

HARVEST HOPS

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FROM ALL OF US TO ALL OF YOU

HAVE A GOOD TIME



Sex roles and biosocial change

by Gregg Brown

Western society is often labelled a "freak" society, and so it is. The industrial revolution and its scientific by-products have let loose a craze of frenzied activism that just may run itself to the ground and take humanity with it. The overly emphasized virtues of masculine achievement, technology, and "rational" thought has brought on, with it, a rejection and debasement of what is normally associated with the womanly namely feeling, tenderness, wisdom, and contemplation. Through increasingly sophisticated reductionistic techniques, humanity is being disassembled piece by piece, so that it can be built into that larger, more worshipped entity, "Progress". In the wake of its charging disciples nothing is safe, particularly sex roles.

With the advent of industrialization man apprehensively found himself letting go of the last threads of his "manhood", or more precisely, the physical livelihood that set him apart from woman and her socio-economic role. By desire or displacement, the woman rolled over to her side of the socio-

economic spectrum, so that the man could broaden his horizons, expand his perspective, and, in effect take over any of her non-maternal sources of income and status. Business was good, but man started to feel cramped again; so the "wife" was "packaged" in a Household, a virtual box of luxury, and bestowed with the miracles of convenience, a reward for her being a housewife and mother, and a reassurance to the husband of his importance as a man. But then the baby was phased out, and women started to get restless, uneasy, less manageable...

The liberation movement had and still has a cause for discontent, namely the loss of fulfillment. After being eased out of her economic and social roles, the woman had to totally rely on her motherly function for her fulfillment. The economic and social isolation inherent to living in a box will always be unnatural because it robs woman of sources of status that have been with her throughout evolution.

Her primary function might always have been reproductive, but without her secondary sources of fulfillment she is incomplete as a

The solution obviously is a reintegration into society, an about-face in specialization. The big question is: how is it going to work? The methods of how women will reenter society will evolve from the reasons why. The selective pressures that made the traditional division of labour adaptive are no longer there. Men cannot hunt; and protecting is no longer an issue. Women cannot gather and neither is maternity a biosocial imperative. The environment has been altered, new problems are at hand, and thus new selective pressures are in effect. Western society, in all its glory, desperately needs what were once essentially the qualities of motherhood. Women are partially geared to deal with the basic problems that man created in her absence. Women are preadapted for some of the man-made disasters that are crying out for attention and a sympathetic ear.

The process will not be one of genetic adaptation, but of individual human being and as a woman. For even a mother must have some outside interests if she is ever going to relinquish her hold on her child properly.

adaptation. It is called "adaptive generalization" among other things, and it "occurs when a species occupies a major new adaptive zone in contrast to radiation into subzones or niches characteristic of adaptive specialization" (Dunn 1971) Instead of trying to reshape the sex stereotyped behavior pattern by modifying the genetic base, adaptive generalization creates a more general behavioral pattern that provides the individual with the power to act ontogenetically.

Adaptive generalization as a solution, is opposed to the occasional tendency for women to "ape" men, in order to make it in the men's world. The fear of men in man created by "rugged individualism", the masculine ideal, needs the compensatory dominance of women to reach out and dissolve the chronic isolation, the solitary shiftiness that drives Western society to big accomplishments and even greater depressions. The role of female dominance could be extended to include collective activities in the public arena, but joining the power game of men would lead to a self-defeating dead end.