

## **On the Psychology of Young Women: Two Clinical Monographs—Introduction**

**Joseph Adelson<sup>1</sup>**

*Received January 2, 1973*

These two splendid monographs give us reason to be optimistic about the immediate future of work on the psychology of youth and adolescence: not only because of the youthfulness of the authors (they are both still in their 20s), and not only because of the considerable merits of the studies themselves, but also because they signal the emergence of some much needed departures in our collective strategy of inquiry. Let me say what I think these are.

1. These are studies of young *women*. Any student of work in our field can sense the degree to which we have, for the most part tacitly, neglected the psychology of women. Any close student will further sense that many of our general theories of personality are, again tacitly, masculine theories, in that they provide schemas of action and experience which “fit” mainly or only the behavior and sensibility of the male. There are many signs that we may be moving beyond such parochialism. Some of the credit is no doubt due to the impetus provided by the Women’s Liberation Movement. Unfortunately, much of this latter work is politicized and thus deeply tendentious. To see women (or any other group) as mere vessels of typing and oppression is to reduce human complexity and, ironically, to exchange the simple-mindedness of the past for new and more fashionable forms of simple-mindedness. The studies which follow, though by no means free of hypothesis, are blessedly free of tendentiousness.

2. These are studies of *normal* young women. For both good and

<sup>1</sup>Department of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Dr. Adelson is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*.

not-so-good reasons, we have been excessively preoccupied with the pathological, the deviant, and the otherwise special; it is as though we trouble to study the young only when we find them troubling. Thus we know far more about those who are delinquent or addicted or disturbed or alienated than we do about the many more who are not. Another form of parochialism, then, and another one we must move beyond. These two monographs tell us that the study of the center is as intriguing as (and far more demanding than) the study of the poles.

3. These are *clinical* studies of normal young women. Many of us give at least lip-service to the idea that the distinction between "clinical" and "empirical" is arbitrary and beyond that false; nevertheless, the distinction hangs on, relentlessly, and so we have a "clinical" literature which, at its frequent worst, is a string of anecdotes and an "empirical" literature which, at its frequent worst, is a set of numbers signifying little but the spurious triumph of the statistical will over the murk of reality. The studies we have here are exemplary in displaying strategies wherein clinical and empirical methods of investigation enhance each other. In one case (Hatcher), earlier clinical observations are used to generate hypotheses which are then tested, the tests being deepened by further clinical observation. In the other (Josselson), earlier clinical observations have been formulated into an empirically tested typology, which is now deepened by intensive and systematic clinical observation.

4. These are clinical studies of normal young women which employ a *developmental* framework. Research on youth and adolescence has not yet exploited fully the power of the developmental perspective. Most of our effort has gone into the analysis of adolescent types, a strategy which has its uses for many problems; but we have only recently begun to explore the sequential phases of adolescence, inquiring into the temporal variations and their consequences. The extraordinary utility of a stage approach is demonstrated by the studies reported in this issue, particularly in that they suggest that fixations at certain stages have powerful effects on the adolescent experience, and that these may indeed form the basis for new and heuristic typologies.