace of mind - the self-nurturing quiet time that gives a person a frame of mind to integrate her activities and to expand her personality and intellect.

Because women have not traditionally been expected to be employed outside the home, the choice of being a dependent occurs more frequently for women than for men. Many spend part of their lives being wholly wives or mothers. But, however a woman chooses to divide her work activities, the factors that contribute to the focus for that stage of her life may change and choices may recur.

Conflicts are likely to exist with any life-pattern choice for women because the role expectations for women today are not clear. Internal conflicts of individuals often reflect the conflicts in society. Women who choose the new life style possibilities often experience

conflict with traditional values. Women who choose a traditional life style are also torn by changing values in society. Shertzer and Stone (1974) say that many women are caught in a cultural lag; that is, they have an education or a career but are trying to fulfill a traditional life style expectation and as a result perceive themselves as inadequate.

#### Recurring identity search

Whatever the life choices that were made in early adulthood, opportunities for rechoosing occur in adulthood, mature adulthood and old age. For example, if a woman chooses the roles of wife and mother as primary values in her life (a "traditional choice") she faces a time when her children gain their own independence and her value in terms of that role is decreased. The mother and grandmother role overlapped more frequently for our foremothers. Today a woman is likely to experience a time when neither of these traditional identities fits her. Those who developed a sense of self-worth around the roles of wife and mother, may experience a sense of uselessness and worthlessness without the responsibilities of those roles. Severe depression can accompany this feeling of nothingness. Some search for new directions in a hope of redefining themselves. Because our society values people who have jobs, and educational standing, some may grasp at any job, at any education pattern in hopes of gaining a sense of importance. Others think of having another child. The choice of how to pattern one's life is open again as it was during adolescence.

The role identity that a person feels as wife may be lessened by the changing conditions of our culture. Some jobs require men to be away from their families for long periods of time; thus increasing a woman's need for an individual identity. Other women are searching for a sense of their own identity because of divorce or separation. A woman

who chose the traditional identity completely of wife/homemaker may feel she has no value as a person without a husband. Feelings of failure accompany a lack of faith in one's ability to fulfill one's career choice - for some women choose to make marriage their total careers. Some may lack confidence in their ability to do anything outside the home, and others lack confidence in their ability to maintain a home alone. With role identity change, feelings of personal identity loss are common. When important sources of self-esteem and criteria for identity have been lost, new tasks have to be developed in order to experience a feeling of growing and being.

The search for meaning to one's life is continual but crucial periods exist for some women. Around age thirty, some remember childhood dreams of success and experience feelings of wasted potential. For women who have had children, thoughts and feelings of restlessness may occur when the children are in school and no longer the mother's total responsibility. Some feel a readiness to reach out for new activities after ten to fifteen years of marriage (Baruch, 1966 cited in Bardwick, 1971). Thoughts of being separated, of having an affair, of having an independent income, of being important outside the home are accompanied by feelings of excitement, fear and ambition. This period can bring ambivalent feelings about both staying where one is and "stepping out".

Trying to gain a sense of value in a world outside the home means starting at the bottom. A woman who for years has been competent and capable in her home environment has to begin again in a world whose achievement standards do not include home-activities and accomplishments. She starts with low status. The goal of self-worth outside the home must seem a long way off. Fears of failure to obtain the goal prevail.

A woman who has already established herself as a capable homemaker would naturally feel hesitation at risking failure in a new setting. The qualities that are the most helpful in being a good wife and mother are not even the qualities that make the best business person. She has years of experience that won't help her in her new job.

The search for an independent sense of self may lead some married women to consider separation or divorce. The feeling of being trapped in daily activities that are boring and trivial may be so strong that the only way out seems to be to break away from the stifling atmosphere. The world outside one's home may appear to have people and activities that are exciting and valuable. When a woman feels her living situation is boring, and lacking in action, she can either accept the dullness and risk deep depression, or find some way of revitalizing her life. Some are able to adapt their daily routine so that their own self-worth can be maintained. But often feelings of self-worth seem impossible within the maze of social interaction patterns that have been established by the years a couple have lived together. Feeling worthwhile within the conditions of some relationships may be impossible. In trying to establish a healthy sense of self, a person has to consider change and that may include getting out of an unhealthy relationship.

#### Recurring aloneness

Wyckoff (1974) claims that one unhealthy result of sex-role stereotyping is that by developing certain parts of one's character and suppressing others, gaps are created that limit a woman's or a man's potential for being a whole human being. Often what happens is that individuals continually look for another to match with, as if two people could be "two halves" and by coming together could form "a whole".

Individuals may feel incomplete when they lack a partner of the opposite sex or may have a low opinion of themselves when they are not in such a relationship.

A recurring fear of being left alone is experienced by some women at different periods in their lives. Although societal pressures for women to marry may be changing, there is a stigma attached to being "an old maid". Some young women fear that never getting married would mean that they were unacceptable in some sense. Some separated or divorced women dread being alone and some fear that their chances for forming new relationships with men are lessened because they have children.

In each period of a woman's life when she is alone, issues recur: placing priorities for contact with women and men, having sexual contacts, and choosing alternative living arrangements. Traditional standards for interacting with others are slow to change. A woman may find she is once again waiting to be chosen and playing "dating games" she thought she had left behind.

#### Widowhood

Widowhood is a fact of life for many women. Coevering (1971) identifies several developmental tasks for the widow during the stages of the bereavement period. She uses the three stages of impact, recoil and recovery. Concrete tasks of the initial period include arranging for the funeral, determining the financial state of affairs, starting legal estate processing. The recoil stage usually occurs when the funeral is over and the relatives are gone. The widow must then resume household duties, adjust to loneliness and the role of widow and make plans for her future. During these first two stages grief reactions may include intense depression and anxiety with feelings of worthlessness.

ness. The final phase, recovery, involves the tasks of finding a new identity, learning to make decisions and accepting sole responsibility for them, finding a meaningful and emotionally satisfying life, and accepting the physical aspects of a changed status. These stages are particularly difficult for the North American widow because of her dependency on her husband for companionship, friendship, and identity.

Coevering concludes that the most important single adaptation the widow must make is to find a new identity.

#### Physical changes

For some women a middle-age identity crisis is associated with menopause. Cessation of menstruation and accompanying changes of ovarian decline occur for most women between the ages of forty-five and fifty-five. Many of the uncomfortable symptoms of menopause are now attributed to estrogen deficiency, and estrogen replacement therapy is recommended by some (Wilson & Wilson, 1963). Whether the depression that many women report during this period is caused by hormonal changes or is brought on by situational stresses is not established (Sherman, 1971). Bart (1971) concludes from a study of depressed middle-aged women in mental hospitals that forming a sense of worth based on others rather than on one's own self leaves one with feelings of emptiness when those people depart. When a person has no clear role to play in society and very little is expected of her, feelings of worthlessness and nothingness are understandable. If being youthful and bearing children have been primary gratifications, the loss of those qualities will threaten a person's self-worth. Fearing a loss of physical attractiveness and an end to their sex lives causes some to dread menopause. On the other hand, some women report that menopause is not an unpleasant time and resent the

popular image of the haggard, irritable menopausal woman (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1971). In a study of opinion about aging, Neugarten (1968) reports that many women of ages forty to sixty-five see themselves as more confident and more inner directed than before menopause.

The physical signs of aging are more sudden and obvious for women than for men. Feelings of self-worth depend upon self-acceptance which may be difficult for some with daily reminders of societal standards of youthful beauty for women. For some, with age comes the fear of being unwanted, undesirable to others.

### Retirement

Traditionally a woman never did retire. Truly, "A woman's work was never done." For some, retirement just meant the added burden of having a man around the house all day which disrupted daily routine. Having spent their time and developed interests in separate worlds for many years, two people may find they have little in common when suddenly alone together for long periods of time.

Nowadays, a married woman with an out-of-home career may have added concerns. If she married a man older than herself, she may find that he is ready to retire before she is. A woman who began further education for a job of her own at age 35 may only have worked long enough to begin finding personal satisfaction with her job. For the first time, adapting to a husband's work pattern may not be necessary. Some are able to seemingly reverse traditional roles so that the woman may continue her job and the man stay at home.

For some women, retirement means living alone for the first time in their lives. The life expectancy for women is longer than for men, so living alone is a life situation many women have to cope with in their

old age. Even if they have dealt with this issue earlier in their lives, the changing alternatives make this situation a recurring concern.

With old age, some experience a return to family life through the lives of their children. A woman may turn to her children and their families for physical and emotional care. This could be a repetition of the family life and duties that she knew as a child and later as a mother.

#### An independent sense of self

With a strong sense of self, a woman can appreciate her uniqueness and also her connection to all of humanity. A personal philosophy toward life has developed. How one has spent her living reflects the purpose for her life. A person's way of living has prepared her way of dying.

In taking steps toward developing an independent sense of self, a woman may well wonder if she has achieved some degree of personhood as a woman, or jeopardized her possibilities for being fully woman. Added to the confusion arising from her own ambivalent feelings could be the varied reactions of the people she lives with. A recurring theme in Sanity, Madness and the Family (Laing & Esterson, 1964) was that signs of independence and autonomy in a young woman were first seen as improper behavior and then as illness by her family. When a woman's attitude toward her possibilities and personal worth in life begins to change, her life is likely to be disrupted. Daily patterns based on traditional values are likely to seem stifling. Changing perceptions of self and society bring women new sources of guilt, ambivalence, and conflict as well as motivations and patterns of aspirations (Westervelt, 1973).

Women can have ambivalent feelings toward their roles but they can also have ambivalent feelings toward changing their roles.

### Conclusion

The concerns of adult women are identified as depending upon issues in different life stages, depending on important role choices made. Because choices return as life cycles, the spiral is used as a symbol to illustrate the nature of woman's life-line.

Affirmation of self-identity is the most important developmental task for women; because, with a strong sense of self, a woman can find fulfillment in whatever role she chooses in each cycle of her life. Although development of an independent sense of self is a lifelong process, crucial periods of importance for women are described. Some of these depend on physiological changes and accompanying attitudes while others depend on role choices that a woman makes.

The need to increase self-esteem is a common issue underlying many of the problems experienced by women. Some women have low self-esteem because of their attitudes toward their own femaleness and to women in general. Others have low self-esteem because they think they are supposed to place everyone else's needs before their own. Often they are not even aware of their own needs or wants, and not knowing what one wants can reduce one's self-confidence. Others are filled with feelings of self-blame, inadequacy and worthlessness. Some experience their daily living as so useless that feelings of self-worth are impossible. A woman seeking counseling requires help in reducing these factors that keep her self-concept low.

## CHAPTER IV

Examples of Counseling Approaches

Counselors need to first examine their own beliefs and then educate themselves regarding the concerns of women in order to effectively counsel them. They need to be aware of the biological and psychological implications of the various stages in a woman's life and to acknowledge the conflicts presented by the culture and environment of the woman. Counselors need to have current information regarding women in society to help explore and increase the alternatives available for women.

However, counselors also need skills that help a person develop an independent sense of self. Some women planning to change their work role may simply need information, but others may also be seeking self-understanding as they attempt to redefine their importance in the work world. A woman needs to have a strong sense of what is personally gratifying before she can make wise decisions regarding her goals. She needs to develop a willingness to accept or change her life patterns as necessary for her personal satisfaction.

Counselors have recently reported methods, techniques and programs which have been adapted to meet concerns of the modern woman. Approaches are as varied as the counseling schools themselves. In this chapter, examples to demonstrate ways that approaches can be modified for women are described within four areas: women's groups, body awareness and acceptance, assertiveness training, and vocational counseling for the mature woman.

Description of methods within these four counseling areas is not

intended to be a thorough presentation of the particular method, but rather an introduction to demonstrate how each could be used. References to proponents of each method will be included, so that a more complete description could be easily obtained.

These four counseling approaches are not presented as being the only or the most effective methods for counseling women, but rather as approaches that I have experienced as effective. They have been chosen because I have found each of them useful and meaningful in helping women to deal with their concerns in both group and individual counseling sessions. As each method is described, particular issues that were discussed in Chapter III will be referred to in order to show how each method could be useful.

#### Women's groups

One way that being in an all-women's group might be helpful to the woman who is dissatisfied with an aspect of her personal or social functioning is that the structure of the helping relationship differs from the more traditional counselor-client situation.

Chesler (1971) states that a woman seeking psychological help may be placing herself in one more relationship based on dominance/submissiveness, knowledge/innocence, power/powerlessness. This could be unhealthy for a woman who wishes to really change the ways she sees herself and relates to others. If a counselor is part of the women's group, her participation in each group activity is essential for encouraging the group members to value their own experience and to perceive themselves as strong enough to take individual responsibility for personal growth. As a part of a women's group counselors must be sensitive to the values of the women involved and to the amount and type of change they are seeking. J. Lewis (1972), commenting on the number of women's con-

consciousness raising groups in North America, claims that women prefer self-help to counselor help because they fear that a counselor may encourage them toward adjustment to restrictive sex roles rather than toward realization of individual potential.

But why is an all-women's group particularly helpful? In a mixed group women who follow the stereotypical role of dependence, submissiveness and receptiveness are likely to be positively reinforced by the group. Women who have broken this stereotype in their own lives feel reluctant to discuss among men their problems of dealing with feelings of strength, power, competitiveness, sexuality and identity. Patterns of communication between males and females seem to interfere with honest self-examination for some women.

Ramsey (1973), at California State University, conducted a consciousness-raising course for women aiming at increased awareness of the psychosocialization processes of our culture. She claims that an all-female class provided the best environment for women to expand their consciousness regarding the changing and growing options in the work world.

All-women's groups have been reported to work more effectively than mixed groups in connection with counselee problems of identity-loss and lack of self-confidence (Halas, 1973; Cole et al., 1971). Women in groups can begin to recognize the societal nature of their problems. Finding out that other women have similar feelings of doubt and confusion can help a woman to see her problems in a broader context and rather than feel individually overwhelmed by difficulties, she can join with others for collective recognition, support, and solutions.

When women seek counseling they present various problems or concerns from their lives, but beneath the different presenting problems lie a few

strikingly similar themes. These women, in varying degrees, feel isolated, alienated, worthless, lonely, frustrated and helpless. In general, they have low self-esteem and feel they have few personal resources. The sense of isolation, alienation and worthlessness that many women feel is often an issue in their groups. But few women come saying that they feel isolated. More likely they will say, "I have a wonderful husband, lovely children, everything to be thankful for, yet I'm not happy. What's wrong with me?" This attitude of denial and self-blame does little for their feelings of self-worth. The realization that others feel as they do can reduce feelings of self-blame and inadequacy. Because of housing and employment patterns there is more reason for women to feel isolated today than at any time in the past (Janeway, 1971). They need to talk about this isolation as a first step to doing something about changing the social situation that perpetuates it. Examining the sources of their feelings, allowing themselves to express anger or to shed guiltily-stored tears is less threatening among accepting peers than in most other life situations.

Feeling a collective identity with other women, an individual can begin to overcome feelings of self-blame and despair. Feelings of guilt, resentment and inadequacy resulting from the frustration that often accompanies housework or motherhood (as described on p. 46-47) can be acknowledged when one finds that other women experience the situation similarly. Perhaps for the first time, some may feel free to admit the ambivalent feelings they have toward these roles. Expressing feelings of resentment or anger in an appropriate setting can be a way out of depression for many women. Many women are depressed; often they have inappropriately turned their anger toward themselves (Chesler, 1972; Halas, 1973). By recognizing the sources of their anger and having an

outlet to discharge the feelings associated with it, women can be freed for more constructive activity. Each can personally redefine the roles of wife and mother and regain a feeling of choice concerning how to spend her time and energy.

Feeling a collective identity with other women can be helpful for women with some of the other concerns described in Chapter III. For example, Coevering (1971) suggests that the most healthy way for a widow to overcome her feelings of loneliness and lack of identity may be in a widow-to-widow approach. Widows report that friends, physicians or clergy are not usually as ready to accept the varied stages of grief as those who have experienced the situation. In other loss situations, such as separation or divorce, women can gain support and acceptance from peers for the various feelings they experience in the different stages of recovery.

The descriptions in Chapter III of the various developmental tasks of womanhood often stressed the need for increased self-knowledge and acceptance of one's needs. Women's groups can facilitate the sharing of personal experiences so that information can be gathered and myths dispelled. One example of an organized attempt by women to educate themselves as to their own body functioning is the formation of health collectives.

Women's health collectives provide information and support for individuals in a move to reject the authoritarianism of our health care system. The contacts that women make with doctors and hospitals surrounding pregnancy and child care are often not "illness" situations. Self-help groups are forming for health education to increase a woman's knowledge and acceptance of her body. With added confidence, women are sharing with others information regarding their bodies and performing

for themselves some of the procedures usually done by doctors.

Information on female sexuality and accompanying attitude change must be shared among women as well as between women and men. Shulman (1971) says that women are concerned for themselves, but each tends to assume that she is unique in her concerns. For example, a woman may think that other women must be experiencing sexual satisfaction, and that there is really something wrong only with her. The isolation of women from other women for sharing and revealing important personal matters contributes to self-blame and unsureness. Women can share their personal knowledge of sexual experience and find out what patterns of sexuality they have. A woman is only frustrated in reading of clitoral orgasm if she doesn't know where or what the clitoris is. Finding out that women masturbate, even that it is not evil to look at one's genitals can be important steps for some women (Frankfort, 1972). Some women allow a doctor, a husband or a lover (often all males) to see or touch their genitals, but do not give themselves that freedom. Gaining knowledge about oneself is an important step to being sexually satisfied.

In many ways, female sexual patterns are just beginning to be understood. Women have to share what they know and learn about their own patterns before generalizations can be made.

Women's groups are useful to help women take personal responsibility for change, to expand their consciousness regarding the changing and growing options for women, to gain self-confidence and identity. Group members can appreciate the commonality of their condition and begin to feel strength and support from other women. They can share experiences and beliefs and increase their self-knowledge. Feeling a collective identity with other women, an individual can begin to overcome feelings of self-blame

and unsureness. A woman's image of women can improve. Gradually, a more positive self-concept can develop and a woman can gain a more independent sense of herself.

#### Body awareness and acceptance

The need for women to increase self-esteem and decrease personal dissatisfaction underlies many of the problems that bring them to counseling. How a person views her body (herself) influences what she sees in others and how she relates to them. It is reflected in the way that she presents herself and in the way others act toward her. In order to build self-esteem, a woman needs to develop a more favorable image of femaleness, to increase her self-acceptance (including acceptance of her body), and to increase her awareness of body sensations.

The unfavorable image that women often have of femaleness (as described on p.36) adds to their low self-esteem. Ancient societal myths and taboos regarding menstruation, pregnancy, and menopause still influence women's opinions of their own body functioning. Theories (as those described in Chapter II) regarding female physical and emotional inferiority, female envy of masculinity, or female social and sexual fulfillment totally dependent on pregnancy/child bearing/child rearing add to the restrictive view that some women have of their abilities. Some women limit their activities believing in the weakness and fragility of women in general. Such cultural attitudes are harmful to woman's self-concept and create barriers to self-acceptance.

The media of our society continually present an image of a physically "beautiful" woman, often in attendance on a man. Standards for physical qualities and "womanly" duties are set. The message is accepted in varied degrees and as a result many women struggle with unrealistic

expectations for themselves. Our society's worship of the female body sets a narrow mold for admirable body characteristics that is impossible for the majority to obtain. Yet, advertisements continually encourage women to strive for something closer to the "ideal". Wyckoff (1974) sees the issue of women's breasts as a particularly relevant example. They are judged so much by others and compared to the media image of what beautiful breasts are supposed to be that they often become lacking in feeling. Their visual value has become the most important quality. A woman needs to decrease her attempts to meet unattainable standards of physical beauty and increase her acceptance of her body.

With increased self-acceptance a woman can begin to increase her awareness of body sensations. Women who deny the sensations that they are feeling (example described on p. 38) may be unable to focus their attention on their inner body reactions; they may truly not know what body sensations they have. This may be because they have placed higher priority on outer looks than on inner feelings. Increased acceptance of physical sensations could lead to more unity in the feelings and thoughts a person is experiencing.

Anne Kent Rush (1973) suggests the use of techniques from body therapies for women to heal distorted self-images, to be more aware of physical sensations and to progress toward thinking and feeling in unity. Body therapy does not mean the exclusion of physical processes, but the inclusion of physical processes. The basic philosophy is that mental/emotional attitudes are accompanied by body expressions in the form of tensions or pleasure sensations depending on the stimulus. Health is defined as a balanced development of mind and body, an integration of actions, thoughts, and feelings.

A few specific examples of body therapy techniques to illustrate what can be done to facilitate body awareness and acceptance may be more meaningful than an attempt to generally describe "body therapy".

1. Attention is given to the way a person expresses herself non-verbally. How a person holds or carries herself and her use of various body parts gives others an impression of her feelings about herself. However, people are often unaware of messages they are sending. Having gestures or body positions pointed out can often draw a person's attention to the feelings that accompany the words being spoken.
2. Awareness of one's feelings toward her body can often be increased by asking a woman to examine what part of her body she hides or what part she emphasizes in the way she dresses and carries herself. Being able to acknowledge dislike for a body part can be the first step to examining the expectations that she holds for herself. Also, acknowledging positive feelings about one's self can gradually reduce over-attention to the negative feelings a person has and thus increase her self-acceptance. The next examples illustrate body therapy techniques that could increase awareness of body sensations.
3. Relaxation exercises can help a person become aware of body tensions. The person who is leading the exercise usually has participants sit or lie down and gradually increase the depth of their breathing. Then verbal instructions are given to guide the participants' attention to specific body parts and to help them acknowledge and release body tensions. Many participants report that they were unaware of the tensions that they had until their attention was drawn to them. The feeling of well-being with the release of tensions should encourage the participants to use the same techniques to help themselves "feel better" in many situations in their lives.

4. Breathing exercises can increase awareness of patterns of breathing and sensitivity to body sensations. 5. Non-verbal exercises done in pairs can help participants focus on their feelings and body sensations when they are interacting. For example, two people can stand side-by-side, with shoulders touching, and gradually experiment with leaning on each other. They do the exercise without words with their eyes closed and attempt to pay attention to feelings and body tensions that they experienced. Afterward each can discuss with her partner how she felt when she was leaning, how she showed when she had had enough, or what she felt when her partner leaned on her longer than she cared to give support. These examples are based on the belief that attention to one's body sensations is likely to increase knowledge of one's feelings and the ways that they are expressed. Many of the techniques can help a person examine her feelings in situations beyond the actual exercise.

The first issue discussed under woman's need to increase her self-esteem is to develop a more favorable image of femaleness. Perhaps the best way to achieve this is to be with women and share experiences with them. Myths and taboos about "untouchable" female body functions can often be dispelled with discussion that examines the roots of these myths, includes a variety of experiences and beliefs, and focuses on information that is now available about female body patterns. One non-verbal method that is valuable for helping women feel good about themselves and other women is massage. Liking for one's body is often increased because the person "feels good" during and following the massage. Awareness of body tensions and sensations is also increased.

There are many more body therapy techniques that have been adapted to meet the concerns of the woman in counseling. The examples offered

here are meant to illustrate as simply as possible some ways that body awareness and acceptance could be increased.

Body therapy techniques can be helpful for women who have participated in consciousness-raising groups but who feel they lack the resources and self-confidence to change their actions. Rather than attempting to adjust to some "sociological ideal" for all to fit into, a woman can learn to relax into herself, to pay attention to herself, and to trust her own standards. With a growing sense of her personal strength and uniqueness, a woman can change her attitudes and self-defeating behaviors and gain in self-confidence.

Much of Rush's body work for women is based on the belief that self-knowledge and the ability to examine and give pleasure to herself adds to a woman's ability to enjoy herself with others in work and play. Rush (1973) stresses the importance of women reclaiming their sexuality. Unfortunately, sex has often been traditionally viewed as a feminine "weapon", something that women could use to manipulate men. Holding out sexually may have been one of the few strongholds for a woman who saw herself as powerless in a relationship. With added self-knowledge, examinations of expectations in relationships, and reclaiming of personal pleasure, such self-defeating behaviors may be eliminated.

Three underlying concerns of women have been described: her need to develop a more favorable image of femaleness, her need to increase self-acceptance, and her need to increase awareness of body sensations. As a woman increases her acceptance in one of these areas, she is able to develop each of the other areas more meaningfully. Thus, these cannot be viewed as steps to building self-esteem, but rather as cycles in personal growth.

### Assertiveness training

If the traditional feminine response patterns include passiveness, non-assertiveness, and subordination, women must break out of these patterns in order to build their self-esteem. Women who desire change need skills to reduce self-defeating behaviors.

Jakubowski-Spector (1973) describes how assertiveness training (a program initially described by Alberti and Emmons, 1970 and Lazarus, 1971) can be adapted to work effectively with some of the problems that women bring to counselors. In job and home interactions, many people feel inadequate when expressing opinions or beliefs and are left with the impression that they have been taken advantage of or that their opinion has not been considered. Women find themselves in many situations where such feelings do arise. Commonly, the type of employment that women have involves being of service to others. Interpersonal relationships have traditionally been areas for female gratification. A woman may fear that voicing complaints could damage her relationship or that others may depreciate her. Sexually, she may know what she finds stimulating or irritating, but fears offending someone else by requesting different behaviors. She may fear that asking for some change would "not please" the other person and that she would be rejected.

These anxieties must be considered first, so that the woman is willing to learn ways to assert herself that will not violate her or others' rights. Learning how to present small reasonable complaints can prevent storing of grievances until a blow-up occurs. A woman may be non-assertive in some situations, be aggressive in others, and be assertive in still others. Her goal would be to increase the areas of her life where she can be assertive. She may need to examine the

situations in which she is aggressive and practice ways in which she can express her feelings without hurting or depreciating others. Many somatic complaints which have a psychogenic origin can be alleviated by reducing tension and anxiety resulting from inhibited reactions in cases of consistently non-assertive women.

Assertiveness training helps a woman to be strong and personally effective and to be feminine as well. The program has three goals: (a) to educate the woman to her interpersonal rights, (b) to overcome whatever blocks exist to acting assertively, and (c) to develop and refine assertive behavior through active practice methods. A belief system is established so that a woman can accept that her feelings and personal rights do matter. The client presents specific situations from her everyday life with which she is willing to practice varying responses with the counselor. A role play is designed to rehearse specific responses, the counselor also models for that situation, and the client learns by doing better each time that she tries. Her confidence increases and her anxiety about consequences decreases as she becomes more skilled in the new behavior. When a person has the necessary skills, she can choose her behavior in situations with increased responsibility. Being non-assertive may be wise in some situations, but the choice to be non-assertive can give a person a healthy feeling of self-worth.

This is one counseling method proposed to directly influence the attitudes and behavior of the woman who is dissatisfied with her present life style. Jakubowski-Spector claims the issue of "assertiveness" is particularly suited to social problems some women experience today.

### Vocational counseling for the mature woman

A woman may seek counseling for help in clarifying or changing her roles regarding her work or her relationships. Different role choices occur at various times throughout the life cycle. As role choices recur, the factors surrounding the choice-point may vary. Recent social change indicates that alternatives to the traditional feminine pattern may be increasing. However, to consider any options or to decide for herself what life style would be self-satisfying, a woman must know what options there are and what implications for living would accompany different choices.

Women who return for education or careers in mid-life have been described as a special clientele for counselors (Barbier, 1971; Cook, 1970; Fitzgerald, 1973; Matthews, 1969). Matthews points out that counseling for the mature woman is mainly for the women of suburbia; not because they are the most important, but because they are the women who come for counseling. Cook further distinguishes these women as unlikely to be those who identify with the TV stereotype of the happy housewife. These are likely to be women in a transition period, searching for new identity during the second half of their lives.

In order to find out what kinds of counseling services these women need, counselors need to listen closely to what the women themselves are saying, and even to how they are saying it. Some are asking questions that require community information that counselors can answer. However, others are asking for self-knowledge and they seek help in understanding themselves. Longer term, more extensive counseling is usually needed to help a person gain confidence in her abilities and acceptance of her personal qualities. Frequently women in this second

group do not know what they want to do nor what they would be good at for they have no clear sense of identity that can be translated into concrete life tasks. Their acceptance of traditional feminine values has led them to subordinate their personal goals for the sake of the family. In a counseling situation these women may be expressing needs for increased self-confidence, acceptance of a new role from their families, and updating or expanding of their previous education or career skills. For the purpose of explanation, these three major concerns will be dealt with separately.

Need for increased self-confidence. In mid-life, a woman may experience a void due to diminished family responsibility. She may have feelings of doubts about herself and her worth, frustrations with her daily activities, feelings of being left behind in education and mental development. A significant number of women feel an unsettling discontentment with the housewife role, but fear that to express such feelings would be disloyal to their loved ones who seem satisfied with the situation.

It is important for a woman to know that her needs for educational and emotional satisfaction are common for her age and background. Women in groups can give each other courage to explore their feelings and can provide support to each other in their search for individual worth. Activities that add to a person's self-esteem are crucial in this period, for confidence can be built gradually on small personal successes. As an individual matures, she is less likely to be influenced by traditional socializing factors and increasingly motivated by internal self-directedness, particularly if she can gain the confidence necessary to trust her own standards.

Self-discovery must involve a discovery of the woman's own needs, talents and strengths. Support must then be available so that she can begin to move purposefully to develop them. She must also learn what her limitations are. Failure as a result of unrealistic goals is unnecessary. Self-affirmation requires long-term concentrated effort because what is involved is often an internal revolution. Uncertainties and anxieties must be acknowledged and small steps taken toward confidence building. For example, a woman who feels that it is aggressive and unfeminine to drive steadfastly toward a goal of her own choosing may benefit from learning to distinguish between assertiveness and aggression and in developing some skills in asserting herself.

With a stronger sense of self, a woman has the ability to make more confident decisions and feel better about herself. The feelings of self-worth grow like a spiral. Each decision made and followed by action builds on the existing self-confidence which is a basis for further decisions.

Acceptance from families. It is extremely important that a woman does not further lower her self-esteem with feelings of guilt regarding her family. Counselors might help a woman to realize that withdrawing some of her time and energy from her family is not withdrawing her love and care. Matthews (1969) claims that many of a woman's misunderstandings and conflicts stem from her family's lack of qualitative involvement in the decision-making process. Small groups of women and their families need to be involved in group counseling experiences. Family members can discuss why mother/wife is thinking about work or education, what kinds of plans she is considering, what kinds of changes this may bring about in the home, and what suggestions each family member has to contribute.

Feelings of stress and resentment can be felt, expressed and talked over. A reasonable level of acceptance and a workable plan for time, energy and money can contribute enormously to a woman's security and commitment.

Up-dating and/or expanding previous education. Counselors can assist a woman in determining her new course of action. A woman's vocational choice may have changed to reflect her new level of self-esteem. Matthews (1969) suggests several steps that a counselor can work through with the client to facilitate successful vocational plans. For example, role playing can be used as a means of vocational experimentation. Vocational planning can utilize preference tests and career-choice models. Marilyn Cole (1975) co-ordinated a program called Contemporary Woman: Options and Opportunities and included practice in writing tests and discussions of scoring and interpreting the various placement tests in order to add to the test-taking skills and lessen the anxiety felt by women who have been away from testing situations for years.

A continued counseling support system is needed when a woman is ready to implement her vocational plans. Andrews (1973) describes a group counseling program that was established to assist women in adjusting to their new roles as students. Gradually the initial shock accompanying the entry into such a new environment can be replaced by feelings of confidence and belonging.

Matthews (1969) stresses that counseling contact should continue through the stages of vocational analysis, resynthesis, and further development of resources. Integration of skills learned while working in the home and with the family can be encouraged by stimulation and support from other women.

Later, Matthews (1970) stresses experiencing the process of decision

making rather than the content as the key to vocational exploration. The development of self-concept and self-study skills is the key to continued personal satisfaction.

#### Process of change

Change involves re-examination of daily life patterns. Commenting on the process of change, Anne Kent Rush (Mander & Rush, 1974) says, I have found, for myself and for most other women, that the "progress" toward freedom from confining conditioning is erratic: sometimes I feel ecstatic and free and clear and like a "new woman" and sometimes I feel horribly discouraged or scared or like the same old person as when I began long ago! The ups and downs, I have found are the normal cycles of growth to be expected. I go through changes in spiral patterns, continuously moving, never going down quite as far as where I started, allowing myself (and others), becoming more me. (p. 94)

#### Conclusion

Four counseling approaches that have been modified for women are described: women's groups, body awareness and acceptance, assertiveness training and vocational counseling for the mature woman. These have been chosen to demonstrate how different counseling approaches could be modified to meet the developmental life issues of modern women. With added knowledge of the unique issues of concern, counselors could adapt their preferred methods to more effectively counsel women.

## CHAPTER V

Summary and Conclusion of StudyPurpose

This study has two main goals: first, to outline some developmental life tasks or issues of adult women that might bring them to counseling; and second, to describe certain counseling approaches modified for women.

Summary of results of study

The concerns of adult women are identified as depending upon issues in different life stages. The spiral is used as a life-line symbol to illustrate the recurring nature of many of the choices and concerns of women.

Role choices. The important role choices that a woman has made are described as determining the life issues relevant in each stage. In adolescence and young adulthood choices for work and relationship commitments are experienced by everyone. However, most women experience the choices in a different way than most men. For example, more women than men have the choice to be completely dependent or to share economic responsibility in a relationship. Traditionally a woman was expected to form a marriage relationship and spend her time caring for her husband, children, and house. Decisions to pursue an education or a career are in conflict with this long-standing expectation and may cause conflict for the woman. Also, making a career or education commitment may seem to restrict a woman's opportunities for relationships and jeopardize her chances of getting married.

Regardless of what choice a woman makes in early adulthood, role

choices recur as she grows older and the factors influencing her decisions change. For example, if she chose a motherhood role, her situation changes when all her children are attending school and again when they all leave home. If she chose a wife role, her situation changes with separation, divorce or death of her spouse (this last factor is far more frequently experienced by women than by men). If she had been an economically dependent wife, her situation changes even more dramatically. Any of these factors may cause a woman to consider initial or re-entry into the job or education worlds during adulthood. Few men have the experience of receiving their first paycheck after they have turned thirty-five or forty. Men who do change jobs or decide to continue education in mid-life have usually not been completely out of the labor market for fifteen years. However, as many women do experience situations like these, their conflicts, doubts and concerns need special attention.

Crucial periods. Affirmation of self-identity is described as the most important underlying developmental task for women; because, with a strong sense of self, a woman can find fulfillment in whatever role she chooses in each cycle of her life. Although development of an independent sense of self is a lifelong process, crucial periods of importance for women are described. Some of these are experienced in varying degrees of intensity by all women because they are triggered by physiological changes, while others are dependent on role choices that a woman makes. Crucial periods in a woman's identity formation are: 1. the beginning of menses, 2. pregnancy, 3. birth of her children, 4. the cessation of menses. A woman's attitude to female body functioning is influenced by the social factors that surround these events. But these events are accompanied by hormonal changes and frequently by added emotional stress

as well, and the way a woman copes with these can vary with the attitudes, values and knowledge held by her and significant others in her life.

Other crucial periods in identity formation may occur: 1. with marriage, 2. with birth of first child, 3. when all children are in school, 4. around age 30, 5. after 10-15 years of marriage, 6. with separation or divorce, 7. with death of spouse, 8. with retirement from out-of-home job, 9. with husband's retirement. A woman's self-esteem is confirmed by the way each of these crucial periods is experienced.

Self-esteem. The need to increase self-esteem is identified as a common underlying issue to the problems many women bring to counselors. Some women have low self-esteem because of their attitudes toward their own femaleness and to women in general. Others have low self-esteem because they think they are supposed to place everyone else's needs before their own. Often they are not even aware of their own needs or wants, and not knowing what one wants can add to one's lack of self-confidence. Others are filled with feelings of self-blame, inadequacy and worthlessness. Some experience their daily living as so useless that feelings of self-worth are impossible.

In order to increase their self-esteem women need to develop a more positive attitude to themselves as women; to increase their self-knowledge; to acknowledge and get rid of their feelings of resentment, self-blame, isolation and inadequacy; to develop skills to break out of the traditional "feminine" response patterns; and to revitalize their lives to reflect their individual values.

Counseling approaches. Four counseling approaches are described as examples of methods that have been modified to effectively counsel women. Each method is helpful in meeting some of the five major needs identified

in the last paragraph as being necessary for the development of a healthy self-concept. (1) All-women's groups are particularly valuable for developing a more positive attitude toward women and women's problems, and for acknowledging and getting rid of feelings of self-blame, inadequacy and isolation. They are also valuable for gaining a collective identity and for sharing information and support. A sense of personal value and increased self-confidence are possible results. (2) Increased body acceptance is of particular importance because a woman's identity is often closely related to her body image. Techniques from body therapies are suggested to help a woman develop a more favorable image of femaleness, increase her self-acceptance, and increase her awareness of body sensations. (3) Assertiveness training is described as a method to facilitate a woman's acceptance of her interpersonal rights and to provide skills for expressing herself without violating the rights of herself or others. This would be particularly valuable for acknowledging and expressing feelings of resentment in a way that is not self-defeating. Assertiveness training also helps a woman develop skills to break out of the traditional "feminine" response patterns. (4) Vocational counseling for the mature woman is described as involving confidence building, inclusion of family members, and updating or expanding previous education. A continued counseling support system is recommended for implementation of vocational plans. With a higher level of self-acceptance and added confidence in her own individual values, a woman may revitalize her daily life and feel satisfaction in either her in-home or out-of-home career.

#### Suggestions for further research

Developmental tasks and issues for the entire life span need to be presented for females. Information that has been published on early

childhood, school age and adolescent concerns for girls should be compiled. An entire life-span framework could be a starting point for understanding the developmental patterns of women. As described in Chapter II, the specific developmental concerns of women have not been adequately explored to date.

Research is needed regarding the amount of hormonal change that a woman experiences with menstruation, pregnancy, post-partum and menopause. The amount of emotional stress that accompanies the hormonal changes associated with these events varies among women in our culture and with women of our culture compared to women of other cultures. Hormonal tests of women experiencing extreme emotional distress could be compared with hormonal tests of women experiencing little or no emotional distress in each of these periods of change. If a sudden change in a woman's hormonal balance should be established to correlate with emotional distress, the means of helping the woman to overcome her distress might be hormonal treatment. In any case, more information on the effects of hormonal changes could reduce the myths regarding women and hormonally affected mood changes that have been used in our society to limit the activities of women.

Several sociologically based events are described to illustrate the special circumstances of many women. Rapid change in culturally approved roles is described as causing added conflict for today's woman. Empirical research would be useful to indicate whether the special social situations and conflicts described in this thesis are in fact the problems that do cause women to seek counseling. Most statistical reports to date record the client's problem as diagnosed by the psychiatrist or hospital rather than the problem as presented by the

client. With statistical attention to the presented problems of clients, situational factors of women seeking counseling may be identified. From such evidence, factors common to the situations in which women find themselves could be identified and the knowledge could be used to initiate social change.

The first issue identified for effective counseling of women is that counselors need to first examine their own beliefs and then educate themselves regarding the concerns of women. Research could determine which type of counselor training program would effectively prepare counselors of women. Experiences that would be the most helpful for counselors doing this specialized work have not been established.

Four counseling methods are described in Chapter IV of this thesis as examples of counseling approaches that have been reported to meet some of the current concerns of women. Each of the methods described here needs to be tested and evaluated to establish if it does in fact help women increase their self-esteem.

Further testing is needed on the five aspects of personal development that are identified as leading to increased self-esteem. For example, does a more positive attitude toward women in general correlate with an increase in self-esteem? Then, pre- and post-tests could be done on participants in the counseling methods described under the headings of Women's Groups and Body Awareness and Acceptance in Chapter IV, to establish if a growth in positive attitudes toward women and an increase in self-esteem could be shown.

Only four counseling methods that have been modified to meet the current needs of women are described. Research into a wider variety of counseling approaches would probably reveal other methods that are also

working effectively with women. From this, a comprehensive handbook of counseling methods and techniques could be compiled for counselors of women.

In general, the need is for research on specific topics to diminish the number of areas that are open to individual interpretation (for example, effects of hormonal and sociological changes; effectiveness of specific counseling programs). Such specific information could then be compiled in a comprehensive framework outlining the developmental patterns of women.

#### Conclusion of study

Because of sociological and biological determinants, women's life patterns contain specific developmental tasks and issues. Counselors must give attention to the person who is experiencing each biological or sociological life change, and help that person work toward a positive affirmation of her identity. Having a strong sense of self, one appreciates one's uniqueness, one's separateness and one's unity with humanity.

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VITA

Surname: Pendergast (Nee: Miller) Given Names: Barbara Ann  
Place of Birth: Westlock, Alberta Date of Birth: October 11, 1944

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

Mount Royal College, Calgary, Alberta	1962 to 1963
University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta	1963 to 1965
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta	1966 to 1967

Degrees, Diplomas, etc., Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B. Ed.	1967	University of Alberta, Edmonton
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Honors and Awards:

Publications:

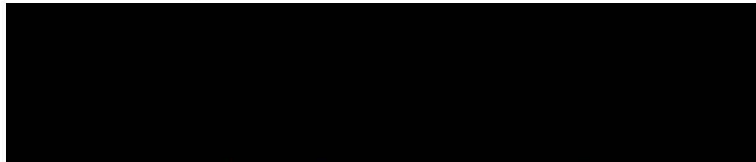
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SPECIALIZED COUNSELING FOR WOMEN

Author



Signature

Barbara A. Pendergast

Name

December 1, 1975

Date