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Broken Patterns: Professional Women and the Quest for a New Feminine Identity

Anita M. Harris

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Broken Patterns: Professional Women and the Quest for a New Feminine Identity

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Broken Patterns: Professional Women and the Quest for a New Feminine Identity Anita M. Harris Broken Patterns, by award-winning journalist Anita M. Harris, places modern American professional women --and their mothers and grandmothers--in remarkable historical context. Based on interviews with women who entered male-dominated careers in the 1970s and 1980s, the book outlines a "push-pull" pattern of generational and historical development going back to the Colonial period in America. Broken Patterns will be of special interest to women at all career stages because it shows how the experiences of mothers and grandmothers influence career decisions and lives. And it traces the impact of rapid technological and social change on family structures, psyches, and gender roles. Unlike several new books arguing that women's quest for equality has stalled, Broken Patterns takes a hopeful view. It suggests that progress is not linear, nor cyclic, but spiral. "As individuals, as generations and as a society," Harris writes, "we push forward toward a goal, reach an impasse, pull back to retrieve and reintegrate aspects and values of the past in order to move forward, once again." The new edition includes stories of present day college students and recent graduates, a new preface and an afterword assessing how far women have come since Broken Patterns was originally published, in 1995. NPR Reporter and author Margot Adler calls the book "A splendid study of professional women."

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