

anything in the present or future. The nostalgic person is past-oriented and has a dislike for the present, a longing for an idealized past, and a dread of the future (Carlson, 1984). On the other hand, life review and reminiscence is defined as an active process of recalling past events. Carlson (1984) delineates that the content of life review/reminiscence is both highly selective and primarily gratifying as well as ego-syntonic. McMahon & Rhudick (1964) explain that the person engaged in life reviewing/reminiscing recalls significant personal experiences which were highly charged emotionally at the time of their occurrence. The act of life reviewing/reminiscing enable the elderly to relive, re-experience, and rework a past experience in the present (Pincus, 1970).

Sometimes in the process of reviewing/reminiscing his or her life, the individual may experience a sense of regret that becomes increasingly painful. In severe forms, this regret can generate anxiety, guilt, and depression. Bulter (1974) cautions that in extreme cases, if the individual is unable to resolve problems or accept them, terror, panic, and even suicide can result. On the other end of the spectrum, some of the positive outcomes of reviewing/reminiscing one's life include the righting of old wrongs, reconciliation with enemies, acceptance of mortality, a sense of serenity, pride in accomplishment and a feeling of having done one's best (Butler, 1995). In many ways, life review/reminiscence is similar to the psychotherapeutic situation in which the individual reviews/reminiscences his or her life to understand present circumstances. There is a bridge between the past and the present. Life review gives the elderly an opportunity to reflect on what to do with the time they have left, and may be the mechanism that makes it possible for them to examine and accept the fact that one's life is one's own responsibility. Life review/reminiscence with the elderly is, then, particularly fascinating from Erikson's developmental point of view because the social worker and the elderly can look back together at all previous stages, like a check list of things to consider, to see how the individual arrived at his or her current situation. Life review/reminiscence serves to maintain the relationship with previous parts of the self, and then, is related to the syntonic resolution of the last stage of life. It is closely connected to the growth of one's identity, and instrumental in contributing to the evolution and maintenance of ego integrity.

### The Application of Erikson's Theory to Both Sexes

In applying Erikson's perspective to the elderly's life, the question of whether his description of the life cycle is applicable to both men and women arises. In considering this, what issues should the social worker take account of in working with the elderly?

Turning to the literature about the psychology of women to examine the perception of the women's life cycle as compared to Erikson's perception, there is an argument that Erikson describes only the male life cycle. Gilligan (1982) indicates that attachment is a more important issue than separation in the formation of women's identity in light of the fact that femininity is defined through attachment. Issues related to attachment, therefore, should be a primary focus when approaching the elderly female for intervention. Gilligan (1982) disputes that dependency is experienced differently by women than men. For men, separation and individuation of their gender identity is important because separation from their mother is imperative in the development of their masculinity. Likewise, Chodorow (1978) extends about this point and holds that gender identity, which is a part of personality formation, for girls takes place "in a context of [an] ongoing relationship since mothers tend to experience their daughters as more like, and continuous with, themselves" (p. 166). Girls stay a part of the dyadic primary mother-child relationship and "involved in issues of merging and separation, in an attachment characterized by primary identification and fusion of identification and object choice" (Chodorow, 1978, p. 167). She asserts, however, this does not mean that women's ego boundaries are weaker, but that there are differences between boys and girls in their ego development and personality formation. Essentially, they differ in modes of individuation and definition. Girls emerge from the preoedipal stage with a basis for empathy built into their primary definition of self because there is a continuity of relationship and attachment and they do not have to defend themselves by denying preoedipal relations. Girls have less demand for differentiation in order to develop their gender identity and can regard their father as a primary object without a strong need to turn away from their mother. They experience themselves as "more