CASE STUDY OF MISS M.

Report of a graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts Counseling and Guidance

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The following case study was conducted under the direct supervision of Ida Watkins Klinger, M.S.W. and licensed Marriage and Family Counselor, Dr. J. Harry Klinger, physician and pathologist, and Dr. Marvin Eisenberg, psychiatrist. The therapy sessions took place at the Valley Psychiatric Medical Clinic located at 3959 Laurel Canyon Boulevard, Studio City, California. The theoretical basis from which I have worked in these therapy sessions is eclectic, with the main emphasis placed on theories of Freud, Jung, and the concepts of Transactional Analysis.

Presenting Problem

Miss M. came to therapy because she was having difficulties with her boyfriend, Rick. She was displeased that her boyfriend was not interested in marriage at the moment. He kept telling her, "Maybe sometime in the future", but not now would he make a commitment. Her dissatisfaction was that she could not get her boyfriend to commit himself to her, and she did not understand why.

History

Miss M. is twenty-seven years old. She is the eldest of two children, her brother being three years younger than she. Miss M. now resides in Brentwood, California, and has been living there for a little over a year. Miss M. was born in New York. At the age of seven her family moved to Tucson, and later, at the age of eleven
the family moved to El Paso. Miss M. remained in El Paso until she was eighteen. It was at this time that her parents separated and she went to live with her mother in New York. When she started college, Miss M. returned to El Paso to live with her father, then moved to Tucson, where she maintained her own apartment while attending the University of Arizona, in Tucson. It was there that she was raped at the point of a knife and returned immediately to El Paso. After finishing college Miss M. returned to New York to live with her mother. She taught school in New York for a short time until her mother's death. Immediately thereafter Miss M. returned to El Paso, and after a brief stay, left to look for employment and a home in Los Angeles.

Miss M. is an elementary school teacher and a specialist in reading. She recently obtained a job teaching remedial reading to delinquent boys. Miss M. has a small silk-screen business which she operates independently. She also plays the guitar.

Miss M. and her brother suffered from asthma and other illnesses while living in New York, which caused the family to move to Tucson. Later, while living in El Paso, Miss M. suffered from tapeworm. This tapeworm came from cheap and unsafe meat her father had purchased in Juarez. Miss M. now appears to be in good physical health.

Miss M.'s mother came from a very wealthy and well-educated family in New York. She was interested in the arts and was a painter by profession. Miss M.'s mother was in very poor health most of her life. She suffered from headaches, migraine, stomach cramps, and back problems, which resulted in her requiring a laminectomy. At the final stages of her life she became psychotic,
bloated, (140 pounds overweight) and developed emphysema. Miss M.'s mother was treated symptomatically for all of these illnesses, and spent her last years in and out of private and state mental hospitals. She was then diagnosed as being mentally ill; however, it has recently come to light that Miss M.'s mother licked her paint brushes to point them, and as a result contracted chronic lead poisoning which caused many of her symptoms. Miss M.'s mother died over a year ago while living on welfare in New York City.

Miss M.'s father is now remarried and is living in El Paso. He never completed his college education as he was forced to quit school in order to support his own mother. He had many jobs, but most recently worked for U.S. Tobacco. He also has started several small businesses of his own.

Miss M.'s parents were divorced after twenty years of marriage. Miss M. described her father as impulsive and bad tempered. Their marriage had been turbulent and unhappy because there was never any understanding between them.

Miss M.'s brother, Ken, aged twenty-four, lives in Dallas, Texas. For a short time he worked for the Wall Street Journal in advertising. He recently quit this job to go to Europe for three months. He plans to attend law school when he returns.

Diagnosis

Miss M. is hyperactive, talks excessively, laughs inappropriately, and is in constant motion. I believe that Miss M. is suffering from a severe psychoneurosis classified as "hysterical personality."
The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2nd edition, 1969, American Psychiatric Association) defines the hysterical personality as one whose behavior patterns are characterized by excitability, emotional instability, over-reactivity, and self-dramatization. This self-dramatization is always attention-seeking and often seductive, whether or not the patient is aware of its purpose. These personalities are also immature, self-centered, often vain, and usually dependent on others.

Goals for Therapy

Through therapy, my hope has been to give Miss M. a better self-image; to help her to feel less desperate; to give her a better sense of her own self-worth; to help her to be more selective in making relationships; to help her to clarify her concept of her parents and her brother; and to help work through her hostility toward her parents so that she could be free of anger at them.

Weekly Interviews

The following is a log of our therapy sessions. Along with these interviews I have also included my comments and analysis as they relate to Miss M.'s behavior and growth.

September 20, 1972.

This, our first interview, I asked Miss M. to tell me about herself, her family, and how she grew up, so that I could get to
know her a little. The following are my notes from this interview.

Miss M. is twenty-seven and a teacher by profession. She was referred by Mark Forman. Her mother died a little over a year ago of emphysema. She was ill all her life. Her parents were divorced after twenty years of marriage. Miss M.'s mother came from a very wealthy family who felt her father was not good enough for her mother. Her father worked for U.S. Tobacco Co. He remarried Miss M.'s sorority sister's mother. Through the years he had started several businesses, but never succeeded in any. Miss M. stated that her mother was a "Hypochondriac." She had many illnesses and a laminectomy. She was bloated; 140 pounds overweight.

Miss M. was born in New York. Because she and her brother were constantly ill, the family moved to Tucson when Miss M. was seven. At age eleven the family moved to El Paso where Miss M. lived until she was eighteen. It was then that her parents separated and she and her mother went to live in New York city. When Miss M. started college she returned to El Paso to live with her father. She said she felt very torn inside because she wanted to make both of her parents happy.

Miss M. went to the University of Arizona in Tucson where she had her own apartment. While living there she had the terrifying experience of being raped at the point of a knife. "The man did it to five other girls too. It was terrible." Immediately thereafter Miss M. returned to El Paso.

Miss M. has a brother aged twenty-four, named Ken. He lives in Dallas. He works for the Wall Street Journal in advertising, but
he's quitting this job to go to Europe for three months, and then he's going to law school.

Miss M.'s father used to buy meat in Juarez because it was cheaper there, but she got a tapeworm from it.

Miss M.'s mother died while living on welfare in New York city. Her mother's brother, who is an attorney for Revlon, did not help her mother. Instead, he used pull to get her mother on welfare.

Miss M. sees her brother as a, "second father." She states that she is very close to him, and feels that he takes care of her.

September 27, 1972.

Miss M. used this session to talk about the problems she is having with her boyfriend, Rick. "Rick is a real estate lawyer and somewhat 'Napoleonic'." She and Rick started having sex three weeks after they met. She sees him two or three times a week. They have been dating for five months. Rick comes from Chicago. "He is a little high-toned." Miss M.'s roommate is getting married to Rick's best friend. Rick is twenty-eight and has never been married. He's going to Europe in October. Miss M. has the fantasy that in time he will come around to wanting to marry her even though he insists he is not interested.

I feel Miss M. was overly eager to marry and began "ringing the wedding bells," with no realistic basis.

October 4, 1972.

Miss M. has another friend, Alan, a writer and artist. He is thirty-five years old. Miss M. goes to bed with him also. Because
of her lack of self worth and her desperate search for love, Miss M. is promiscuous.

We talked at great length about the nature of relationships between men and women. Miss M. had no insight into her self-defeating behavior of her desperation.

October 11, 1972.

Rick belittles Miss M. and mistreats her. He's off to Europe for three weeks. He assures Miss M. he is not interested in marriage, but she feels time will change him.

The men Miss M. has been associated with in the past belittle her or are not available for marriage, which she insists is her goal. At this session I recommended that Miss M. get a copy of Berne's book, *The Games People Play.*

Miss M. plays, "Kick me." While she says she wants marriage she chooses men who are unavailable. We talked about why women become involved with men who are not available, while they reject those who are.

October 18, 1972.

Rick is returning from Europe Wednesday night. Miss M. lets him step all over her. She seems willing to settle for anything just to get a little. With the fantasy that she will ultimately involve Rick and get him to marry her, Miss M. cooks for him, washes his clothes, and cleans his house.

Here again is Miss M.'s lack of self worth. She is so desperate for love that she allows men to use and abuse her. Both in this
interview and the following, Miss M. was so involved and excited about Rick's impending return, that she spent both hours in excited talk and fantasy about Rick.

October 25, 1972.

Miss M. wears a sign, "Excuse me for living." She is also ringing the wedding bells. Miss M. looks for "indications" that Rick is interested in marrying her. She babysits for his sister's children as a way of ingratiating herself.

This week she washed sheets for her neighbor Mark Forman.

November 1, 1972.

Miss M. customarily sees Rick on Saturday nights and looks forward all week to this date night. This week Rick asked her out for Friday night so she asked him, "Will I then see you Saturday night, too?"

Miss M. had a dream of a fetus, and she felt very sorry for it. It is impossible to get into dreams with Miss M. because she is so flighty and lacking in insight. I believe the fetus represents Miss M.'s stage of emotional development.

November 8, 1972.

After this Friday night date, Rick did not call Miss M. for Saturday. She was in despair. Miss M. sat home all evening on Saturday, looking out the window watching for him, afraid to leave the house in case he should phone. Late that evening Miss M. did
see him coming into the apartment building with a redhead on his arm. She was beside herself and could hardly sleep all night. Again in the morning, Miss M. saw Rick coming out with this same redhead, who had evidently slept with him overnight.

The disappointment of having her fantasies of Rick shaken, was traumatic to Miss M.

November 15, 1972.

This week Miss M. got a job as a teacher and is very exuberant. She has so little pride or self worth that she obviously did nothing in relation to Rick's philandering. In fact, although she was devastated last week, she felt that it was a man's privilege to chase, and laughingly remembered that she sleeps with Alan on the side. That, she felt, made it okay.

Miss M. had her usual date with Rick this Saturday and slept with him.

Up until this point I have made no effort to give Miss M. insight into her behavior and her feelings because she talks incessantly and is unduly optimistic, and I have been unable to break through.

November 22, 1972.

Miss M. feels so "improved" that she now is worried what happens when one person is well adjusted and the other is not. She laughingly then said that she's concerned that since she is getting healthy, what if Rick doesn't.

"Rick comes from a wealthy kosher home, but is not spoiled." He is very close with his family and takes care of his sister like
Miss M.'s brother takes care of her. (In reality, Miss M.'s brother uses her, takes money from her, belittles and mistreats her.)

Rick now talks very openly about how he feels toward his family. He loves them. He talks about how he feels about being small. He's only 5'6" tall.

Miss M. had a dream that her brother went blind. We talked about this dream and I pointed out that all the people in her dreams represent some part of her, and perhaps the masculine part of her, represented by her brother, went blind. I also pointed out that the masculine part of her is her inner strength, and that she needs to get in touch with that masculine part and use it to her advantage so she won't be stepped on and misused.

Miss M. had no insight into the inner blindness that keeps her involved and optimistic in this obviously, "dead-end affair."

But later in a phone call something seemed to have broken through, because Miss M. was agitated about the hopeless situation with Rick.

November 29, 1972.

Miss M. had two dreams. In the first dream someone was calling out, "Mommy, mommy, but I want to suck my thumb." The second dream went as follows; Rick's father said, "I love you. I love my son too, but drop him. He's no good for you."

Miss M. finally realized how Rick was misusing her, and her own fantasies were keeping her from seeing the nature of the relationship, and keeping her in it.
Rather than feeling unhappy over it, Miss M. seemed in good spirits and very hopeful of the future. She sent Rick a note asking that he return her diaphragm. After telling him off, Miss M. had a dream that she was a lesbian. This may, in part, explain her promiscuity. By having many sexual experiences she "proves to herself" that she is not a lesbian, which may be her underlaying fear. (Miss M. is flat-chested and has a very odd and unusually masculine laugh, although her speaking voice is a normal feminine voice.)

December 6, 1972.

Miss M. told me that she wanted to transfer to a male therapist. Discussion brought out that Miss M. was very angry at her mother, and had no respect for her father because he had "no balls!". He quit college to support his own mother. Miss M.'s mother and her mother's relatives called her, "Little Mel," meaning that Miss M. is like her father—bad tempered. Miss M. resented this because she doesn't want to be impulsive like her father.

Miss M. tries to think and be calm now. The only member of her family she likes is her brother, who is the "living end." Miss M. speaks of him as if he were absolute perfection. He has just returned from Europe and is living at Miss M.'s apartment without contributing anything, and in fact, is taking money from his sister.

The prototype of her subserviant relationship with other men is obviously that with her brother.

After we discussed these feelings, Miss M. decided to remain with this therapist.
December 13, 1972.

Miss M. picked up her roommate, Chontelle, at a party one night when the girl was drunk, had been evicted by her boyfriend, and had no place to go. Miss M. took her in. Chontelle was unemployed except for an occasional prostitution. Alan came to visit Miss M. and Chontelle seduced him and went to bed with him. They both had sex with the same man. On another occasion, Chontelle brought three men up to the apartment and Miss M. slept with two or three and copulated in series, like sandwiches.

Immediately after this Miss M. had a dream of a sick little girl, aged five, who said "I need to stop running."

I felt this was a bit of insight, on Miss M.'s part, about the immaturity of her behavior.

December 20, 1972.

At the request of the therapist, an interview was arranged with Miss M.'s father, who came from El Paso, very much prejudiced against therapy and apparently very hostile. In the interview it came to light that his first wife, Miss M.'s mother, who was an ardent painter, used to lick her brushes and contracted chronic lead poisoning. The diagnosis was delayed. Her condition not recognized, she was treated symptomatically for various disorders, such as headache, migraine, stomach cramps, and finally mental illness. At the final stages of her life she was psychotic, bloated and developed emphysema.

At this point I excused myself and consulted a physician on the
clinic staff who pointed out that the symptoms for which Miss M.'s mother was treated at the end of her life were also symptomatic of lead poisoning, which could have been caused by the woman licking her brushes to "point them" in her art work.

Both Miss M. and her father were greatly relieved when I gave them this information. Somehow they felt there was less onus to Miss M.'s mother having had psychotic behavior due to lead poisoning, than to being psychotic for other reasons. Miss M.'s father realized for the first time in his life his dead wife's condition, and out of his relief, broke down crying. He felt guilty for his hostility toward his wife in his unsatisfactory marriage, and being burdened with two children. Miss M. understood, for the first time, her father's feelings and his hostility toward her, and both left the session in better spirits and with a better understanding.

The result of this interview encouraged the therapist, as well as Miss M. to have an additional interview with Miss M.'s brother.

December 22, 1972.

The young man came the following day, since he was at that time boarding at Miss M.'s home, and related his experiences and lack of relationship with his parents. His present philosophy is to get what he can get from whomsoever, with no effort on his part, "Since the world owes him a living."

He obviously has no insight into his own problems, much less those of his sister.
December 26, 1972.

This session with Miss M. was utilized to make Miss M. see how she was used by her brother, like by all other men; never had the protection of her parents, and the pattern of a healthy relationship between men and women.

Prognosis

Miss M. is young and bright and eager to know herself better. She plans to continue in therapy. The prognosis is extremely favorable.

SUMMARY

Miss M. first came to therapy because she was troubled by an unsatisfactory relationship with her boyfriend, Rick. She wanted him to make a permanent commitment to her, which he was unwilling to do. Miss M. spent many early sessions fantasizing and talking incessantly about her future hopes for their relationship. Sometime later in our sessions it was brought to light that Miss M.'s boyfriend, Rick, belittled her, misused, mistreated and disregarded her in much the same manner as her father mistreated her mother, and as her father and brother mistreated her.

Being so desperate for love and having so little pride or sense of her own self worth, Miss M. was emotionally unable and unwilling to see the reality of her situation. She was promiscuous with most all of the men she dated. She allowed herself to be used; doing
their laundry and cleaning their apartments in the hopes of getting
their love in return.

As our therapy sessions continued Miss M. began to get some
insight into her infantile behavior. One dream was especially sig-
nificant. Miss M. stated in the dream, "I need to stop running."

Miss M. eventually broke off with her boyfriend, Rick. She
also met in my office with her father and her brother and was able
to come to a better understanding of her own feelings toward the
members of her family, as well as gain insight into their feelings
toward her.

Miss M. left these sessions with a better understanding of who
she is, and a greater sense of her own worth as a human being. She
seems bright and enthusiastic about the future.