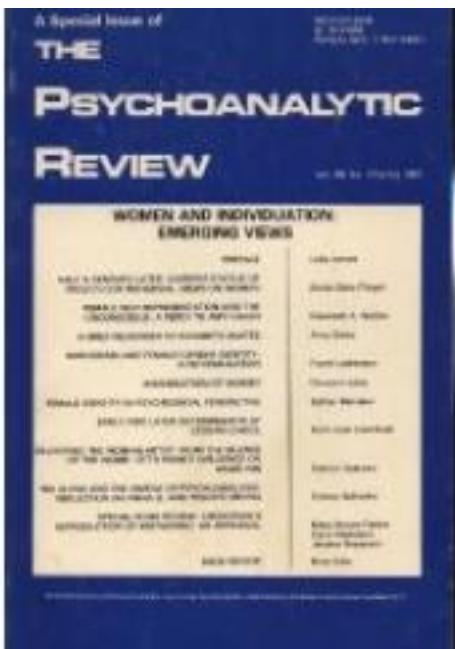


# Women and Individuation: Emerging Views



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In the last two decades Freud's views on women have been subject to careful scrutiny and reformation both within and outside psychoanalysis. In the wake of the social, economic and political revolution of our times the foundations of the traditional patriarchal family have been shaken, changing radically the relationships between men and women. Whether driven by economic necessity or the need for creative self expression women of all classes now participate at all levels of society in a wide variety of occupations and life styles. The impact of this tumultuous change on women's consciousness, individuation and self-image is a major preoccupation of social scientists who are on the forefront of the debate concerning the psychoanalytic theory of feminine development. Within psychoanalysis itself clinicians turn

increasingly to empirical studies of child development to validate or refute or rework Freud's ideas. This endeavor is in the spirit of Freud's own insistence upon the value of direct observation. Yet it has led to a paradox whereby the same evidence is often used by different theorists both to confirm and disprove classical theory. As if this were not confusing enough, a highly articulate group following Lacan's view that psychoanalysis is an interpretative discipline dismiss empirical proof as irrelevant for psychoanalysis. While the controversy on methodology rages, a proliferation of studies on women's individuation have poured forth, generated by the ferment within psychoanalysis. The new formulations are the outgrowth of the changing perspectives on narcissism, the increased understanding of the preoedipal years, the work on attachment behavior and the mother-child dyad, and most recently, the influential studies of gender identity formation. Foremost among the new ideas is Stoller's concept of a core gender identity that revives and extends Jones's and Horney's objections to Freud's normative psychosexual stages for women. A core gender identity represents an awareness each child develops of being either

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