In the last decade empirical research has supported new theoretical formulations regarding female adolescent development. This new research suggests that gender is socially constructed and that there is a separate line of psychological-social development for females. On the cutting edge of psychodynamic theoretical reformulations are feminist theorists who regard this separate line of development as having special female qualities. Such theories conceptualize female development as being based on affiliation needs of interdependence, nurturance, and care. This theoretical formulation is profoundly different from what we have come to know as the recapitulation theory in adolescent development. Heretofore adolescent development has been conceptualized from a male point of view. These new theoretical insights challenge traditional or NeoFreudian conceptualizations of female adolescence as a second separation-individuation phase of development or a reactivation of earlier oedipal conflicts.

Much to the credit of Max Sugar, this Second Edition of Female Adolescent Development includes articles which embody feminist theories of adolescent female development. Dr. Sugar has edited a collection of comprehensible and cogent articles which draw material from both clinical practice and research. The volume has twelve chapters with easily accessible references at the end of each chapter. The work is divided into three domains entitled: Biological Issues; Psychodynamics; and Psychosocial Issues respectively. All in all the authors attempt to explore, within these topical areas, the meaning of femaleness in contemporary western society.

These scholarly contributors are not engaged in polemics here but present theoretical formulations which undergird research or clinical practice. One surmises that some of the contributors are practicing analysts. One author describes clinical work with female adolescent analysands who struggle with issues related to the interpersonal negotiation of changing body images. In short, what is explicated in this collection of readings are issues of normative development as well as
psychopathology. Exceptions, however, are articles which offer a review of current research literature when exploring a particular area of focus related to adolescent development. The chapter on minority group status, for instance, offers extensive reportage on culture and ethnicity research.

Judith S. Dubas and Anne C. Petersen, authors of the volume’s first two chapters (pp. 3–27), explore research in female pubertal and cognitive development. New ground is covered in this section’s presentation of research studies which explore the bio-psychosocial context of puberty. What is of significance in these studies is the notion that puberty is not a single event but a developmental process which consists of a series of pubertal markers and effects.

Interestingly, research findings reviewed suggest that menarche is only one pubertal marker which occurs later than most others for the female adolescent. For example, reproductive maturity which involves endocrine and somatic development begins anywhere between the ages of eight and eleven years of age. It is suggested that the adolescent female is fully advancing toward biological maturity by the time menarche occurs. Until now it seemed reasonable to assume that there may be a direct cause and effect relationship between psychosocial functioning, pubertal status or pubertal timing. However, the more important issue for researchers is not cause and effect correlates, but an examination of the circumstances under which pubertal effects occur.

In the second chapter the authors inform that current cognitive studies question traditional beliefs about the cognitive abilities of female adolescents. The reader is disabused of the generally held notion that gender differences in cognitive abilities emerge at adolescence. Additionally, reported here is emergent research which examines hormonal influences in cognition related to gender differences. On the whole present research findings suggest that the proportion of sex-related differences in cognitive functioning has decreased remarkably within the last two decades. The implications of much of this new research is that sex-related differences in cognitive function occur primarily because of the differential socialization experiences of males and females.

Clearly, the Psychodynamics section is one which makes for exciting, interesting and provocative reading. Here authors employ conceptualizations of affiliation and interdependence in the clinical assessment of the female adolescent client. One of the more discerning articles is one wherein authors, Muslin and Lewis (pp. 81–96), at-