

*T*he Origins and Implications of Gendered Identities

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If you woke up tomorrow and found you had changed into the opposite sex, how would your life be different?

Before beginning this chapter, write out a one- or two-paragraph response to this question. Resist the temptation to skip this, and take a few moments to think seriously about how being the other sex would really change your life.

Karl Marx is famous for saying, "Give me a child until age 5 and he will be mine forever." In this comment, Marx expressed a central insight about human nature: The experiences during the early years of life profoundly influence individuals' identities. Although we continue to evolve throughout our lives, foundations of our personalities, values, attitudes, and perspectives are established through communication during the formative years between birth and age 5. What happens then has enduring implications for how we define ourselves and how we interact with others.

In this chapter, we focus on the ways in which gender is communicated to infants and children during the early years of life and what that implies for our identities as adults. You will recall that Chapter 2 introduced interpersonal and cultural theories to explain how society communicates its views of gender to individuals. Now we will explore in greater depth the communicative processes by which children come to learn and internalize society's views of gender and

how these views then affect their lives. As George Herbert Mead (1934) pointed out, children learn social values through communicating with others, who introduce them to the definitions, meanings, and values of the culture. Having learned these, the majority of women and men then embody them in their own communication, thereby reproducing existing social views of gender.

To launch our discussion, we will first consider the necessarily social human self. By this I mean that we will examine how individual identities are inevitably created through interactions with others. We will then focus on communication from parents, teachers, and peers, all of whom participate in the process of teaching children the cultural code. Exploring the content and patterns of communication clarifies how interaction genders boys and girls so that most adopt, respectively, masculine or feminine identities. Finally, we will trace the implications of gendering processes by considering how they are reflected in contemporary college students' views of what it means to be masculine or feminine in North America today. By understanding the origins and implications of gender roles, we should gain clearer insight into our own identities — and perhaps options to them.

■ Talked into Humanity

We are born into a gendered society. We enter a social world that emphasizes masculinity and femininity. From the pink and blue blankets hospitals frequently use to swaddle newborns, to parents' distinct interactions with boys and girls, gender messages besiege infants from the moment of birth. Key players in the gender drama are parents, teachers, and peers, each of whom contributes to imparting cultural expectations and prescriptions to newcomers in the society so that they may understand and, thus, participate in a common social world.

Communication is a primary agent of socialization. Through interaction with others, children learn about the society into which they were born. They discern social norms, values, and expectations, and they apply these to themselves. As they do so, children form a sense of who they are — an identity that reflects how others see and act toward them. Because this process relies on interaction with others, the identity an individual claims for herself or himself is also necessarily a social one that arises out of our communication in relationships.

The Social Self

According to Mead, we have no self at birth. Instead, we develop an identity through communication with others who are significant to us. Newborn infants experience themselves as blurred with the rest of their environment. To develop awareness of personal identity, a baby interacts with family members and others

who are part of a larger social world. These interactions facilitate two processes central to developing a personal identity: conceiving the self-as-object and monitoring.

Self-as-object. By the term self-as-object, Mead did not mean that individuals take a detached view of themselves, nor that they objectify themselves. Rather, he was pointing out that humans are distinct from all other sentient creatures in their ability to reflect on themselves. We are unique in the capacity to be simultaneously the subjects and objects of our own thinking. We are able to stand outside of ourselves in order to perceive, describe, and evaluate our own activities, much as we would those of others. For instance, we say “I am attractive,” “I am strong,” “I ought to take care of my sick parent,” and “I’m overweight.” Our ability to self-reflect enables us to define ourselves and exercise some choice over who we will become.

How we think about ourselves inevitably reflects the views of us that others have communicated. In ongoing interactions, children discover how others see them. At first, others’ views of us are external, but gradually, they are internalized into ways we see ourselves. Because our sense of identity begins outside of ourselves, it is infused with the values, meanings, and understandings of a larger society. Mead (1934, pp. 150–161), in fact, insisted that we can *experience self only after experiencing others*. Because gender is one of the most basic and important categories of identity in our society, it is a major focus of others’ perceptions of us and of their communication to and about us. The emphasis others place on assigning gender to children explains why this is one of the first clear senses of self that we develop. If you reflected on the question posed at the beginning of this chapter, you have some idea of how central gender identity is to your sense of who you are. Trying to imagine yourself as the other sex is extremely difficult, because gender is a primary facet of our identities.

Monitoring. Because we learn to take the self as an object, we are able to monitor ourselves, which means we observe and regulate our attitudes and behaviors (Wood, 1992a, p. 80). We use symbols, usually language, to define who we are (son, student, mother, attorney, kind, independent, and so on). Monitoring is an internal process people use to keep themselves within the external norms and expectations of society. Mead spoke of *internal dialogues* to indicate that monitoring happens inside of us, but it involves the perspectives of others we have imported into our own thinking. Thus, in our private self-talk, we engage in a dialogue with the social world. As we do so, we remind ourselves what we are supposed to think, do, and feel in various situations—that is, we tell ourselves what the social codes stipulate as “appropriate” (Wood, 1993b). For instance, a 5-year-old girl might think “I want to go play in the yard” and then monitor that wish by repeating something she has heard from her mother: “but nice girls don’t

get dirty.” The little girl voice’s and the mother’s voice engage in an internal dialogue through which the child decides what to do.

Because we reflect on ourselves from the perspectives of others, we monitor our own actions and feelings from the viewpoint of our society as others have communicated it to us. Through internal dialogues, we keep ourselves attuned to the social perspective and use that to guide how we think, act, feel, and define ourselves. With this background on the process by which identity reflects social meanings, we may now consider in more depth how communication from families, peers, and teachers contributes to forming gender identities.

■ Gendering Communication

The different theories introduced in Chapter 2 offer us a variety of insights into how children discover social meanings of gender and integrate these into their identities. By interweaving these theories, we may understand in some depth how families, teachers, and peers shape development of gender identity in children.

Gendering Communication in the Family

The family is a primary source of gender identity. Through both overt, deliberate instruction and subtle, unconscious communication, families contribute in major ways to the formation of gender identity. To understand how families gender children, we will focus on two dimensions of communication between parents and children. First, we will elaborate on the largely unconscious process of internalizing gender, which was introduced in Chapter 2. Second, we will examine more overt ways in which children learn gender from parents. Parents’ beliefs about gender influence how they interact with sons and daughters, what expectations they communicate to each, and how they themselves serve as gender models for children. Taken together, the unconscious and conscious processes call our attention to the fundamental importance of parent-child communication in creating gendered identities.

Unconscious processes: Identification and internalization. Even skeptics of psychoanalytic theory generally admit that the conscious level of human communication does not fully explain human personality, including gender identity. Insight into unobservable yet very important unconscious dynamics comes primarily from psychoanalytic theories. The basic principle of psychoanalytic theories is that core personality is shaped by family relationships in the early years of life.

Although current psychoanalytic theorists reject some of Freud's ideas, they agree with his fundamental claim that family psychodynamics are critical to the formation of gender identity. During the earliest stage of life, children of both sexes are in a similar state of "infantile dependence" (Chodorow, 1989, p. 47) in which they depend on and identify with the person who takes care of them. Almost invariably this is a woman, usually the mother. This implies that children of both sexes typically form their first primary identification with an adult woman.

Yet common identification with a female does not mean boys and girls pursue similar developmental paths. Because mothers and daughters have a sameness that mothers and sons do not, boys and girls form distinct relationships with their mothers. Mothers tend to identify with daughters more closely than with sons, they seem to experience daughters more as part of themselves, and they encourage daughters to feel connected to them (Apter, 1990; Chodorow, 1989; Fliess, 1961). With sons, mothers are inclined to emphasize the difference between them and to encourage sons to differentiate from them. Through a variety of verbal and nonverbal communications, mothers fortify identification with daughters and curb it with sons.

According to psychodynamic theory, around age 3, male and female development diverges dramatically. You'll recall that this is the stage at which gender constancy is secured so that children realize gender is an unchanging, continuous part of their identity (Kohlberg, 1966; Money & Ehrhardt, 1972). For girls, development proceeds along the path initially established — identification with the mother. Through concrete, daily interactions with her mother, a daughter continues to crystallize her sense of self within the original primary relationship.

To develop masculine gender identity, however, boys must sever the early identification with the mother and replace it with an identification with a male, often the father. This process is complicated by the fact that fathers are generally less physically present in boys' everyday lives and often are emotionally remote as well (Keen, 1991; Slater, 1961; Winch, 1962). The gender model with which boys

MARY KAYE

helped mom a lot with cooking and cleaning when I was little. I used to really enjoy that, because it made me feel like an adult. I remember thinking "I'm just like mommy" when I'd be cleaning or doing stuff in the kitchen. I wanted to be like her, and doing what she did made me feel we were the same.

identify is usually more abstract and removed from their daily lives than the one for girls. Because boys typically lack a concrete, personal relationship with the person whom they are supposed to become like (Mitscherlich, 1970), masculine gender is elusive and difficult to grasp. This may help explain why boys typically define their masculinity predominantly in negative terms—it is being not feminine, not like mother. This can be accomplished by repressing the original identification with mothers and denying anything feminine in themselves. By extension, this may be the source of boys' tendencies to devalue whatever is feminine in general ("Ugh, girls are icky"), a pattern not paralleled by girls' views of masculinity. D. G. Brown's (1956) early studies, as well as more recent work (Burton & Whiting, 1961; Chodorow, 1989; Gaylin, 1992; Miller, 1986), suggest boys may feel compelled to disparage what is feminine in order to assure themselves that they are truly masculine, an identity that is less accessible than femininity because of the remoteness of fathers in many homes.

As development continues, girls are encouraged to be "mommy's helper" and to interact constantly with a single, specific person. However, around age 5, boys begin to roam from home to find companions. Boys' development typically occurs in larger groups with temporary and changing memberships; for girls, it unfolds within a continuing, personal relationship with an individual (Jay, 1969). These different contexts and relationships socialize boys to focus on achievement and independence and girls to emphasize nurturance and relatedness (Barry, Bacon, & Child, 1957; Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986).

REGGIE

I was really confused as a kid. My father left us before I was even a year old, so I didn't know him at all. My mom worked all day and was too tired to date or anything else, so there wasn't a man around. I tried to help mom, but she'd tell me I didn't have to do this stuff because I was "her little man." I used to watch mom doing stuff around the house and I'd think, "That's not what I'm supposed to do," but I had a lot of trouble figuring out what it was that I was supposed to do. I just knew it wasn't girl stuff. Then I got a big brother through a program at school. He was 17, and he spent most every Saturday with me and sometimes some time after school during the week. Michael was great. He'd let me hang out with him, and he'd show me how to do stuff like play ball and use tools to make things. Finally I had a sense of what I was supposed to be like and what I should do. Michael really helped me figure out who I was.

Early experiences do more than provide behavioral training consistent with gender; they also shape core identity. By engaging in distinctive kinds of family relationships, boys and girls unconsciously internalize different roles into their fundamental sense of selfhood. Chodorow (1989, p. 57) suggests that because girls develop feminine identity within personal, ongoing relationships, as they mature they continue to seek close relationships with particular individuals and to prioritize personal communication with others. Throughout life, women in general rely on communication in close relationships to learn about themselves and nurture connections with others (Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1982). Because boys separate from their initial relationship with mothers in order to form masculine identities, and because they tend to interact in temporary groups with changing members, they learn to define themselves through independence and to maintain a "safe" distance between themselves and others. They tend to engage more in doing things than in personal communication with others. For example, if you observe young children, you're likely to notice that girls typically engage in conversation or talk-oriented games (for example, playing house), while boys usually favor activities that require little verbal interaction (for example, baseball).

The different styles typical of males and females—whether as children or adults—have been described as *agentic* and *communal*, respectively (Bakan, 1966, 1968). Explaining these differences, Bakan (1966, p. 15) wrote that agency and communion

characterize two fundamental modalities in the existence of living forms. . . . Agency manifests itself in self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion; communion manifests itself in the sense of being at one with other organisms. Agency manifests itself in the formation of separations; communion in the lack of separations. Agency manifests itself in isolation, alienation, and aloneness; communion in contact, openness, and union. Agency manifests itself in the urge to master; communion in noncontractual cooperation.

While others have used different terms, Bakan's association of agency with masculine identity and communion with feminine identity is widely accepted by clinicians and researchers. Various studies (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Carlson, 1971; Cohen, 1969; Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan & Pollack, 1988; Gutman, 1965; Thompson & Walker, 1989) confirm the generalizations that femininity is generally relationally oriented while masculinity pivots more centrally on independence. It's important to understand that these are generalizations about gender, not sex. Women as well as men with masculine inclinations value independence and prefer distance from others, and men as well as women with feminine orientations place a premium on relationships and interpersonal closeness. How is identity formation affected when men, not women, are primary caregivers? Research on this is just beginning, but it might encourage a more

relational, communal identity in male children, since they could define themselves within the first relationship with another male.

Ego boundaries. Concurrent with the process of constructing gender identity is a second intrapsychic development: formation of *ego boundaries* (Chodorow, 1989; Surrey, 1983). Ego boundaries define the point at which an individual stops and the rest of the world begins. They distinguish the self—more or less distinctly—from everyone and everything else. Because they are linked to gender identity and evolve concurrently with it, masculine and feminine ego boundaries tend to differ. Individuals who develop feminine gender identity, which emphasizes interrelatedness with others, tend to have relatively thin or permeable ego boundaries. Because girls are encouraged to identify with mothers and not to differentiate, they often do not perceive clear-cut or absolute lines between themselves and others.

The relatively thin ego boundaries cultivated in females may partially explain why they tend to be more empathic—to sense the feelings of those close to them and to experience those feelings as nearly their own. It may also explain why women, more than men, sometimes become so involved with others that they neglect their own needs. Finally, this may shed light on the feminine tendency to feel responsible for others and for situations that are not one's own doing. When the lines between self and other are blurred, it's hard to tell what *your* responsibilities and *your* needs are. To the extent that others merge with yourself, helping them is helping you. This may be related to a tendency toward co-dependency, which is a major new focus of research and therapy.

Masculine gender identity is premised on differentiating from a female caregiver and defining self as “not like her.” It makes sense, then, that masculine individuals tend to have relatively thick or rigid ego boundaries. They generally have a definite sense of where they stop and others begin, and they are less likely to experience others' feelings as their own. The thicker ego boundaries encouraged in masculine socialization help us understand why later in life men generally keep some distance from others and, especially, from other people's problems. Rigid ego boundaries also suggest why men in general are unlikely to take responsibility for other people and situations, and why they tend not to experience another's feelings as their own. Contrary to some accusations, people with masculine identities are not necessarily unconcerned about others; instead, it is more likely that men generally experience others' feelings as separate from their own.

Interested in the implications of ego boundary development for adults, Ernest Hartmann (1991) has studied the nature and function of internal ego boundaries in his clinical practice. He explains that people with thick boundaries have “a very solid, separate sense of self [which] implies not becoming overinvolved and can also imply being careful, not becoming involved with anyone rapidly” (p. 36). He goes on to note that “people with thin boundaries may become

V I N C E

My girlfriend is so strange about her friends. Like the other night I went by her apartment and she was all upset and crying. When I asked her what was wrong she told me Linda, her best friend, had just been dumped by her boyfriend. I said she acted like it was her who'd broken up, not Linda, and she didn't need to be so upset. She got even more upset and said it felt like her; couldn't I understand what Linda was going through? I said I could, but that she wasn't going through it; Linda was. She told me it was the same thing because when you're really close to somebody else you hurt when they hurt. It didn't make sense to me, but maybe this theory of ego boundaries is what that's all about.

rapidly and deeply involved with others and may lose themselves in relationships" (p. 37). After measuring ego boundaries of nearly 1,000 people, Hartmann concluded that there are "clear-cut differences between men and women. . . . Overall, women scored significantly thinner than men—thinner by about twenty points, or 8% of the overall score" (p. 117). He also found that women tend to be comfortable feeling connected to others, sensing that their lives are interwoven with those close to them, and they may be uneasy with too much autonomy.

Men, on the other hand, tend to feel most secure when autonomy and self-sufficiency are high, and they may feel suffocated in relationships that are extremely close. This may explain why women typically want more togetherness than men find comfortable and men tend to desire more separation than women enjoy. Some theorists (Rubin, 1985; Schaef, 1981) see the genders' distinctive preferences for closeness as a reason why women create more emotionally intense same-sex friendships than do men. With other women, they find the kind of intimate, personal connection they value. These patterns, which are particularly evident in adult life, have their roots in childhood socialization processes.

In noting the influence of early communication on adult gender identity, we don't want to repeat Freud's fallacy of thinking that anatomy is destiny. Important as childhood socialization is, we should remind ourselves it is not an absolute determinant of adult personality. Gender, like other important aspects of ourselves, is not fixed by age 5 and then constant and unchanging throughout the rest of our lives. Our understanding of gender and of our personal gender identity changes over time as we experience different situations and diverse people who

B O N I T A

You asked us to think about whether we ever got the message that males are more valued than females. I know I did. I guess I got it in a lot of ways, but one really stands out. I remember when I was 9 my mother was pregnant for the third time. When she went into labor, daddy took her to the hospital with me and my sister. We all sat in the waiting room while they took mom down the hall. Later the doctor came in and went to my father. I still remember his exact words. He said, "I'm sorry Mr. Chavis, it's another girl. Guess you'll have to try again."

embody alternative versions of masculinity and femininity and who communicate how they see us.

Summing up the ways in which family communication in the early years of life unconsciously shapes gender identity, Chodorow (1978, p. 169) states, "The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate." These differences are not merely in behaviors and attitudes but are rooted in the basic psyche, which is formed through early, primary relationships in the family and which shape identity in enduring ways. To discover how children build on the basic intrapsychic structure, we will now discuss what and how they learn about gender through communication with others.

Parental attitudes about gender. Communication from parents frequently reinforces the unconscious bases of gender identity we have examined. Children learn gender roles through rewards and punishments they receive for various behaviors and through observing and modeling others of their gender. Typically, girls are encouraged to be communal through communication that reinforces cooperation, helpfulness, nurturance, and other behaviors consistent with social meanings of femininity. In boys, agentic tendencies are promoted by rewarding them for behaving competitively, independently, and assertively. In addition, children learn about gender by watching parents, who themselves usually embody cultural views of masculinity and femininity. Children observe what mothers and fathers do, using parents as models for themselves.

One understanding of gender that most children learn through early communication is that males are generally more valued than females. According to Basow (1992, p. 129), "Nearly everywhere in the world, most couples prefer male children to female children," a preference that is communicated, indirectly or

directly, to children. In fact, preference for males is so strong that in some cultures female fetuses are aborted and female infants are killed immediately after birth (French, 1992; Steinbacher & Holmes, 1987; Williamson, 1976). That males are routinely more valued may explain why many young girls wish they could be boys—they understand that their parents and the culture as a whole regard males more highly than females.

Parents' attitudes toward sons and daughters often reflect gender stereotypes more than responses to their particular children. Social scientists have shown that labeling a baby male or female affects how parents perceive and respond to it. In one study, within just 24 hours of birth parents were responding to their babies in terms of gender stereotypes (Rubin, Provenzano, & Luria, 1974). Although male and female babies were matched for size, weight, and level of activity, parents described boys with words such as *strong, hardy, big, active, and alert*. Parents of equally large and active girls described their daughters with adjectives such as *small, dainty, quiet, and delicate*. More recent experiments show the persistence of parental tendencies to gender stereotype children (Delk, Madden, Livingston, & Ryan, 1986; Stern & Karraker, 1989).

Parental stereotypes affect children's development. Qualities that are expected and promoted are more likely to be woven into children's behavioral repertoires than are those that are not expected and/or are discouraged. Parents have been shown to act toward children on the basis of gender labels. In general, boys are treated more roughly and encouraged to be more aggressive, whereas girls are treated gently and urged to be emotional and physically reserved (Antill, 1987). One study found that parental gender stereotypes prompt parents to expect boys to excel at math and science but do not expect or encourage this in girls (Eccles, 1989). Another recent report (National Public Radio, 1992) noted that parents praise sons more than daughters for accomplishments, a pattern that encourages boys to aim for achievement and to tie their successes to what they are able to do. Finally, researchers (Fagot, Hagan, Leinbach, & Kronsberg, 1985) report that parents respond more approvingly to assertiveness in sons than in daughters and react more positively to interpersonal and social skills in daughters than in sons.

Parental communication about gender. In addition to guiding parents' responses to children's behaviors, gender stereotypes are communicated by the toys and clothes parents give children and the chores they assign to them. Despite evidence that rigid gender socialization restricts children's development (Morrow, 1990), many parents continue to select toys and clothes that are gender specific. Recently, a group of researchers surveyed the rooms of 120 boys and girls who were under 2 years old (Pomerleau, Bolduc, Malcuit, & Cossette, 1990). They found girls' rooms were populated by dolls and children's furniture, and the color

pink was prominent. Boys' rooms most often were decorated in the colors blue, red, and white, and in them were various vehicles, tools, and sports gear.

Further investigations have shown that many parents actively discourage their children's interest in toys and games that are associated with the other sex (Antill, 1987; Fagot, 1978; Lytton & Romney, 1991). For instance, boys may be persuaded not to play house or to cook, and girls may be dissuaded from engaging in vigorous, competitive games. Different types of toys and activities promote distinct kinds of thinking and interaction. More "feminine" toys like dolls encourage quiet, nurturing interaction with another, physical closeness, and verbal communication. More typically "masculine" toys such as sporting equipment and train sets promote independent and/or competitive activities that require little verbal interaction. Because the toys children play with can affect how they think and interact, some researchers caution parents not to limit children to toys for one sex (Basow, 1992; Fagot, 1985).

Another way parents communicate gender expectations is through the household chores they assign to sons and daughters. As early as age 6, many children are given responsibilities that reflect their parents' gender expectations. As you might expect, domestic duties such as cleaning and cooking are most often designated for girls, and more active chores such as outdoor work, painting, and simple repairs are assigned to boys (Burns & Homel, 1989; Goodnow, 1988; McHale, Bartko, Crouter, & Perry-Jenkins, 1990). There are several implications of differential responsibilities delegated to girls and boys. First, like toys, various tasks encourage particular types of thinking and activity. Domestic chores emphasize taking care of others and taking responsibility for them (cleaning their clothes, shopping for their needs, and so on), while maintenance jobs encourage independent activity and emphasize taking care of things rather than people. Domestic chores also tend to occur in small, interior spaces, whereas maintenance chores are frequently done in open spaces.

In general, boys are more rigidly gender socialized than girls. This is more true of Caucasian than African-American families, since the latter tend to socialize children of both sexes toward autonomy and nurturing of children (Bardewell, Cochran, & Walker, 1986; Hale-Benson, 1986). It's much more acceptable for girls to be "tomboys" than for boys to play house or cuddle dolls. Similarly, it's considered more suitable for girls to be strong than for boys to cry, for girls to act independently than for boys to need others, and for girls to touch and show tenderness toward other girls than for boys to demonstrate closeness to male peers.

These differential gender latitudes are evident in how parents communicate with sons and daughters. Sons tend to receive more encouragement to conform to masculinity and more rewards for doing so than daughters receive for femininity. In addition, boys are more directly and strongly discouraged from any feminine

inclinations than girls are from masculine behaviors and interests. It's also been shown that fathers are more insistent on gender-stereotyped toys and activities, especially for sons, than are mothers (Caldera, Huston, & O'Brien, 1989; Fagot & Leinbach, 1987; Lamb, 1986). The overall picture is that boys are more intensively and rigidly pushed to become masculine than girls are to become feminine.

Why are boys more vigorously socialized into gender, especially by fathers? Some researchers believe this pattern reflects cultural and parental preferences for males and a general valuing of masculinity (Feinman, 1984) with the corresponding devaluation of femininity (French, 1992; Miller, 1986). It would make sense that boys would be encouraged to become what the culture esteems, while girls would not be so strongly urged to become something less valued. It's also possible that being masculine is more difficult than being feminine, since the former requires repressing human feelings and needs (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Pleck, 1981). If so, then stronger socialization would be required to overcome natural inclinations.

Parental modeling. Another way parents communicate gender is through modeling masculinity and femininity and male-female relationships. Parents are powerful models for gender—they are perhaps the single most visible, constantly present examples of how to be a man and a woman. We have already discussed children's tendencies to identify with their same-sex parents. As a daughter identifies with her mother, she begins imitating her mother to become feminine herself. Boys use mothers as a negative example of what they are *not* supposed to be and do (Chodorow, 1989). In addition, boys look to fathers for a definition of masculinity; a father is his son's primary model of manhood, one he emulates in his own efforts to become masculine.

Children also learn about gender by watching who does what in their families. By observing parents, children gain understanding of the roles socially prescribed for females and males. One particularly striking example of gender roles that children learn from parents involves mothers' and fathers' responsibility for child care. Research consistently shows that mothers invest considerably more time and more constancy in taking care of children than do fathers (Hochschild, 1989; Okin, 1989; Riessman, 1990). Even when both parents hold full-time jobs outside of the home, only about 20% of husbands do half of the child care and homemaking chores (Hochschild, 1989). Further, mothers and fathers engage in different kinds of child care. Mothers do the constant day-in, day-out activities of feeding, bathing, dressing, supervising, and so forth. Fathers more typically engage in occasional activities and ones that are more enjoyable for both children and parents, such as playing games or taking weekly trips to the bagel shop or zoo (Burns & Homel, 1989; Hochschild, 1989). Given this, it's not surprising that most children turn to their mothers when they need help or comforting and to

D A V I D

I never thought about why I thought dad was so much more fun than mom, but what we're studying now makes sense. We used to wait for dad to come home, because he'd always spend a half hour or so before dinner playing with us — tossing a ball or working with the trains or whatever. Mom never did that. Now I can see that she was really doing more for us all of the time — fixing our meals, buying us clothes, taking care of our doctor's appointments, and just generally being there for us. Maybe it's because dad was around less of the time that he was more special to us. Anyway, he was the one we looked forward to playing with.

their fathers when they want to play. Fathers are the preferred playmates (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Learning these gender roles through observing parental models prepares children to reproduce the roles in their own lives as they grow into adulthood.

Fathers appear to be particularly important in shaping gender in children. As we noted earlier, fathers generally have more rigid ideas about gender roles, and they enforce them on children more intensely. This is particularly so with sons, whom fathers encourage to do what the society defines as masculine activities and to avoid ones regarded as feminine. Interestingly, young girls use both parents as models, but boys tend to rely almost exclusively on their fathers or other males (Basow, 1992). Further, the extent to which fathers themselves hold strong gender stereotypes affects the attitudes about gender that children develop. Children of fathers with traditional gender beliefs tend to be conservative and hold rigid gender stereotypes themselves. They also seem to have more narrow views of what males and females can do (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989). Conversely, children of androgynous parents tend to have more androgynous and flexible attitudes themselves (Sedney, 1987).

In summary, parents play a major role in shaping children's understandings of gender in general and their own gender in particular. Through unconscious identification and internalization of gender to more overt learning from communication of parents and modeling, most children's initial views of masculinity and femininity reflect their parents' attitudes, behaviors, and interactions. Of course, parents are not the sole influence on gender development. We now will look at two other sources of communication about gender: teachers and peers.

Teachers' Communication

Like families, schools are primary agents of gender socialization. One of the most striking and continuing ways teachers communicate cultural views of gender is through unequal attention to male and female students. Starting with kindergarten and continuing through college and graduate school, teachers give more time, effort, and attention to male students than to female ones. They do this in a number of ways. They generally praise boys' contributions more lavishly than those of girls (Epperson, 1988; Hall & Sandler, 1982), call more frequently on males (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Sadker & Sadker, 1986), and recognize males' achievements more than those of females (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Spender, 1989; Wood & Lenze, 1991a). Further, teachers routinely discuss academic work and career ambitions with boys but are less generous in the academic counseling they provide to girls (Hall & Sandler, 1982, 1984; Spender, 1989). Taken together, these differential behaviors reinforce the societal message that males are more important than females.

Another way teachers communicate gender is by encouraging and discouraging gender stereotypical behaviors in male and female students. Consistent with cultural views of femininity, teachers reward female students for being quiet, obedient, and cooperative. Equally consistent with cultural views of masculinity, teachers reward male students for accomplishments, assertion, and dominance in classrooms (Hall & Sandler, 1982; Sadker & Sadker, 1986). While teachers tend to accept answers that boys shout out, they routinely reprimand female students for "speaking out of turn." Responses like these communicate to children that boys are expected to assert themselves, and girls are supposed to be quiet and polite.

Teacher expectations are particularly striking in their effects on African-American students. When they begin school, African-American girls tend to be active, ambitious, and independent, results of their familial socialization, but teachers encourage them to be more nurturing and less autonomous. By age 10, these girls have often learned that independence and achievement are not rewarded. To gain teachers' approval, many African-American girls become more passive and more dependent ("Study of Black Females," 1985). Many teachers also communicate low expectations of African-American males. More than their white peers, African-American males are disproportionately targets of teacher disapproval and unfavorable treatment (Grant, 1985). Even when actual behaviors are controlled, teachers generally perceive African-American males as more disruptive and less intellectually able than white males or females of either race (Ross & Jackson, 1991). When these attitudes infect the everyday life of schools, it's small wonder that African-Americans' academic motivation often declines the longer they stay in school and that they drop out in high numbers. This is another illustration of relationships between gender and race oppression.

Are there differences in male and female teachers' gender stereotypical expectations and behaviors? At least at higher education levels, there seem to be rather consistent differences. Female university and college professors, compared with their male counterparts, tend to be less biased against female students, are more able to recognize females' contributions and intellectual talents, and are more generous in giving them academic and career encouragement. In general, female students participate more actively and more equally with their male peers in classes taught by women than in ones instructed by men. Unfortunately, substantial influence on gender identity has taken place by the time a student enters college. Further, while female faculty may be less likely to gender stereotype students, they remain scarce in higher education, so there are fewer women with whom to take classes. Research also indicates that differences in teachers parallel those found in parents, with male teachers tending to have stronger, more rigid gender stereotypes than female teachers (Fagot, 1981; Weiler, 1988).

Existing evidence suggests many teachers have gender stereotypes, which they communicate to students through their expectations, responses, and distinct interaction with males and females. The fact that male students generally receive substantially more recognition, encouragement, and academic counseling than females makes the classroom a "chilly climate" for girls and women, who are often not expected to excel and are not encouraged to learn skills of assertion and independent problem solving. Given the differential treatment male and female students receive, it's hardly surprising that males' self-esteem rises the longer they stay in school, while females' self-esteem and expectations of achievement decrease the longer they stay in school (Astin, 1977). Because school has such a powerful impact on self-concept and opportunities in life, we will consider gendered education in depth in Chapter 8.

Communication with Peers

Finally, let's consider the ways in which communication with peers influences gender identity. The power attributed to "peer pressure" is no myth. Once children begin interacting with other children, peers exercise strong influence on attitudes and identities. Acceptance by peers is higher when children conform to gender stereotypes (Martin, 1989), and this is especially true for boys (Fagot, 1984). Males are much more insistent that boys do boy things than females are that girls do girl things, which continues the more rigid gender socialization imposed on males.

Looking back on your own experiences, you can probably confirm the lesser tolerance for boys to engage in feminine activities than for girls to engage in masculine ones. Most young girls, in fact, do play rough sports, but boys generally don't engage in playing house, for instance. Those who do are likely to hear the

cardinal insult for a young boy: "You're a sissy!" Peers communicate gender expectations for aggressiveness and passivity, although once again there is greater acceptance of girls who deviate from feminine prescriptions for passivity than for boys who don't "measure up" to the rules for masculinity (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987). Peers make it quite clear that boys are supposed to act like boys, which means, above all, they must not show any signs of femininity. Once again, this reinforces the cultural message that masculine is more valuable than feminine: Boys may *not* act feminine, but girls may act masculine.

The kinds of interaction between girls and boys differ in ways that further gender identities. In an early study, D. N. Maltz and R. Borker (1982) found that the games typically played by girls encourage cooperation, inclusion, and interpersonal communication. In contrast, boys' games promote competitiveness, individual achievement, and a focus on goals. More recently, developmental psychologists ("How Boys and Girls," 1992) confirmed these patterns, noting that boys teach each other to be controlling and competitive, while girls teach each other to be cooperative and kind. Thus, informal interaction with peers reiterates parents' and teachers' gender lessons.

Although peers are important to both sexes, they seem more critical to boys' development of gender identity (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987). Male bonding tends to occur in adolescence and is extremely important in reinforcing and refining masculine identity (Gaylin, 1992; Raphael, 1988; Rubin, 1985; Wood & Inman, 1993). Males' greater reliance on peers for gender identity may reflect the difference in parental same-sex models available to boys and girls. In most families the mother is more constantly present in the home than the father, so a female child can learn how to be feminine within an ongoing, continuous relationship with another person. Because fathers tend to be more physically and psychologically removed from family life, they are less available as concrete models. Young boys may need to find other tangible examples of masculinity in order to define their own identities.

In summary, peers contribute in major ways to creating our gendered identities. They communicate expectations and establish rules that determine who is part of the "in group" and who is not. Because peer acceptance is extremely important in the first two decades of life, fitting in with friends and chums is a cornerstone of esteem. Thus, children and adolescents generally do what is necessary to gain the approval and acceptance of their companions. This is a source of considerable frustration to many parents who try to eliminate stereotypes in how they raise their children, only to find that peers quickly and effectively undo their efforts. From ages 5 to the early 20s, peers typically have influence at least equal to that of families, and this influence seems particularly pronounced in encouraging gender stereotypical attitudes, behaviors, and identities (Huston, 1985; Martin, 1989).

We have now considered how various individuals contribute to gendering our identities and how different theories provide insight into this process. Becoming gendered usually entails maternal caretaking during the initial years of life and the kinds of identification and the development of ego boundaries promoted by that caretaking. Further gendering of identity occurs as children interact with parents, peers, and teachers who communicate cultural expectations of masculinity and femininity. In concert, these sources define cultural views of gender and talk individuals into masculine and feminine identities, which guide how they think, act, and feel.

The players in the gender drama we have discussed do not fully explain the persistence of gendered identities throughout our lives. The gender socialization begun in early years is sustained and reinforced by other cultural influences such as media. We will examine some of these in later chapters. Before moving on, however, we should translate the research we've considered into more personal terms that illuminate the implications of gender socialization for later life.

■ The Personal Side of the Gender Drama

Theory and research regarding how we become gendered is only part of the story. Equally important is understanding how gender socialization affects us as we move beyond childhood. To grasp this, we will consider what it means to grow up masculine and feminine in present-day North America.

Growing Up Masculine

What does it mean to be a man in America in the 1990s? Pervasive references to "male privilege" suggest that men, particularly heterosexual white men in the middle and upper classes, have special access to the opportunities and rewards of our society. Further, it is widely understood that our culture reveres masculinity and maleness far more than femininity and womanliness. This is, of course, true as a statement about social values and how they result in privileges for certain groups. It is why American culture is often described as **patriarchal**, which literally means "rule by the fathers." Yet this tells us little about how masculinity constrains and affects individual men who abide by prevailing prescriptions. To understand the drawbacks and advantages of masculinity, let's first consider what several college men say. In the boxes on Randy, Jake, and Charles, we hear of the pressures, expectations, and constraints of manhood as much as the prerogatives and privileges. As Charles tells us, it's a mixed bag. In his book, *The Male Experience*, J. A. Doyle (1989) identifies five themes of masculinity,

J A K E

You asked what it means to be a man today. For me it means that I can expect to get a job and keep it as long as I do decent work. It also means I'll probably have a family to support—or be the major breadwinner for it. It means I don't have to worry about somebody thinking I'm not serious about my work because of my sex. My girlfriend keeps running into this in her job interviews—being treated as if she's not serious about working, when her GPA is higher than mine. I guess going through interviews together has made me aware of how much bias there still is against women. And, yeah, it's made me glad I'm a man.

C H A R L E S

I don't know what it means to be a man. I do know what it means to be an African-American man. They're not the same thing. Being an African-American man means that people think I'm strong and stupid. They think I can play football but can't be a responsible businessman. It means my woman expects me to provide for her and kids later, but that society thinks I'll run out on them, since everyone thinks black men desert their families. It means when I walk on campus at night, white women cross the street or hook up with some white guy—whether they know him or not—because they think I'm sex crazed and going to rape them. It also means I'm supposed to be aggressive and tough—all the time. It's not okay for me to hurt or need help or be weak—not ever; that's not part of being a man. Jeez, my dad drilled that one into me! It means I can get away with being tough and pushing my weight around, like women can't do that, but I can't get away with being sensitive or giving in to others. It means I get a better job than my wife, but it means I am supposed to, and I can never not think about taking care of my family like she can. It's a mixed bag, which you don't hear a lot about.

R A N D Y

It's funny you asked us to write about what it means to be a man today. I've been trying to figure that out. It's real clear to me that it means I have to make it. Women have a choice about whether to "make their mark" on the world and be successful. I don't. I have to be successful at work, or I am a failure as a man. But I can't figure out exactly what it means to be "successful." I see men who are successful, like my father, and they're slaves to their bosses and their jobs. They don't enjoy life. They're not free to do what they want. They have to always be making it, proving they're successful. Last year my uncle had a heart attack. He was only 51. He was successful, and look what it got him.

ones that weave through the commentaries of these three men. We will consider each of these elements of the male role.

The prime directive is *don't be female*. Doyle (p. 150) calls this the "negative touchstone" of the male role, by which he means that the most fundamental requirement for manhood is not being womanly. Early in life most boys learn they must not think, act, or feel like girls and women. Because this prohibition teaches boys that girls are inferior, it is thought to be one of the bases of the general attitude that females are inferior to males. Any male who shows sensitivity or vulnerability is ridiculed as a sissy, a crybaby, a mama's boy, or a wimp.

The second element of the male role is the command *be successful*, which surfaces when men discuss the concept of masculinity. Men are expected to achieve status in their professions, to be successful, to "make it." They do not have options such as choosing to stay home with children or having a woman provide for family finances. The few men who do this are generally regarded as odd and not manly. Recently, W. Farrell (1991) wrote that men are regarded as "success objects," and their worth as marriage partners, friends, and men is judged by how successful they are at what they do. Training begins early with sports, where winning is stressed. As Alfie Kohn (1986, p. 168) remarks, "The general rule is that American males are simply trained to win. The object, a boy soon gathers, is not to be liked but to be envied, . . . not to be part of a group but to distinguish himself from the others in that group." In childhood and adolescence, being a success means excelling at athletics or academics.

Later in life, this translates into being not just good at what you do but being better than others, more powerful than peers, pulling in a bigger salary

than your neighbors, and having a more expensive home, car, and so on, than your friends. Success for men, we might tell Randy, is a comparative issue—it means being better than others. For 20 years in a row, a national survey has reported that the primary requirement for manhood is regarded as being a good provider (Faludi, 1991, p. 65). Salient to most males (Pleck, 1987), the provider role appears to be particularly important to African-American men (Cazenave & Leon, 1987).

A third injunction for the male role is *be aggressive*. Even in childhood, boys are often encouraged to be roughnecks, or at least are seldom scolded for being so. They are expected to fight and not to run from battles or to lose them. Later, sports reinforce early training by emphasizing aggression, violence, and toughness. Coaches psych teams up with demands that they “make the other team hurt, hurt, hurt” or “make them bleed.” Perhaps the ultimate training for aggression comes in military service, especially during times of war. “We’ll make you into men” promises a recruiting poster. The pledge is really that the military will teach men to fight, to inflict pain on others, to endure it stoically themselves, and to win, win, win.

From childhood on, males learn to be aggressive, to “show what you’re made of.” In discussing the importance of aggression to masculinity, Doyle (1989, p. 183) calls our attention to the paradox that “aggression is both denounced as a significant social problem and applauded as a masculine attribute.” The way aggression is justified for men is that they must protect their rights—they have to retaliate, or seek revenge, when they are violated by another. Not to do so is to be unmanly.

Men’s training in aggression seems to be linked to violence (Goldner et al., 1990; Gordon, 1988; Thompson & Walker, 1989), especially violence against women. Because males are taught that women are inferior (remember the prime directive of masculinity: don’t be female) and aggressiveness is good, it’s not surprising that some men believe they are entitled to dominate women. This belief surfaces in studies of men who rape (Costin & Schwartz, 1987; Scott & Tetreault, 1987). The same belief that “I have a right to do my will on her” is evident in studies of men who abuse their girlfriends and wives (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gelles & Straus, 1988). One study (Thompson, 1991) reported that both college women and men who are violent toward their dates have masculine gender orientations, reminding us again that gender and sex are not equivalent terms. Even the judicial system long upheld a man’s right to beat his wife within certain limits (a stick no larger than the width of his thumb, which gave rise to the colloquial expression, “the rule of thumb”). Further, some states do not allow a wife to prosecute her husband for rape, since the law holds that carnal relations are a husband’s right—regardless of his wife’s willingness. Thus, laws condone men’s aggression against women.

A fourth element of the male role is captured in the injunction *be sexual*. Men should be interested in sex—all the time, anytime. They are expected to have

a number of sexual partners; the more partners a man has, the more of a “stud” he is (Gaylin, 1992). Even in the 1990s, many fraternities still have rituals such as recognizing brothers who “made it” at the last fraternity event. During rush, one fraternity recently issued invitations with the notation B.Y.O.A., which one of my students easily translated for me: Bring your own ass.

A number of writers (Brownmiller, 1993; Faludi, 1991; French, 1992; Russell, 1993) have criticized men’s inclination to treat women as sex objects, which clearly demeans women. This tendency is encouraged by socialization that stresses sexual conquests and virility as essential to manhood. Less often noted is that the injunction to be sexual also turns men into sex objects. Sex isn’t a free choice when you have to perform to be a man. Some men resent the expectation that they should always be interested in sexual activity.

Finally, Doyle says the male sex role demands that men *be self-reliant*. Men are expected to be confident, independent, autonomous. The Marlboro Man was an extremely effective advertising image because he symbolized the independence and toughness of masculinity. A “real man” doesn’t need others, particularly women. He depends on himself, takes care of himself, and relies on nobody. This is central to social views of manliness. As we noted earlier, male self-development typically begins with differentiation from others, and from infancy on most boys are taught to be self-reliant and self-contained (Thompson & Pleck, 1987). Men are expected to be emotionally reserved and controlled: It’s not manly to let feelings control oneself or to need others. These five aspects of masculinity clearly reflect gender socialization in early life and lay out a blueprint for what being a man means and calls for in contemporary America. Yet these views are not necessary or healthy. Individual men have options about whether they will embody society’s traditional definition of masculinity, and many men are crafting

K E V I N

I’m a man, a normal man, okay? I mean I like girls, and I like to have sex. Sometimes. But that’s not all I think about. It’s not all I want with women. And frankly sometimes I’m not in the mood. But a man can’t say that. If he does, then people think there’s something wrong with him. You have to be on—always ready, always drooling for sex to prove you’re a man. We don’t have any freedom to say “I’m not in the mood” or “I’m not interested.” Once I told a girl that when she came on to me, and she asked me if I was gay. I’m not gay. But I’m not a constant sex machine either.

alternative identities for themselves. In later chapters we'll discover examples of ways to revise masculine identity.

Growing Up Feminine

What does it mean to be feminine in the United States in the 1990s? Casual talk and media offer us two quite different versions of modern women. One suggests that women now have it all: They can have careers, marriage, and children. They can get jobs formerly closed and rise to the top levels of their professions; they can have egalitarian marriages with liberated men and raise nonsexist children. At the same time, other communication from the culture intones a quite different message. It tells us women may be able to get jobs, but fewer than 20% will actually be given opportunities to advance. Crime statistics warn us rape is rising, as is battering of women. We discover that married women may have careers, but over 80% of them still do the majority of housework and child care. Medical researchers warn that eating disorders among women are epidemic, and media relentlessly carry the message that youth and beauty are women's ticket to success. Some social analysts claim that our society's attitude toward women is so negative that it is misogynistic, or woman hating. This may be an overstatement, yet within it lies more than a grain of truth. America idolizes women at the same time that it exploits and degrades them. The existence of two such discrepant cultural attitudes gives us a clue that prevailing images of women are conflicting and confusing. The boxes on Jeanne, Jana, Bernadette, and Debbie give us a better understanding of what femininity means, as these women explain how they feel about being a woman. These women recognize cultural expectations

J E A N N E

Hungry. That's what being a woman means to me. I am hungry all of the time. Either I'm dieting or I'm throwing up, because I ate too much. I am scared to death of being fat, and I'm just not made to be thin. My genes don't cooperate. I am large boned and everyone in my family tends toward plumpness, but I can't be that way. I gain weight just by smelling food. I think about food all the time—wanting it but being afraid to eat, eating but feeling guilty. It's a no win situation. I'm obsessed, and I know it, but I can't help it. How can I not think about my weight all the time when every magazine, every movie, every television show see screams at me that I have to be thin to be desirable?

of women that have been noted by researchers and social commentators. We can identify five themes in current views of femininity and womanhood.

The first theme is that *appearance still counts*. Women are still judged by their looks. They must be pretty, slim, and well dressed to be desirable. Inducing girls to focus on appearance begins in the early years of life when girls are given dolls and clothes, both of which invite them to attend to appearance. Gift catalogs for children regularly feature makeup kits, adornments for hair, and even wigs so that girls learn early to spend time and effort on looking good. Dolls, like the ever-popular Barbie, come with accessories such as extensive wardrobes so that girls learn dressing well is important. Teen magazines for girls feature fashion and

J A N A

I like being a woman today. It's the best time ever to be female, because we can have it all. When I finish my B.A., I plan to go to law school, and then I want to practice. I also want to have a family with two children. My mother couldn't have had the whole package, but I can. I love the freedom of being a woman in this time — there's nothing I can't do.

B E R N A D E T T E

I think expectations of women today are impossible. I read magazines for working women, since I plan to work in business when I graduate. They tell me how to be a good leader, how to make tough decisions and keep others motivated, how to budget my time and advance in an organization. Then in the same magazines there's an article on how to throw a great dinner party with a three-course meal plus appetizers and dessert. Am I supposed to do that after working from 8 to 6 every day to advance in business? Somehow the husband's role in all of this never gets mentioned. It's all supposed to come together, but I don't see how. It seems to me that a career is a full-time responsibility and so is running a home, yet I get the feeling I'm supposed to do both and keep my cool all the time. I just don't see how.

D E B B I E

To me it means I'd better include the expenses of cosmetics, beauty salons, health clubs, and super clothes in my budget from now on. I have to worry about being attractive. I have to look good or I'm a failure as a woman. Guys don't face that. If a guy looks bad it's okay, but not a girl. I've seen this in classes a lot. In one class I had last term, we had a woman professor, who was really fabulous. She really knew her stuff, and she was interesting and funny and smart. But her clothes were out of style and sometimes ruffled like she didn't iron them. I heard a lot of comments about how "sloppy" she was. In another class of mine the man who taught it wore the same jacket almost every day. It was frayed at the sleeves and just kind of ratty, and his shirts were usually wrinkled. So I said something once about his sloppy dress, and my friend just laughed at me and said I ought to appreciate his "eccentric" style. See what I mean? It's a real double standard that you don't hear about much. Whatever else may have changed about views of women, the demand to look good hasn't.

grooming sections and are saturated with ads for makeup, diet aids, and hair products. Like Jeanne said, nearly every magazine, film, and television show spotlights a beautiful woman. The cultural injunction that women must be pretty is unambiguous and unabated (Wolf, 1991).

At the opening of this chapter, I asked you to respond to the question "If you woke up tomorrow and found you had changed into the opposite sex, how would your life be different?" That question comes from a study (Tavris & Baumgartner, 1983) of 2,000 children in grades 3 through 12. One of the clearest findings was that both boys and girls recognized the importance of appearance for girls. Even children as young as 9 understand that girls' success depends on looking good. The boys responded that if they woke up female, they certainly hoped they were gorgeous, because unattractive females are outcasts. When girls considered waking up as boys, they noted it would be a relief not to have to worry about looks all the time. One 10th grader (p. 92) said "I would go back to bed, since it would not take very long to get ready for school."

Cultural expectations for beauty include being slim—or even thin. Jeanne's comments are particularly poignant as she points out that the requirement to be slender can become tyrannical. She's not alone in her obsession with eating or her ways of coping with the societal expectation of thinness in women. In a survey of 33,000 young women, 42% of the respondents said losing weight was more important and would make them happier than success at work (Wooley &

Wooley, 1984). Eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa and bulimia are epidemic and rising as women try to conform to the requirement for thinness. This rigid expectation literally kills thousands of women annually (Wolf, 1991), just to meet the cultural demand for excessively slender bodies (Rodin, Silberstein, & Striegel-Moore, 1985). Women seldom feel they will be loved, respected, or accepted based on their achievements, values, or personality unless they are also attractive.

A second cultural expectation of women is *be sensitive and caring*. Girls and women are supposed to care about and for others and to be nice, responsive, supportive, and friendly. It's part of their role as defined by culture. A number of studies (Aronson, 1992; Hochschild, 1989; Okin, 1989; Wood, 1993c) reveal that women do the majority of caregiving for the whole culture. From assuming primary responsibility for young children to taking care of elderly, often sick or disabled relatives, women are the ones who do the preponderance of hands-on caring. In interviews with adult daughters who care for their aging mothers, Aronson (1992) found that daughters thought this was required to meet society's definition of being "good women." Giving care to others is part of being a woman.

Major responsibilities for children and needy relatives are not the only care burdens expected of women: They are also supposed to be nice, deferential, and helpful in general, whereas men are not held to the same requirements (Hochschild, 1975, 1979, 1983). In their survey of school children, Tavris and Baumgartner (1983) found that both boys and girls recognized there were greater restrictions on girls' activities than on those of boys: They perceived that girls have to do more for others and less for themselves. The girls said that if they were to wake up male, they'd be able to "do anything." They would have more freedom because they wouldn't have to focus on others' needs.

There is one activity that both boys and girls in the study of school children saw as a female advantage. Girls and women are allowed to express feelings more openly than are boys and men. Males are expected to be "calm and cool," as one of the school children remarked; they cannot let on how they really feel, especially if they are afraid of things. Cultural views of femininity include expressiveness, which may explain why women often seem more aware of and comfortable talking about feelings than men are.

A third persistent theme of femininity is *negative treatment by others*. According to substantial research, this still more or less goes with the territory of being female. Supporting this theme are the differential values our culture attaches to masculinity and femininity. Janeway's (1971) early findings that devaluation is built into the feminine role in our culture remains true more than two decades after she first reported it. It's not only built into cultural views, but typically is internalized by individuals, including women. Through communication with parents, teachers, peers, and others and through media and education, girls learn that boys get more respect and more opportunities. It is a lesson retained as girls

mature into womanhood. For instance, Hochschild (1983) has shown that female flight attendants are more often abused by passengers than their male peers. Further, Hochschild revealed that both male and female flight attendants understand this pattern and accept it.

The knowledge that American society values males more than females is imparted early as responses from school children make clear. Girls who imagined waking up as boys said (p. 94), "My dad would respect me more if I were a boy" and "My father would be closer because I'd be the son he always wanted." Early awareness of cultural disregard for women, coupled with ongoing elaboration of that theme, erodes the foundations of self-esteem and self-confidence. Given this, it's no wonder that girls and women generally suffer more depression and have lower self-confidence and belief in themselves than males: From birth they've been told that they *are* worth less than their male peers (French, 1992).

Another aspect of negative treatment of women is the violence inflicted on them. They are vulnerable in ways men generally are not to battering, rape, and other forms of abuse (Goldner et al., 1990; Gordon, 1988; Thompson, 1991). Tavis and Baumgartner (1983) found that even 9-year-old boys and girls realize women are subject to violence from others. Contemplating waking up female, the boys said (p. 94), "I'd have to know how to handle drunk guys and rapists" (eighth grader); "I would have to be around other girls for safety" (sixth grader); "I would always carry a gun for protection" (fourth grader). Vulnerability to violence is part of femininity in Western culture.

Be superwoman is a fourth theme emerging in cultural expectations of women, one well expressed by Bernadette. Jana's sense of exhilaration at "being able to have it all" is tempered by the realization that the idea that women *can* have it all appears to be transformed into the command that they *must* have it all. It's not enough to be just a homemaker and mother or just have a career— young women seem to feel they are expected to do it all.

Women students talk with me frequently about the tension they feel in trying to figure out how to have a full family life and a successful career. They tell me that in interviewing for jobs they have to make compromises to locate where their romantic partners have jobs. They ask me how to stay on the "fast track" in business when they foresee taking off at least some time to have one or more children. How, they ask, can I advance in business like a man when I also have to be a mother? The physical and psychological toll of trying to do it all is well documented in women (Faludi, 1991; Friedan, 1981; Hochschild, 1989), and it is growing steadily as women find that changes in the workplace are not paralleled by changes in home responsibilities. Perhaps it would be wise to remember that superwoman, like superman, is a comic character, not a viable model for real life.

In a recent issue of *Newsweek*, Sally Quinn (1993) wrote an article titled "Look Out, It's Superwoman." In it, Quinn detailed the many roles Hillary Rodham Clinton is filling, from being First Lady to being mother and fan at her daughter's soccer match, to being a top policy-maker in charge of health care

reform in the United States, to arranging for dinners at the White House, to participating in high-level policy-making meetings of cabinet members. The new "First Lady Plus," wrote Quinn, "is doing it all . . . as Superwoman, the role model for the '90s" (p. 25). Although Hillary Rodham Clinton's abilities and involvements are impressive, not every woman must be as multitalented, energetic, and capable as she is in order to be a successful and valuable individual and member of a family and society. As an individual woman she is admirable; as a single model she may be less constructive for the rising generation of women.

A final theme of femininity in the 1990s is one that reflects all of the others and the contradictions inherent in them. *There is no single meaning of feminine anymore.* Society no longer has a consensual view of who women are or what they are supposed to do, think, and be. A woman who is assertive and ambitious in a career is likely to meet with approval, disapproval, and curiosity from others. A woman who chooses to stay home while her children are young will be criticized by many women and men, envied by others, respected by some, and disregarded by still others. Currently, multiple views of femininity are vying for legitimacy. This makes being a woman very confusing. Yet it also underlines the excitement and possibilities open to women of this era to validate multiple versions of femininity. Perhaps, as Sharon suggests, there are many ways to be feminine, and we can respect all of them.

SHARON

It surely is confusing—I'll say that. My mother and I talk about women, and she tells me that she's glad she didn't have so many options. She says it was easier for her than me because she knew what she was supposed to do—marry and raise a family—and she didn't have to go through all of this identity crisis that I do. I see her point, yet I kind of like having alternatives. I know I wouldn't be happy investing my total self in a home and family. I just have to be out doing things in the world. But my best friend really wants to do that. She's marrying a guy who wants that too, so as soon as they've saved enough to be secure, they plan for her to quit work to raise a family. I know someone else who says she just flat out doesn't want to marry. She wants to be a doctor, and she doesn't think she can do that well plus take care of a home and family, so she wants to stay single. I'm still figuring out how much to try to balance things. I don't really know yet if I will or won't have kids, but it's nice to know I can choose to go either way. My mother couldn't.

Prevailing themes of femininity in North America reveal both constancy and change. Traditional expectations of attractiveness and caregiving to others persist, as does the continuing devaluation of anything considered feminine. Change, however, is signaled by expanding opportunities and less consensus on what a woman must do and be. There are different options, which may allow women with different talents, interests, and gender orientations to define themselves in diverse ways and to chart life courses that suit them as individuals.

Summary

In this chapter, we have considered formative influences on gender identity and how they are reflected later, in adult life. Beginning with Mead's symbolic interactionist theory, we saw that children are literally talked into membership in the human community. Through interaction, we learn how others see us and import their views into our self-conception so that how we view ourselves is inevitably laced with social overtones. We rely on internal dialogues to resist social views of gender or to conform to them by guiding thought, feeling, and action. Interactions with others also affect the structure of the psyche, which is the core of human identity. Because this process occurs in our first stage of life, it profoundly shapes our sense of who we are as gendered individuals. We build on the psychic understanding of gender through interaction with parents, teachers, peers, and others whose communication provides us with both direct instruction and models of femininity and masculinity.

Theory and research about gender identity have practical, personal implications. Communication about being masculine and feminine in childhood affects how we define ourselves as adults, what feelings we allow and suppress, what constraints we experience on our activities, and how we judge our basic self-worth. In offering their ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman in present-day North America, a number of young writers translated theoretical material into accounts of how cultural expectations frame and inform their concrete lives. We learned that many men think society expects them to be successful, aggressive, sexually interested and active, self-reliant, and—above all—not feminine. College women tell us being feminine today means that appearance counts more than intelligence or personality; that there are restrictions on activities ranging from professional opportunities to vulnerability to violence; that others will treat them negatively; and that, increasingly, they experience a pressure to do it all—meet traditional expectations of homemaking and mothering while simultaneously being dynamic, successful, and intensely involved in careers. Most of all, young women say there is no single, clear view of femininity, which is equally a source of confusion, on one hand, and a source of excitement about options, on the other.

Communication plays a primary role in shaping gender identity. It is through interaction with others that we come to understand how society defines masculinity and femininity and what specific individuals such as parents, teachers, and peers expect of us. Communication creates gendered identities by transforming us from biological males and females into gendered individuals.

Before we leave our discussion of influences on gender identity, it's important to reiterate the role of personal choice in defining ourselves. Socialization is not as relentless and deterministic a force as it may sometimes seem. Clearly, we are influenced by the expectations of our culture as those are communicated to us in interaction with individuals and institutions. Yet we also contribute to social understandings of gender. By reflecting on how our society views masculinity and femininity and how those expectations of gender are communicated to us, we enlarge our capacity to think critically about the desirability of cultural views in general and their appropriateness for each of us in particular.

It's also important to remember that social views of gender are not self-sustaining. They endure only to the extent that individuals and institutions persist in reproducing them through their own activities. Through our own communication and the ways that we embody masculinity and femininity, we participate in reinforcing or altering cultural views of masculinity and femininity. Shifts in social expectations of gender that emerged in students' descriptions of the meaning of manliness and womanliness clue us to the important realization that what gender means is not fixed — it changes. How it changes and what sorts of revisions it includes depend on individual and social practices that question existing views of gender and argue for altered conceptions. In the next chapter, we will consider how individuals have participated in various rhetorical movements that challenge and redefine cultural understandings of what it means to be masculine and feminine.

*D*iscussion Questions

1. How important do you think the early years (birth until 5) are in shaping gender identity? To what extent do you think your sense of being masculine or feminine was established in the first few years of your life? Has it changed since?
2. How does George Herbert Mead's concept of "self-as-object" apply to the processes of creating and refining gender identity? How does being able to see, evaluate, and reflect on yourself and your activities affect how you enact gender? Have you ever resisted cultural prescriptions for your gender? If so, how did the capacity to reflect on yourself influence your ability to depart from widely held views of gender?
3. Would you describe your ego boundaries as relatively permeable or rigid? How did you develop a sense of yourself as more connected to others or independent of them? How do your ego boundaries influence your current relationships with

others? How do permeable ones enrich life and relationships? How might they constrain and limit someone? What are the advantages of rigid ego boundaries? How might they restrict a person?

4. What kinds of toys did you receive as a child? Were you encouraged to like and play with “gender-appropriate” toys? Did you ever ask for a toy that your parents told you was not appropriate for you? Are there differences in how parents responded to men and women students’ interest in cross-gender toys?

5. What kinds of chores and responsibilities did you have growing up in your family? Were they consistent with social definitions of your gender? Did you help with outside work or activities inside the home? Did you ever resent what you were told to do and what you were told was not your job?

6. How did your parents model masculinity and femininity? Explain how parents (mother, stepmother, father, stepfather) represented what it means to be feminine and masculine. Does your own embodiment of gender reflect influences from them?

7. Answer the question at the beginning of the chapter for yourself: “If you woke up tomorrow and found you had changed into the opposite sex, how would your life be different?” How consistent are your responses with those from the Tavis and Baumgartner study discussed in this chapter?

8. Do you think the five themes of masculinity discussed in this chapter apply to men today? If you are a man, do you feel you’re expected to be successful, aggressive, sexual, self-reliant, and not feminine? How do these social expectations affect your options and your comfort as a person? If you are a woman, are these five themes ones you associate with masculinity and expect in men? How might this be limiting for your relationships?

9. Do you think the five themes of femininity identified in this chapter still apply to women? If you are a woman, do you feel you are supposed to be attractive and sensitive to others? Do you expect to be treated negatively (from being trivialized to being vulnerable to rape) because of your sex? To what extent do you feel pressured to be superwoman — be it all, do it all? If you are a man, are the themes of femininity ones that are part of your thinking and expectations about women? How might endorsing these themes limit your relationships with women?

10. Write a page or so describing what it means to you to be a man or a woman today. Specify what you like and dislike about being a woman or a man. As a class, discuss your views of femininity and masculinity and the ways in which those are comfortable and inhibiting for your lives.