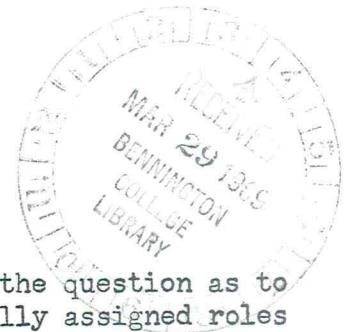


WOMEN'S LIBERATION NEWS



At the last meeting of the Women's Liberation Movement the question as to whether there is an innate biological basis for the traditionally assigned roles of men and women was brought out in the discussion. The following excerpts from "Determinants of Psychosexual Orientation" by Dr. John L. Hampson may shed some light on this issue. The book from which this study was taken, Sex and Behavior, is available on reserve in the library.

"The concept of the innate, constitutional origins of masculinity and femininity was formulated at least as long ago as earliest recorded history and has been espoused throughout the centuries with only minor variations on the theme of an essential dichotomy...As Frank Beach (1955) once pointed out, attempts to eliminate the instinct concept have failed because of a naive acceptance of the idea that all behavior is either acquired or inherited.

"It is becoming increasingly clear, that even in lower animals, behavior previously dismissed as instinctive is often determined and patterned by multiple factors - biochemical, genetical, experiential, etc.

"So far as the human species is concerned, some workers, finding an instinctual explanation of sexual behavior not totally satisfactory, have grasped at the experiments with sex hormones in lower animals psychosexual behavior. However, a theory must be tested experimentally. Unhappily, definitive experiments in humans are not easily arranged.

"The experimental study of psychosexual behavior in humans is seldom blessed, as I am reminded again, with the nicety of control possible in the animal laboratory.

"However, beginning about a decade ago a series of observations and studies was begun in the Endocrine Clinic of the Johns Hopkins Hospital by Dr. Joan Hampson, Dr. John Money, and myself. The subjects of these studies were, one might say, experiments of nature in that they were individuals ranging in age from infancy through middle age who presented one or another kind of endocrine and/or hermaphrodite disorder.

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"We rather take it for granted that in the ordinary, average human being there will be a correspondence between all the variables of sex. That is to say, we assume that in an individual with functioning ovaries rather than testes, we will find a preponderance of feminizing, estrogen-type hormones, an XX chromatin pattern, the usual female Mullerian derivative, internal accessory sexual structures, typical female external genital structures, and appropriate secondary sexual development. We expect also to find that this person will be living as a woman and will be so classified on her birth certificate. To those who have not had experience in an endocrine clinic, it comes as something of a surprise to realize that there are many clinical conditions in which this congruence of somatic and psychosocial factors is missing. It is to the study of these individuals that we have turned in an attempt to elucidate the salient factor or factors in the ontogenesis of sexual behavior. Clearly, study of an individual lacking in a congruence of these indices might shed light on the relative importance of such factors, as hormones, gonads, and so on, in the determination of psychosexual orientation and sexual behavior. (A girl, for example, discovered to have no uterus and whose gonads were testicular in structure might be a case

in point).....

GENDER ROLES AS RELATED TO OTHER VARIABLES

"I want now to summarize our findings on some 113 patients with various types of hermaphroditic incongruity, and to comment briefly on a group of girls and women with gonadal aplasia.

"In our approach to these studies we decided that from our point of view as psychiatrists the important dimension to be evaluated was the quality and pervasiveness of the gender role displayed by each individual. The notion of gender role has been a nuclear one in our studies. We wanted to embrace more than eroticism, and 'sex role' seemed to imply just eroticism. As we have used the term, gender role is revealed by all those things a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or girl, man or woman. It includes but is not restricted to sexual eroticism.

"There were 19 patients in our series of hermaphroditic individuals who had been assigned to and reared in a sex contrary to their sex chromatin pattern as determined by the skin biopsy method or by the buccal smear technique. Without a single exception, it was found that the gender role and orientation as man or woman, boy or girl, was in accordance with the assigned sex and rearing rather than in accord with the chromosomal sex. It seems to us, therefore, convincingly clear that gender role and orientation as male or female does not automatically correspond with the chromosomal sex; instead it is in some way related to assigned sex and rearing.

"Among the hermaphroditic patients studied there were 30 in whom a contradiction was found between the sexual status of the gonads and the sex of assignment and rearing. In all but 3 cases psychologic studies revealed a gender role fully concordant with the assigned sex and rearing.

"As a prognosticator of a person's gender role and orientation, gonadal structure, *per se*, thus proved to be most unreliable; again gender role was in greatest accord with the assigned sex and rearing.

"We conclude that an individual's gender role and orientation as boy or girl, man or woman, does not have an innate, preformed instinctive basis as some theorists have maintained. Instead the evidence supports the view that psychologic sex is undifferentiated at birth - a sexual neutrality one might say - and that the individual becomes psychologically differentiated as masculine or feminine in the course of the many experiences of growing up."

Notice: Harriet Fraadwolff, a graduate of Bennington, now doing Ph.D. work in Early Education at Yale will speak at the next Women's Liberation Meeting. The topic of her discussion will be cultural influences on small children; the implications of the roles assigned to them in elementary schools.

C.P. S.S.