



National Library  
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale  
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Services des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0N4

## CANADIAN THÈSES

## THÈSES CANADIENNES

### NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30.

**THIS DISSERTATION  
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED  
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED**

### AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30.

**LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ  
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE  
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE**

GENDER BLENDING: WHEN TWO IS NOT ENOUGH

by

Holly Devor

B.A., York University, 1971

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

Communication

© Holly Devor 1985

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

October, 1985

All rights reserved. This work may not be reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means, without permission of the author.

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-30791-9

APPROVAL

• Name: Holly Joy Devor  
Degree: Master of Arts (Communication)  
Title of Thesis: Gender Blending: When Two is Not Enough  
Examining Committee:  
Chairperson: William D. Richards, Assistant Professor

Liora Salter  
Associate Professor  
Senior Supervisor

Meredith Kimball  
Associate Professor  
Psychology/Women's Studies

---

Robert S. Anderson  
Associate Professor

Roy Turner  
Professor  
Department of Sociology  
University of British Columbia

October 17, 1985

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant to Simon Fraser University the right to lend my thesis, project or extended essay (the title of which is shown below) to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or the Dean of Graduate Studies. It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

Gender Blending: When Two is Not Enough

---

---

---

---

Author:

(signature)

Holly Devor

(name)

October 17, 1985

(date)

## ABSTRACT

In everyday experience, it is normally assumed that sex predetermines gender, and that gender determines gender role behaviours. The experiences of a minority of individuals are illustrative of a disjuncture in this cognitive schema. Gender blending females are persons of the female sex who identify themselves as women but whose gender role behaviours are such that strangers often mistakenly believe them to be men.

Fifteen gender blending females were interviewed in depth. Enquiries were made concerning demographics, relationships with families and friends, important gender socialization experiences, experiences as gender blending females, advantages and disadvantages of their status and whether they had a desire to, or had attempted to change their gender situation.

An analysis of the interviews in light of psychological and sociological theories of self and gender, suggested that these women acquired their gender blended status in response to familial and social pressures. Many of them were raised within families which rewarded them for masculinity and held femininity in low regard. All were "tomboys" who spent a great deal of time in the company of boys and thus were subjected to masculine peer pressure and socializing influences. For them, masculine behaviours brought social rewards and neutralized some of the stigma attached to being female. The greatest disadvantage of their gender status was the embarrassment that they suffered when mistaken for men. The greatest advantages cited were that

their status enabled them to function as more fully creditable human beings and to move with less fear of male violence than they could as obvious females.

It was argued that, in everyday public life, gender role behaviour determines gender ascription which then determines sex ascription. The masculinity of gender blending females caused strangers to perceive them to be men and to assume them to be male. They were, at times, females who were masculine women, at times, men who were masculine females. This suggests that gender and sex are social statuses which may be acquired through the alteration of gender role behaviours and that sex, gender, and gender role function as three independent variables which may be combined in any configuration.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval .....	ii
ABSTRACT .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vii
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF GENDER .....	7
The Beginnings of Gender .....	7
Theoretical Models of Gender Acquisition .....	13
Early Childhood Experience .....	21
Learning Gender .....	30
Gender Roles .....	41
III. THE SOCIAL CREATION OF GENDER .....	49
The Gendered Self .....	49
Gender Role Strain .....	62
The Male Standard .....	68
Gender Schema .....	73
Gendered Values .....	81
IV. GENDER BLENDING FEMALES .....	88
Introduction .....	88
Gender Blending Girls .....	93
Adolescence and Gender Roles .....	101
The Adult Dilemma .....	108
Gender Role Dysphoria .....	121
Gender Logic .....	126
V. CONCLUSION .....	132
Summary .....	132



Implications .....	146
Possibilities .....	152
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	154
Works Cited .....	154
Works Consulted .....	160

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It pleases me to be able to take this opportunity to say thank you for all the support and encouragement that I have received. My committee members, Liora Salter, Meredith Kimball, and Bob Anderson, have given generously to me of their time and knowledge. I am particularly grateful to Liora Salter for her invaluable guidance when the next step was unclear, and to Meredith Kimball for the depth and detail of her criticism. My partner and friend, Jesse Gossen patiently provided me with a gentle and critical sounding board for every version of my developing ideas. Ellen Randall gave generously of her time to help with proofreading and editing. The encouragement and interest of my many friends helped to sustain me throughout. My thanks to them all.

I would like to thank Simon Fraser University for the financial support granted to me in the form of the Simon Fraser University Open Scholarship and the President's Research Grant Stipend. I would also like to express my appreciation to the faculty and staff of the Women's Studies Department at Simon Fraser University for their consistent support of my endeavors.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to the women who spoke with me so candidly of their lives. Their support of this research, their willingness to participate, and their openness helped to make my task an enriching one. I hope that the fruit of our time together is as enlightening and as empowering to them as it has been for me.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Boys will be boys, and girls will not. These two phrases together form the basis of the everyday understanding of sex and gender. They are understood in the language and minds of members of North American society as both a description of what is and as a prescription of how it must be. "Boys will be boys and girls will not" describes how sex and gender are understood in that males are defined by what they are while females are defined in reaction to the definition of the male. The male is seen as the baseline while the female is seen as an incomplete version of the male. The basis for this understanding can be found in many cultural sources, ranging from the Judeo-Christian Bible, in which Eve was created as a companion for Adam out of his spare parts, to psychoanalysis which described the healthy female psyche as founded on a reaction to the "defective" female genitals.

These two phrases can also be seen as a prescription which reads: boys will be boys and girl will not. That is, in part, the belief shared by all members of society that there are two and only two sexes (female and male) and that every person, most animals, and many things must be either one or the other.<sup>1</sup> Concomitant with this belief is the belief that there are two

and only two genders (girls and boys, men and women),<sup>2</sup> and that males are masculine and females feminine. Masculinity is understood to be the existence of certain traits while femininity is defined as the absence of these traits.<sup>3</sup>

Not all individuals in society fit within the normal patterns that presume that females will become girls and then women and that males will become boys and then men. Not all boys and men are masculine enough to satisfy social requirements, nor are all girls and women feminine enough to do so. A small, but significant, number of people fall outside of the standard formula. Hermaphrodites cannot be clearly classified as belonging to one sex or another. Transsexuals clearly belong to one sex but have a gender identity and follow a gender role which is supposed to belong exclusively to another sex. Transvestites clearly belong to one sex and identify themselves as belonging to the corresponding gender but for varying periods of time live according to the demands of the gender role of another gender. Still other people indisputably belong to one sex and identify themselves as belonging to the corresponding gender while exhibiting a complex mixture of characteristics from each of the two standard gender roles. I call these people "gender blends."

Gender blending people can be distinguished on the basis of several characteristics. They have a normal sexual status of either female or male. They have a normal gender identity which corresponds to their sexual status (females identify themselves

as women, males identify themselves as men). Their gender role patterns incorporate elements which are from both the standard masculine gender role and the standard feminine gender role. They mix these characteristics in such a way that people who do not know them personally, often, but not always, mistake them for persons of the other standard gender status, i.e., females who think of themselves as women are mistaken for men. Gender blending people do not consciously attempt to project confusing gender impressions although they may, under certain circumstances, allow mistakes to stand uncorrected.

This work studies a small group of gender blending females with an aim to (1) identify them as a gender classification, (2) discover commonalities in their experiences of gender, (3) learn about how they came to be gender blending females, (4) come to a better understanding of what it is like to live the life of a gender blending female, and (5) consider some of the personal, social and political implications of a blended gender status.

A total of fifteen women were interviewed who qualified as gender blending females. I searched for suitable women through a tradeswomen's organization, advertisements in a local feminist newspaper, notices posted at gay bars, health clubs and gyms, and through word of mouth contacts. Word of mouth contacts proved to be the most successful method of reaching the women I sought because the credibility and integrity of the interviewer seemed to be a deciding factor for many of them when considering whether or not to "go public" about being mistaken for a boy or

a man.

I offered each woman complete confidentiality as to anything she might say in relation to this research. That having been established I was able to conduct and tape record one and one half to four hours of in-depth interviews with each woman. No single interview lasted longer than two hours. In the interviews I asked each woman about (1) demographic information about herself, (2) her current and earlier relationships with her family and friends, (3) memories she might have about important gender socialization experiences she had in her youth, teen years or adulthood, (4) both representative and personally meaningful experiences related to her gender blended status, (5) advantages and/or disadvantages to her gender status, and (6) whether she had an interest in altering her gender status or had attempted to do so already.

In order to provide a theoretical basis for understanding the information brought out in the interviews, chapter two of this thesis investigates the major psychological theories of gender acquisition. Chapter three continues with a review of the major sociological theories of self and gender acquisition and maintenance. Chapter four consists of a summary and analysis of the interview materials, and chapter five concludes with a summary of findings, an analysis of the implications of those findings, and suggestions of possibilities for an improved understanding of gender.

## NOTES

1. Newborns are normally assigned as male or female on the basis of the appearance of their genitalia at the time of their birth. In particular the size of the penis/clitoris is used as the indicator of sex. If the organ seems large enough and well enough formed the baby is assigned as a male, if the organ is not considered to have the potential to be later capable of sexual penetration the infant is usually assigned as a female. In some cases, a sex assignment cannot be easily made on the basis of genitalia. In such instances, a chromosome test is often employed. Individuals with one Y chromosome and any number of X chromosomes are normally assigned as males while all others are assigned as females. Sex is normally assigned on the basis of the presence or absence of those indicators culturally associated with maleness. Femaleness is recognized on the basis of an absence of maleness. For an excellent discussion of medical approaches to unusual sex types see C. J. Dewhurst and R. R. Gordon, The Intersexual Disorders (London: Balliere, Tindall and Cassell, 1969).
2. Gender is a term which has been used by many people to mean many things. In the context of this work gender is used to mean the identification of oneself, or of another person, as

being either a girl, a boy, a man or a woman.

3. Masculinity and femininity are the gender roles that are associated with boys/men and girls/women. People normally assume that whatever a woman does will somehow have the stamp of femininity on it and that whatever a man does will likewise bear the imprint of masculinity. In the everyday world it is commonly believed that being a man makes one masculine and that being a woman makes one feminine (although society does have to exert some pressure on its members in order to induce them to conform well to their gender roles.) Gender roles vary greatly over time, culture and social position. Money and Ehrhardt have defined gender role as "Everything that a person says or does, to indicate to self or to others the degree that one is either male, or female, or ambivalent; it includes but is not restricted to sexual arousal and response; gender role is the public expression of gender identity, and gender identity is the private experience of gender role." See John Money and A. A. Ehrhardt, Man and Woman, Boy and Girl: The Differentiation and Dimorphism of Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), p.4.



## II. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF GENDER

### The Beginnings of Gender

How are little boys made?  
Take one new baby,  
Poke it and toss it, force it and push it,  
Leave it alone a lot, and never speak softly to it.

How are little girls made?  
Take one new baby,  
Cuddle it and coo at it, soothe it and calm it,  
And never leave it alone.

What are little boys made of?  
Scrapes and pains, fears not shown,  
Lessons learned the hard way,  
Loneliness ingrown.

What are little girls made of?  
Questions and dreams, secrets never told,  
Lessons never learned,  
Life waiting to unfold.

The moment a baby emerges from the birth canal it begins its interactions with its environment. Such interactions have far-reaching effects not only on the personality of a new baby and later adult, but also on the very physiological make-up of that person. Human infants at the time of birth are still far from physically complete, and the interactions which infants have with their environment shape, in many respects, the ways in

which both their young psyches and bodies will mature. The experiences of neonates mold the sensitive minds and tissues of infants into formations which may later prove to be the basis of life-long patterns of pleasure and distress, hope and despair.

The infant human brain, in particular, is only partially developed at the time of birth. Research shows that at the time of birth it has the capacity to respond to a very broad range of stimuli with a seemingly limitless variety of responses.<sup>1</sup> As an infant experiences its environment its brain begins to build a repertoire of response patterns which reflect its experiences. These learning processes that occur within a rapidly maturing brain are reflected in neural growth within the brain. Patterns become physically encoded in the brain in the form of synaptic traces. Such neural growth formations will later facilitate the occurrence of responses of a similar nature. Thus, as response patterns become established in the brain through repeated use, they become more efficient and rapidly occurring responses. In this way experience becomes facility.

During the first year of life the human brain greatly increases in size while its capacities to think and direct neural activities increase correspondingly. During this period of intense growth the brain retains a remarkable plasticity

---

<sup>1</sup> Donald G. Stein and Ronald G. Dawson, "The Dynamics and Growth, Organization and Adaptability of the Central Nervous System," in Constancy and Change in Human Development, ed. by O. G. Brim Jr. and J. Kagan (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p.174-177.

whereby many of its areas may serve overlapping functions. If a part of the brain is impaired another part may take over the functioning of the original part. If an area of the brain is understimulated it may atrophy and become no longer available for use.<sup>2</sup> Thus it may be seen that the ability of an infant to learn through experience within its environment is matched by an ability of the brain to grow and change within its interactions with its environment. The human brain continues to grow well into life but its growth is 90% complete by the age of six years, 60% of growth being completed by the age of two years.<sup>3</sup> Thus it can be surmised that the experiences of the first two years of life set many of the patterns which the brain and the human organism may follow throughout life. In a sense, the foundations are laid during the first two years of life on which an entire life might be built.<sup>4</sup>

During its first months of life an infant interacts with its environment almost exclusively through the agency of its caregivers. Many theorists believe that the personality and development of an infant are a direct reflection of the

-----  
<sup>2</sup> J. M. Tanner, Foetus into Man: Physical Growth from Conception to Maturity (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978), p.115.

<sup>3</sup> Steven Rose, The Conscious Brain (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p.187.

<sup>4</sup> Dennis M. Parker, "Determinate and Plastic Principles in Neuropsychological Development" in Brain and Behavioral Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Structure and Function, ed. by John W. T. Dickerson and Harry McGurk (London: Surrey University Press, 1982), p.203-232.

personality and predilections of the major caretaker who, in most cases, is the infant's mother. Careful observations of infants in interaction with their caretakers show that although there is a great deal of truth to such theoretical models an infant is by no means a passive participant in the process. Each baby is born with its own prenatal history and predispositions as a result of its interuterine experience and genetic make-up. So that at even from the moment of birth and during the first months of life an infant must be thought of as engaged in an interactive union with the people, objects, and forces in its world.<sup>5</sup>

The adults who welcome a newborn into the world have their own personalities and belief systems well established by the time they find themselves in attendance at a birth. They communicate their gender beliefs to children through the medium of their personalities. Many studies have shown that adults have a strong tendency to attribute a sex and sex differences to newborn infants even when the sex of a child is unknown to them. When adults are presented with a baby whose sex is not specified, they will almost always inquire as to the sex of the child. If that information is still not provided to them, they will then most often decide for themselves what the sex and gender of the child are. These sex/gender ascriptions then form

---

<sup>5</sup> J. D. Lichtenberg, Psychoanalysis and Infant Research (Hillside, New Jersey: The Analytic Press, 1983), p.43.

a basis for their subsequent interactions with the child.<sup>6</sup>

Adults in interaction with infants believe that they are impartially observing those characteristics which coincide with their beliefs as to how females and males are supposed to be. They observe these characteristics in most cases whether or not they have reliable information as to the sex of the infant they are observing. What is important in these instances is that what the adults observe corresponds to the sex that they believe the infant to be, regardless of the actual sex of the infant. A group of adults, in a 1976 study, when shown a video tape of a crying nine month old infant, interpreted the crying as a sign of "fear" when the infant had been identified as female, and as a sign of "anger" when the infant had been identified to them as male. This demonstrates that when an infant is believed to be female (male) it will be observed to behave in a feminine (masculine) manner regardless of the actual behaviour, or sex, of the child.<sup>7</sup>

The existence and constancy of this situation highlights the firmly held beliefs in the minds of the public, that there are two and only two sexes, that all humans are one or the other sex, and that males are masculine and females are feminine.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Carol Seavey, Phyllis Katz and Sue Zalk, "Baby X: The Affects of Gender Labels on Adult Responses to Infants," Sex Roles, 1 (1975), 103-109.

<sup>7</sup> J. Condry and S. Condry, "Sex Differences: A Study in the Eye of the Beholder," Child Development, 47 (1976), 812-819.

<sup>8</sup> Harold Garfinkel, "Passing and the Managed Achievement of Sex Status in an Intersexed Person - Part I" in Studies in Ethnomethodology (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice

These beliefs force those who subscribe to them to understand all human beings, including newborn infants, in a way which permits all observed behaviour and attributes to fit entirely within the binary matrix of femininity/masculinity. It is this belief structure which compels different observers, observing the same behaviour of the same infant, to label that behaviour as masculine when the infant is thought to be male and feminine when the infant is thought to be female.<sup>9</sup>

Adults who hold such beliefs attempt to align their own behaviour with their beliefs, and in the process transmit some portion of their beliefs and behaviours to the infants in their care. Infants perceived by their caretakers to be tough and angry will receive different sorts of care than ones who are

-----  
<sup>8</sup>(cont'd) Hall, 1967), p.122-128; Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKinna, Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), p.4, 113.

<sup>9</sup> Adults do not reserve this sort of double vision to their experience of infants. Media Women of New York have summarized this approach, in part, as follows:

If		
A Person	Call	Call
Is:	Her	Him
Supportive.....	Bright.....	Yes-Man
Intelligent.....	Helpful.....	Smart
Innovative.....	Pushy.....	Original
Insistent.....	Hysterical.....	Persistent
Tough.....	Impossible.....	Go-Getter
Cute & Timid.....	A Sweetheart....	A Fairy

See Media Women - New York. "How to Name a Baby - A Vocabulary Guide for Working Women," in Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement, ed. by Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), p.590-1.

perceived to be delicate and fearful. Furthermore, adults who perceive themselves to be tough, or delicate, will administer different types of care to the infants involved. The net result of such situations may be that adult beliefs become translated into infant experience which ultimately may crystalize into physiological, emotional, and behavioural attributes in a growing human being.

### Theoretical Models of Gender Acquisition

Infants learn many things about themselves and their environment while in the hands of their caregivers. As an infant continues to grow and physically complete many of the steps begun before birth, it simultaneously proceeds through the first stages in a life-long process of personality development. Many psychologists, in particular those of the psychoanalytic school, place a major emphasis on those patterns learned by the infant in the first years of life. Psychoanalysts have theorized that the experiences of these years are the bedrock on which all other experience stands and the weave through which all other experience is filtered and understood. They have hypothesized that the major psychological events of the first two to three years of life are indelibly etched into one's psyche and that although their effects can be modified they can never be erased. The plasticity of the rapidly developing infant brain during this same period would seem to lend credence to such proposals.

One of the major tasks of the young child during these first crucial years of life is the acquisition of gender identity; gender identity being the identification of the self as a woman or girl, man or boy. In very young children this identity is often defined by terms of reference different from those used by adults and is often not seen by children as immutable. Along with gender identity, young children begin to develop a sense of gender roles. Gender roles for young children are the ways that boys or girls are supposed to and/or do act. Young children often understand gender roles differently than adults though not always in less distinct ways.<sup>10</sup> As children develop a concept of gender role and gender identity they begin to identify themselves not only with a gender but with a gender role. This aspect of the personality is known as gender role identity.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Consider that:

"Five year old children believe that if you put a dress on a man he could change into a woman. Adults know that this is not 'true,' but they believe that if you put a penis on a woman and remove her breasts, ovaries and uterus and give her androgens she could change into a man."

See Kessler and McKinna, p.107.

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg and Dorothy Z. Ullian, "Stages in the Development of Psychosexual Concepts and Attitudes" in Sex Differences in Behaviour, ed. by Richard Friedman et al. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), p.209-222; Joseph H. Pleck, The Myth of Masculinity (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1981), p.11.



Psychologists are divided in opinion as to how gender identity and gender roles are acquired. The three most prominent theoretical approaches at present are the identification theories such as those first presented by Freud,<sup>12</sup> social learning theories as put forward by Bandura<sup>13</sup> and his followers, and the cognitive developmental school as exemplified by Kohlberg and Gilligan.<sup>14</sup> Most recently, Sandra Bem has proposed a Gender Schema theory which incorporates elements of both cognitive developmental theory and social learning theory.<sup>15</sup>

Identification theorists suggest that young children come to identify with same sex parents due to the powerful influences that they exert on the child. Little girls are thought to identify with their mothers as a result of the salience of their mothers' nurturant qualities, while little boys are believed to identify with their fathers as a result of the attractiveness of

<sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. by John Rickman (New York: Liveright, 1921, 1957), p. 169-209, esp. p.185-188; Sigmund Freud, "The Ego and the Id," in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. by John Rickman (New York: Liveright, 1923, 1957), p. 210-246, esp. p.219-221.

<sup>13</sup> Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977).

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg, Essays on Moral Development (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981); Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

<sup>15</sup> Sandra L. Bem, "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing," Psychological Review, 88 (1981), 354-64; "Gender Schematic Theory and its Implications for Child Development: Raising Gender-aschematic Children in a Gender-schematic Society," Signs, 8 (1983), 598-616.

their fathers' dominant position within the family. Children are thought to wish to become like the parent that they identify with, to emulate the qualities of the chosen parent.

Identification theorists propose that, over a period of time, this imitation process leads to an identity and a personality easily understood by any member of society as either clearly masculine or clearly feminine. They suggested that this process of gender identity and gender role acquisition is a naturally occurring one; that it need not be coerced or prompted by societal pressures. Identification theorists argue that the personalities of young children evolve and grow according to patterns which are universal and independent of varying social systems or customs.

Social learning theorists approach the question of gender identity and gender role development from a different perspective. They recognize that society exerts pressures on young children to conform to established social patterns. The people around children at any given time have certain expectations as to how children of a particular sex should act. Certain behaviour patterns are socially rewarded and others are selectively discouraged. Children respond to a systematic schedule of rewards and punishments by developing a pattern of behaviour which conforms to the social expectations of the group of people applying the rewards and punishments. Social learning theory does not propose that this is necessarily a conscious process on the part of the persons shaping a young child's

personality but rather a subtle process whereby values are transmitted to children who, over a period of time, absorb them as their own.

The cognitive developmental theorists believe that children take a more active role in the learning of gender. They suggest that children proceed through a series of developmental stages wherein their ability to understand concepts and absorb information becomes more complex with age. At very young ages children begin to ask questions about how the world around them is organized; they have a desire and a need to make sense of their experiences in life. One of the first ways in which children learn to understand the world around them is by recognizing that the people of the world can be divided into two large groups on the basis of gender. Once children learn to make this distinction they use it as a filtering device to help them to classify the behaviours of others into the more easily recognizable and understandable units of gender. Cognitive developmental theory proposes that children desire to behave in accordance with the expectations of their social group. Once children understand what gender they are, they actively attempt to learn how to perform their gender role to the best of their understanding and abilities. As children grow older their conceptual abilities become more sophisticated and their gender roles acquire more subtle nuances and phrasing.

Gender Schema theory accepts and incorporates the cognitive developmental idea that children desire to understand their

world and that they have a propensity to categorize their experiences. Gender schema theory borrows from social learning theory the notion that children learn through their social experience that the categories of male and female are important social indicators. The net result then, according to this theory, is that children learn to classify people, objects and abstract ideas according to a sex-typed gender schema. They learn to do this because they have a cognitive desire to classify and a social impetus to classify according to sex or gender, rather than according to any number of other possible classification schemata.<sup>16</sup>

Each of these theoretical models has its strengths and weaknesses. Identification theories recognize and acknowledge largely unconscious motivations and needs which spring from the child. Identification theories fail to take adequate account of the external social demands which impinge on children or of the conscious and active needs of children to understand their world. Social learning theories explain the influences of external forces and beings in the creation of gender but they tend to develop a picture of children as passive recipients of these forces. Cognitive developmental theories describe children as active participants in the shaping of their own personalities but inadequately attend to questions of either internal unconscious forces or external social pressures. Gender schema

---

<sup>16</sup> Bem, "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account" and "Gender Schema Theory and its Implications."

theory describes the interaction between the cognitive development of children and their social milieu, but largely ignores the role of unconscious dynamics within the social environment and their effects on young minds. Each of these theoretical perspectives seen individually is lacking in some essential area; the four taken together provide a more complete picture. All share a common understanding that personality and gender are, in their essence, formed during the first few years of life. All claim a tremendously powerful influence for the parents, or primary caregivers, during the first years of life.

It would seem necessary that a theoretical perspective which attempts to explain the deep and enduring nature of the lessons learned during this period must also take into account the physiological effects of these learning processes. The periods of most intense gender learning and personality formation correspond to the first years after birth during which the brain is undergoing its most intense post-natal period of growth. The patterns of thought and behaviour which are being learned by infants and young children under the age of six are the templates around which the young brain forms itself during this most plastic of periods in the life of the brain. Such a theory must consider that not only are memories being created and stored in the cortex for later use as the unconscious bases of personality and behaviour patterns, but traces are also being etched in those parts of the brain which control more basic and more involuntary gender attributes.

There are centres in the brain which control excitability and sensitivity levels of sensations such as pleasure and pain, hunger and satiation, rage and fear, sexual arousal and the corresponding hormonal levels associated with each of these states. All of these parts of the brain, which together form the hypothalamus, are also immature and developing concurrently with personality and gender.<sup>17</sup> Personality and gender patterns which become habitual during these first years of life may become encoded in the brain as life-long sensitivities or propensities of a physiological nature. Thus, sex differences which are discernable in the brains and behaviour of children as young as six months of age<sup>18</sup> may well be a result of those children's experiences of social gender biases rather than the natural

---

<sup>17</sup> The hypothalamus is capable of secreting hormone stimulating and inhibiting substances before birth and at the time of birth, but is not fully developed until early childhood. See Peter D. Gluckman, Melvin M. Grumbach and Selma L. Kaplan "The Human Fetal Hypothalamus and Pituitary Gland," in Maternal-Fetal Endocrinology, ed. by D. Tulchinsky and K. J. Ryan (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1980), p.196-232, esp. p.216.

<sup>18</sup> Newborn infant females respond more than males to sweet taste, touch, and light and tend to move their mouths more than males. Male infants tend to be better able to lift their heads and to startle more easily than females infants, who sleep more than males do. By the age of six months brain wave pattern differences can be seen in the EEG's of male and female infants. See Anneliese F. Komer, "Methodological Considerations in Studying Sex Differences in the Behavioral Functioning of Newborn Infants" in Sex Differences in Behaviour, ed. by Richard Friedman et al. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), p.197-208; Cherry Thompson, "Cortical Activity in Behavioral Development" in Brain and Behavioral Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Structure and Function, ed. by John Dickerson and Harry McGurk (London: Surrey University Press, 1982), p.131-167; Lichtenberg, p.20.

unfolding of preprogrammed or innate differences.<sup>19</sup>

### Early Childhood Experience

North American and European mothers and fathers prefer the births of sons. Fathers show a stronger preference in this direction, especially if there have been no other sons born, as yet, into their families. Mothers most often desire to have sons in order to please their husbands in their desires for sons, or to satisfy other family members. Fathers show a stronger preference for sons than mothers do, while showing a lesser preference for daughters than mothers do. Mothers' preference for sons is slight while fathers' preference for sons is three times greater than their preference for daughters.<sup>20</sup> Such partiality would seem likely to bias parents in their attitudes towards their newborns before those infants were even born.

Parents' preconceived gender beliefs reflect the common stereotypes that females are "soft, fine-featured, little, inattentive, weak, and delicate," and that boys are not.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Charles H. Doering, "The Endocrine System," in Constancy and Change in Human Development, ed. by O. G. Brim Jr. and J. Kagan (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980), p.229-271, esp. p.266.

<sup>20</sup> J. McGuire, "Gender Specific Differences in Early Childhood: The Impact of the Father," in Fathers: Psychological Perspectives, ed. by Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire (London: Junction Books, 1982), p.95-125, esp.p.107.

<sup>21</sup> Michael E. Lamb, Margaret T. Owen and Lindsay Chase-Lansdale, "The Father-Daughter Relationship: Past, Present and Future," in Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development, ed. by Claire Kopp and Martha Kirkpatrick (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), p.95.

Parents (fathers more so than mothers) tend to believe that their infants are acting in these ways despite the fact that female infants at birth are generally more mature, active and alert than male infants.<sup>22</sup>

It is not surprising then to find that fathers and mothers show different patterns of interaction with daughters and sons from the very first day of birth. Fathers, visiting their newborn children in hospital on the day of their birth, have been found to spend more time with their sons than with their daughters; fathers hold their sons more than their daughters and speak to their sons more than to their daughters. Mothers have been found to be more equal in their attentions to sons and daughters, perhaps reflecting their more equal interest in the birth of either a son or a daughter.<sup>23</sup> This pattern has been shown to continue throughout a child's upbringing, with fathers showing greater interaction with their boy children than their girls, and with mothers tending to instruct their growing children in less stereotyped ways than do fathers.<sup>24</sup>

Fathers also tend to spend considerably more of their time with infants engaged in play activities, while mothers spend the majority of their time in contact with infants being involved in

---

<sup>22</sup> Lamb et al., p.95.

<sup>23</sup> Anne Wollett, David White and Louise Lyon, "Observations of Fathers at Birth," in Fathers: Psychological Perspectives, ed. by Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire (London: Junction Books, 1982), p.71-91.

<sup>24</sup> McGuire, p.101.



caretaking activities.<sup>25</sup> Mothers spend, on the average, a vastly greater number of hours with their infants than do fathers, while passing a smaller percentage of this time engaged in play. As a result, infants experience their two parents through different patterns of activities. Mothers of infants interact with their children both more often than do fathers and while engaged in activities of a different nature.<sup>26</sup>

When infants are involved in play activities with their parents they also find that their two parents have significantly different styles of play. Fathers tend to play more physically interactive games. Mothers are more verbal in their play.<sup>27</sup> Mothers and fathers in interaction with infants interpret the activities of their infants in ways which conform to their own attitudes about sex-roles and infants. Boy children tend to be handled (particularly by their fathers) in ways which reflect the dominant cultural attitudes that males are tougher, more aggressive, more independent, stronger, and more intellectually competent than females.

-----  
<sup>25</sup> Michael E. Lamb, "Father-Infant and Mother-Infant Interaction in the First Year of Life," Child Development, 48 (1977), p.167-81.

<sup>26</sup> David White, Anne Woollett and Louise Lyon "Fathers' Involvement with their Infants: The Relevance of Holding" in Fathers: Psychological Perspectives, ed. by Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire (London: Junction Books, 1982), p.126-143.

<sup>27</sup> Ross D. Parke and Barbara R. Tinsley, "The Father's Role in Infancy: Determinants of Involvement in Caregiving and Play," in The Role of the Father in Child Development ed. by M. E. Lamb (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1981), p.429-457.

Fathers especially tend to encourage independence in their sons and dependence in their daughters. Sons are related to in a manner which encourages them to explore and take risks while daughters are encouraged to stay close to their parents and are rewarded for help seeking behaviours. Fathers, who play more physically active and less verbal games with both sons and daughters, are most physically active and least verbal with their sons. Mothers tend to exhibit fewer sex biased differences in their handling of their infants but they too encourage dependence more in their daughters than in their sons.<sup>28</sup>

These differing play patterns which infants experience at the hands of their mothers and fathers must be considered not only in light of the fact that sons receive more of their fathers' attentions, but also in light of the fact that fathers tend to be more strict with their sons in terms of gender role behaviour, and less lenient than mothers are with either their sons or daughters.<sup>29</sup> Fathers hold, touch and handle their sons more and differently than their daughters, at an age when females are believed by some researchers to have a greater sensitivity to touch than males.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Phyllis R. McGrab "Mothers and Daughters" in Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development, ed. by Claire Kopp and Martha Kirkpatrick (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), p.113-129; Parke and Tinsley, p.429-457; McGuire, p.103-4,118; Beverly I. Fagot, "The Influences of Sex of Child on Parental Reaction to Toddler Children," Child Development, 49 (1978), p.459-465.

<sup>29</sup> McGuire, p.101.

<sup>30</sup> Lichtenberg, p.20.

This combination of circumstances results in infants assigned to different sexes having considerably different experiences of the world starting in the hospital at birth and extending throughout their first, most impressionable, months of life. These differences in interaction with parents, and other adults, affect the ways in which infants respond to masculine and feminine adults. Infants at least as young as nine months of age have been found to be able to differentiate adults on the basis of the gender of the adults, and to show a greater preference for interaction with adults of one gender.<sup>31</sup> For example, a young baby when "talked to from behind by the mother will show a smooth, controlled response. When the father's voice is heard the baby will respond with jerky excitement,"<sup>32</sup> thus displaying conditioned responses to the different patterns of interaction characteristic of mothers and fathers. Lamb, Owen and Chase-Lansdale proposed that the major gender role lesson of the first year of life is the learning of such response patterns. They assert that:

learning to recognize masculine and feminine interaction styles has more important implications for sex-role development than any explicit attempts on the part of parents to differentially shape the behaviour of their sons and daughters.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Michael Lewis and Marsha Weinraub, "Sex of Parent X Sex of Child: Socioemotional Development," in Sex Differences in Behaviour, ed. by Richard Friedman et al. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), p.165-189.

<sup>32</sup> Lichtenberg, p.49.

<sup>33</sup> Lamb, Owen and Chase-Lansdale, p.97.

Lamb, Owen and Chase-Lansdale suggested that long before a child is old enough to have an intellectual concept of gender, it begins to learn to distinguish between masculine and feminine on the basis of non-verbal behavioural cues such as styles of physical movement, tones of voice, facial expressions and the types of activities that adults engage in with children.

At the same time as infants are learning to distinguish between different types of adults on the basis of their behaviour patterns, they are learning their first basic lessons about how to survive and thrive in the world of humans. Through the interaction of their personalities and those of the adults around them, infants come to learn about their world. Infants whose interactions with the world of adults are characterized by warmth, caring and protection will develop markedly different personalities from infants whose experiences of the world of adults have been characterized by rough handling and a cool or distant caring. The question has been raised by Doering, and others, as to whether such differences in the handling of an infant might also have life-long physiological effects.<sup>34</sup> It is well known that certain individuals require greater or lesser levels of stress in their lives in order to function optimally, and that a deficiency of emotional warmth during childhood can result in a stunted physical stature.<sup>35</sup> Likewise, it has been

---

<sup>34</sup> Doering, p.266.

<sup>35</sup> Lytt I. Gardner, "Deprivation Dwarfism," Scientific American, 227 (July, 1972), 76-82.

suggested that different individuals vary widely in their sensitivities to sex hormones and that similar affects may result from significantly dissimilar sex hormone levels.<sup>36</sup>

The hypothalamus of the brain is the control centre which orchestrates the body's complex sensations and responses to fear, rage, hunger, thirst, sexual drive, pleasure, pain, and the hormones which regulate these states. It would seem logical then, to infer that infants who experience life as consistently, or often, dangerous and hostile might more often have cause to use those portions of the brain engaged in sensing and responding to such experiences. With repeated stimulation and use, these portions of the brain might become strengthened, more highly sensitized, and more adept at response. Other areas of the brain which were called into use less often might become sluggish, or even atrophy, from disuse. In a brain which is experiencing its greatest postnatal period of growth such effects might be dramatic indeed, resulting in sensitivity and response patterns which, if continually reinforced throughout the growth period, might become entrenched for life. Once so entrenched, such patterns might also be passed on to later generations by way of behavioural conditioning.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Jacquelyne Parsons, "Psychosexual Neutrality: Is Anatomy Destiny?" in The Psychobiology of Sex Differences and Sex Roles, ed. by Jacquelyne Parsons (Washington: Hemisphere, 1980), p.3-29.

<sup>37</sup> Experiments with rats, cats, and monkeys have all demonstrated these effects. See Rose, p.218-220; Robert Ader, "Early Experiences and Hormones: Emotional Behavior and Adrenocortical Function," in Hormonal Correlates of Behavior: Vol.1: A Lifespan View ed. by Basil E. Eleftheriou and Robert L.

Thus, it might be inferred that the early experiences of young children play a major role in shaping not only their personalities but also their physical propensities. It would seem logical to suggest that if the brain and its mechanisms are plastic and impressionable, then the experiences of the young organism, especially if forcefully and consistently experienced, might play a role in determining the form into which the developing brain, and the mechanisms which it controls, will ultimately stabilize. Such patterns could then become the resource basis for more mature learning processes. Triggering mechanisms, intensities of response levels, and physical response patterns might all be set into motion, tempered, or enhanced, by the pre-verbal experiences of a young and sensitive organism.

Investigations into brain activity in newborn infants have shown no differences as measured by EEG monitoring, until sometime between six months and one year of age,<sup>38</sup> by which age infants have experienced six months or more of constant and intensive gender role training from the adults around them. Infants experience this training as pleasure or pain, fear or safety, satisfaction or frustration of hunger or thirst, or relief from the discomfort of heat or cold.

---

<sup>37</sup>(cont'd) Sprott (New York: Plenum Press, 1975), p.19; Stein and Dawson.

<sup>38</sup> Thompson.

The hypothalamus of the brain, which regulates the emotional and physical responses of the body to sensory input, and which is not fully matured at birth, may develop characteristic response patterns to consistent sensory input (such as rough handling) and often repeated experiences (e.g. fear). As the brain matures and loses some of its plasticity, these response patterns may become firmly embedded. The implications of this process could be profound for later sex and gender development.

The hypothalamus controls the functioning of those hormones which in turn control general body growth, "fight or flight" impulses and the development of secondary sex characteristics.<sup>39</sup> Experiences of the first months of life might enhance, or confound, naturally occurring tendencies in newborn infants leading to structural and functional, physiological and biochemical patterns which may take until puberty to unfold. In this way, very early infant experience may translate into not only sex-typed emotional or psychological characteristics but even into apparently "innate" physical abilities and secondary sex characteristics later in life.

---

<sup>39</sup> Secondary sex characteristics are physical traits which are used as secondary indicators of sexual status. Commonly used characteristics include voice timbre, body hair, bone structure, musculature and patterns of fat deposits.

## Learning Gender

In a world where all newborns are immediately classified as one sex or another, and where this classification forms the basis for all forms of social interaction from that moment onward, male and female infants experience the world in profoundly different ways. Female infants experience the world in ways which teach them that they will be protected and shepherded. Male infants experience the world as a more challenging and often dangerous place.

All children generally experience the first months and years of their lives in the almost constant company of adults. Margaret Mahler has divided this time into several stages of development. The first stage, lasting approximately through the first three months of life, she called the symbiotic stage. During this stage of development, infants have very little definition of themselves as separate and distinct from their primary caregivers (who Mahler assumed to be the mother).<sup>40</sup> Infants only gradually become aware of themselves as separate from their mothers in body and in person. This process of learning one's physical and psychological boundaries in relation to one's mother was termed by Mahler the separation-individuation process. Mahler saw this process as consisting of "two complementary developments;" separation being

---

<sup>40</sup> Jane Flax, "The Conflict Between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and within Feminism," Feminist Studies, 4 (1978), 171-189, esp. p.173.



the process of learning one's physical and psychological boundaries, or who, or what, one is not, and individuation being the process of learning who, or what, one is.<sup>41</sup> This separation-individuation process, according to Mahler, occupies young children through roughly the first three years of their lives.

The separation-individuation phase is characterized by the mother and infant sharing in an exploratory process wherein the infant takes ever more adventurous steps away from the security of the mother while always returning between explorations to the safety of the symbiotic state. In this way the infant slowly learns its own boundaries and those of the mother as well as learning to define itself against the changing background of its ever expanding territory.

Although all young children may very well go through these processes, not all children experience their symbiosis or separation-individuation in the same way. Mothers may have differing levels of attachment to their children, or different styles of expressing their affections, or may be prevented by other obligations, or physical or mental illness from caring for their children in the way that they may optimally wish to. Their children may have physical or psychological characteristics which cause their mothers to experience anxiety or alienation or otherwise effect the type of care that an infant will receive.

---

<sup>41</sup> Margaret S. Mahler, Fred Pine and Anni Bergman, The Psychological Birth of the Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation (New York: Basic Books, 1975), p.4.

Mothers also hold beliefs about what constitutes ideal infant and child care, beliefs which will likewise influence the kind of care that a youngster may receive.

One of the largest contributing factors to the style of care an infant receives is the sex of the child. A second major variable in the equation is the sex of the major caregiver of the first year to two years who, in most societies around the world, is the biological mother.<sup>42</sup> Mothers relate differently to their sons and daughters; it is one of the major responsibilities of mothers to teach their children to behave in accordance with the cultural expectations of their sex. At the same time, mothers have different psychological responses to their daughters than they do to their sons. By the very fact of their mutual femaleness mothers tend to identify more strongly with their daughters than they do with their sons. This suggests that the symbiotic attachments between mother and daughter might be more intense than between mother and son.

Yet mothers are not without conflict in their identification with their infant daughters. They may find themselves to be aware of the difficulties of being female in a patriarchal world, and so to wish that their daughters might have been spared the difficulties of having been born as a female into such a world. They may also wish that their

---

<sup>42</sup> Thomas S. Weisner, "Some Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Becoming Female," in Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development, ed. by Claire Kopp and Martha Kirkpatrick (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), p.313-332.

daughters grow to be more successful females than they themselves have been. Mothers' closeness with their daughters might also be tainted by unconscious fears of homosexual attachments and lesbian tendencies within themselves.

A symbiotic period which is disrupted by such ambivalences on the part of the mother could lay an unstable foundation for the later phases of separation-individuation in which the girl child discovers who she is and who she is not.<sup>43</sup> Yet, it is difficult to imagine any mother in a patriarchal world who would not be beset by such conflicting desires and emotions. Further, if the father, or other family members, has been disappointed at the birth of a female child these feelings may well become magnified. If, in addition, a female child is physically ill-matched to the prevailing stereotypical vision of how a female child should look or act, the situation may become more difficult still. In situations where a female child is unusually large, uncuddly, or coarse looking, or when a parent, or parents, strongly preferred a male child, a female child may find herself being unconsciously reared by her parents as a surrogate son.<sup>44</sup>

Mothers likewise often have conflicted feelings and attitudes towards their young sons. All women are aware of the

---

<sup>43</sup> Flax, p.174-175.

<sup>44</sup> Teresa L. Buck, "Familial Factors Influencing Female Transsexualism" (Unpublished M.S.W. Thesis, Smith College for Social Work, 1977), p.60-67; Robert Stoller, "Etiological Factors in Female Transsexualism: A First Approximation," Archives of Sexual Behavior, 2 (1972), 47-64.

greater power which society affords to males solely on the basis of their maleness. This, in itself, is sufficient to engender a different sort of attachment between mother and son. Mothers know that their infant sons will grow to be more privileged in the world than they themselves have been. As well, most women have in their lives experienced some level of fear of male violence and know that their male infants will grow to become members of an often violent and dangerous fraternity. It would seem inevitable then that mothers would relate to their infant sons as more "other" than they would to their daughters.

Male children attempt to learn how to define themselves as males after a symbiotic phase in which they have identified themselves with their mothers, females. Thus, male identity in a society where early childcare is almost exclusively the province of females, must be established in opposition to female identity.<sup>45</sup> Male children learn to take their identity from the fact of their being "not female." They must be more distinct in their definitions of themselves than must their sisters and must do so at an earlier age. They must learn to see themselves as different from the most powerful person in their lives: their mother. This establishes in male children a self-identity, a gender-identity, which is based on a defensive sense of

---

<sup>45</sup> Margaret Mead, "On Freud's View of Female Psychology," in Women and Analysis: Dialogues on Psychoanalytic Views of Femininity ed. by Jean Strouse (New York: Grossman, 1974), p.95-106.

separateness and denial of relationship and connection.<sup>46</sup> Female children may establish their sense of self-identity and gender identity through identification with a sense of sameness with their mothers. They can thus base their sense of self and security on a more solid grounding of relationship to their primary caregiver and their major source of care.

Infants who are to become masculine must learn to recognize and appreciate differences between themselves and their mothers. They must engage in a process of retreat from the symbiotic state. Infants who are to become feminine persons must maintain, in some essential ways, an attachment to their feminine caregivers while undergoing the separation and individuation processes. Infants are aided and encouraged in their endeavors by the adults around them. Babies who are assigned as female at birth are handled and spoken to, rewarded and punished in ways which will facilitate the steps towards femininity. Babies designated as males are encouraged to form masculine personalities.

The degree to which parents actively participate in these processes varies according to their abilities and attitudes. Parents who hold aspirations for their children which may in some ways contradict the socially prescribed procedures may vary their behaviour accordingly. Adult caregivers may also be influenced by their own attitudes about the essential natures of

---

<sup>46</sup> Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Reproduction of Mothering (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p.166-174.

males and females. Henry Biller has found that "parents and others seem to expect more masculine behaviour from tall, broad, and/or mesomorphic boys."<sup>47</sup> Others have suggested that parents of girl babies who find that their infants are large, active, and/or "not pretty" may also relate to their children in ways which evoke more masculine behaviour patterns.<sup>48</sup>

As children grow older and begin to have a separate and individual sense of themselves they begin to absorb social lessons from a larger sphere than the mother-child bond. Both female and male children become increasingly aware of their fathers, elder siblings, and other adults with whom they have regular contact. Both boys and girls reach out to these other people to help them in their quest for separation and individuation during the first three years of their personality development. These people make themselves available to children in different ways according to their own sex and the sex of the child; behaviours which are mediated by social and cultural beliefs concerning gender roles.

Fathers play an important role in the development of gender in young children. Fathers, who tend to be more stereotyped in their gender attitudes than mothers,<sup>49</sup> act out their gender

---

<sup>47</sup> Henry Biller, "The Father and Sex Role Development," in The Role of the Father in Child Development, ed. by Michael Lamb (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), p.319-358, esp.p.325.

<sup>48</sup> Stoller, "Etiological Factors" p.50; Buck, p.60-67; Biller, p.342.

<sup>49</sup> Mcguire, p.101; Lamb, Owen, and Chase-Landsdale, p.99; Biller, p.341.

attitudes in the contacts that they have with children. As they do so, they communicate through those interactions as a gender role model. Fathers who expect to see stereotypical gender behaviour interpret what they see in light of their expectations and behave accordingly. Infants or children who are consistently related to as if they are in need of help and protection may grow to think of themselves in those terms and their more assertive tendencies may become extinguished. In this way, children can become what their parents expect them to become.

Fathers of infant sons pay more attention to them than they do to their daughters, and demand more rigidly stereotypical behaviours from them.<sup>50</sup> Early in the second year of their sons' lives fathers greatly increase the amount of time that they spend with them. They may begin to spend as much as twice the time with their sons that they spend with their daughters.<sup>51</sup> This higher level of interaction between fathers and sons may have several effects on the developing gender of both male and female children. The greater saliency of fathers to their sons serves to increase the likelihood that sons will identify with their fathers as major role models and imitate their gender behaviour. The increased amount of time that fathers spend with their sons also increases the opportunities that fathers have

---

<sup>50</sup> McGuire, p.104.

<sup>51</sup> Michael E. Lamb, "The Development of Father-Infant Relationships," in The Role of the Father in Child Development, ed. by Michael Lamb (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), p.459-488, esp. p.473.

for shaping their social learning and cognitive development. These factors, in combination with the high degree of gender rigidity demanded by fathers of their sons, would seem to lead to a continuation of the pattern of greater masculine subscription to gender role stereotypes.

Fathers who keep themselves less available to their daughters than to their sons become less available to their daughters as models for their gender development. This relative inaccessibility of fathers may foster in girl children a greater motivation to receive fatherly attentions and an intensified motivation to please their fathers.<sup>52</sup> In the majority of situations, pleasing fathers requires of daughters that they exhibit a high degree of conformity to gender role stereotypes. This effect may be further intensified through the enhancement effects of intermittent reinforcement by fathers.<sup>53</sup> Fathers are therefore able to function as major gender educators despite their lesser involvement with their children.

The quality and nature of these first years of human relationship set the basis for a child's "stance towards itself and its world - its emotions, its quality of self-love...or self

---

<sup>52</sup> Lamb, Owen and Chase-Landsdale, p.100-107.

<sup>53</sup> Such a schedule of aperiodic reinforcement has been shown to produce stronger and more persistent behavioural effects than a consistent one. See Norma Radin, "The Role of the Father in Cognitive, Academic, and Intellectual Development," in The Role of the Father in Child Development, ed. by Michael Lamb (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981), p.379-427, esp. p.384.



hate."<sup>54</sup> When the needs of a child are not adequately met, for whatever reason, the ramifications may be very far reaching. Chodorow, in a discussion of the preverbal period of infancy, speculated that:

When there is some major discrepancy in the early phases between needs and material and psychological care, including attention and affection, the person develops a "basic fault," an all pervasive sense, sustained by enormous anxiety, that something is not right, is lacking in her or him. This sense, which may be covered over by later developments and defenses, informs the person's fundamental nature, and may be partly irreversible.<sup>55</sup>

It would seem possible then, that similar effects might result from similar conflicts at a slightly later developmental stage. If Mahler and others were correct in their assertions of a universal symbiotic phase, through which all infants pass, and if separation were a painful, albeit natural process, then all adults might harbour within them such a "basic fault."

The separation process is not experienced identically within the two major personality divisions of masculine and feminine. Male children are encouraged to separate from their mothers more quickly and radically than are female children, thus allowing them to quickly develop a sense of themselves as "not female," or male. Female children are allowed and encouraged to maintain their attachment to their mothers longer and to let go of their mothers in a slower and more gradual release, thus protecting them from some of the inevitable

---

<sup>54</sup> Chodorow, p.78.

<sup>55</sup> Chodorow, p.59.

anxiety associated with the path toward masculinity. A feminine identity is therefore bound up more profoundly with a sense of connection and continuity, while a masculine one is in essence one of separation and denial.<sup>56</sup> Masculinity then, might be seen as a double duty shield defending one from femaleness and compensating for a pervasive anxiety born of a premature and severe separation phase. In a sense, masculinity might be an example of the sort of "basic fault" which Chodorow has described.

The development of femininity, although seemingly grounded in a more secure sense of positive identity, could also create fundamental anxieties. Children are characteristically curious and exploratory. Social definitions of femininity encourage a greater curtailment of such natural tendencies to self education in female children. One result of this could be a degree of frustration of the needs of female children for separation and individuation. Mothers, having themselves been raised to be feminine, tend to have a less clear sense of their own boundaries in relation to their daughters than in relation to their sons. Such a situation might serve to further intensify the mother-daughter bond and thereby increase the difficulty in the mother-daughter separation process.<sup>57</sup>

-----  
<sup>56</sup> Chodorow, p.167-174; Gilligan, p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Flax, p.174-175; Alice Rossi "On The Reproduction of Mothering: A Methodological Debate," Signs, 6 (1981), 482-514, esp. p.492.

In a society which classifies infants on the basis of a simple binary system, thereby denying the infinite diversity of nature, many children, both male and female, do not easily fit within the stereotypical notions of femininity and masculinity. Nonetheless, society demands that parents, and other adults, attempt to teach children to conform to their culture's norms of masculinity and femininity. Parents are not always entirely adept at their tasks. Infants and young children are individuals. Although it is possible to make generalizations about the development of masculinity and femininity, few, if any, children are entirely feminine or masculine either physically or psychologically.

### Gender Roles

Since the 1930's psychologists have been developing a body of work which has attempted to systematically describe popular concepts of masculinity and femininity. Their attempts have been hindered by the shifting nature of popular opinion and their own inevitable positions as members of the very society they have been attempting to study. Psychologists embark on their endeavors already well steeped in the attitudes and traditions of their own societies. The prejudices inherent in such positions influence the questions which researchers ask, the ways that they are asked and the interpretations which they apply to the data which they collect. The subjects whom

researchers investigate carry with them values and beliefs gained from earlier investigations into the nature of masculinity and femininity as they reach the public in their more popularized forms, and the beliefs and behaviours generated from the realities of their experience of sex, race, class, culture, age, or ethnicity.

Commonly, gender is viewed as a property which may be generalized within a given society. Researchers regularly fall into an ethnocentric trap of assuming that gender qualities vary with sex, but do not vary significantly with other social factors. Subjects responding to research investigations do so within the frameworks established by researchers whose methods and questions are prejudiced by such beliefs.

The earliest models of gender roles were based on an assumption of a continuum ranging from masculinity to femininity. Such models required a subject to be classified as masculine or feminine and allowed for no overlap or middle ground. Later models included a concept of layers or levels of personality wherein one might be outwardly masculine but inwardly feminine.<sup>58</sup> More recently, Sandra Bem introduced the idea that gender roles need not be seen as an either/or sort of arrangement; that one individual might be both highly feminine and highly masculine, or neither, thus introducing the concepts

---

<sup>58</sup> Pleck, p.6-8.

of androgynous and undifferentiated personalities.<sup>59</sup>

Methods of testing for, and designating, femininity and masculinity have come from research into popular opinions and attitudes, but the results of such research then filter back into society as the findings of "experts" and in turn become, to some degree, the basis for popular opinions and attitudes. Researchers then base their later questions on the results of existing research, while their respondents, in part, also base their opinions on popularized versions of earlier research results.

Unfortunately, some of the early and influential work done in this field was, as well, based on highly unrepresentative samples. For example, the for many years widely used Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) male-female (m-f) scale was based on a sample consisting of "fifty-four male soldiers, sixty-seven female airline employees and thirteen male homosexuals in the early 1940's." The median education of the sample as a whole was only eight years.<sup>60</sup> Although such a collection of people might arguably represent a variety of individuals, the sum of those 134 persons could not represent the full range of social attitudes. Standards of femininity and masculinity also differ across class, age, race, ethnicity, and time, as well as with changing political and sexual persuasions.

<sup>59</sup> Sandra L. Bem, "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny," Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology, 42 (1974), 155-162.

<sup>60</sup> Pleck, p.37.

The gender role standards of a female, inner city, black youth of the 1980's will differ from those of middle-aged rural white male during the 1950's. Such factors have rarely been taken into account in the investigation of gender role standards.

The Gough Femininity (Fe) scale was originated in 1952 based on the opinions of a group of high school students in Wisconsin and a group of University Students in California. By 1966, more than half of the items on the scale were shown to no longer differentiate between males and females in a group of U.S. college students.<sup>61</sup> The Gough (Fe) scale was still widely used in 1974 when Bem proposed her new standard, the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) as an alternative. Bem's Inventory was based on the opinions of 100 Stanford University undergraduates in 1972, half of whom were female and half of whom were male. Bem's sample might be seen as an attempt to account for the changes brought by time and sex but her sample did not take into account, in any systematic way, any other variables.

Gender role standards as described by psychological testing and as subscribed to by members of the public are far from neutral in their impact. Members of the general public and practicing psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and therapists attach differing degrees of value to various gender role characteristics. Broverman, et al. found, in 1970, that clinicians held a different standard of mental health for females than they held for males and that the standard for males

<sup>61</sup> Pleck, p:37.

corresponded closely with their standards for a healthy individual, whereas their standards for a psychologically healthy female did not.<sup>62</sup> A survey taken in the 1960's found that women were twelve times more likely than males to have preferred to have been born to the other sex,<sup>63</sup> while a 1978 study found that both feminine males and feminine females wished to become more masculine.<sup>64</sup> These studies indicate that a wide range of people place greater value on masculinity than they do on femininity.

A perusal of the qualities used by the Broverman study, and later by Bem, to characterize masculinity and femininity reveals some of the bases for the more positive valuation of masculine qualities. Masculine qualities are ones which are more likely to lead to behaviours which qualify one for success in a patriarchal (and capitalist) society. A comparison of masculine qualities with those of femininity clarifies why femininity is not highly valued and rewarded in patriarchal societies. Some of the terms which the Broverman study used to characterize masculinity were: "very aggressive," "very logical," "very self-confident," "very ambitious," "can make decisions easily,"

<sup>62</sup> Inge K. Broverman et al., "Sex-Role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgements of Mental Health," Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 39 (1970), 1-7.

<sup>63</sup> Harry Benjamin, The Transsexual Phenomenon (New York: Julian Press, 1966), p.148.

<sup>64</sup> Warren H. Jones, Mary Ellen O'C. Chernovetz, and Robert O. Hansson, "The Enigma of Androgyny: Differential Implications for Males and Females?" Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 46 (1978), 298-313.

"knows the ways of the world," "easily able to separate feelings from ideas," and "likes math and science." Feminine characteristics, in the same study, included: "very talkative," "very gentle," "very aware of the feelings of others," "very interested in own appearance," and a "very strong need for security."<sup>65</sup> Bem later characterized masculine persons as: "aggressive," "ambitious," "assertive," "analytical," "forceful," "self-reliant," and "willing to take a stand." Bem's feminine scale included: "cheerful," "childlike," "flatterable," "gentle," "gullible," "shy," "sympathetic," "warm," and "yielding."<sup>66</sup> Clearly, feminine attributes qualify one for secondary and co-operative social roles, while masculine characteristics train one for primary and dominant social roles.

Recent studies, using Bem's Sex Role Inventory to rate the sex-typing of individuals, have found that only half of the adults studied were conventionally sex-typed, (i.e. masculine males, feminine females).<sup>67</sup> When female subjects alone have been tested it has been found that considerably less than 50% of them were rated as feminine females.<sup>68</sup> These studies demonstrate that although femininity and masculinity are widely accepted as descriptions of the behaviour of females and males, such

---

<sup>65</sup> Broverman et al., p.3.

<sup>66</sup> Bem, "Psychological Androgyny," p.156.

<sup>67</sup> Jones et al., p.302.

<sup>68</sup> S. Oldlam, D. Farnill and I. Ball, "Sex Role Identities of Female Homosexuals," Journal of Homosexuality, 8 (1982), 41-46.



descriptions are as often incorrect as they are correct.

Furthermore, recent studies have found that masculinity and social adaptability tend to be found together in individuals regardless of their sex or gender identity; masculine males tended to the greatest degrees of self-confidence, self-esteem, and flexibility, feminine females tended to exhibit these qualities the least, while masculine females, androgynous males and females and feminine males obtained some level between the two extremes.<sup>69</sup> Femininity, then, can be understood as a social behaviour pattern which is, by definition, maladaptive to emotional well-being and material success in a patriarchal society. Masculinity, by contrast, can be seen to function as a minimum basic requirement for social success in mainstream society regardless of one's sex or gender identity.

Femininity and masculinity can best be understood as ideological constructions whose human manifestations (women and men, girls and boys) are recreated in each generation according to the intermeshing requirements of social, cultural, economic and biological necessities. The apparent naturalness of femininity and masculinity does not stem from any inevitable and overwhelming biological imperative, but rather from the pervasiveness of a patriarchal structure which is founded on the division of humanity by sex; a division which a patriarchal society demands must be at all times, and under all circumstances, unequivocal and obvious.

---

<sup>69</sup> Jones et al.

The imbeddedness of members of society within this belief system leads them to experience themselves and those around them as verifying the "intrinsicness" of femininity and masculinity. They then transfer not only their beliefs but also psychological and physiological reproductions of those beliefs to the infants in their care. In this way, the "universality" of gender as the primary organizing principle of all human endeavor is continuously reinforced and reconstituted within and between each succeeding generation.

### III. THE SOCIAL CREATION OF GENDER

#### The Gendered Self

Between the ages of eighteen months and two years children are believed to settle into a gender identity which is more or less permanently established.<sup>1</sup> By the age of two and a half children generally understand that they are members of a gender grouping, and by age three they have a fairly firm concept of gender. Generally, it is not until children reach the age of five to seven years that they become convinced that they are permanent members of their gender grouping.

Researchers test the establishment, depth, and tenacity of gender identity through the use of language and the concepts which language mediates. The language systems in use in populations studied by researchers in this field conceptualize

---

<sup>1</sup> Much research has been devoted to determining when gender identity becomes solidified in the sense that a child knows itself to be unequivocally either male or female. John Money and others working along the same lines have proposed that it is difficult or impossible to change a child's gender identity once it has been established around the age of eighteen months. Money and Ehrhardt, p.243.

gender as binary and permanent.<sup>2</sup> Children learn the social definitions of gender and gender identity simultaneously with their learning of the appropriate behaviours and the words to describe those behaviours. Thus, it would seem very difficult to ascertain whether gender identity is established before the acquisition of language, as there would be no medium through which to effectively communicate the concept of gender. In fact, it seems as though the concept of gender might have no meaning at all independently of language, and that the idea of gender permanence, at least in unsophisticated young minds, might be a function of the nature of its definition.

Children only gradually come to understand the meaning of gender in the same way as adults do. Very young children may learn the words which describe their gender and be able to apply them to themselves appropriately, but their reasoning is often

-----  
<sup>2</sup> Many North and South American native peoples had a legitimate social category for persons who wished to live according to the gender role of another sex. Such people were sometimes revered, sometimes ignored, and occasionally scorned. Each tribe had a native word to describe such persons, most commonly translated into English as "berdache." Similar institutions and linguistic concepts have also been recorded in early Siberian, Madagascan, and Polynesian societies, as well as in Medieval Europe. See Susan Baker, "Biological Influences on Human Sex and Gender," in Women: Sex and Sexuality ed. by Catherine R. Stimpson and Ethel S. Person (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.186; Evelyn Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender in Certain North American Tribes: The Case of Cross-Gender Females," Signs, 10 (1984), 27-42; Vern L. Bullough, "Transvestism in the Middle Ages," American Journal of Sociology, 79 (1974), 1381-1389; J. CI. DuBois, "Transsexualisme et Anthropologie Culturelle," Gynecologie Pratique, 6 (1969), 431-440; Donald C. Forgey, "The Institution of Berdache among North American Plains Indians," Journal of Sex Research, 11 (Feb, 1975), 1-15.

different from that used by adults. Only in time do children learn that friends, adults, and animals can also be grouped together by gender. As well, children often use very different criteria for ascribing sex or gender to persons, pets or inanimate objects. Five year olds, for example, may be able to accurately recognize their own gender and the genders of the people around them, but they will often make such ascriptions on the basis of role information rather than physical attributes even when physical cues are clearly in evidence. One result of this level of understanding of gender is that children in this age group often believe that one may change one's gender with a change in clothing, hair style, or activity.<sup>3</sup>

Children learn about the meaning of gender within the social context of the society in which they live. Each society has a different definition of appropriate gender activity and the value of sex as a determining factor in the behaviour of individuals within that society. Within larger social grouping there exist sub-groupings and sub-cultures whose gender definitions may vary from the mainstream definitions of gender behaviour or roles. Children learn what is considered appropriate within their particular social setting; from the media, schools, and other institutions, they may learn the standards of the mainstream where they differ from those of their sub-group.

---

<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Maccoby, Social Development: Psychological Growth and the Parent-Child Relationship (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980), p.255.

Although the standard social definition of gender is based on genitalia, this is not the way that young children first learn to distinguish gender. The most salient qualities to the young mind are the more culturally specific qualities which grow out of sex role prescriptions. Young school age children, who were given dolls and asked to identify their gender, overwhelmingly identified the gender of the dolls on the basis of attributes such as hair length or clothing style, in spite of the fact that the dolls were anatomically correct. Only seventeen per cent of the children identified the dolls on the basis of their primary or secondary sex characteristics.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that children in this age group believe that although it is not correct to do so, one may change gender merely by changing one's hair style or gender role behaviour patterns.<sup>5</sup> Children, five to seven years old, understand gender as a function of role rather than as a function of anatomy. They understand that gender (role) is supposed to be stable but that it is possible to alter it at will.

George Herbert Mead has suggested that people's concepts of themselves as individuals are entirely bound up in their understanding of the expectations of the society of which they are a part. He proposed that as people begin to develop concepts of themselves as individuals they do so only while observing

<sup>4</sup> Maccoby, p.227.

<sup>5</sup> Maccoby, p.229.

themselves in reflection. Children start to understand themselves as individuals separate from others as they begin to understand that others see them and respond to them as particular people. In this way the concept of the individual as an "I" (a proactive subject) comes into being simultaneously with the individual as a "me" (a member of society, a subjective object). Children learn that they are both as they see themselves and as others see them.<sup>6</sup>

To some extent children acquire the values of the society around them almost indiscriminately. At the same time as they develop a sense of what one is supposed to do or be, they also become aware of the fact that not everybody is the same and that not all members of society actually behave according to the socially correct forms of behaviour. To the extent that children absorb the generalized standards of society into their personalized concept of what is correct behaviour, they can be said to hold within themselves the attitude of the "generalized other."<sup>7</sup> This "generalized other" functions as a sort of monitor or meterstick against which individuals may judge their own actions with those of their idealized members of society. In this way people have available to them a guide, or an internalized observer, to turn the more private "I" into the object of public scrutiny, the "me." The tension created by the

<sup>6</sup> George Herbert Mead, "Self," in The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead ed. by Anselm Strauss (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1962, 1934), p.212-260.

<sup>7</sup> G. H. Mead.

constant interplay of the personal "I" and the social "me" is the creature known as the "self."

But not all others are of equal significance in the life of an individual, and so not all others are of equal impact on the development of the self. Any person outside of the individual is available to become part of one's "generalized other" but certain individuals, by virtue of sheer volume of time spent in interaction with an individual or by virtue of the nature of particular interactions, become more significant in the shaping of one's sense of values. These "significant others" become prominent in the formation of one's self-image and one's ideals and goals. As such they carry disproportionate weight in one's personal "generalized other."<sup>8</sup>

The first important molders of children's concepts of social standards reside within the immediate family group, but very early in life children become exposed to the standards of others in the larger social context. Often there are conflicting or confusing messages given to children as to the nature of social standards. Children are only able to make sense of such variety within the context of the experiences that they have already had within society and according to their cognitive abilities.

Certain ways of understanding become more readily available to children as they learn which are the ways that many other

<sup>8</sup> Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills, Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1953), p.96.



people around them share. Different societies, or social groupings within societies, will emphasize different ways of recognizing and organizing knowledge. Social definitions and standards will also vary with the passing of time, so that one may find that within the boundaries of different societies widely different standards may prevail.

Members of societies share common ways of understanding the people, objects and events of their lives. In order to share these understandings they must have available to them similar conceptual structures with which to organize their experience into cognitive bits which make sense and which may be effectively communicated to others. A conceptual structure which allows this sort of understanding and shared meaning to exist is a cognitive schema.

Most societies use sex and gender as a major cognitive schema for understanding the world around them.<sup>9</sup> People, objects and abstract ideas are classified as inherently female or male. The attributes, qualities or objects actually associated with each class may vary widely from society to society, but most use gender as a most basic groundwork. Gender, then, becomes a very early cognitive tool for most children to use to help them to understand the world that they grow into. Children learn first, that gender is a legitimate way to classify the contents of the world and second, that others will readily understand them if they communicate through such a framework.

---

<sup>9</sup> Weisner.

Children also learn from those around them what to allocate to the categories of male and female; what elements of all things are considered to fall under the influence of the feminine principle and which are classified as within the masculine sphere.

During the period in children's lives when they are first learning their gender identity and gender role they also learn the definitions and usages of a gender schema. Children learn that they are girls or boys, that every one else is either a girl or a boy, that girls and boys are different by virtue of the different ways that they act and look, and that certain objects and ideas are associated with maleness and femaleness. As children assimilate the concepts and classifications of the gender schema of their social group, they learn to define themselves and those around them by its terms of reference. A process begins in young minds whereby it becomes not only legitimate but also expedient to sift all experience through the mesh of a gender schema.<sup>10</sup>

Young children who are just learning a gender schema often seem overly zealous in their application of it. Their understanding of its rules is as yet crude and therefore their insistence on its enforcement may seem equally crude and dogmatic. Nonetheless, gender schema in its more adult form is perhaps the most pervasive and ubiquitous cognitive schema

---

<sup>10</sup> Bem, "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account," "Gender Schema Theory and Its Implications".

worldwide. While adults may vary in their consistency of use of a gender schema, and while gender schemata themselves may vary over time and culture, all societies have gender categories.

In highly sex-typed societies, or individuals, a gender schema is the predominant mode of thought.<sup>11</sup> In any given situation there are always a number of cognitive frameworks one might use to understand the dynamics of that situation. Other major frameworks which might be used to understand situations involving human dynamics might revolve around race, social class, age, or physical size, but sex-typed individuals and societies tend to regard gender as the most significant factor in understanding themselves and the situations they find themselves in.

Children who are raised within a society which emphasizes a gender schema over all others learn to embrace those aspects of the schema which apply to the gender group that they have been assigned to. Because an element of gender schema is that there are two distinct gender groups, children also learn to reject those elements of the schema which do not apply to themselves. As it is the case that gender schemata are highly sophisticated and can be used to understand any experience, children are engaged in this process with increasing sophistication as their cognitive abilities improve with age.

---

<sup>11</sup> Sex-typed persons or groups of persons are those who endorse the division of skills, personality attributes, behaviours, self-concepts, and preferences according to a regime of sex-appropriateness. See Bem, "Gender Schema Theory and Its Implications," p. 598.

All persons in a society, children and adults alike, engage constantly in a process of interpreting experience and thus developing shared meanings. Each interaction between people is built upon the exchange of social cues which individuals use to construct their understandings of the meanings of actions, words, and events. Individual and small group interactions take place within the larger contextual framework of the cognitive schemata of societies, and while all interpretations of interactions between members of a society must be understood within that context, cognitive schemata will be applied subjectively to everyday events.

Persons of any age interacting in social situations, have available to them many possible interpretations of what they experience in the presence of others. Identical styles of dress and movement may be seen as comely when the actor is recognized as a female or revolting when the actor is recognized as a male. Likewise, certain behaviours are acceptable when performed by a seven year old child of any gender, but are a source of shame or embarrassment when performed by an adult. At the same time as social actors receive such information from others, they attempt to project information about themselves which both reflects their self images and conforms to their understandings of the requirements of their social setting.<sup>12</sup> This process is open-ended, to some degree, as people are often willing to

---

<sup>12</sup> Erving Goffman, The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p.35.

reinterpret earlier information as new information suggests a more "sensible" interpretation of prior events.<sup>13</sup>

Individuals are able to understand social experiences only within the restrictions imposed on them by their own frames of reference, or from within the boundaries of their own cognitive schema.<sup>14</sup> In order to be able to do this, members of society call upon a loosely organized commonsense "stock of knowledge at hand"<sup>15</sup> which "anyone like us necessarily knows."<sup>16</sup> Such a schema offers them guidelines which they may use to organize their perceptions. Together, the people involved in face-to-face interactions may develop a shared understanding of the meaning of their experiences through an ongoing interactive process whereby people engage in a subtle bargaining process as to whose version of reality will become accepted as the working definition in their interaction.<sup>17</sup>

When two individuals meet they must establish certain facts about themselves as a basis for the smooth progress of their interaction. Individuals in a society belong to classes and social groups which govern their behaviours towards one another

<sup>13</sup> Aaron Cicourel, Cognitive Sociology: Language and Meaning in Social Interaction (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p.52-58.

<sup>14</sup> Erving Goffman, Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974), P.22, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Kenneth Leiter, A Primer of Ethnomethodology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p.5.

<sup>16</sup> Garfinkel, p.54.

<sup>17</sup> Goffman, Presentation, p.9.

by certain etiquettes and proprieties. Perhaps the most major of these social divisions is gender. Adult members of society generally consider that a social failure has occurred if a person's gender is not displayed obviously, immediately and consistently. Children are permitted to be less obvious in their gender display, and they are tolerated benignly when they inquire as to the gender of others. Nonetheless, children understand that to be able to recognize gender quickly and correctly is a sign of maturity. <sup>B</sup>

Young children actively attempt to learn the definitions of their gender category. They do so, in part, by "trying on" different behaviours and discerning from the responses of those around them the appropriateness of their gender display. They also learn gender by studying the actions of the adults around them as they conduct themselves as men and women. As well, adults attempt to instruct and guide young children into their assigned gender roles.

A subtle, but powerful, process of interaction revolves around the cueing and countercueing of gender display. Both adults and children signal to one another through their simple everyday talk and actions the complex message which is an unmistakable gender.<sup>18</sup> "Any scene...can be defined as an occasion for the depiction of gender difference, and in any

---

<sup>18</sup> Garfinkel, p.181; Erving Goffman, Gender Advertisements (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976), p.8.

scene a resource can be found for effecting this display,"<sup>19</sup> so that there may be no plausible excuse for adults to fail to properly display their gender.

Children, who are young enough to be conceivably still learning the proper application of their society's gender schema, may be tolerated when they fail to display gender behaviours appropriate to their assigned genders, although this tolerance is not evenly distributed between the two gender classes. Masculinity would seem to be more highly valued in children than is femininity. Masculine behaviour in female children is tolerated as quite harmless, perhaps even salubrious. Feminine behaviour in male children, on the other hand, is only poorly tolerated and often seen as a cause for alarm.<sup>20</sup> Masculinity in children then, as in adults,<sup>21</sup> is more highly valued than femininity regardless of the gender attributed to the children.

Children learn the greater value of masculine behaviours and the lesser value of feminine behaviours by observing the respect granted to them by the adults around them in response to masculine and feminine patterns of interaction. Although children do receive a great deal of social training as to the "correct" ways for boys and girls to act, they also receive the

---

<sup>19</sup> Goffman, Gender Advertisements, p.9.

<sup>20</sup> Saul Feinman, "Approval of Cross-Sex-Role Behavior," Psychological Reports, 35 (1974), 643-648.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, p.310-11.

message of the dominant gender schema that male is the standard against which all things associated with gender are measured. Thus, children learn that to be masculine is to be better: to be male and masculine is to be best, to be female and masculine is to be second best, to be female and feminine is to be a "good girl" but second class, and to be male and feminine is to be a traitor. It is not cross-gender-role behaviour that is censured so much as it is gender behaviour which lowers the gender class value of a child.

### Gender Role Strain

Cognitive developmental theorists have suggested that children will desire to learn what is appropriate for their gender grouping once they have identified themselves as members of that grouping. This process of identification and modelling is complicated by the diversity in gender schema definitions. There may exist severe or subtle disjunctions between the gender schemata projected by various "significant others" or between "significant others" and a child's "generalized other." The actual prescriptions and proscriptions of gender schemata are constantly in flux and undergoing challenge from competing social and cultural ideological sources. Individual representatives of society who come into contact with children hold within themselves individual versions of a gender schema which in itself contains confusions and contradictions.



Further complications arise despite the best intentions and abilities of children to subscribe to a gender schema as they understand it. Simultaneously, while developing gender identity, gender role and gender schema, children develop personalities which revolve around these and other issues. Children also carry within themselves certain innate dispositions and talents. It is not uncommon that gender role requirements as outlined in a gender schema conflict with the personalities, talents, and dispositions of growing children. Such conflicts result in gender role strain wherein individuals find it difficult to negotiate their assigned gender role as they understand it.<sup>22</sup> In such situations the disjuncture between one's "I" and one's "me" could become uncomfortably large and a person's sense of themselves as a coherent "self" might become endangered. Such conflict might result in an internalized power struggle between one's "I" and one's "generalized other." In other words, when a child or adult does not see themselves as they believe others see them and as they themselves believe they ought to be, a personality disintegration is possible.

Persons experiencing such conflict have several avenues open to them: they might readjust their behaviour, so that others see them more as they see themselves; they might choose to readjust their definitions of themselves so that they reflect more exactly the opinions of others; or they may shift their locus of social standards to reside with a different social

---

<sup>22</sup> Pleck, p.9.

group whose standards more exactly coincide with their personal sense of themselves. This last option could allow them to align what other people see and what they themselves see to more closely match the social standards subscribed to by the individuals themselves and by their "significant others."

Each option must be understood within a larger social context. Gender schemata exist in society as universally accepted ways of making sense out of everyday experience; everyone may not agree on exactly how a schema is to be defined but in general gender schema is a universally used cognitive technique and as such is a most basic part of social sense. If individuals were to contradict, in behaviour, speech, attitude, or in any other way, the basic tenets of the gender schema of their society they would be challenging the accepted social definitions of sense. One result of such a situation might be that these individuals would simply be misunderstood. If such misunderstanding were viewed benignly there might be no further implications. Were this behaviour aschematic enough, it might be considered dangerous, criminal, or insane. The ramifications in such situations could be severe.

Where persons perceive that their private definitions of themselves vary significantly from their public image, they may attempt to display their private selves more openly in an attempt to bring the "I" and the "me" into alignment. This option has certain inherent limitations. One must be cautious not to display attributes which might bring one social censure,

therefore individuals who perceive themselves to be experiencing a conflict between their public and private selves may be able to use this option only in limited ways.

Another way to negotiate a more perfect conjunction of "I" and "me" is to adjust one's personal self-image to match more closely the way one is seen by others. This approach has the advantage of running the least risk of offending public sensibilities. It is safer in that social expectations are being met rather than questioned, but it carries with it the greatest challenge to the self because the "I" is the most deeply rooted and intensely personal part of the self.

A method for partially relieving gender role strain which least threatens the self and most effectively avoids conflict and the power of social disapproval revolves around the constituency of the "generalized other." People may choose to allow certain individuals or ideologies to take prominence within their conceptualizations of cognitive schemata. Gender schema need not be one's preeminent cognitive schema, nor must it be constructed according to the demands of the dominant ideologies of society. Individuals, or groups of individuals, may choose either to give other cognitive schemata dominance within their own cognitive frameworks, or may choose to disregard gender schema wherever possible in their own lives and social interactions. Gender role strain might therefore be relieved by a willful mental effort to shift one's cognitive schemata priorities.

Such a shift could be reinforced and bolstered by a similar effort to shift one's "significant others" and "generalized others" to include persons of similar persuasions. Gender role strain may then be lessened to the degree that individuals are able to constrain their social contacts to persons of similar minds. Such a strategy would be limited in its effectiveness to the same degree that any social deviation might be. Social deviation is rarely tolerated easily and social deviation from gender schema prescriptions (by individuals or groups of individuals) can be perceived as extremely threatening to a social order which is, to a large degree, predicated on a gender schema. Those who threaten the social order can be, and often are, severely socially punished for their transgressions.

Persons who find themselves unable to conform satisfactorily to their assigned gender role may become socially stigmatized for such failure (when such individuals are female the level of social stigma suffered by them is magnified by their already marginal status as female in a patriarchal society). Normally, in North American society, when people join together in social situations they expect from one another a certain level of social collusion so that all participants in an interaction will be able to share a common meaning and understand the intentions of one another. The most generally applicable way to establish a common language of communication is to agree to collectively subscribe to elements of the dominant social language. This dominant social language is

composed not only of words but also of a shared understanding of the meanings of non-verbal communications and a set of values and attitudes.<sup>23</sup> Persons who do not, willingly or unwillingly, share in these common creations of meaning become people who carry with them a stigma, and persons who carry a stigma come to be seen by others as "not quite human." They can thus become partially or fully disqualified from social acceptance.<sup>24</sup>

People who are aware that they have a disjuncture in their gendered selves between their "I," their "me," and their "generalized other" must manage themselves in such a way so as to minimize any possible stigma which might result from others becoming aware of their situation. Such people may attempt to disguise or compensate for the offending parts of their gender behaviour which they feel unable or unwilling to modify. Individuals who take such an approach carry with them at all times the awareness that they are secretly in transgression of social laws. At any time they may become exposed not only as persons with stigma but also as persons engaged in deceit.

Thus, stigmatized persons, who believe themselves to be stigmatized for reasons beyond their control, have few options open to them. They may allow their nonconforming "I's" to be fully visible to public scrutiny and become subject to the full force of social affront at gender nonconformity; they may

---

<sup>23</sup> Erving Goffman, Presentation.

<sup>24</sup> Erving Goffman, Stigma: Note on the Management of Spoiled Identity (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963), p.5.

attempt to hide whatever offending gender behaviour that they are able to conceal and run the risk of exposure, and the subsequent further discreditation associated with falsehood, as well as suffer the anxiety of leading a life mired in duplicity; or they may allow their stigma to become public while safeguarding themselves by limiting their social contact to persons who will be sympathetic to their situation. In any case, full social acceptance and peace of mind are not easily available to persons who do not conform to the gender requirements of the "generalized others" among whom they live.

### The Male Standard

Gender Schemata are not unitary or absolute in their ideological constitution. The details of gender categories will vary with time, culture, economics, and political structure. Nonetheless, there are certain characteristics which are common to dominant gender schemata in many cultures worldwide. Gender schemata postulate that all experience can be cognitively organized on the basis of maleness and femaleness, that there are only two gender categories, and that all other categories can be subsumed within these two. Within intensely patriarchal societies it is further assumed that maleness is the dominant principle and that femaleness is derivative from maleness.

The dominant patriarchal gender schema underlies psychological, social, economic and political definitions of

gender. Psychological examinations of personality routinely start by dividing subjects and/or results into classifications of male and female. Any and all results then obtained have built into them the parameters of gender. In this way the division of persons by gender is both legitimized and reinforced. This emphasis carries through, as well, into other social, political, and economic research and into research involving animals. Gender thus becomes a relevant variable in almost every situation studied.

Recently research has been undertaken to investigate what people do when they are denied information which readily allows them to use their gender schema as an organizer of information. In studies involving infants, adults were exposed to infants whose sex was not obvious and were asked to relate to them in controlled situations. The adults often inquired as to the sex of the infants and when that information was not forthcoming they proceeded to ascribe a sex to the infants despite a lack of concrete gender information. It was further found that when adults were allowed to assume a sex for a child they most often assumed the child to be male.<sup>25</sup> The assumption of gender and the more frequent assumption of maleness reflects those elements of the dominant gender schema which demand an identification by gender and postulate that maleness is primary, i.e. generic or inclusive of lesser categories.

---

<sup>25</sup> Seavey, Zalk and Katz.

Adults themselves are so thoroughly imbued with the dominant gender schema that it is virtually impossible to gather any group of adults who would be so totally devoid of gender cues as to be suitable subjects for similar studies. Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKinna, in the mid 1970's, devised a study using graphic representations of adults exhibiting mixtures of common gender cues in order to examine how adults recognize and ascribe gender. By combining nine gender specific characteristics (long hair, short hair, wide hips, narrow hips, breasts, flat chest, body hair, penis, and vulva) with two non-gender specific characteristics ("unisex" pants and shirt) they were able to produce ninety-six different combinations of characteristics overlaid on simple line drawings having the same arms, hands, legs, feet, shoulders, waistlines and heads. The ninety-six different drawings were each shown to equal numbers of male and female adults who were asked to identify the figure as male or female, to rate the confidence that they had in their appraisal, and to suggest how the figure might be changed to render it a member of the other gender.<sup>26</sup> The results of this study strongly suggested that people see maleness wherever there is any indication of it. A single indication of the possibility of maleness strongly tended to take precedence over almost any number of indications of femaleness.

Common wisdom and, to a large degree, medical opinion assumes that gender is determined on the basis of genitalia.

---

<sup>26</sup> Kessler and McKinna, p.145-146.



Thirty-two of the figures used had their genitalia covered by a non-gender specific pair of pants and displayed various combinations of the other possible characteristics. Gender cues were evenly distributed among the thirty two drawings, but more than two-thirds (sixty-nine percent) of the 320 people who viewed these figures saw them as male. Surprisingly, a majority of the figures (fifty-seven percent) with no genitals exposed but showing breasts were among those seen as male.<sup>27</sup>

The tendency to see maleness was even more pronounced among the remaining 640 persons who viewed drawings of figures with exposed genitals. Kessler and McKinna found that, although in theory it is genitalia which determines the sex of an individual, in fact, it is the male genital which serves this function. In this study it was overwhelmingly the presence or absence of the male genital cue which determined the sex ascribed to the drawings. The female genital cue did not have this same power. The drawings which exhibited a penis were almost unanimously (ninety-six per cent) identified as male regardless of the presence of female cues such as breasts or wide hips.<sup>28</sup>

The presence of a vulva in a drawing was, by contrast, sufficient to elicit a female identification in only a little less than two thirds (sixty-four per cent) of the representations. In the remaining more than one third

---

<sup>27</sup> Kessler and McKinna, p.149-150.

<sup>28</sup> Kessler and McKinna, p.151.

(thirty-six per cent) of the drawings where a vulva was in evidence the people who viewed the drawings were able to disregard that information in favor of male cues which were also present. (No figure had both male and female genitals portrayed.) The only combinations which produced a rate of female identification equal to the rate of male identification which was achieved with the presence of the penis in combination with ~~any other cues~~ (male or female) were the drawings which showed a figure with vulva, wide hips, "unisex" shirt, and long hair, or a figure with vulva in combination with no body hair, breasts and long hair. In other words, for the figure to be seen virtually every single time as male required only the presence of a penis; for the figure to be identified as female equally as consistently required the presence of a vulva plus the addition of one of two specific combinations of three additional female cues.<sup>29</sup>

These studies demonstrated that even in situations of conflicting, confusing, or absent gender cues people were willing, able and likely to ascribe gender. They also showed that when there was a doubt as to the gender of an individual, people tended to see maleness. These studies also suggest that maleness is seen where there are indicators of it, whereas femaleness is seen only where there is an absence of male cues. This way of seeing corresponds closely to the patriarchal gender schema notions of maleness as a positive force and femaleness as

<sup>29</sup> Kessler and McKinna, p.151-153.

a negative force; of maleness as a presence and femaleness as an absence; of maleness as primary and femaleness as derivative.

### Gender Schema

The clusters of social definitions which are used to identify persons by gender are grouped, according to the dominant gender schema, as femininity and masculinity. The masculine cluster is assumed to identify one as male while the feminine cluster is used as a signifier for femaleness. Most commonly these two clusters of characteristics are seen as mirror images of one another with masculinity thought to be characterized by dominance and femininity by submission. Another commonly cited set of signifiers for masculinity and femininity are aggression and passivity. A more accurate description of the social qualities subsumed by femininity and masculinity might be to label masculinity as generally concerned with egoistic dominance<sup>30</sup> and femininity as concerned with co-operation. Characterizing femininity and masculinity in this way does not portray the two clusters as being in a hierarchical relationship to one another but rather as being two different approaches to the same question; that question being one centrally concerned

<sup>30</sup> Egoistic dominance is a striving for superior rewards for oneself or a competitive striving to reduce the rewards for one's competitors even if such action will not increase one's own rewards. Persons who are motivated by desires for egoistic dominance not only wish the best for themselves but also wish to diminish the advantages of others whom they may perceive as competing with them. See Maccoby, p.217.

with the goals and means of the use of power.

Popular conceptions of femininity and masculinity revolve around hierarchical appraisals of the "natural" roles of males and females. Members of both genders are conceived of as sharing many of the same characteristics although in different relative proportions. While both males and females are popularly thought to be generally able to do the same things, most activities are divided into suitable and unsuitable categories for each gender class. Persons who perform the activities considered appropriate for another gender will be expected to perform them poorly; if they succeed adequately, or well, at their endeavors they may be rewarded with ridicule or scorn.

The patriarchal gender schema currently in use in mainstream European and North American societies both reserves highly valued attributes for males and actively supports the high evaluation of any characteristics which might become associated with maleness. The ideology which the schema supports, postulates that the cultural superiority of males is a natural outgrowth of the innate predisposition of males towards aggression and dominance, which is assumed to flow inevitably from evolutionary and biological sources.

Female attributes are likewise postulated to find their source in innate predispositions acquired in the evolution of the species. Feminine characteristics are thought to be intrinsic to the female faculty for childbirth and breastfeeding. Hence, it is popularly believed that the social position of females is

biologically mandated to be intertwined with the care of children and a natural dependency on men for the maintenance of mother-child units.

Femininity, in general outline then, "would result in warm and continued relationships with men, a sense of maternity, interest in caring for children, and the capacity to work productively and continuously in female occupations."<sup>31</sup> In specific terms each of these qualities translates into a vast number of proscriptions and prescriptions. Warm and continued relations with men require of women that they be heterosexually oriented. A heterosexual orientation requires of women that they dress, move, speak and act in ways that men will find non-threatening and attractive. As patriarchy has reserved power as a masculine attribute, femininity must be expressed through modes of dress, movement, speech and action which communicate weakness, dependency, ineffectualness, availability for sexual or emotional service, and sensitivity to the needs of others. Some, but not all, of these modes of inter-relation also serve the demands of maternity and female occupations.

Common psychological scales of femininity list many characteristics which could easily be interpreted as descriptive of the subordinate social position of females. The Bem Sex Role Inventory, in part, listed feminine items as: "yielding," "understanding," "shy," "gullible," "childlike," "soft spoken,"

<sup>31</sup> John K. Meyer and John E. Hoopes, "The Gender Dysphoria Syndromes: A Position Statement on So-Called 'Transsexualism'," Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, 54 (Oct, 1974), 444-451.

and "sensitive to the needs of others."<sup>32</sup> Broverman et al. included the following items in their listing of female pole items: "not at all aggressive," "not at all independent," "very submissive," "not at all ambitious," "very interested in own appearance," and "almost never acts as a leader."<sup>33</sup> These characteristics clearly define character traits which do not easily qualify one to exert power within a social structure predicated on competition, hierarchy, and dominance.

Feminine body postures are defined and organized in such a way as to communicate subordinate status and vulnerability to trespass. Feminine body postures also commonly convey a message of "no threat." They are postures and movements which demonstrate subordination through a minimizing of spacial use: feminine appearing people generally tend to keep their arms closer to their bodies, their legs closer together, and their torsos and heads less vertical than do masculine looking individuals. Feminine looking people also tend to point their toes inward and use their hands in small or childlike gestures. Other people tend to stand closer to feminine people and feminine persons tend to make more appeasement gestures, such as smiling, than do masculine people. Perhaps as an outgrowth of a subordinate status, women tend to excel over men at the ability to correctly interpret and effectively display non-verbal

---

<sup>32</sup> Bem, Measure of Androgyny, p.156.

<sup>33</sup> Broverman et al., p.3.

communication cues.<sup>34</sup>

Feminine speech is characterized by inflections, intonations, and phrase use which convey non-aggression and subordinate status. Feminine speakers use more polite expressions, and ask more questions in conversation than masculine speakers do. Feminine speech is also characterized by sounds of higher frequencies which are often interpreted by masculine listeners as childlike and therefore ineffectual.<sup>35</sup> Feminine styles of dress also display subordinate status through the greater restriction of the free movement of the body and the greater exposure of the body in a more sexual way than do masculine styles. The more gender distinct the dress, the more this is the case.

Those elements of femininity which centre on emotional sensitivity to the needs of others also serve the needs of women as mothers and as workers. Certain more masculine qualities also serve the needs of mothers and working women: the ability of mothers to discipline, guide and protect their children, or qualities which allow women to compete successfully and

<sup>34</sup> Goffman, Gender Advertisements; Judith A. Hall, Non-Verbal Sex Differences: Communication Accuracy and Expressive Style (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Nancy M. Henley, Body politics: Power, Sex and Non-Verbal Communication (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1979); Marianne Wex, 'Let's Take Back our Space': "Female" and "Male" Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures (Berlin: Frauenliteraturverlag Hermine Fees, 1979).

<sup>35</sup> Karen L. Adams, "Sexism and the English Language: the Linguistic Implications of Being a Woman" in Women: A Feminist Perspective, 3rd edition, ed. by Jo Freeman (Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield, 1984), p.478-491; Hall, p.37, 130-137.

aggressively in the job market. Within the frame of reference of the patriarchal gender schema such "masculine" qualities become all but invisible when exhibited by women. They often go unobserved or, if noted, they may be explained away as some special form of maternal instinct which appears to be similar to masculine behaviours, or perhaps simply as a failure of femininity.

Masculinity is expressed in North American society through the attainment of some level of proficiency at some or all of four main attitudes of masculinity. Masculine persons must display success and high status in their social group; "a manly air of toughness, confidence, and self-reliance;" "the aura of aggression, violence, and daring," and a conscientious avoidance of anything associated with femininity.<sup>36</sup> These requirements reflect the patriarchal ideology that masculinity results from a hormonal impetus towards aggression, which in turn impels males towards achievement and success. This constellation of minimum requirements for masculinity also reflects the ideological stance that demands that maleness (masculinity) remain pure of female (feminine) pollutions.

Masculinity, then, requires of its actors that they organize themselves and their society in a hierarchical manner so as to be able to quantify success more explicitly. The achievement of hierarchical success requires competitive and aggressive behaviour from those who wish to obtain it.

---

<sup>36</sup> Pleck, p.139.



Competition which is motivated by a goal of individual achievement (egoistic dominance), requires of its participants a degree of emotional insensitivity to feelings of hurt and loss in others and a measure of emotional insularity to protect oneself from vulnerability to manipulation by others. Such values lead those who subscribe to them to view feminine persons as "born losers" and to strive to eliminate any similarities with feminine people from their own personalities. In patriarchally organized societies, masculine values become the ideological structure of the society as a whole. Masculinity thus becomes "innately" valuable and femininity serves a counterpunal function to delineate and magnify the hierarchical dominance of masculinity.

Commonly used psychological measures of masculinity reflect these preoccupations in their definitions of masculinity. The Bem Sex Role Inventory listed the following among its masculine items: "aggressive," "ambitious," "competitive," "dominant," "forceful," "individualistic, and "self-sufficient."<sup>37</sup> In the study done by Broverman et al. the masculine pole items included: "very aggressive," "almost always hides emotions," "very competitive," "very ambitious," "very dominant," and "not at all aware of feelings of others."<sup>38</sup> These character traits are ones which well suit a person who wishes to succeed in a society organized in support of patriarchal values.

-----  
<sup>37</sup> Bem, Measures of Androgyny, p.156.

<sup>38</sup> Broverman et al., p.3.

The body postures, speech patterns and dress of masculine persons also demonstrate and support the masculine assumption of dominance and authority. Typical masculine body postures tend to be expansive and aggressive: physically masculine people tend to hold their arms and hands in positions away from their bodies, and to stand, sit or lie with their legs apart, thus maximizing the amount of space that they physically occupy. Physically masculine persons also tend to stand more erect than do feminine persons thereby communicating an air of authority, or a readiness for aggression. Masculine movements tend to be more abrupt and less fluid than do feminine ones and so tend to communicate force rather than flexibility. Masculinity is also reflected in a stern or serious facial expression which suggests minimal receptivity to the influence of others, a characteristic which is an important element in the attainment and maintenance of egoistic dominance.<sup>39</sup>

Masculine speech and dress tend to likewise demonstrate and reinforce the superior status of masculine behaviour patterns. Masculine speech patterns display a tendency towards expansiveness similar to that found in masculine body postures. Masculine persons tend to make more attempts to control the direction of conversations than do more feminine people.<sup>40</sup> They tend to speak more loudly, use less polite and more assertive forms, and they tend to interrupt the conversations of others

<sup>39</sup> Goffman, Gender Advertisements; Hall; Henley; Wex.

<sup>40</sup> Adams and Ware; Hall, p.37, 130-137.

more often. Masculine styles of dress tend to emphasize the size of upper body musculature and to allow freedom of movement. Such styles of dress encourage an appearance of physical power and a sense of ease with large body movements. Such an appearance of strength and readiness to action serve to enhance a masculine aura of aggressive intimidation. Expansive postures and gestures combine with these qualities to insinuate that a masculine position is one of secure dominance.

### Gendered Values

Many theorists have suggested that the early childhood experiences of boys and girls shape them into their assigned gender roles by creating deep psychological needs in individuals which predispose them towards the social roles into which they will be required to grow. Nancy Chodorow hypothesized that the primary emotional bond of all children is the one first held with the mother, and that the recreation of this bond is a motive force behind attitudes of both masculinity and femininity. She argued that femininity revolves around the need to recreate the complexity of the emotional situation experienced by young girl children as they develop autonomy while still retaining primary bonding with their mothers. Chodorow suggested that masculinity stems, in part, from the need to recreate the one-on-one emotional situation lost to young male children as they rejected their bonds to their

mothers and cleaved to the social definitions of masculinity.

The men that boys become strive to recreate the emotional closeness and security of the mother-child bond within their intimate relationships, while, in their public lives they suffer from a need to assert their independence from women, and from dependency in any guise.<sup>41</sup> Women, on the other hand, tend to grow out of a more secure attachment to their mothers. They too wish to recreate the experience of union and strive to do so in their intimate relationships, while also needing the complexity of relationship with more than one other person. Women, however, are frustrated to some degree in their attempts to find intimacy with the men in their lives due to the conflicting masculine needs to receive unconditional love and to assert independence from the source of that love. Women therefore tend to turn to other women and, more commonly, to their own children for a reconstruction of the love they received as children. Chodorow suggested that through heterosexuality and childrearing women strive to recreate the mother-father-child triangle of their own childhood.<sup>42</sup>

In this formulation, femininity has two major components: maternal and heterosexual. The heterosexual component of femininity functions as a means to achieve maternity as a recreation of the original mother-child configuration. The needs of masculinity require that femininity be defined through

<sup>41</sup> Chodorow.

<sup>42</sup> Chodorow, p.201.

heterosexuality in order to achieve the masculine psychological goal of surrogate mothering for the grown male.<sup>43</sup> Childrearing, an integral part of femininity, is an impediment to the emotional goals of masculinity although it may serve other important goals of masculinity in terms of egoistic dominance.<sup>44</sup>

Masculinity then might be characterized as a cluster of psychological needs which vibrate with the conflict between a largely unconscious need for emotional submersion and a continuously reinforced social need for independence. Femininity could be characterized as centrally motivated by a need to union, a need which is socially channelled toward childbearing and heterosexuality.

Not all females become equally feminine, and some females reject the heterosexual component of the female role. Rejection of heterosexuality, though, need not mean a lack of interest in the recreation of the mother-child bond. Many women turn directly to other women, rather than to children, for an approximation of the sort of love that they recall from their childhoods. Many women desire to, and do have, children without forming heterosexual bonds to men. Many of these women form loving bonds with other women and children in non-heterosexual family groups. Concerning these dynamics, Adrienne Rich has asked:

If women are the earliest sources of emotional caring

---

<sup>43</sup> Chodorow, p.139.

<sup>44</sup> Chodorow, p.207.

and nurture for both female and male children, it would seem logical from a feminist perspective at least, to pose the following questions: whether the search for love and tenderness in both sexes does not originally lead toward women; why in fact would women ever redirect that search; why species survival, the means of impregnation and emotional/erotic relationships should ever become so rigidly identified with each other; and why such violent strictures should be found necessary to enforce women's total emotional, erotic loyalty and subserviance to men.<sup>45</sup>

The answers to these questions might spring from an analysis which focuses on the masculine needs of motherly attention and egoistic independence within a morality which would allow the assertion of masculine needs to dominate over a more co-operative balancing of masculine and feminine goals.

Heterosexuality has been analysed as a defining characteristic of femininity and femaleness from a perspective which attributes its definition entirely to patriarchal goals. Catharine MacKinnon has argued that femaleness is defined entirely within sexual terms. More specifically, that to be female is to be heterosexual and that to be female and other than heterosexually within the power of males is to be in defiance of the social meaning of the female gender.<sup>46</sup> Femininity, from this perspective, can be seen as a structure designed for the purpose of satisfying the egoistic needs of males for dominance; and heterosexuality can be seen as a

---

<sup>45</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," Signs, 5 (1980), 631-660, esp. p.637.

<sup>46</sup> Catharine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence," Signs, 8 (1983), 635-678; and "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory," Signs, 7 (1982), 515-544.

component of femininity which ensures that females are accessible to the needs and demands of a patriarchal power structure. It is through the institution of heterosexuality that females remain in intimate and continued contact with the social functions required of them in support of masculinity. Through this institution it is ensured that females never stray far from a masculine reminder of the definitions of femininity.

Masculinity is less rigidly defined in terms of heterosexuality. Although masculinity requires access to the sexuality of women it does not pivot around that sexuality in the same way as the feminine role does. Masculinity has other dimensions which can be sufficient to independently delineate one as male. Outwardly directed states are more salient in masculinity than are emotional or home-centred conditions. Economic achievement, bureaucratic power, physical strength, aggression, and emotional toughness are major indicators of masculinity,<sup>47</sup> heterosexuality is a minor indicator. Insufficient or non-existent heterosexuality will cast a doubt on a person's masculinity<sup>48</sup> but if other more outwardly directed qualities are in evidence the negative effect of a defective heterosexuality may be diminished or erased.

Thus, although femininity and masculinity share common elements, the function of those elements is quite different. Both masculinity and femininity are in part defined through

<sup>47</sup> Pleck, p.140.

<sup>48</sup> Pleck, p.4.

their heterosexual and childcaring roles but those roles carry very different importances in their applications to the lives of men and women. The feminine role, to a great degree, derives from the need of the masculine role for support functions. Masculinity requires emotional nurturing from a maternal source; femininity is defined by that requirement. Masculinity further requires independence from that maternal source of emotional stability, and to this end the dominant patriarchal gender schema attributes greater masculinity to outwardly reaching, emotionally cool, achievement activities.

These different motivations and statuses result in different moral standards for feminine and masculine persons. Masculine and feminine attitudes result in different styles of interaction based on differing standards of right and wrong, differing value systems and differing assumptions about the motivations and goals of others. More masculine people tend to relate to the world on the basis of an assumption of the separation of individuals and a valuing of the results of separation while more feminine people tend to value and strive for interactive styles and situations which are based in a desire for attachment. As a result of these differences, women tend to approach moral questions and problems within a context of conflicting responsibilities while men tend to approach these same situations as questions of conflicting rights.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> Gilligan.



Masculinity fosters an ethic wherein independent individuals assert their rights. They do so within a set of laws which provide guidelines for resolving whose interests will take precedence when conflict arises. It is understood as inevitable and fair, in such a system of justice, that there will exist a hierarchy of rights and individuals. Where separation is the theme, order is the method.

Femininity demands an approach to questions of morality from another perspective. Feminine morality is predicated on the desire for the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Feminine morality is based in an ethic of care for others and demands that conflicts be resolved through the minimizing of power differences and the assumption of commonality. Where attachment is the theme, empathy is the method.

The aggressive assertion of power supports the masculine ethic of domination through rights while a contextual and supportive balancing of power through empathy and nurturance supports the feminine ethic of co-operation.<sup>50</sup> Where these two intersect, the aggressive striving for egoistic dominance of masculinity supported by a patriarchal social, political and economic reality underlies the negative social valuation of femininity and the marginal status of femaleness and the ethic of co-operation.

---

<sup>50</sup> Gilligan.

#### IV. GENDER BLENDING FEMALES

##### Introduction

During the past two decades, the social critique and vision of feminism has begun to have an impact on the thoughts of girls and women and on the structures of society. Feminist analysis has proposed that the female role is too restrictive and that both females and males should have the same rights and privileges within society. Radical feminists have suggested that the social distinctions between women and men are oppressive and should be abandoned in favour of a genderless social organization.

Such feminist analysis stands as a minority voice within societies which are intensely patriarchal and are committed to the continuance of gender distinctions as essential underpinnings to the maintenance of a male-dominated, hierarchical, sex/gender system. Females who wish to step outside of their prescribed roles have for examples both the firmly established models of the traditional patriarchal system and the ill-defined suggestions of feminists.

Standard European and North American cultural definitions of sex and gender postulate that all humans are born as either male or female and that the fact of their sex determines the development of their gender. Females, by virtue of their femaleness, become girls and then women; and males, by virtue of their maleness, become boys and then men. All girls and women are assumed to be more or less feminine because femininity is defined as those things which girls and women do; while all men are assumed to be more or less masculine because masculinity is defined by what men do.

But there are, and always have been, females and males who do not fit this easy pattern. In addition to transvestite females of present and earlier times there have emerged in recent years a group of females who blend within themselves characteristics recognizable as both masculine and feminine. In some women this blending of characteristics results in a public image which is sufficiently gender ambiguous that they are often, but not always, perceived by the public to be men. These females are distinguishable from impersonators of men in that while they are often mistaken for men they do not actively attempt to pass as men.

I have studied fifteen women who blend gender in this way. All of these women were chosen on the basis of (1) their being often, but not always, addressed by strangers as if they were either boys or men, (2) their firm self-identification as females at the time of their interviews and (3) their assertion

that they do not normally make any premeditated attempt to pass as boys or men. For all but three of the women these misidentifications have happened as often as several times a week and for most of them they have been an everyday occurrence, to the point where they no longer automatically expect to be correctly identified as females by strangers. Eleven of these people have been regularly addressed as males for at least ten years and all but one of them have experienced this situation for more than five years; for five of them such mistakes have been a lifelong experience.

The women interviewed ranged in age from twenty-two to forty-one years, their average age being twenty-nine years. Fourteen of them were white and one was black. Six were from rural areas or small towns and nine were from cities. Fourteen grew up either in Canada or the U.S. and one lived in England until she was in her mid twenties. Fourteen were Anglophones and one was a Francophone. Fourteen were living in large cities at the time of their interviews, one in the country. All but one have completed high school and at least some university. Two had post-graduate education. Two women grew up in families supported by welfare. Seven women came from working class homes where the single working parent was either a low ranking member of the armed forces, a technician, a tradesperson, a waitress or a factory worker. Four women were from middle-class families that derived their incomes from small businesses or the civil service. Two women's families were upper-class ones in which

both mothers were full-time housewives, one father was a highly skilled medical specialist and the other was with the diplomatic corps.

The jobs that the interviewees had worked at were mostly in fields either dominated by men or shared by men and women. Their employment histories include jobs in construction, technical and skilled trades and unskilled labour. One woman has worked as a security guard, another as a police officer, a third worked in forestry and a fourth woman was a rock musician. Only four of the twenty-two jobs represented were in areas dominated by women, one woman was a child-care worker, another was a nurse, a third woman worked as a meter-checker and the fourth was employed as a house cleaner. All but one identified themselves as feminists, or feminist sympathizers. Four women were heterosexual, eleven were lesbian.

I made contact with the women that I interviewed through advertisements and word-of-mouth contacts. I advertised through a feminist newspaper and announcements posted at gyms and health clubs, gay bars, and a tradeswomen's organization. The women who came forward to be interviewed came to me mostly through word-of-mouth contacts stemming from my own inquiries or from women who had already been interviewed by me and could recommend me. I conducted one and a half to four hours of exploratory interviews with each of these women in an attempt to (1) identify current commonalities among the group that I had chosen, (2) discover commonalities in their backgrounds and

upbringings which might help to elucidate how they came to be as they are, and (3) to begin to understand their everyday experience of their blended gender status.

The general areas which I asked about during the interviews were (1) socioeconomic and demographic information, (2) relations with other family members, (3) relations with childhood and teenage peers, (4) gender role learning experiences, (5) a history of their experiences of being mistaken for boys or men, (6) advantages and disadvantages of such mistakes, (7) why they thought it happened to them, and (8) whether they had or would take any steps to avoid such situations.

All of the information gathered through these in-depth interviews has necessarily been filtered through the joint mechanisms of subjective recall (sometimes going back 20-30 years) and the inevitable leading bias in any interviewer's questioning. In this case the interviews were conducted from a feminist bias which led to, among others, an unintentional assumption in the interviews that being mistaken for a man would be an unpleasant experience which one would want to curtail to the greatest degree possible. Such difficulties, however do not preclude valuable insights being gained from this work. While it is not possible to reliably make wide ranging generalizations on the basis of a small number of case histories, nonetheless, certain intriguing possibilities and patterns begin to emerge from this small group of individuals.

### Gender Blending Girls

All but three of the women in this group come from families where the mother was in the home on a full-time basis for all or most of their youth. Twelve of them came from families having three or more children with half of the group having grown up in families which had more than six children in them. This combination of factors suggests that although these women had available to them a consistently visible female role model in the home they probably did not have the benefit of a great deal of her undivided attention; a fact which several women mentioned in the course of their interviews. This situation also led some of these women to view their mothers as having devoted their lives to a job which appeared to them, as children, to have been dominated by thankless drudgery and powerlessness.

Twelve of the fifteen families in which these women grew up probably were governed to some degree by traditional values. Six of them went to Catholic schools or described themselves or their families as "religious;" four of them grew up in or around the armed forces community; three of them were raised, at least during their earliest years, by grandparents; and three women merely described their upbringings as "strict." Most of these women's families contained within them at least one element which might be presumed to have transmitted to them a conservative framework with which to understand gender and

gender roles, in other words a traditional gender schema.' A home environment of this type would tend to emphasize the social distinctions between males and females, allow males greater freedoms and privileges, and celebrate masculine accomplishments while disregarding or belittling feminine ones. Several women recalled feeling jealous and competitive with their brothers because of such preferential treatment.

All of these women reported that as girls they enjoyed physical activity and were tomboys throughout their early years. Several common experiences may have resulted from their enjoyment of physical exertion. All of them had a strong preference for wearing pants whenever possible and many of them expressed a clear dislike of dresses when they were young. One woman's reasons for her dislike of dresses was typical of the reasons given by others.

I didn't like dresses because I didn't like people seeing my underpants or I didn't like that sort of coyness of if the wind blows or if you bend over, you can't do a head stand or hanging by your knees in the jungle gym. That whole trip, it's embarrassing and degrading and I was aware of that as a kid.

Another explained that she didn't start to seriously dislike dresses until her teens:

I hated dresses, I just hated them. It was a very big deal...They are impractical...when I was eight I guess I didn't care if somebody saw my underwear...when you get older you have to wear nylons and high heels and you just become this ineffectual little bo-bo staggering around. You can't go out and run, you can't go out and sit behind the bleachers and smoke dope on the grass.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bem, "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing," and "Gender Schematic Theory and Its Implications."



For these women, dresses and feminine attire provided only an impediment to their enjoyment of physical freedom.

Their preference for vigorous physical activities also led them away from the companionship of girls and into activities in the company of boys. Thirteen out of the fifteen women said that when they were very young they were either loners or they played mostly with boys and that in their youth, teens, and young adulthood twelve of them considered team sports a very important part of their lives. One woman spoke for most of them when she said "All my life I associated mostly with boys because the girls...just didn't seem to want to have the same kind of fun I do." Two other women were more critical in their appraisals of the activities of most of the other girls that they knew. The first woman explained her preference for boys this way:

I had never found women who were good enough to play with me, who I found challenging. And I really got bored and I didn't like playing women because they weren't good enough, because it slowed me down.

A second woman explained her dislike of other girls this way:

What I saw of girls in school was that they weren't very smart and they didn't do very many things, that they weren't strong in their bodies and they didn't use their minds.

Although all of them played with girls at some times and several of them had best friends who were girls, they seem to have considered other girls to be either misguided, or honorary boys like themselves. It seems likely that their many years of activity within the social sphere of boys and under the discipline of team sports, may have imparted to these girls

value systems and styles of dress, speech, and movement which could easily appear masculine to a casual observer.

The relationships that these women had with their parents and siblings also show some similarities. Twelve of the fifteen women reported a strong positive identification with an older male present in their family during their early years. Nine of those twelve, and one other woman, indicated a weak identification or negative experience with older females in their early family environment. Additionally, many of them spoke of this pattern continuing throughout their lives. Many of these women reported that although their mothers were physically present in the home they were in some way unavailable to their daughters. One mother died when her daughter was five years old, another retreated into drug abuse, another was merely out of town a lot, two were holding down the double work day of a full-time job and family responsibilities, and three were just plain busy with so many kids. One woman described her mother as "just really sick of kids, you know by the time I was ten she had been dealing with kids for twenty-five years and she was really tired." Six of them were "embarrassed by," "ashamed of," or "disappointed in" their mothers and none of them reported a clearly positive overall attitude towards their female parent. One woman described her mother as "a worrying neurotic wimp" and another said that her mother was "everybody's servant." While nine of the women had older sisters only one of them had any praise for her older sisters and three of them strongly disliked

them.

This must be seen in contrast with how these women experienced their fathers and older brothers during their youths. Eight women specifically portrayed their fathers as firmly holding the power in their families. Ten women expressed strong admiration and respect for their fathers and a few of them expressed exceptionally strong positive feelings towards them. They spoke of their fathers in terms such as "my first love" and "my idol."

Seven of these women recalled that their fathers' often expressed their power and authority by being disrespectful, abusive or humiliating towards their mothers. Several women mentioned wishing that their mothers had been more able to assert themselves with their fathers, and being disappointed by their mothers' failure to do so. This situation might have led the girls experiencing it to see the actual power of their fathers amplified and that of their mothers diminished. Such a situation might increase the attractiveness of their fathers as role models while decreasing the appeal of their mothers as feminine examples. As well, six of the women interviewed mentioned some sort of protective attitude or feeling towards their mothers, younger sisters, or female playmates. In this context such protectiveness could be seen as one more step in the assumption of a masculine posture.

Perhaps more importantly, many of their fathers took a special interest in their daughters from a young age. Much

research has shown that fathers play an important role in the development of gender roles in their children. One of the ways that they usually do this is by devoting more time to their sons than their daughters. By making themselves more available to their boy children as role models, they encourage them to identify with their masculinity and discourage feminine behaviours. Fathers ordinarily encourage femininity in their daughters by making themselves relatively unavailable for role modeling and reinforcing heterosexuality and femininity in their interchanges with their girl children.

The fathers of eight of these girls interacted with them in a pattern which strongly encouraged masculinity rather than femininity. One woman's relationship with her father illustrates this most graphically. Her mother told her that her

father was raised with a bunch of boys and now he got married and wanted to have sons but he had two daughters and although he loved you both very much, he still needed to have a male to identify with.

Her father chose his first born daughter to become his son. He called her by the masculine nick-name "Bud"<sup>2</sup> and encouraged others to relate to her as a boy. She recalls:

I can remember people coming up and my father would be talking to them and they'd say "Well, is this your son?" And my father would laugh and say "This is my son Ellen."...He was really good about it...He didn't think that I had to wear dresses or be feminine to be a girl.

Another told of how her father chose his oldest of three daughters to share with him those chores that a father might

---

<sup>2</sup> All names used in this thesis have been changed.

otherwise share with a son.

He taught me a lot of things, outdoors, like fixing a car, everything I know about cars. And he was an electronics tech so I know a lot about wiring of houses. We built our basement in three houses that we lived in, so I helped with that and helped with the wiring and stuff. So a lot of the typical trades I learned from him...because he needed help and it was usually me he called on, because there was no way that my sister would have done it.

Others, as girls who only weakly identified with other females, found that the only way to get the attention of their fathers was to excel at sports.

Still others of these women found masculinity attractive as a result of their experiences with their older brothers. One woman told of being best friends with her older brother and almost like twins. Another simply said that "anything my brother did I thought was great!" Still another remembered competing with an older brother for her father's affection. One woman remembered feeling this way about her brother:

I was very conscious of the different ways that boys and girls were treated from an early age...I was a feminist when I was eight...boys got treated this way and girls got treated that way and they got the better deal for the most part and I didn't want to put up with that... They didn't get hassled about hanging out by the river so much...it wasn't such a big deal for them to go off into the hills. I wasn't supposed to go unless my brother was with me when I was little but he could go by himself. I wasn't supposed to play football. I wasn't supposed to get quite as dirty.

Another decided that the only solution was to become a boy, so together with another eight year old girl they hatched a scheme.

She was the world's best boy and I was the second best boy...we were tough, very tough...We both had brothers and they had a lot of fun. And they had black rubber boots with orange around it and we weren't allowed to

have them because we were girls. And they used to get to go out on Saturday mornings and we didn't because we were girls so we called each other boys.

This course of action seems a logical solution to an eight year old's frustration with the limitations of the traditional female role.

At least three of these women were incest survivors and one was raped repeatedly by her husband during her marriage. All four of them made comments which seemed to indicate that they may have turned to masculinity, in part, as a shield against the vulnerability of their femaleness. The woman who had been raped by her husband said simply: "I was raped many times by my husband. So now I decided that I was going...to be the man." All three of the women who reported suffering incest told of very strong desires to become boys during their childhoods; two of them started reading and making inquiries about sex change operations and continued, at the time of their interviews, to find the idea fascinating.

In their early years these fifteen women were funnelled towards masculinity by some or all of the following factors. (1) They grew up in home environments in which traditional gender values were relatively strong. (2) Their mothers, and/or older sisters, and/or grandmothers either were not prominent in their early years or were seen by these girls as weak and ineffectual people. (3) They had fathers who either enlisted them as surrogate sons or only provided them with affection as a reward for masculinity. (4) Their experience of incest made maleness seem invulnerable. (5) They took pleasure in vigorous physical

activity and were encouraged in this direction by other family members and/or peers (usually male). (6) Their peer group consisted mostly of boys who supported and reinforced tendencies towards masculinity while discouraging and punishing femininity. In individuals where all six of these factors were strongly present the feminine identity of the girl was so deeply suppressed as to result in self-doubts regarding their own femaleness. Three women in this group had seriously considered sex-change operations at some time prior to their interviews.

### Adolescence and Gender Roles

For eight of these girls, puberty and adolescence, brought anxieties and conflicts. Anglo-American societies are relatively tolerant of "tomboyism" in young girls probably because of the common definition of femaleness and femininity in terms of the roles of wife and mother. Before puberty, it would seem, there is nothing to be lost by allowing little girls to indulge in boyish pastimes. At the onset of puberty a female becomes capable of performing her social roles of wife and mother. It was at this age that these girls were confronted with intense social pressures to abandon their masculine habits and become "ladies." Pressures towards increased femininity came from both peers and family. The girls were pushed towards more feminine ways of moving, dressing, and social interaction. They were also pushed towards heterosexuality. But these girls were already

comfortable with themselves as they were and they resisted many of the sudden changes demanded of them.

One woman remembers her puberty as a difficult time. The changes which were happening to her body were not something which she welcomed, nor were they possible to hide from others.

Grade 8 was the worst year for me. It was the transition year. It was the year that...there was this whole new social pressure to dress and look nice at school...It was just terrible...It bothered me because it meant that I was a girl and I had to start doing something different, that people expected me to do something different. Everybody wanted me to get a bra which I didn't want to do. I was mortified. The whole thing embarrassed me. My mother had never talked to me about it, I didn't have a close sister I could talk to and I didn't have any close girlfriends...I hung out with boys...they talked about other things....Things started changing then, there was more of this boy-girl thing. Boys wanted to go out with girls and wanted to feel them up.

Another woman recalled that it was at puberty that her father first began to shape her femininity in earnest. He both stopped supporting her sports activities and started urging her to lose weight and wear pretty dresses.

I remember...quite a noticable about-face...when I started menstruating, my parents went from driving me to the ball games, coming to my ball games...being real proud of the fact that I hit home runs...and suddenly it became an embarrassment

She remembered her father's attempts to correct her way of walking and dressing.

One time I got off the bus at the corner, I was walking down the street and my father was sitting on the front verandah. I had to walk up the street. When I arrived at the porch he said, "I was just noticing you walking along the street, you have a really long and mannish stride. You should shorten your stride, the way you walk...." I can remember times that I did dress up...I would get all this quote positive reinforcement...And I



never believed it so I found that really humiliating...  
I felt horrible and I really felt like I looked stupid.

One result of the humiliation that this woman felt as a teenager was that she not only developed a hatred of dresses but also a sense of herself as ugly and ungainly.

Two women recalled that as they became adolescents they experienced a gender pressure of a different sort. Their peer group consisted mostly of boys who took a relatively dim view of femininity and discouraged it among their friends, even when those friends were female. One woman told about this incident during her junior high school years:

I sort of was a dual personality. I still wanted to be a boy and I still wanted to wear jeans and climb trees. ...I remember once I went to my grandmother's house...usually I wore my jeans and I'd go through the back lots and back alleys and climb over brambles and under fences to get there. One day...I decided that I wanted to be a girl that day. I thought, now what do my girlfriends wear? They wear pedal pushers and sleeveless cotton blouses and they carry purses. So I put on pedal pushers and this blouse, I'd never worn a sleeveless cotton blouse before, I wore whatever they were wearing, bobbysox and carried a purse and walked down the sidewalk. And I went by this house where there were three boys living, we used to play with when we'd play sports, and they looked up at me, I remember the one kid was my age, and said, "Why don't you go home and change into some real clothes and come back and play with us? Go and get rid of that stuff and come back and play" ...I thought they were being funny and unimaginative. But it sort of, was a little surprise, you know, that finally I was dressing to be socially acceptable and I was not socially acceptable.

Another remembered that when she got her first bra her pals were less appreciative of its merits than even her own uninspired acceptance of it.

I told the guys and they were just aghast, they didn't know what to make of it. It was like a barrier, which really sort of embarrassed me because I just sort of

thought that it was something that, you know, girls have...and they've got to wear one. And I thought fine....Well it turned out to be physically constraining, well I mean it is, it's a god damned harness!...That lasted about a year and then I ran into the women's movement who legitimized not wearing a bra. So, you know I pretended that it was political but it wasn't, it was physical comfort.

Neither of these experiences would seem likely to propel a young woman eagerly into a comfortable femininity.

The difficulties that many of these women had with puberty were compounded by the fact that many of them were tall for their age. One result of this may have been that many of them think of themselves as large women and consider that their size is a factor in their being mistaken for men or boys. One woman is 6'4", one woman is 5'10", two are 5'9", ten of them are 5'5"-5'7" and one is 5'3" tall. All but one of these women are taller than the average North American women, three of them reach the average height of North American men, and one is unusually tall for a person of any sex. The experience of the tallest woman of the group strongly suggests that height is indeed a factor in gender ascription. She found that people seemed to address her size rather than her appearance in that mistakes have happened to her even when she has been dressed in a most obviously feminine manner.

I think it's a psychological kind of way when you look up at somebody, they quite often address that person as sir and it's a kind of automatic thing. Because that happens a lot to me. It doesn't matter what I'm wearing...they'll say "Can I help you sir?" and then they'll right away notice...I can be in a dress, make-up, earrings, perfume, the whole bit...So in that sense I don't think it's the clothing or the appearance but it's the actual psychological way of looking at me.

It would seem likely then that other women who are not as tall might also be subject to this effect to a less drastic degree. Among women who are taller than average, their height might be one factor, among many, which might contribute to a stranger misjudging their gender.

Adolescence brings with it a kindling of sexuality and an awareness of others as sexual beings. Eight of these girls, by this age, had a best girlfriend or a small group of girls with whom they played sports. By their pre-teens they had grown more distant from the boys of their youth, playing sports with them but sharing secrets and understanding with their girlfriends. When their sex drive became active these girls were having their most intense emotional experiences with their girlfriends and their peer group had not yet become fully oriented towards heterosexual dating and flirtations. Thus, it seems likely that their earliest sexual feelings would have been directed towards those with whom they were closest at the time, other girls. This situation might serve to explain, in part, the sexual orientation of some of the eleven lesbians in the group.<sup>3</sup>

A growing sexual and romantic interest in girls might also have served to reinforce a growing masculine self-image in some of these girls. Many definitions of femininity and female role of the 1960's and early 1970's included a heterosexual

---

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller explanation of this theory of erotic orientation development see Michael D. Storms, "A Theory of Erotic Orientation Development," Psychological Review, 88 (1981), 340-353.

orientation as a parameter. Even today it is not unusual to hear that lesbians are not "real women" because they are not sexually and romantically interested in men. For one woman the fact of her attraction to women, coming after a lifetime of boyish interests, was the one more step which made her not only doubt her femininity but her very femaleness.

When I was fifteen I went to my brother...I had read this article about that tennis player Rene who had had a sex change and for the first time I started thinking, ahah, maybe this is the problem ...I got very mixed up and I said, "Ok, I like cars, I want to be a doctor and I like girls. What's the problem?" So I thought I had a problem and I thought well I'm supposed to be a boy and then I started remembering when I was kid [he] used to joke "She's supposed to be a boy, look at her muscles... look at her jaw, she'd got this big jaw and look at her shoulders. I've never seen any girls like that."

Fortunately for her, her brother did not support the idea of a sex change, but he did support her right to pursue whatever her interests might be regardless of social pressures.

Some of the lesbian women may also have found a haven in the common stereotypes about lesbians. It would seem likely that few of them had any more information about lesbianism than what they had gathered from the distortions of the media and their peers. If that were the case then they may have held a vision of lesbians as mannish women. For some of these women such an image might have offered them an explanation of their own predilections for masculinity and an identity which still allowed them to reach adulthood as women. As lesbians they could escape from femininity without having to think of themselves as men trapped within women's bodies.

It would also seem likely that some of the nine women who became lesbians during their young adulthood were simply following in the path that they had been following for years. Many of these girls were quite masculine throughout their youths and had experienced many of the social pressures towards masculinity that little boys experience while they are growing up. Six of the women who became lesbian specifically stated that as children they were often male in their fantasy life. It seems a logical step for a masculine youth to develop a masculine sexual orientation, i.e. a sexual orientation towards women.

It is interesting to note that all four of the heterosexually oriented women in this group commented that they were quite late in developing any romantic or sexual interest in boys. These same women also recalled that they continued to have mostly male friends into their late teens, well after most of their friends were already dating, and that they only abandoned their male friends when they were forced to do so by the boys themselves. The girls who became heterosexuals had more years of masculine peer group socialization than the other girls around them and were probably still passing most of their time in the company of boys as they came to their sexuality. Their heterosexuality may in part be explained by their being surrounded by an actively heterosexual peer group while being emotionally bonded to males at the time that they developed

their sexuality.<sup>4</sup>

Three of the fifteen women did not fit the family pattern of strong identification with an older male and weak identification with an older female figure but in all other respects were similar to the rest of the group. They differed from the others only in that they had a weak or ambivalent identification with adults of either gender and therefore did not use either of their parental figures as strong role models. As they reached maturity these women possessed physical characteristics which when overlaid on a youthful tomboyism and a tendency towards masculinity brought them to adult experiences very similar to the rest of the group. One woman gradually developed full facial hair, another grew a mustache and the third was a larger than average, thick boned woman who had a low pitched speaking voice. These physical features combined with other masculine aspects of their appearances and personalities projected masculinity to others as strongly as the personalities and mannerisms of the more masculine identified women.

#### The Adult Dilemma

By the time these women reached adulthood they seemed to have developed a tremendous ambivalence about femaleness. They appeared to carry with them many stereotypical ideas about sex

-----  
<sup>4</sup> For a fuller explanation of this theory of erotic orientation development see Storms.

and gender common to most members of North American and European society. They seemed to believe that although they did not participate in the more blatant forms of femininity, because they were female, whatever they did was somehow inherently womanly or feminine in the sense that it should have distinguished them as female. When it repeatedly failed to do so many of them were forced to question their ability to communicate their femaleness to others. Their stereotypical beliefs and the reflexive nature of social communication, lead them to doubt both their own abilities to communicate their femaleness and the very fact of their femaleness. Many of them came to believe that the source of the mistakes lay both in negligent observations made by members of the public and in something male about themselves. Over a period of time they became increasingly resigned to the fact that, in the eyes of the public, they appeared to be men.

As adults, these women adopted similar styles of dress and many of them described their mannerisms similarly. All of them wore their hair cut in simple, short hairstyles which required little care. Only one of them dyed, curled or otherwise attempted to alter the natural lay of her hair. Only one woman regularly wore make-up and those who did wear jewelery as a part of their everyday dress wore only the simplest and least conspicuous types. A few wore earrings on occasion, but as one woman said "sometimes I wear earrings but...the boys wear earrings now too." The women who did wear earrings mentioned

that they only wore very small, stud type earrings, only one woman wore large or dangling ones. All of them described their usual clothing as pants (usually jeans); T-shirts, work shirts, tailored or men's shirts; and runners or work boots. One woman defended the femininity of her appearance by saying "I thought a girl looks like a girl no matter how her hair is."

These women generally felt that their appearances were neither masculine nor feminine but "neutral." They correctly observed that many other women wear basically the same sorts of clothing that they do and are recognized by others as women. They therefore were forced to conclude that there was something about each of them that set them apart.

Ten of them identified themselves as assertive or aggressive and felt that this was part of why they looked masculine to others. Several women implied that their better days were the ones on which the mistakes happened more often. One woman said:

If I feel particularly good, I feel really vibrant and like the whole world is there and I'm just going to charge right through it...I get called sir a lot more.

Another woman thought that she was mistaken for a man because she took up more physical space with her mannerisms than most women.

I think a lot of it has to do with my attitude, how I perceive myself in the world, physically...women generally don't talk loud, they don't flail their arms around when they're talking, they don't laugh out loud, they don't walk with the full length of their leg. They aren't boisterous, they don't take command.

A third woman expressed a similar analysis of her situation.



I think that some of the things that are attributed to femininity are really a lot of shit and so becoming more in control of my life and putting forth my ideas and looking people in the eye and not apologizing for everything when I don't really mean it could be considered becoming more masculine but I look on that as unlearning a lot of negative things.

It seems that not only were these women identifying some of the characteristics which others consider signs of maleness but they were also demonstrating that they too believed that masculinity was in many ways superior to femininity. One woman told about the day that she realized that she had accepted a masculinist vision of gender. As a youth she had admired her brother and wanted to be a boy like him and in her fantasy life had imagined herself in a "biker gang." Then at the age of 27:

I had a big personal catharsis when I woke up one day and realized...that I never wanted to be a woman. I always felt that I was weaker, stupider, had less opportunity, which was certainly true. So I enlightened myself...[Now] I'm a feminist, and I think women are better than men and I have no reason to want to be a man.

Several of the women made similar clear statement about having no desire to be a man but nonetheless seven of them seemed to see more value in masculinity than in femininity and all of them were certainly more comfortable with the postures and perogatives of masculinity than with the restrictions and requirements of femininity.

For twelve of these women being mistaken for a boy or man was a daily or almost daily experience. The majority of situations where they were aware of the mistake being made were simple short interchanges with clerks in stores or servers in restaurants. They found these situations "frustrating" and

"embarrassing" and they were often angered by the continual mistakes. Several of them commented that at first the novelty of the experience was rewarding for them but with time and repetition the mistakes became "boring" and "tedious." None of the women said that they enjoyed being mistaken for a man but all but two of them were able to cite some advantages to their situation.

The women were aware, to some degree, of the causes of the mistakes in that they were able to identify some of the reasons for their being mistaken but only two of them actively attempted to reverse the errors once they had begun. Only two of the women said that they regularly corrected people who mistook them, three said that people usually figured their mistakes out by themselves, and five women reported that people sometimes corrected themselves. One woman was particularly articulate as to why she didn't correct people.

When it first started to happen regularly, like every day, I started to take it on, like I was a freak and I had to learn how to live my life as a freak, something that everybody could stare at whenever they wanted to and comment about whenever they wanted to...well if they thought I was a man from beginning to end then I wasn't a freak. The freak was in the mistake, so I didn't correct them. I just sort of shrunk a little bit inside of myself, but I didn't correct them.

Other women also remarked that the situations were easier for them to endure if nobody else knew that there was anything amiss. The women often mentioned desiring to be able to just go about their daily business without having to discuss their gender with strangers. This was possible for them if they left

the mistakes uncorrected and took steps to insure that it would not become detected during an interchange with a mistaken stranger.

Over time this sort of duplicity wore on the self-images of the women who employed it. They found themselves in situations where their choices seemed to be to expose themselves to ridicule and embarrassment by disclosing that they were women or to comply with the expectations of others and act like men. Some seemed to have begun to believe that by avoiding confrontations they were somehow responsible for the mistakes, and their acceptance of this responsibility may have further reinforced their sense of themselves as masculine. As well, the ploy that many of them used to avoid embarrassment probably exposed them to the socializing experience of the social pressure put on men to act masculine. The contrast between public censure of life as a masculine woman and the ability to quietly move through interchanges as a man must have acted as a powerful reinforcer of masculinity for at least some of these women.

The attractiveness of the masculine stance was bolstered by the obvious preferential treatment that many of them encountered as men. One woman recalled the first time she walked the street at night as a man.

I was walking down the street and men were looking me straight in the eye with this incredible amount of respect. I didn't know what the fuck was going on...Like it was totally different...this feels like being in another world, it was like being a human being. I couldn't believe the sensation. What a power trip, it was wonderful, so I started to learn, hey, if I looked like a guy no one is going to hassle me.

Compare this to what another woman had to say about her experience as a woman in public places.

It's awful to be treated like a girl by the general public ...They think you're dumb, they think you don't know anything.

A third woman came to this understanding of the social advantage of masculinity.

I guess a lot of it is that men are so in control of the world, and this is an awful thing to say...I'm shocked that I even think it...men, in this world, are so dominant that everything seems to go towards them, that sometimes to be mistaken, to look like a man, can be an advantage...if by accident you can look like a man you have more chances than if you look like a woman.

These women received a clear message that as women they were deficient but as men they were advantaged.

The sorts of advantages that these women mentioned most often had to do with freedom of movement. Ten women cited the advantage of a feeling of safety on the streets at night or safety from the threat of rape to be a very valuable result of their masculine appearances. Six women said that they felt that as men they received more "respect" than they did as women. Two women felt that it gave them an advantage in male-dominated work situations and three women felt that being mistaken for a man was an advantage for them as lesbians because it allowed them to publicly express affection with their lovers without attracting undesirable attention.

The stories they told about trying to pass through the world as unremarkable females were far less pleasant. Many difficult situations could be avoided by quietly allowing

mistakes to go uncorrected, but because all of these women identify as women, not as men, there were certain situations which they could not bring themselves to conveniently avoid by passing as men. The most common area of complaint was with public washrooms. They repeatedly spoke of the humiliation of being challenged or ejected from women's washrooms. Similarly they found public change rooms to be dangerous territory and the buying of undergarments to be a difficult feat to accomplish. This washroom story was typical:

I've been chased out of washrooms. Old ladies with umbrellas, a cleaning lady with a broomstick, like I don't have a chance. I walk in there and all of a sudden they - a couple of times they just bang me on the head and I'd go running...They actually hit me on the head, no questions asked, wham. Then I'm out of there and they go on and on...saying boys aren't supposed to be in women's washrooms. I didn't have a chance to say anything.

Another woman told of resorting to buying her underwear through a mail order catalogue because she shared the experience of the woman who felt humiliated because she was treated as "some kind of pervert pawing through the underwear."

Nonetheless, most of these women felt that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Not all of them were willing to state this unequivocally but only six of them gave a clear "yes" to the question "Do you want it to stop?" They live in a public world which disdains femininity and have had first hand experience both of that disdain and of the benefits which society affords to masculinity.

As well, most of these women were lesbians; they socialized and found many of their friendships within a less public community of lesbians. Stereotypically lesbians have been typecast as masculine women, and the lesbian community has historically condoned a percentage of its women taking on the "butch" role. Certainly this is not true of all, or even most, lesbians but one woman seemed to be speaking the truth when she said "I think that for the most part lesbians are supportive of women who look even more like men than I do."

All but one of the lesbian women were also feminists and as lesbian-feminists they had theoretically relegated butch roles to history. Still, the lesbian or lesbian-feminist community does not encourage femininity and does quietly condone masculinity. One woman summed up the lesbian-feminist position this way:

We sort of dress in what's comfortable, in a way a uniform of wearing butchy clothes but we don't wear them because we want to be like men, but because we want the privilege of dressing comfortably.

Another woman recalled that her episodes of being mistaken for a man increased in frequency after she became acquainted with lesbian-feminists. They gave her permission to abandon many of her previous attempts at femininity.

I had all these wonderful new friends and I was getting pretty constant positive reinforcement that I was just fine. And so when I was with them I felt totally normal. She had acquired new friends who shared her predicament and helped her to view it as normal. She told about joining a friend one morning at a restaurant. The waitress approached them and

asked:

"What would you gentlemen like for breakfast?"...I said nervously "Oh, ah, we're not gentlemen" and Lynne said "We're not even men!" and threw her head back and laughed all over the restaurant. She was a great role model for me.

These lesbian women lived in both a public and a private world which rewarded them for their masculinity and left them feeling vulnerable and foolish when they attempted femininity.

All of the heterosexual women in the group reported some support for the ideas of feminism and found support for themselves in the writings of feminists. Three of these women lived and worked among people who espoused feminism and found support for their gender choices among those people. One woman called her appearance "a political statement" and counted feminist support as an important factor in her comfort with herself as she was.

The thing is that I've got a terrific support network, through my companion, through my family, through people like that who do not give me too bad a time about the way I dress.

Another of the heterosexual women found some support from her lovers but her only contact with feminism was through books that she had read. She, among all the women in this group, seemed to have suffered the most self-doubt and raging anguish about her gender. She had, at one point in her life, attempted to qualify for a sex-change operation and had suffered physical and mental ailments which she believed to be sourced in her gender problems. Her friends and lovers had all been hypermasculine men and at the time of her interview she stated

that "I'd never really be a man, but if I had the choice I'd still be a man. I don't really like being a woman." But she did say that "If I could find strong women who think a lot like I think, then, yeah, I'd like to have women friends." One can only wonder if she might find such women among feminists. But even in her isolation this woman was able to call upon some feminist analysis as a validation of herself and a criticism of the society around her:

The source of my problem is society's attitude, I mean lot's of people's attitudes towards the way they think women should look. It's not my problem really, it's their problem but I'm the one who gets the shitty end of the deal it seems...I used to think it was my fault...I always wanted to kill myself because I thought I was worthless because people knocked me down so much.

Many other women also reported feeling very badly about themselves as a result of their ongoing experiences of being mistaken for a male. All of them had at some time considered what they might do to prevent the mistakes. Most reported that they felt that they had certain physical qualities which were beyond their control to change. They had also considered what they might do about the way they dressed or groomed themselves to increase the possibility of their being recognized as women. Seven of them stated that they would feel foolish in obviously feminine clothing. They seemed to hold the opinion that extreme femininity would be necessary to accomplish the task and they sometimes held anachronistic ideas of what that femininity would have to look like. Seven women said that they would feel like transvestites if they were to wear dresses and two women said



that they had been called transvestites when they had worn dresses. One woman expressed this exaggerated vision of the requirements of femininity:

I'm not really interested in stiletto heels, nylons and short skirts or any of those things, because I feel strongly about freedom of movement and being comfortable at the same time.

Another woman critiqued femininity on a political basis:

You explain to me objectively how standing two inches above your natural heels' placement, how wearing things which constrain you, nylons which dig into your body, bras which harness you and clothing which seems to fundamentally pull out at every layer and then walk around as if your shoulders are two inches closer together than they actually are, how physically free is this? It is not. It is signs of oppression...I'm not stupid, I could wear a skirt if I wanted to. I'd be uncomfortable but I could force myself.

Probably as a result of such ideas about feminine appearances twelve of the women said that they were not at all willing to change the way they dressed.

Even though all but one of these women were feminists and most were romantically and sexually involved with women, they did not seem to hold very positive views of other women in general. When speaking of "average" women one woman referred to them as "a bunch of jerks" and another called them "pretty wimpy." Still another woman described her male co-workers as "ok on a certain level" but had this to say about the women she worked with.

[They are] really hard to comprehend because they're willing to be clerical workers for all their lives...and the way that they dress, the amount of money that they spend on clothes so that they can look a certain way, and the shoes that they wear, the total obsession with the way they look....Its dumb! Its very exasperating to be around them!

Such attitudes contrast sharply with the sorts of opinions that some of the lesbian women expressed about other lesbians. By and large, they considered them to be exempt from their criticisms of the feminine role probably because they considered lesbians to be generally less feminine than most women and more masculine like themselves. One woman remembered the first lesbians that she knew as "the kind of women that I liked to be with. They cursed and they didn't take crap from anybody." Another implied that being mistaken for a man might be a side-effect of lesbianism:

being mistaken for a man would happen to lesbians a lot just because we...like ourselves and our bodies more. We're not into wearing high heels and mincing down the street to impress whoever happens to looking out the window at us.

By rejecting traditional femininity and elevating lesbian masculinity they acquired for themselves a female group with whom they could identify and feel "normal."

The heterosexual feminists were less harsh in their criticisms of women who seem to wholeheartedly embrace femininity but still chose to see themselves as belonging to a different class of women than the average. One woman put it this way:

Instinctively I would say that I'm not very feminine because feminine means oppressed...but if you said to me "You're not very female" I would deeply resent that.

Another said:

I hate being treated or seen as a female - I'd rather be seen as kind of a human being...Let's say that being mistaken for a "typical female" bothers me a lot more than being mistaken for a man.

For both the heterosexual and lesbian women in this group, feminist criticisms of the traditional feminine role justified their stance and allowed them the luxury of a moral correctness.

### Gender Role Dysphoria

The women in this group experienced their femaleness as a liability when they were in the public eye. At the same time, because they were adult females, they found that their masculinity also made them vulnerable to embarrassment, ridicule or undue attention. The smallest tasks often became the occasion for unwelcome intrusions into their privacy. Interchanges which would normally remain entirely impersonal often became times of brief, but intense personal exchange. Buying a package of cigarettes or having lunch often resulted in uncomfortable explanations and embarrassed apologies about a woman's gender and an observer's gender assumptions. One woman described the cumulative effect this way:

If it happens a lot I feel pretty crummy. I feel on the defensive a lot. I feel that when I go somewhere I have to be careful because people will dislike me and show it, partly if they think I'm a lesbian, partly if they think I'm a man and find out that they're mistaken, or partly if they think I'm a woman that's dressed like a man.

Another woman seemed to speak for many of them when she said that it was just too much trouble to go around explaining herself all the time to strangers. She felt that the easiest way to deal with the problem was just to allow people to believe what they wanted and to thus maintain her privacy, but the way

she expressed herself said something more basic about her attitude towards being a woman. What she said was:

The people I know they know I'm a woman. Everybody out there in the world doesn't have to know I'm a woman.

In this statement she implied that being a woman was information which requires careful management in order to avoid unpleasant social consequences. In this attitude lies the crux of the problem for these women and for many women.

In a patriarchal society, femaleness is stigmatized. In a patriarchal society, to be a man is to be a full person. These women recognized this pattern in their youthful experiences and discovered that masculine behaviours were at least a partial antidote to the stigma of being female. When they were very young they were encouraged in their masculinity by family and/or peers. As they reached puberty they began to feel social pressures to become more feminine at the same time as the gulf between the statuses of girls and boys widened. Several of them made brief attempts to comply with the demands of teenage femininity but felt themselves to be failures. Their failures only served to reinforce their convictions that for them masculinity was more appropriate and that as girls they were embarrassments to themselves. For the nine women who became lesbians during their teens or early adulthood, popular stereotypes of lesbians and the definition of gender partly in terms of heterosexuality allowed them to construe their lesbianism as further proof of their masculinity. All of these factors served as confirmation and reinforcement of their

masculine self-images.

Nonetheless, these women reported that they were happy with themselves as they were. They were comfortable with their way of dress and the masculine aspects of their personalities. Seven of them said that although they were bothered by the continual mistakes they were not willing to change themselves in order to accommodate other people's visions of how a woman should be. One woman was unwilling to change herself "because to change it I would have to change me and I feel like I like me the way I am." Another woman accepted her situation as a challenge. She said "I'm willing to assert myself as a woman, and this woman chooses to look like this and that woman chooses to look like that." Yet, neither one of these women were among those who either corrected the mistakes or were usually recognized as women after an initial momentary mistake.

The women in this group were regularly confronted with a contradiction between their private self-images and their public images. For themselves they were secure in the knowledge that they were women and were generally happy with the sorts of women that they were. To strangers they were often not recognizable as women and were thus assumed to be men and treated as men. This conflict left them few options. Three women considered and rejected the idea of sex change operations as a way to align their sex and their self-images with the way others saw them. For these three, after they had rejected the idea of sex-change, and for all of the others the problem became one of management

of stigma.

All but one of these women became feminists as adults. Feminism added a dimension of validation to their positions as masculine women. Feminism allowed many of them to disavow themselves from femininity on the basis of a feminist critique of that institution. It gave them a way to rationalize an appearance which to others seemed clearly masculine; as feminists they saw themselves as rejecting a constricting feminine role but not as mimicing men. Feminism offered to them the possibility of being neither masculine nor feminine. Many of them came to define themselves not as masculine women but as women who were not feminine, or as gender neutral.

As eleven of these women became lesbians their lesbianism also came to be a major factor in their coping mechanisms. Lesbianism afforded them an identity that justified their being masculine while confirming for them that they were indeed women. Lesbianism gave them a validating group of other women with whom to identify, releasing them somewhat from the neccessity of identifying with men, the only other masculine people. By adjusting their lives so that they lived as much as possible within these communities of women they were able to build more positive self-images of themselves as women.

The support of their chosen communities did not exist among the strangers with whom they were forced into contact while in the course of moving and working in the public world. In that world they were still seen as masculine people, most often as

men. In that context they were faced with the choices of identifying themselves to strangers as unusually masculine women or of attempting to pass freely as men. When they either identified themselves as women, or were discovered to be women after an initial mistake, they usually suffered acute embarrassment and often were the subject of ridicule and abuse. Even when strangers were apologetic about their mistakes these women felt themselves to be embarrassed and humiliated by the situation and were displeased by the uninvited intimacy that it evoked.

Many of them quickly discovered that if the mistakes went undetected they not only were able to pass quietly about their business but that they were able to pass quietly through many situations dangerous to them as women. They discovered that as men they not only avoided the humiliation of being unusually masculine women but that they were afforded more respect and privileges than they had ever experienced as women. For most of them, under most circumstances, the choice became a clear one. They could be women and be "a freak, something that everybody could stare at whenever they wanted to," or they could be "a man from beginning to end" and "have more chances than if you look like a woman."

## Gender Logic

The experience of these women demonstrates that maleness is not a necessary condition for masculinity and that sufficient masculinity characterizes one as a man. Persons of any sex can be raised to be masculine and can be masculine to any degree. Persons of any sex can, and do, become socially recognizable men. For these women their sex did not determine their gender role but their gender role did, in the eyes of strangers, determine their gender. In other words, although they were females they became masculine and that masculinity was sufficiently developed that strangers recognized them as men.

Their masculinity was a matter of appearances, mannerisms and attitudes, all<sup>5</sup> of which can be adopted by any person of any sex, although possibly not at any point in their lives. For these women their earliest years and the years around puberty seemed to be crucial times in the formation of their gender roles and their gender identities. They adopted styles of movement and personality that indicated to others an unapologetic command of themselves and a forthrightness usually only seen in boys and men.

They displayed these qualities in a world dominated by a rigid patriarchal gender schema. According to this schema there are certain qualities which are considered to be uniquely

---

<sup>5</sup> Consider Kessler and McKenna's tongue-in-cheek quip that "Beards, breasts and other gender characteristics can be bought in a store." See Kessler and McKenna, p.68.



associated with males and certain ones which are uniquely associated with females. These women grew up publicly exhibiting many characteristics strongly associated with maleness and few associated with femaleness. As such they often found themselves to be mistaken by strangers for boys or men on the assumption that anyone who appeared to be more masculine than feminine must be a male.

In fact there is a disjuncture between the postulates of the popular understanding of sex and gender and the way it actually can be seen to work. Popularly it is thought that one's sex defines whether one is a boy or a girl and that gender identity then defines whether one is masculine or feminine. What appears to actually be the case is that sex and gender can be quite separate and that gender role behaviour socially defines and identifies gender. In other words, gender is a social status: (1) persons of any sex can become boys and then men, or girls and then women, and (2) in terms of non-intimate social interactions, gender is ascribed on the basis of gender role and one's sex is assumed on the basis of that information.

What this means in practice is that when an individual appears to be masculine and there are no major and compelling feminine contra-indicators, that person attains the social status of man or boy. When an individual appears to be predominantly feminine and has no major masculine contra-indicators that person attains the social status of woman or girl. It would seem from this study that when a person

exhibits a blend of characteristics which are not sufficiently masculine to consistently earn them the label of man, s/he will more often than not be assumed a man. A possible explanation for this situation could be that these persons are being given the benefit of the doubt within a patriarchal context which values men more highly than women. If an observer does not wish to give offense there would be less offense in erring in the direction of affording someone higher status rather than lower.<sup>6</sup>

Once a gender status has been ascribed to a person, a belief in the popular gender schema leads one to assume the corresponding sex and to ignore or rationalize away any indications to the contrary. Once an assumption of maleness has been made, the masculinity of the individual can be stretched limitlessly without that assumption of maleness being called into doubt. What is crucial is the depth of the initial impression of masculinity. If that initial impression is insecure the assumption of gender and sex will remain open to further clarification, but if an observer is secure in their appraisal of a person's gender and sex they will resist contrary evidence because the popular gender schema postulates that one's sex is, and can only be, at all times evident to all observers. It remains possible, within this schema, to take a moment to gather all of one's gender cues before ascribing gender, but it is unthinkable that a firm and unquestioned gender ascription

-----  
<sup>6</sup> For an interesting discussion of this phenomenon from a more empirical perspective see Kessler and McKenna.

might be wrong.<sup>7</sup>

The net result is a circular thought pattern. When one observes someone who appears to be predominantly masculine one will ascribe to them the status of "man" and assume that if that person is a man then he must also be of the male sex. The circularity arises wherein the assumed maleness then becomes the undeniable basis for the the status of "man" which in turn becomes the basis for the justification and rationalization of all of that person's actions as inherently masculine. Once these assumptions have been made any indications of femininity, womanliness or femaleness will be ignored or rationalized as an aberration within that person's manliness. In this way it becomes possible to force all persons to fit within one of the two gender statuses postulated by a patriarchal gender schema.

In practice, what sex usually determines is the type of rearing that a child will experience. That rearing, in most cases, produces an individual whose personality and appearance conforms to a sexual determinist model. When that is not the case the gender ascribed to a person by non-intimate others is a product of that person's degree of masculinity or femininity, and the gender identity attained by an individual is a product both of how others see them and of their own knowledge of their sex. To the public eye, sex and gender are ascribed on the basis

---

<sup>7</sup> Many of the women interviewed told stories of being mistaken for effeminate men: transvestites, transsexuals, and male homosexuals. The people who made these assumptions were probably attempting to rationalize obvious femininity in the "men" standing before them.

of gender role behaviour, while in everyday life, sex is irrelevant to the ascription of gender. In day-to-day interactions with strangers one's gender role behaviour determines whether one is a man or a woman, and the status of man or woman carries with it the assumption of a corresponding sex. This means that the reality of everyday gender communication and the theory of the popular gender schema are in opposition to one another.

The popular gender schema provides a basis for a sexist society by propagating an ideology of an innate, and entirely pervasive, sexually determined social structure. This schema conditions members of society to see a clear unbroken causative link leading from one's physical sex to one's gender status to one's gender role, and allows people to see and govern all human situations through a binary matrix of male and female. In the course of normal everyday life people use the popular gender schema to help them make sense of their experience. The way gender is normally perceived is as follows:

- (1) All people are either male or female, men or women, masculine or feminine.
- (2) People recognize physical characteristics, mannerisms, and personality traits as masculine or feminine on the basis of the popular gender schema.
- (3) Normally they instantaneously and unconsciously weigh those gender cues which they observe and ascribe a gender status

on the basis of their judgement, i.e., feminine people are women, masculine people are men.

- (4) Once a gender status has been ascribed to a person, a sex is assumed in accordance with the schema, i.e., men are male, women are female.
- (5) The assumption of that sex and the postulates of the gender schema then combine to provide explanations for any lingering misaligned gender cues, i.e., a prominent chest might be explained away as large pectoral muscles, or simply fat on the upper body.

Gender role determines gender ascription and sex is assumed on the basis of that gender ascription. One may change one's sexual status, in a sexist society, by altering the gender role that one communicates to others and the pressures of social expectations and rewards can be powerful enough to induce one to do so.

## V. CONCLUSION

### Summary

In the course of everyday life individuals recognized as men are normally males and individuals identified as women are normally females. In some cases, in public interactions involving persons who are strangers to one another, females are addressed and responded to as men. Some of the females that this happens to are purposely attempting to be perceived and accepted as men, but there are also a number of such women who do not consciously intend to be thought of as men. I call the people in this latter group "gender blending females."

Gender blending females are those people of the female sex who project gender cues which can be socially interpreted as sufficiently masculine to earn them the social status and some of the privileges of men. But, as gender blending females they do not do so in a consistent or purposeful fashion. Among their friends and acquaintances, and to many strangers, they are clearly women. The intriguing aspect of their gender status is that they have clear female identities and know themselves to be women concurrently with gender presentations which often do not

successfully communicate these facts to others.

In this study I have investigated theories of the psychological and social roots of self, gender identity and gender roles and interviewed fifteen gender blending females. I spent one and a half to four hours with each of the women interviewed, during which time I asked them about their socioeconomic and demographic situations, and their relationships with their family members and peers. I also enquired about memories they might have had about gender role learning experiences and for a history of their experiences of being mistaken for boys or men. Finally, I asked whether they felt there were any advantages or disadvantages to their situations, why they thought they were mistaken and if they had done or would do anything to avoid such mistakes. I then analyzed the information I gained in these interviews in light of theoretical models of self and gender offered by psychology and sociology. In my analysis I sought to discover commonalities which might exist in the women's backgrounds and current experience and to come to a better understanding of how gender is communicated.

This study involved only fifteen such gender blending females. Each woman's story was particular to her own experience and a reflection of her own personal understanding and memory of the events of her life. Although there were many commonalities among the reports that they gave of the details of their lives, even this small collection of individuals showed great variety.

Any generalizations that it is possible to make about these women can only apply to them as individual examples of an unusual gender type. Nonetheless, their experiences suggest interesting interpretations of the functioning of gender on a larger scale.

When evaluating the stories told to me by these women I found elements of identification theory, cognitive developmental theory, social learning theory and gender schema theory to be useful. Psychological theories of gender identity acquisition and gender role acquisition revolve around identification with parental figures, social pressures to conformity and the desires of children to understand the world around them and fit into it smoothly. Sandra Bem has proposed that all theories of gender acquisition must be understood within the framework of the dominant gender schema, a cognitive schema which defines what might be considered legitimate gender observations and what might not.

The dominant gender schema in European and North American society is predicated on a dualistic and hierarchical biological determinist model. The schema rests on the assumption that all people are members of the male or female sex and that sex is both discrete (either/or) and permanent. Further, the schema postulates that the physical fact of one's sex causes one to be a girl or woman, boy or man, and that girls and women are innately feminine while boys and men are innately masculine. Finally, the schema assumes that the standard in all matters of



sex and gender is the presence or absence of indicators associated with maleness, thus empowering maleness/boyness/manliness/masculinity as primary statuses and deprecating femaleness/girlness/womanliness/femininity to secondary or derivative positions.

Within the dominant gender schema all gender attributes and categorizations are confined to two major divisions: male/female, girl/boy, man/woman, feminine/masculine. Within such a conceptual framework anything which is not feminine can only be seen and understood as masculine; anyone who is unfeminine, is masculine. So that females who, for whatever reason, are perceived as unfeminine are perceived to be in the same measure masculine.

I hypothesize that the women in this study were either children who impressed their parents as in some way unfeminine close to their time of birth or were the children of parents who wanted sons. If they were the sort of children who their parents perceived as unfeminine (by whatever standards their parents employed) they were probably treated by their parents as unfeminine and so did not acquire a strong feminine identity and traditionally feminine habits early in life. Such an identity and habits could then elicit social interactions which could act as further reinforcements of masculine behaviour patterns.

In the broadest of terms, these gender blending females could be said to have been raised to become the sorts of adults who would communicate their femaleness poorly. Their home

environments strongly communicated to them the social superiority of men and the powerlessness and ineffectualness of women. They learned from their parents, grandparents, and siblings that the behaviours and attitudes associated with maleness (masculinity) earned one power, respect and authority while the behaviours and attitudes associated with femaleness (femininity) epitomized weakness, incompetence and servility. Many of them also came from homes where their fathers acted as if they would have preferred their daughters to have been sons and so enlisted their daughters as surrogate sons. In these families, the fathers paid the sort of attention to their daughters that psychological theories describe as an important element in the normal upbringing of boys. Their fathers could be said to have, in many ways, raised their daughters to be boys.

Many of these gender blending females also remembered their mothers as either being unavailable to them during their early years or being unhappy, ineffectual women. They recalled their mothers in terms that led me to believe that they wanted to distance themselves from any possibility of similarity with them.

In these families it seemed as though the fathers made themselves especially available to their daughters as role models at the same time as many of the mothers provided weak role models. One result of this situation was that many of these girls strongly identified with men and all things masculine. Following closely with such an identification came the motivation to actively seek out information about how to conform

to a masculine role and a desire to do so.

One element of the masculine role that many of these females seemed to learn in their youths was a disdain for the more obvious signs of femininity. Another element of the masculine role that most of these girls enthusiastically embraced was team sports and vigorous outdoor physical activity. It is impossible to say if such a preference developed out of some innate biological need for activity or out of a desire to conform to masculine expectations but one significant result of that preference was that these girls spent a great deal of time in the company of boys and away from the company of girls. In the companionship of boys they were subjected to masculine peer pressure.<sup>1</sup> The boys that they played with would only accept them onto their teams and into their games if they acted like proper boys and not like sissies, or girls. Many of the women I interviewed spoke with pride of being the only girl who was able to consistently earn the honour of being "one of the boys."

The social climate that these girls lived in was permissive of their youthful masculinity. Their families and peers covertly approved of their activities and the dominant gender schema contained within it a category which explained such a pattern as

-----  
<sup>1</sup> Fathers and male peers have been found to exert the greatest pressure on children to conform to gender role stereotypes. Considering the relative amounts of time that children spend with their fathers and their peers, it seems likely that male peers could be the single greatest source of social gender role pressure for children. See Judith Langlois and A. Chris Downs, "Mothers, Fathers and Peers as Socialization Agents in Sex-Typed Play Behaviors in Young Children," Child Development, 50 (1980), 1237-1247; Maccoby, p.241.

temporary and gave it the legitimacy of a name: tomboyism.<sup>2</sup> As they reached puberty they began to feel increased pressures to become feminine. The grace period allowed by the dominant gender schema had expired and the time had come for them to take the place reserved for them by social convention and dictated by the biological determinism of the dominant gender schema.

The ideological model of the dominant gender schema allows no place for tomboys to exist past puberty.<sup>3</sup> The biological determinism of the schema demands that at puberty the hormonal processes which initiate puberty must also obliterate tomboyism and inflate femininity.

Prior to this time these women were relatively unconflicted about their gender status because they had available to them a legitimate explanation which anyone could understand, they were tomboys. Some of them were mistaken for boys when they were children and a few had fantasies of becoming boys, but none reported these incidents as very difficult for them and a few women reported those mistakes as a source of pride.

-----  
<sup>2</sup> The parameters that gender researchers measure as positive indicators of tomboyism are: rough and tumble play or intense energy expenditure, preference for traditional boys' toys and male playmates, lack of interest in clothing and adornment, lack of interest in infants, motherhood, and marriage, and interest in career for later life. See Anke Ehrhardt and Susan Baker, "Fetal Androgens, Human Central Nervous System Differentiation and Behavior Sex Differences," in Sex Differences in Behavior Ed. by Richard Friedman et al. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), p.40-44; Money and Ehrhardt, p.98-103.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, tomboyism is quite common. As many as half of all women and as many as three quarters of all lesbian women are tomboys in their youth. See Virginia R. Brooks, Minority Stress in Lesbian Women (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1981), p.27-28.

As teenaged girls who looked and acted masculine there were no legitimate labels available to them. They felt out of place and awkward and were sometimes the subject of ridicule. They could no longer be "one of the boys," they could no longer be tomboys, and for these women it was too late to become ladies. Many of them attempted to become more feminine around the time of their puberty and through their adolescence. Few of them felt themselves to be even moderately successful in their attempts and some of them resisted the pressures to conformity until well into their late teens. Their early teen years marked the first time that their gender status became an important issue to any of them.

The combination of their family and peer experience to that point in their lives had led them to the firm conviction that to be a girl, a lady, or a woman was to be inferior and disadvantaged. Nonetheless, they knew themselves to be females and according to the gender schema under which they lived they had to now become young women. For many of them this proved to be a difficult task to accomplish.

They desired some way to retain the social style which they had been enjoying and yet conform sufficiently with the demands of the society in which they lived that so they would not draw unpleasant attention to themselves. Several women extended their tomboy period as far into their late teens or early adulthood as they possibly could, avoiding until that time that significant teenage landmark of the end of childhood, sexual activity. All

searched for a way to pass through the boundary separating childhood from young adulthood without falling into the void where there existed no name for them in the gender schema. A few seriously considered taking the only path that they could think of which would allow them to continue to be as masculine as they wished, they considered and rejected the idea of sex-change operations as a way to allow them to continue in their masculinity.

Many of the women I spoke to became lesbians. A lesbian identity offered these women a schematically logical solution to the dilemma of moving from tomboyism into adulthood. Their masculine gender role dictated that as adults they should become attracted to feminine people, i.e. women, and the dominant gender schema describes lesbians as mannish women. As members of society who wished to conform, and who seemed to be deeply steeped in the beliefs of the dominant gender schema, the only options which appeared available to them were those of the dominant gender schema.

That schema dictates that normally all masculine people are men. The extreme response to a masculine female then could be that she is really a man in a female body and so the solution to that challenge to the ideological system of the gender schema is to cause the body and the role to conform. If attempts to make the role fit the body are unsatisfactory then the schematically logical answer is to alter the body to fit the role. For persons who are willing to accept a status for themselves which is less

"normal" the stereotype of the "mannish woman" is available. A "mannish woman" is both an affront to the dominant gender schema and a logical outgrowth of it. The affront lies in the exception to the rule of female femininity, the logic lies in the implicit support of the superiority of the masculine that an approximation of it implies.

As adults these women found that although they had come to terms with their identity as female, strangers were not able to consistently perceive them as such. This was unnerving for most of the women I interviewed because their understanding of the way sex and gender interact was formed by the dominant gender schema. That schema postulates that being an adult of the female sex causes one to be a woman and that one's femaleness will inevitably be in evidence due to the forces of nature and the agency of sex hormones. They believed, as do most members of society, that if they were females anything they said or did, anyway they looked or acted, would have the imprint of femininity and femaleness upon it.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> In practice, femininity may be a rare commodity. In a 1977 study of college aged females, only 15% of the heterosexual sample tested as feminine on a widely accepted sex role inventory. The remaining 85% of heterosexual females scored as either masculine or some combination of masculine and feminine. In the same study, only 7% of the lesbians scored as feminine, while the other 93% were rated as exhibiting some gender role which was not predominantly feminine. See Alfred Heilbrun and Norman Thompson, "Sex-Role Identity and Male and Female Homosexuality," Sex Roles, 3 (1977), 65-79.

A similar study found a less dramatic distribution among both heterosexual women and lesbian women. In a total heterosexual sample of 790 women 41% were rated as feminine while 59% were rated as not predominantly feminine. In a significantly smaller lesbian sample, 14% were found to score in the feminine range, while more than 85% of the lesbian sample

Over a period of time they began to have doubts both about themselves and about the society in which they lived. Social theory of the formation and maintenance of the self suggests that one's sense of self is constantly in flux and is in a dynamic relationship with the social milieu. In these women there was a tension between their most personal vision of themselves (I) and the way others saw them (me), as well as between their selves (I+me) and the standards of society that they had internalized and come to believe (the generalized other). Repeatedly they were confronted with the fact that others did not see them the way they saw themselves, i.e., they saw themselves as women but others saw them as men. Repeatedly they were faced with the conflict between how they were (self) and how they were supposed to be (the standards of the generalized other). Each in some way attempted to resolve these conflicts.

Most of the women engaged in an ongoing balancing act between themselves as they were most comfortable and compromises which would allow them to appear to conform to the standards that they thought society demanded. Their test of minimum acceptability was that they should be recognized as female. But, many of them seemed to be very ambivalent about their femaleness and the wisdom of displaying it in public. They had learned the tenets of the dominant gender schema, and the ideology that it

-----  
<sup>4</sup>(cont'd) scored as not feminine. Thus it can be seen that not only are most males not predominantly feminine but neither are most females. See Oldham, Farnill and Ball, p.44.



serves, well enough to understand that femaleness is often a liability in a patriarchal society. They had also learned early in their lives that some of the stigma of being female could be neutralized through the adoption of the behaviours and attitudes of masculinity. They had learned that masculinity gained them more advantages than femininity.

These gender blending women employed three major techniques to mitigate the strain of their non-conformity to the demands of the dominant gender schema. When in public, most of these women attempted to avoid discomfort whenever possible by not drawing attention to themselves as females or by downplaying any attention which might arise from other people's observation of this fact. If a stranger acted as if they thought that they were dealing with a man, the women in this group most often allowed, or even encouraged, that misperception to continue until the interaction was completed. In this way the stranger had no idea that there had been anything unusual about the person or the interchange that they had just experienced and the gender blending female was thus spared the embarrassment of being identified as a woman who looked like a man.

A second technique that most of these women employed was to adopt a critique of the society which they perceived as responsible for creating the situations that they found themselves in. They attempted to reduce the force of the dictates of the generalized other in their own minds by the use of intellectual arguments disputing the fairness of social

standards. This technique allowed these women to feel better about themselves because it gave them a perspective in which they seemed to be engaged in a morally correct rebellion against an unjust society.

The final technique that they used extensively was to surround themselves as much as possible with people who not only knew them to be female but supported them in their desire to be masculine. Those women who were lesbians found in the lesbian community a ready made group of such supportive women. The lesbian community has a gender sub-schema which encourages and rewards masculinity among many of its members. Within the lesbian community these women found that they were either normal, or in a privileged and esteemed position. The heterosexual women surrounded themselves as much as possible with feminists and other people who found their masculinity either attractive, or of no special importance. These women used this technique to purposefully choose and increase the importance of the significant others in their lives to a position where their significant others were in competition with the generalized others for the role of social arbiters.

In the use of all of these techniques the women were attempting to diminish the power of the dominant gender schema to define them as non-existent. As children they had been permitted or encouraged to be masculine by people around them who understood them to be going through a more or less normal stage. As adults there was no name for them in the dominant

gender schema and so there was no identity for them to attach to themselves other than that of some sort of deviant so strange that the experts had not yet discovered or named them. Many of these women had spent years feeling that they were the only people that such mistakes happened to and believing that they were some kind of freaks of nature.

Even after they found the support of sympathetic friends, the theoretical criticisms offered by feminism and the cradles of the lesbian and feminist communities, they still had to contend with the the grip that the dominant gender schema held on their own beliefs, those of their chosen communities and of the public. Years of continued mistakes seemed to cause most of these women to have doubts about the authenticity of their own femaleness. After years of having others tell them that they didn't see them as they saw themselves (an I-me conflict), many of these women began to wonder if perhaps the others were not right after all. The power of the opinions and actions of others, in concert with the women's own acceptance of the validity of the basic tenets of the dominant gender schema, was strong enough to cause some of these women to begin to believe that there was some underlying physical basis for their masculinity. Many wondered if perhaps they weren't part male after all.

## Implications

The difficulty for these, and many other women, lay in two faults in the standard gender schema. Firstly, the schema is a dualistic and deterministic one. All humans are assumed to be one or the other of two and only two types, and membership in one of those classes is assumed to cause one to be in all ways a member of that class. Secondly, the dominance of the schema allows individuals who live under its sway no other legitimate ways to understand themselves or those around them.<sup>5</sup>

The experience of these women and ample gender research<sup>6</sup> demonstrates that many people do not easily fit into the standard gender classifications. Furthermore, the experience of these women clearly indicates that although they were females, the fact of their femaleness did not determine that they would be feminine or even recognizable as women. In many cases these women were able to be, for short periods of time, entirely creditable men. One must conclude that, at least in the case of these gender blending females, on the one hand, their femaleness did not cause them to be in all ways members of the female class, and on the other hand that, on many occasions over a

<sup>5</sup> The dominant gender schema can be seen to operate as an "incorrigible belief" system. Incorrigible beliefs are those concepts which people believe so strongly that nothing can cause them to question their veracity. At one time the belief that the world was flat was such a belief. See H. Mehan and H. Wood, The Reality of Ethnomethodology (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Bem; Jones; and Oldham, Farnill and Ball, among others.

period of years, their masculinity caused them to be socially recognized as men and treated as members of the male class.

The dualism and the determinism of the dominant gender schema molded their own thoughts and those of the people around them in such a way that their behaviours and appearances had to be categorized as, and believed to be, either inherently male or female. Because the schema allows no middle ground and assumes that maleness causes one to be a man, and being a man causes one to be masculine, the only way to understand a person who appears to be masculine is to believe that person to be a man and to believe that person to be male. The women themselves believed this schema despite the evidence of their own lives. The limitations of the schema are such that these women were forced to continue to struggle for an identity which allowed their lives to be "thinkable."

The personalities of these women flourished within the legitimate gender category of tomboy. When they passed beyond the age during which the schema allows this category to function, they found themselves at a loss for identity. These women did not think of themselves as gender pioneers and seemed to be somewhat conservative in their own gender beliefs. The repertoire of gender definitions that they had available to them was limited and they chose from what they knew, as did the strangers who came into contact with them. There was no legitimate name for who they were and so they were forced in their own hearts and minds, and in the eyes of others, to become

either men or some sort of as yet unnamed freaks.

The standard gender schema is an ideological construction which serves to structure the social understanding of sex and gender in a way which supports hierarchy and male rule. It neither accurately describes how the communication of gender is actually negotiated nor the actual distribution of physical, psychological, or social characteristics among humans. The ideological construction which the standard gender schema promotes assumes that one's sex determines how one will look, think and act. To a certain extent this is true because a generalized belief in this proposition leads people to attempt to act in conformity with its tenets. The experience of gender blending females and others who do not conform to the demands of the standard gender schema<sup>7</sup> demonstrate that in every day experience people read gender and sex as a function of gender roles. In a practical and functional sense, gender roles determine one's gender status, and one's sexual status, rather than the other way around.

Likewise, a generalized acceptance of the standard gender schema creates a society in which many individuals attempt to project images of themselves that conform to the models of femininity and masculinity that they have been taught. At the same time most people know themselves to be not exactly the same individuals that they project to others but do see themselves as

-----  
<sup>7</sup> People such as transvestites, transsexuals and gender blending males.

generally existing within the parameters of their expected gender roles. The example of these gender blending females, and a sizeable body of recent investigations into gender roles,<sup>8</sup> shows that probably a great many people, and perhaps even most people, only mildly reflect the descriptions of men and women that most people believe to be true.

Studies involving infants and adults, and the experiences of these gender blending females, highlight the tendency of those who have been inculcated with the standard gender schema to see the world as that schema describes it, despite evidence to the contrary.<sup>9</sup> The schema dictates that all humans are either female or male, and that their sex will be easily recognizable at all times due to the different ways that males and females inevitably look and act. As a result, members of the public insist on immediately being able to identify all humans as belonging to one or the other of the classes female or male.

They use any available evidence to come to a conclusion in a mostly unconscious process. Once a choice has been made on the basis of gender role cues, all conflicting evidence is either ignored or somehow forced to fit within the schema. There is no room in this plan for humans who do not constantly and consistently display evidence of their sexual and gender status. A hierarchical system of sex discrimination could not exist if

---

<sup>8</sup> See particularly the work of Bem; Jones; and Odlam, Farnill and Ball among others.

<sup>9</sup> See Garfinkel; Kessler and Mckinna; and Seavey, Katz and Zalk.

the sexual status of all individuals were not set for life and at all times in evidence.<sup>10</sup>

The gender blending females in this study are not exceptional because of the attitudes that they hold about gender and gender roles, or because of their personality types. What makes these women stand out is that they do not effectively display evidence of their femaleness at all times and under all circumstances. For many and varied reasons, these women have refused to comply with this demand of the standard gender schema. Because the schema recognizes only men and women and no other gender status these women found themselves becoming men by default.

The patriarchal system demands that the persons who must be contained and controlled are the ones who must distinguish themselves.<sup>11</sup> By not so differentiating themselves they have been able to, on some occasions, usurp the power of males. Most importantly to most of these women, and I believe the major reason why they have allowed the mistakes to continue for years, is that they have largely avoided the institutionalized physical control and confinement of women by men. By refusing to mark themselves as women (stigmatized persons), they have largely escaped the threat of physical and sexual violence which acts as

---

<sup>10</sup> In much the same way that the Nazis required all Jews to wear yellow stars on all of their garments so that they might never inadvertently enjoy any of the privileges of the "master race."

<sup>11</sup> Consider the functioning of the pass system and apartheid in South Africa.



an invisible corral containing women in those times and places which the patriarchal system has chosen as appropriate for females to occupy.

While this course of action offers these women an escape from some of the normal limitations of being female in a patriarchal society, it does cause them a great deal of anxiety. One of the ways that they assuage some of that anxiety is by negating those who might condemn them through a criticism of the rigidity of the sex/gender system under which they live.

Most of the women in this study justified their gender choices on the basis of a feminist criticism of sexism. What they have failed to take into account was that by allowing themselves to be perceived as men they pose no threat to sexism. In order for their gender choices to effectively challenge the limitations of the female role they must be visible as females. In order to challenge the idea that there are two and only two gender categories possible they must appear to be neither men nor women. To allow themselves to be mistaken for men and to not identify themselves as women allows the formula masculine=man=male to remain unquestioned. To be sufficiently gender blended so as to not be identifiable as either a woman or a man is not a task that an individual can accomplish alone. Gender is very much in the eye of the beholder and one's gender is as much in the reading as in the telling. In a sexist world, our vocabulary is limited.

## Possibilities

A gender schema which more accurately described the present reality and would allow for a less sexist future might be based on the concept of gender blending. In such a schema, characteristics might still be associated with personality types called masculine and feminine but those types could become divorced from the male and female sexes. The world could be seen to be presently peopled by men and women and other persons who are neither women nor men. All persons might be thought of as possessing some characteristics which might be called masculine or feminine while the mature state of humans could be seen as consisting of a blend of gender characteristics. Those people who were unbalanced in their blending of characteristics could be labeled as men or women depending on the tilt of their disposition. In a gender blending schema, the natural state would be seen as blended, and masculinity and femininity seen as immature states on the road to gender balance.

A gender blending schema could also identify masculine and feminine patterns more accurately by describing them as dominance seeking and co-operative. Dominance and co-operation can easily be thought of as human endeavors and to do so would facilitate a shift away from a gender based system. Societies, organizations and individuals could then structure and constitute themselves according to a cognitive schema which valued human qualities rather than sexist ones.

Were people to become no longer distinguishable on the basis of sex, were all gender choices open to all humans, were there to cease to be a cognitive system which measured the world in gendered units, the material basis for sexism would cease to exist.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

- Adams, Karen L. "Sexism and the English Language: The Linguistic Implications of Being a Woman." Women: A Feminist Perspective. 3rd ed. Edited by Jo Freeman. Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield, 1984.
- Ader, Robert. "Early Experiences and Hormones: Emotional Behavior and Adrenocortical Function." Hormonal Correlates of Behavior Volume 1: A Lifespan View. Edited by Basil E. Eleftheriou and Richard L. Sprott. New York: Plenum Press, 1975.
- Baker, Susan W. "Biological Influences on Sex and Gender." Women: Sex and Sexuality. Edited by Catherine R. Stimpson and Ethel S. Person. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Bandura, Albert. Social Learning Theory. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977.
- Bem, Sandra L. "Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing." Psychological Review, 88 (1981), 354-364.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Gender Schematic Theory and its Implications for Child Development: Raising Gender-aschematic Children in a Gender-schematic Society." Signs, 8 (1983), 598-616.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny." Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology, 42 (1974), 155-162.
- Benjamin, Harry. The Transsexual Phenomenon. New York: Julian Press, 1966.
- Biller, Henry. "The Father and Sex Role Development." The Role of the Father in Child Development. Edited by M. E. Lamb. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981.
- Blackwood, Evelyn. "Sexuality and Gender in Certain Native American Tribes: The Case of Cross-Gender Females." Signs, 10 (1984), 27-42. New York: Gordian Press, 1979.
- Brooks, Virginia. Minority Stress in Lesbian Women. Toronto: Lexington Books, 1981.

- Broverman, Inge K., Donald M. Broverman, Frank E. Clarkson, Paul S. Rosenkrantz, and Susan R. Vogel. "Sex Role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgements of Mental Health." Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology, 39 (1971), 1-7.
- Buck, Teresa L. "Familial Factors Influencing Female Transsexualism." Unpublished M.S.W. Thesis, Smith College for Social Work, 1977.
- Bullough, Verne. "Transvestites in the Middle Ages." American Journal of Sociology, 79 (1974), 1381-1389.
- Chodorow, Nancy. The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Reproduction of Mothering. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
- Cicourel, Aaron. Cognitive Sociology: Language and Meaning in Social Interaction. New York: The Free Press, 1974.
- Condry, J. and S. Condry. "Sex Differences: A Study in the Eye of the Beholder." Child Development, 47 (1976), 812-819.
- Dewhurst, C. J. and R. R. Gordon. The Intersexual Disorders. London: Balliere, Tindall and Cassell, 1969.
- Doering, Charles H. "The Endocrine System." Constancy and Change in Human Development. Edited by O. G. Brim Jr. and J. Kagan. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.
- Dougherty, E. and C. Culver. "Sex-Role Identification, Ability, and Achievement Among High School Girls." Sociology of Education, 49 (1976), 1-3.
- Dubois, J. Cl. "Transsexualisme et Anthropologie Culturelle." Gynecologie Pratique, 6 (1969), 431-440.
- Ehrhardt, Anke A. and Susan W. Baker. "Fetal Androgens, Human Central Nervous System Differentiation and Behavior Sex Differences." Sex Differences in Behavior. Edited by Richard C. Friedman et al. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.
- Fagot, Beverly I. "The Influences of Sex of Child on Parental Reaction to Toddler Children." Child Development, 49 (1978), 459-465.
- Feinman, Saul. "Approval of Cross Sex-Role Behavior." Psychological Reports, 35 (1974), 643-648.
- Flax, Jane. "The Conflict Between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and within Feminism." Feminist Studies, 4 (1978), 171-189.

- Forgey, Donald. "The Institution of Berdache Among the North American Plains Indians." Journal of Sex Research, 11 (Feb, 1975), 1-15.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego." A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud. Edited by John Rickman. New York: Liveright, 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Ego and the Id." A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud. Edited by John Rickman. New York: Liveright, 1957.
- Gardner, Lytt I. "Deprivation Dwarfism." Scientific American, 227 (July, 1972), 76-82.
- Garfinkel, Harold. Studies in Ethnomethodology. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1967.
- Gerth, Hans. and C. Wright Mills. Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1953.
- Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- Gluckman, Peter D., Melvin M. Grumbach and Selna L. Kaplan. "The Human Fetal Hypothalamus and Pituitary Gland." Maternal-Fetal Endocrinology Edited by D. Tulchinsky and K. J. Ryan. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1980.
- Goffman, Erving. The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life. New York: Doubleday, 1959.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Gender Advertisements. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Stigma: Note on the Management of Spoiled Identity. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963.
- Green, Richard and R. Stoller. "Two Monozygotic (Identical) Twin Pairs Discordant for Gender Identity." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 1 (1971), 321-327.
- Hall, Judith A. Non-Verbal Sex Differences: Communication Accuracy and Expressive Style. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984.
- Heilbrun, Alfred and Norman Thompson. "Sex-Role Identity and Male and Female Homosexuality." Sex Roles, 3 (1977),

Henley, Nancy M. Body Politics: Sex and Non-Verbal Communication. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979.

Jones, Warren, Mary E. O'c. Chernovetz, and Robert O. Hansson. "The Enigma of Androgyny: Differential Implications for Males and Females." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 46 (1978), 298-313.

Kessler, Suzanne, and Wendy McKenna. Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach. N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1978.

Kohlberg, Lawrence. Essays on Moral Development. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981.

\_\_\_\_\_. and Dorothy Z. Ullian. "Stages in the Development of Psychosexual Concepts and Attitudes." Sex Differences in Behavior. Edited by Richard C. Friedman et al. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.

Komer, Anneliese F. "Methodological Considerations when Studying Sex Differences in the Behavioral Functioning of Newborn Infants." Sex Differences in Behavior. Edited by Richard C. Friedman et al. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.

Lamb, Michael E. "Father-Infant and Mother-Infant Interaction in the First Year of Life." Child Development, 48 (1977), 167-181.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Development of Father-Infant Relationships." The Role of the Father in Child Development. Edited by M. E. Lamb. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981.

\_\_\_\_\_. Margaret T. Owen and Lindsay Chase-Landsdale. "The Father-Daughter Relationship: Past, Present and Future." Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development. Edited by Claire B. Kopp and Martha Kirkpatrick. New York: Plenum Press, 1979.

Langlois, Judith and A. Chris Downs. "Mothers, Fathers and Peers as Socialization Agents in Sex-Typed Play Behaviors in Young Children." Child Development, 50 (1980), 1237-1247.

Leiter, Kenneth. A Primer of Ethnomethodology. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Lewis, Michael and Marsha Weinraub. "Sex of Parent X Sex of Child: Socioemotional Development." Sex Differences in Behavior. Edited by Richard C. Friedman, et al. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.

- Lichtenberg, J. D. Psycoanalysis and Infant Research. Hillside, New Jersey: The Analytic Press, 1983.
- Maccoby, Eleanor. Social Development: Psychological Growth and the Parent-Child Relationship. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Javanovich, 1980.
- MacKinnon, Catharine. "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence." Signs, 8 (1983), 635-678.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory." Signs, 7 (1982), 515-544.
- Mahler, Margaret S., Fred Pine and Anni Bergman. The Psychological Birth of the Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation. New York: Basic Books, 1975.
- McGrab, Phyllis R. "Mothers and Daughters." Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development. Edited by Claire B. Kopp and Martha Kirkpatrick. New York: Plenum Press, 1979.
- McGuire, Jacqueline. "Gender Specific Differences in Early Childhood: The Impact of the Father." Fathers: Psychological Perspectives. Edited by Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire. London: Junction Books, 1982.
- Mead, George Herbert. "Self." The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead. Edited by Anselm Strauss. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962 (1934).
- Mead, Margaret. "On Freud's View of Female Psychology." Women and Analysis: Dialogues on Psychoanalytic Views of Femininity. Edited by Jean Strouse. New York: Grossman, 1974.
- Media Women-New York. "How to Name a Baby - A Vocabulary Guide for Working Women." Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement. Edited by Robin Morgan. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.
- Mehan, Hugh and H. Wood. The Reality of Ethnomethodology. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975.
- Money, John and Anke A. Ehrhardt. Man and Woman, Boy and Girl: The Differentiation and Dimorphism of Gender Identity from Conception to Maturity. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.
- Oldlam, S., D. Farnill, and I. Ball. "Sex Role Identities of Female Homosexuals." Journal of Homosexuality, 8 (1982), 41-46.
- Panksepp, J. "Hypothalamic Integration of Behavior: Rewards,



Punishments and Related Psychological Processes." Behavioral Studies of the Hypothalamus. Edited by P. J. Morgane and J. Panksepp. New York: Marcel Dekker, 1981.

Parke, Ross D. and Barbara R. Tinsley. "The Father's Role in Infancy: Determinants of Involvements in Caregiving and Play." The Role of the Father in Child Development. Edited by Michael E. Lamb.

Parker, Dennis M. "Determinate and Plastic Principles in Neuropsychological Development." Brain and Behavioral Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Structure and Function. Edited by John T. Dickerson and Harry McGurk. London: Surrey University Press, 1982. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981.

Parsons, Jacquelyne "Psychosexual Neutrality: Is Anatomy Destiny?" The Psychobiology of Sex Differences and Sex Roles. Edited by Jacquelyne Parsons. Washington: Hemisphere, 1980.

Pleck, Joseph H. The Myth of Masculinity. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1981.

Radin, Norma. "The Role of the Father in Cognitive, Academic, and Intellectual Development." The Role of the Father in Child Development. Edited by M. E. Lamb. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1981.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." Signs, 5 (1980), 631-660.

Rose, Steven. The Conscious Brain. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

Rossi, Alice. "On The Reproduction of Mothering: A Methodological Debate." Signs, 6 (1981), 482-514.

Seavey, Carol, Phyllis Katz, and Sue R. Zalk. "Baby X: The Affects of Gender Labels on Adult Responses to Infants." Sex Roles, 1 (1975), 103-109.

Stein, Donald G. and Ronald G. Dawson. "The Dynamics and Growth, Organization and Adaptability of the Central Nervous System." Constancy and Change in Human Development. Edited by O. G. Brim Jr. and J. Kagan. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Stoller, Robert. "Etiological Factors in Female Transsexualism: A First Approximation." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 2 (1972), 47-64.

---

. Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity

and Femininity. New York: Science House, 1968.

Storms, Michael D. "A Theory of Erotic Orientation Development." Psychological Review, 88 (1981), 340-353.

Strauss, Anselm, ed. The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead. Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1962 (1934).

Tanner, J. M. Foetus into Man: Physical Growth from Conception to Maturity. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978.

Thompson, Cherry. "Cortical Activity in Behavioral Development." Brain and Behavioral Development: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Structure and Function. Edited by John T. Dickerson and Harry McGurk. London: Surrey University Press, 1982.

Weisner, Thomas S. "Some Cross Cultural Perspectives on Becoming Female." Becoming Female: Perspectives on Development. Edited by Claire B. Kopp and Martha Kirkpatrick. New York: Plenum Press, 1979.

Wex, Marianne. 'Let's Take Back Our Space': "Female" and "Male" Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures. Berlin: Frauenliteraturverlag Hermine Fees, 1979.

White, David, Anne Woollett and Louise Lyon. "Fathers' Involvement with their Infants: The Relevance of Holding." Fathers: Psychological Perspectives. Edited by Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire. London: Junction Books, 1982.

Wollet, Anne, David White and Louise Lyon. "Observations of Fathers at Birth." Fathers: Psychological Perspectives. Edited by Nigel Beail and Jacqueline McGuire. London: Junction Books, 1982.

#### Works Consulted

Bem, Sandra L., Wendy Martyna, and Carol Watson. "Sex-Typing and Androgyny: Further Explorations of the Expressive Domain." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34 (1976), 1016-1023.

\_\_\_\_\_.and Ellen Lenney. "Sex Typing and the Avoidance of Cross-Sex Behavior." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 33 (1976), 48-54.

Costrich, Norma, et al. "When Stereotypes Hurt: Three Studies of

- Penalties of Sex-Role Reversals." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 11 (1975), 520-530.
- Davenport, C. W., and S. I. Harrison. "Gender Identity Change in a Female Transsexual." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 6 (1977), 327-340.
- Ehrhardt, Anke A., S. Ince, and H. Meyer-Bahlberg. "Career Aspirations and Gender Role Development in Young Girls." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 10 (1981), 281-299.
- Friedman, Richard et al., eds. Sex Differences in Behavior. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974.
- Green, Richard. Sexual Identity Conflict in Children and Adults. New York: Basic Books, 1974.
- Hopkins, J. "The Lesbian Personality." British Journal of Psychiatry, 115 (1969), 1433-1436.
- Hubbard, R. and M. Lowe, eds. Genes and Gender II: Pitfalls in Research on Sex and Gender. New York: Gordian Press, 1979.
- Jacklin, Carol N. "Epilogue." Sex Related Differences in Cognitive Functioning: Developmental Issues. Edited by M. A. Wittig and Anne C. Petersen. New York: Academic Press, 1979.
- Kando, T. "Males, Females, and Transsexuals: A Comparative Study of Sexual Conservatism." Journal of Homosexuality, 1 (1974), 45-65.
- Karasu, Toksoz B. and Charles W. Socarides eds. On Sexuality: Psychoanalytic Observations. New York: International Universities Press, 1979.
- Keller, Arno. Sexuality and Homosexuality: A New View. New York: W. W. Norton, 1971.
- Kelly, J. and J. Worell. "New Formulations of Sex Roles and Androgyny: A Critical Review." Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 45 (1977), 1101-1115.
- Lev-Ran, A. "Gender Role Differentiation in Hermaphrodites." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 3 (1974), 391-424.
- Lothstein, L. M. Female to Male Transsexualism: Historical, Clinical and Theoretical Issues. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
- McCauley, E. and Anke A. Ehrhardt. "Role Expectations and Definitions: A Comparison of Female Transsexuals and Lesbians." Journal of Homosexuality, 3 (1978), 137-147.

- Money, John and Patricia Tucker. Sexual Signatures: On Being a Man or a Woman. Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. and J. Ziebin. Contemporary Sexual Behaviors: Critical Issues in the 1970's. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
- Morgane, P. J. and J. Panksepp, eds., Behavioral Studies of the Hypothalamus. New York: Marcel Dekker, 1981.
- Pauly, Ira B. "Female Transsexualism: Part 1." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 3 (1974), 487-507.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Female Transsexualism: Part 2." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 3 (1974), 509-526.
- Raymond, Janice G. The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male. Boston: Beacon Press, 1979.
- Ross, N. "On The Significance of Infant Sexuality." Psychoanalysis and Infant Research. Edited by Toksoz B. Karasu and Charles W. Socarides. New York: International Universities Press, 1979.
- Siegel, A. and H. Edinger. "Neural control of Aggression and Rage Behavior." Behavioral Studies of the Hypothalamus. Edited by P. J. Morgane and J. Panksepp. New York: Marcel Dekker, 1981.
- Spence, Janet, Robert Helmreich, and J. Stapp. "Ratings of Self and Peers on Sex-Role Attributes and their Relation to Self Esteem and Conceptions of Masculinity and Femininity." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 32 (1975), 29-39.
- Stimpson, Catherine R. and Ethel S. Person, eds. Women: Sex and Sexuality. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- Thompson, N., B. McCandless, and B. Strickland. "Personal Adjustment of Male and Female Homosexuals and Heterosexuals." Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 78 (1971), 237-240.
- Walfish, S. and M. Myerson. "Sex Role Identity and Attitudes Toward Sexuality." Archives of Sexual Behavior, 9 (1980), 199-203.