

SEX — do we get it from

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An Introduction to Male Psychology,
Consciousness, and Liberation

When we study male psychology, consciousness and liberation, we are first interested in looking at the "Nature versus nurture" or biology versus socialization question. That is, are we born with male sex role, traits and personality or are they the results of learning and social conditioning? Scientists, medical doctors, and psychologists have completed a number of studies recently which shed much light on this controversy.

The first example of these studies involves identical male twins born in March, 1963 in Ohio, U.S.A. In October of that year, the twins were taken to a physician to be circumcised. An accident happened to one of the boys during the circumcision, which was performed with an electric cauterizing needle. A surge of powerful current burned the entire tissue of the penis which necrosed and fell off. A consulting physician recommended sex reassignment as a female. The parents agonized their way to this decision. So, when the male baby was seventeen months old, "he" was given a new name, clothing, and hair style and was raised as a female. At puberty, "she" would have vaginoplasty and hormonal replacement therapy. This is a prime case to consider in the nature/nurture question as it is an example of male nature (chromosomes and an identical twin to compare) and female nurture beginning at seventeen months. She was studied by Dr. John Money and Anke A. Ehrhardt (*Man and Woman, Boy and Girl*), before she was given any female hormonal treatments. These are the mother's own words about her daughter's sex role, traits and personality (author's comments in parenthesis):

I started dressing her, not in dresses, but, you know, in little pink slacks and frilly blouses ... and letting her hair grow ... made a special effort to keep her exclusively in feminine clothes ... I even made all her nightwear into granny gowns and she wears bracelets and hair ribbons ... she now has a clear preference for dresses over slacks and takes pride in her long hair ... (Related to being dressed nicely is the sense of neatness.) She likes for me to wipe her face. She doesn't like to be dirty, and yet my son is quite different. I can't wash his face for anything ... She seems to be daintier. Maybe it's because I encourage it ... One thing that really amazes me is that she is so feminine. I've never seen a little girl so neat and tidy as she can be when she wants to be ... She is proud of herself, when she puts on a new dress, or I set her hair. She just loves it ... (Talking about the boy) ... in the summer time, one time I caught him — he went out and he took a leak in my flower garden in the front yard ... and I just didn't say anything. (But about the girl) ... She took off her panties and threw them over the fence ... But I just gave her a little swat on the rear, and I told her that nice little girls didn't do that, and she should keep her pants on ... And she didn't take them off after that ... (There was a whole pattern of dimorphism of rearing girls and boys with respect to genitalia, sex and reproduction. Of course, girls and boys are not only prepared differently for their future reproductive role as mother and father, but also for their other different roles, such as wife and caretaker of children and house.) The mother observed how her son would copy some of his father's behaviour: like he'll bend over and give her a kiss on the cheek ... and if he (my husband) gives me a swat on the fanny, he'll go on and give her a swat on her fanny, too ... (and the girl copied her mother's responses) ... If she's in an affectionate mood, she'll like it; but very often she'll say, don't do that ... If he's been playing some place and comes in the house to where she is helping me ... then she'll give him a little hug like she's glad to see him ... she copies me in trying to help and tidying and cleaning up the kitchen, while the

boy could not care less about it. (She encourages her daughter when she helps her in the housework.) The girl wanted and received for Christmas dolls, a doll house, and a doll carriage while the boy wanted and obtained a garage with cars and gas pumps and tools ... It is essential for my son to go to university since he will be earning a living for the rest of his life ... as long as my daughter gets high school ... I found that my son, he chose very masculine things like a fireman or a policeman or something like that. He wanted to do what daddy does, work where daddy does, and carry a lunch kit and drive a car. And she didn't want any of those things ... And I asked her, well, did she have plans that maybe someday she'd get married like mommy? ... of course I've tried to teach her not to be rough ... she doesn't seem to be as rough as him ... of course, I discouraged that ... to be more quiet and ladylike. (From the beginning the girl had been the dominant twin. By the age of three, her dominance over her brother was, as her mother described it, that of a mother hen. The boy in turn took up for his sister if anyone threatened her.)

It is clear that her socialization and conditioning (all those conscious cues and reinforcements parents and society provide their children) far outweighed her biology in determining her psychological characteristics. She had all the personality traits and was enacting sex role stereotypes that our society labels as female and none that we label as male.

Another example of the power of socialization is hermaphroditism. Hermaphroditism means that a person is born with the sexual anatomy improperly differentiated or sexually unfinished. If the external genitalia are involved, then they look ambiguous, for an incompletely differentiated penis may be indistinguishable from an incompletely differentiated clitoris, irrespective of genetic and gonadal sex. A genetic female may be prenatally androgenized to such a degree that the person is born looking like a boy with an undescended testes. Conversely, a genetic male may be born with a genital appearance indistinguishable from that of a normal female. Sex assignment or sex reassignment is the medical treatment for hermaphrodites and this postnatal treatment overrules the biological prenatal "determinants or dispositions." *Men and Women, Boy and Girl*, shows rather conclusively in its studies of hermaphrodites that almost all sex role differences are culturally and not biologically determined. The experience of two hermaphrodites from different families is illustrative. Each was born with the female chromosome pattern, and each had internal female organs but a penis and empty scrotum outside. One set of parents believed they had a boy and raised their child accordingly; the other set assigned their offspring as a girl. Surgery and hormones made the youngster's appearance conform to the chosen sex. The children's "antithetical experience signified to one that he was boy and to the other that she was a girl." The girl therefore reached preadolescence expecting to marry a man. The boy, by contrast, had a girl friend and "fitted easily into the stereotype of the male role in marriage, even though he and his partner would both have two X chromosomes."

Trans-sexuality is a third example of the nature/nurture issue. A trans-sexual is a person who has lived his/her life as one sex, and then has had a sex change operation into the opposite sex. James Morris, the famous British journalist, has gone through this operation and has written an autobiography of his experiences (*Conundrum*). He has lived the first forty years of his life as a male, and now has lived the past several years as a woman. She is in an ideal and unique position of experiencing life from both a male and a female perspective. In her own words:

We are told that the social gap between the sexes is narrowing, but I can only report that having, in the second half of

the twentieth century, experienced life in both roles, there seems to me no aspect of existence, no moment of the day, no contact, no arrangement, no response, which is not different for men and for women. The very tone of voice which I was now addressed, the very posture of the person next in the queue, the very feel in the air when I entered a room or sat at a restaurant table, constantly emphasized my change of status. And if others' responses shifted, so did my own. The more I was treated as a woman, the more woman I became. I adapted willy-nilly. If I was assumed to be incompetent, I found myself becoming. If a case was thought too heavy for me, inexplicably I found it so myself ... Men treated me more and more as a junior — my lawyer, in an unguarded moment one morning, even called me "my child;" and so, addressed every day of my life as an inferior, involuntarily, month by month I accepted the condition. I discovered even now men prefer women to be less informed, less able, less talkative, and certainly less self-centred than they are themselves; so I generally obliged them ... My contact with women, on the other hand, is easy and confiding. I am asked often if this has made me a militant feminist, and in some ways it has. I have seen life from both sides, and I know what prejudice survives. I know that by the very fact of my womanhood, I am treated in many petty situations as a second class citizen — not because I lack brains, or experience, or character, but purely because I wear the body of a woman.

The power of sex role stereotyping is quite clear. As soon as he becomes a woman, even though she is no different inside, people treat her according to their expectations of female (feminine) behaviour, and she starts changing as in the "self-fulfilling prophesy" phenomenon.

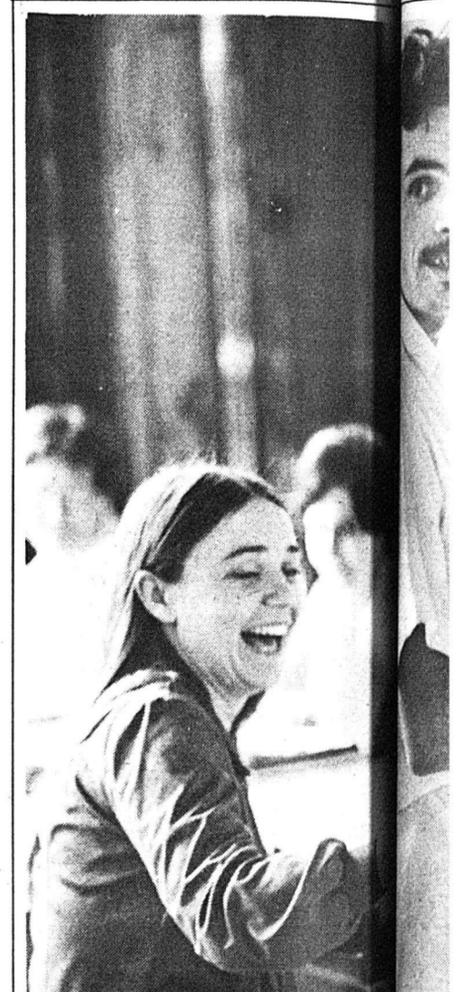
Numerous psychological studies in cognitive-developmental, behavior-learning, and social psychology show the effect of interpersonal expectations on individual personality development. Some of the excellent research in this area includes Bardwick, Judith, *Psychology of Woman: A Study of BioCultural Conflicts*; Broverman, Inge K. and Donald M. Broverman, "Sex-role stereotypes and clinical judgments of mental health"; Chesler, Phyllis, *Women and Madness*; Chodorow, Nancy, "Being and doing: A cross-cultural examination of the socialization of males and females"; MacCoby, Elenor E., *The Development of Sex Differences*; Spinks, Sarah, "The socialization of girl children"; and Weisstein, Naomi, "Kinde, Kuche, Kirche, As Scientific Law: Psychology constructs the female."

So, if there are any biological differences between males and females to account for sex roles, traits and personality, the above three examples show the power of environment and socialization to overrule our chromosomes. And this is highly important as it means that we as males are not locked into our male stereotype roles and programming, and that we can grow and change into more whole human beings. In order to do this, we must first become aware of how we are socialized into developing certain psychological characteristics. Second, we must realize the ways these roles oppress us as human beings. The next steps in this process will be discussed later.

Socialization does not begin at school, but starts the moment after birth when the parents ask the doctor their first question, "It is a boy or girl?" Depending on that answer is how that child, an unique individual, will be treated. As soon as the parents know the sex of the child, they begin to treat him/her differently depending on their own sex role stereotype expectations and attitudes. For example, a male child is touched differently than a female one (frequency, pressure, body areas, etc.). Male and female children are also spoken to differently (tone, voice, topic, facial expression, etc.). Learning theory has amply demonstrated in terms of

modelling and reinforcements all of the subtle cues that are given to children in terms of what our society expects of them to fit into the "proper" male and female role.

In our society, the following characteristics are expected of males (to a greater or lesser degree depending on the individual male): we are expected to be aggressive, independent, objective, rational, intelligent, ambitious, competent, forceful, rough, active, a leader, to be unemotional, to be cool, in control, hard, strong, success oriented, status oriented, dominant, achievement oriented, competitive, authoritarian, outward directed, task directed, performance directed and detached. These psychological traits generally fall into a competency/intellectual cluster. And at the same time we are not supposed to have any traits that would generally fall into an emotional/nurturance cluster — to be sensitive, to be caring, to be gentle, to be compassionate, to be intuitive, to be tender, to be able to cry and directly express emotions other than violence and anger. The whole full range of human traits are divided at birth — one cluster is permitted for males and the



He is not amused.
Role-switching lady gets typical touch butt. The lass, in typical laughing at pinched men when they cling to their hurt pride.

other for females — a tragedy and dehumanization. Males are socialized to be half people running around looking for "our other half" (Women) to make us whole.

I think if we reflect on our childhood we can see quite clearly how we have been socialized into our sex role. Remember all of the admonitions: "Don't be a mommy's boy; don't be a sissy; don't cry, you have to be a big boy now; take like a man; be tough, etc." There was also that certain time when we no longer wanted to be touched or kissed by our mother — especially in front of our friends. What we were learning was to be emotional, "weak," and sensitive but to be "strong," in control, and tough. We were told to play in sports (and win), be competitive, play war games, climb trees, play with trucks and construction tools. We were sent out in the world and we learned that we were not going to spend our adult life at home taking care of children. We were going to work, have a profession, be adventurous, and be successful. Remember what happened around puberty when we learned