

## Gender Differences Are Real

By Frank York

*It's time to root out the imposition of gendered behavior stereotypes from all aspects of our lives. Ending gender oppression means encouraging our children to experiment with alternative gender expressions...*

– Nancy Nangeroni, a transsexual activist quoted in *Transgender Warriors*

*It is fundamental that individuals have the right to define, and to redefine as their lives unfold, their own gender identity, without regard to chromosomal sex, genitalia, assigned birth sex, or initial gender role.*

– From *The International Bill of Gender Rights*, approved by the International Conference on Transgender Law and Employment Policy, 1993

Are men and women different? They're different anatomically, of course, but are they different in any other ways? Do their hormonal differences influence their behaviors and attitudes? Do they process information differently?

Feminists and gay theorists often say "no" to these questions. They maintain that the differences between men and women are mostly the result of socialization in male-dominated societies, and that it is patriarchal oppression that has relegated women to feminine gender roles. Biology is said to have little to do with abilities or sex roles in our society.

Some feminist writers actually believe that the idea of "two sexes" (male and female) is a myth. Dr. Anne Fausto-Sterling, writing in "The Five Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," says that western culture is defying nature by maintaining a "two-party sexual system," for "biologically speaking, there are many gradations running from female to male; and depending on how one calls the shots, one can argue that along the spectrum lie at least five sexes—and perhaps even more." (1)

Not content with denying the reality of two sexes, a subgroup within the gay rights movement—the "transgendered"—is attempting to normalize crossdressing and transsexualism (where the person has a sex change from male to female, or female to male). Some of these transsexuals actually prefer to live as "she-males" – having the physical characteristics of both men and women.

The effort to erase gender distinctions and redefine deviant behavior as "normal" is evident in the efforts of transgender activists to remove "Transvestic Fetishism and Gender Identity Disorder" from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition*, (DSM-IV). If transvestites are successful in removing this disorder from the diagnostic manual, they may well prevail in arguing that because their behaviors are psychiatrically "normal," their condition should be affirmed and protected by society.

Efforts to that effect are already well underway. In 1996, for example, Katherine Wilson with the Gender Identity Center of Colorado, presented a paper, "Myth, Stereotype, and Cross-Gender Identity in the DSM-IV," to the Association for Woman in Psychology, a feminist psychologist group. According to Wilson:

"The pathologicalization of transgendered people in the DSM-IV raises substantive questions of consistency, validity, and fairness and serves to enforce notions of essential gender role that denigrates all too many human beings." (2)

In effect, Wilson is saying that ~~cross-dressing and transvestism~~ are simply another normal ~~sexual-identity variant~~.

### Sexual Mythology Versus Scientific Facts

Professor Steven Goldberg, Chairman of the Department of Sociology at City College of New York, has written a book with the provocative title, *Why Men Rule – A Theory of Male Dominance*. In the book, he debunks much of the feminist mythology surrounding the issue of differences between males and females.

Goldberg maintains that although males and females are different in their genetic and hormonally-driven behavior, this does not mean that one sex is superior or inferior to another. Each gender has different strengths and weaknesses. However, he believes the neuro-endocrinological evidence is clear: The high level of testosterone in males drives them toward dominance in the world, while the lack of high levels of this hormone in women creates a natural, biological push in the direction of less dominant and more nurturing roles in society.

Goldberg writes:

"There is not, nor has there ever been, any society that even remotely failed to ~~assu-~~

ate authority and leadership in suprafamilial areas with the male. There are no borderline cases." (3)

Feminist theorists maintain that socialization is a primary reason why males have dominated the world's cultures, but Goldberg counters:

"...if socialization alone explains why societies are patriarchal, there should be any number of societies in which leadership and authority are associated with women, and one should not have to invoke examples of non-patriarchal societies that exist only in myth and literature." (4)

### Biological Differences

To say that men and women are the "same" is to deny physical reality. Child psychologist Dr. James Dobson relates a humorous story about men and women in his best-seller, *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives*. Several years ago a drug company conducted an experiment with all of the women in a small fishing village in South America. The women were all given an experimental birth control pill. They were given the same pill on the same date, and the prescription was terminated after three weeks to permit menstruation.

"That meant, of course," he says, "that every adult female in the community was experiencing premenstrual tension at the same time. The men couldn't take it. They all headed for their boats each month and remained at sea until the crisis had passed at home. They knew, even if some people didn't, that females are different from males . . . especially every twenty-eight days." (5)

Science makes plain that males and females are different from the moment of conception. As Amram Scheinfeld notes in *Your Heredity and Environment*, these differences between men and women are evident in the chromosomes which carry inherited traits from the father and mother. Humans have 23 pairs of chromosomes within each cell; twenty-two of these are alike in both males and females. But, says Scheinfeld, "...when we come to the twenty-third pair, the sexes are not the same. . . every woman has in her cells two of what we call the X chromosome. But a man has just one X—its mate being the much smaller Y."

It is the presence of this influential Y chromosome, says Scheinfeld, "that sets the machinery of sex development in motion and results in all the genetic differences that there are between a man and a woman." (6) Right down to the cellular level, males and females are different.

Sex differentiation takes place immediately as the male or female begins to develop within the womb. The sex hormones—primarily estrogen and testosterone—have a sig-

nificant impact on the behavior of males and females. Why do boys typically like to play with trucks and girls like to play with dolls? Feminists usually claim this is the result of socialization, but there is growing scientific evidence that boys and girls are greatly influenced by their respective hormones.

### Hormones Trigger Aggression or Nurture

In an ABC special, "Boys and Girls are Different," television host John Stossel described several studies conducted by universities on what appear to be innate differences between males and females. He explained the following:

At the University of Wisconsin, researchers injected testosterone into unborn female monkeys. Monkeys engage in very sex-stereotyped behavior, according to Stossel; the males are aggressive and fight, while the female monkeys typically groom and nurture the young. When the testosterone-injected females were born, they didn't groom or nurture their children. They fought and behaved like males.

In one out of 100,000 pregnancies, a genetic defect causes human female babies to be exposed to a bath of the male hormone androgen. These are CAH girls—short for a condition called congenital adrenal hyperplasia. These children are born female, but they behave like "tomboys." The male androgen influences their behaviors and desires. These girls typically play with "boy" toys more than their female counterparts.

Child psychologist Michael Lewis conducted an experiment with one-year-old boys and girls to see how they would react to being separated from their mother by a barrier. The boys tried to knock the barrier down while the girls stood passively, crying for help. (7)

### Brain Differences

Males and females are not only markedly different in the hormones that drive them, but they are also different in the way they think. The brains of men and women are actually wired differently.

George Mason University professor Robert Nadeau, the author of *S/he Brain: Science, Sexual Politics, and the Feminist Movement*, describes significant differences between male and female brains. In an essay on this subject in *The World & I*, (November 1, 1997), Nadeau observes:

"The human brain, like the human body, is sexed, and differences in the sex-specific human brain condition a wide range of behaviors that we typically associate with maleness or femaleness." (8)

Nadeau says that the sex-specific differences in the brain are located both in the primitive regions, and in the neocor-

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tex—the higher brain regions. The neocortex contains 70 percent of the neurons in the central nervous system, and it is divided into two hemispheres joined by a 200-million fiber network called the *corpus callosum*.

The left hemisphere controls language analysis and expression and body movements while the right hemisphere is responsible for spatial relationships, facial expressions, emotional stimuli, and vocal intonations.

Men and women process information differently because of differences in a portion of the brain called the splenium, which is much larger in women than in men, and has more brain-wave activity. (9) Studies have shown that problem-solving tasks in female brains are handled by both hemispheres, while the male brain only uses one hemisphere.

Differences in the ways men and women communicate is also a function of sex-specific areas of the brain. Women seem to have an enhanced awareness of “emotionally relevant details, visual cues, verbal nuances, and hidden meanings,” writes Nadeau. Similarly, while male infants are more interested in objects than in people, female infants respond more readily to the human voice than do male infants.

### Different Brains: Different Abilities

The difference between the male and female brain is not evidence of superiority or inferiority, but of specialization. Michael Levin, writing in *Feminism and Freedom*, notes that, in general, males have better spatial and math skills than females. While feminists often claim that these differences are due to social expectations—and if girls were encouraged to be mathematicians, they would have the same ability as boys—there is evidence that these differences are inherited and appear in childhood, actually increasing during puberty. On the other hand, girls tend to be more vocal than boys, are better at hearing higher frequencies, and do better than boys in reading and vocabulary tests.

Males have a vastly superior ability to visualize a three-dimensional object than do women. This gives the male his often-observed superior abilities in math and geometrical reasoning. In addition, males are better skilled in gross motor movements than are girls. (10)

### Strength and Endurance

Not only are men and women fundamentally different in the way their brains are wired, they are also vastly different in physical strength and endurance. The differences are rooted within both the genes and the hormones of males and females. Michael Levin notes that women only have 55-58 percent of the upper body strength of men and on average, are only 80 percent as strong as a man of identical weight. Sex differences also appear by the age of three in the ability of males and females to throw a ball far and accu-

rately. (11)

Feminist leaders naively believe that physical differences between males and females should not be taken into consideration when hiring women to become policemen, firemen, or combat soldiers. Yet as Levin points out, females simply do not have the strength or endurance necessary to be effective combat soldiers. Yet in order to accommodate women who desire to be combat soldiers, the military has designed less stressful physical exercises and standards which would allow them to participate in roles for which they have sought inclusion.

### Facing Reality

Contrary to the wishful thinking of feminists, bisexuals, and transsexuals, there are profound differences between males and females—and those differences are programmed within the DNA from the moment of conception. The brains of females and males are clearly “sexed,” and testosterone and estrogen are the juices that augment maleness and femaleness.

To be sure, gender-distorting prenatal abnormalities do affect some individuals, and may increase the likelihood that such an afflicted person will later self-identify as transgendered or transsexual (and in some cases, homosexual).

But barring such unfortunate developmental errors—which we should not normalize as if they were *not* disruptions in normal growth and development—the simple truth remains: *maleness and femaleness are innate and integral parts of our human design.* ■

### Endnotes

1. Leslie Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors*, Beacon Press: Boston, Massachusetts, 1996, p. 103.
2. Katherine Wilson, “Myth, Stereotype, and Cross-Gender Identity in the DSM-IV,” 1996, 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Feminist Psychology Conference, Portland, Oregon, 1996, Internet posting.
3. Steven Goldberg, *The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, Open Court, Peru, Illinois, 1993, p. 15.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
5. James Dobson, *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives*, Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas, 1991, p. 181.
6. Amram Scheinfeld, *Your Heredity and Environment*, J. B. Lippincott, New York, 1965, p. 43.
7. John Stossel, “Boys & Girls Are Different: Men, Women, and the Sex Difference,” ABC News Special, January 17, 1998, transcript from the Internet, The Electric Library.
8. Robert Nadeau, “Brain Sex and the Language of Love,” *The World & I*, Nov. 1, 1997, p. 330.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Michael Levin, *Feminism and Freedom*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1988, pp. 82, 88.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 210.