

Gender identity paper

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Gender Identity Paper Melanie Johnson University of Phoenix PSY/340

December 2, 2012 Dr. W. Scott Benson Gender Identity Hormones play a crucial part in the determination of gender and development of male or female genitalia of an embryo. The timing of the release of these hormones is also crucial. There are two ways hormones influence sex; (1) by influencing the development from conception to sexual maturity of anatomical, physiological, and behavioral characteristics that distinguish males and females, (2) by activating the reproduction-related behavior of sexually mature adults (Pinel, 2009).

This paper will attempt to discuss some of the effects hormones, biological, and environmental factors have on an individual's sexuality. When a baby is born usually the first statement out of the doctor's mouth is "it is a boy" or "it is a girl". Society has traditionally believed one is born either male or female. If one is born male he is expected to be masculine, be attracted to women, and to pursue hobbies and behaviors considered to be manly. If one is born female she is expected to be feminine, to be attracted to men, and to pursue hobbies and behaviors considered to be feminine.

Occasionally an individual may be born with nonconforming gender identity. What this means is an individual may be born with male or female genitalia but actually have interest and behaviors of the opposite sex. For individuals with this conflicting belief life may be extremely painful. Society deems one either male or female and has developed certain schemas for each gender. However one's emotional gender identity may be contrary to what society has deemed the individual. A single sperm cell which fertilizes an ovum, or egg, is called a zygote.

A zygote contains all the information essential for the normal growth of a complete adult organism in its natural environment (Pinel, 2009). The zygote contains 23 pairs of chromosomes; half from the producer of the sperm and half from the producer of the egg. The cells of females only have the X chromosome, the cells of males have X and Y chromosomes; this means the male is responsible for the sex of the zygote (Pinel, 2009). A male zygote will have X and Y chromosomes while a female zygote will have only X chromosomes. Males and females produce the same hormones, androgens and estrogens, in different amounts.

Males produce more testosterone, which is the most common androgen, and females produce more estradiol, which is the most common estrogen. Around the sixth week of gestation the Y chromosome of the male triggers the Sry protein which causes the primordial gonad to develop into a testis; in the absence of the Sry protein the primordial gonads automatically develop into ovaries (Pinel, 2009). Throughout the gestation period various other hormones are released to prompt the development of male or female genitalia. On occasion if the embryo is exposed to conflicting hormones there may be genital abnormalities.

With the advances in medical technology it is possible for expectant parents to identify the sex of their unborn child. Once sex has been determined parents begin purchasing gender specific clothes, toys, and nursery items. This innocent act of the expectant parents begins the gender identity of an unborn child (Eliza, 2011). Traditional families, a mother, a father, and one or more children, is fast becoming a rarity in today's society. Modern families may consist of two mothers, two fathers, a single parent male or female, or

perhaps a grandparent. The environment in which a child is reared has some bearing on his or her sexual preference.

A child reared in a traditional family, by grandparents, or perhaps by a single heterosexual parent may be encouraged to participate in gender specific play and to conform to gender specific roles. These children may also be corrected or disciplined when engaging in play or behaviors perceived to be in conflict with his or her gender. Whereas a child reared in a homosexual environment may be allowed or encouraged to explore his or her emotions of sexuality. Homosexuality has become more prevalent in today's society; this could be a result in society's tolerance of homosexuality and laws passed to ensure the equal treatment of homosexuals.

The author tends to believe society's tolerance of homosexuality has encouraged more individuals to express their homosexual tendencies. In times of the ancient Greek homosexuality and bisexuality were considered natural and normal. The increase in the popularity of Christianity was one of the major factors which affected society's view of homosexuality. Christians considered homosexuality a sin and condemned the practice of homosexuality. However, the increase in gay rights and the implementation of policies which force society to tolerate homosexuality, such as laws against discrimination, has changed the view of homosexuality.

Society has taken the subject of homosexuality away from being a moral issue and turned it into a personal preference. Through the readings of this course it is the author's belief homosexuality is both a matter of choice and also an issue of biological abnormalities. The case studies found within the text indicate a stronger correlation between hormones and sexual

preference. The case of the Twin Who Lost His Penis indicated the individual's sexuality was imprinted from early childhood. The loss of his penis and his being forced to be raised as a girl had no bearing on his male tendencies.

Despite the fact he was forced to live like a girl he always “felt” like a boy. It is the opinion of the author biological factors play a stronger role in determining one's sexuality. Environmental factors such as society's view of homosexuality have also played an important role in the acceptance of such behavior. Through the ages society has dictated the types of behaviors and actions which are acceptable and “normal”. A generation ago smoking was acceptable and homosexuality was considered abnormal. Today's society says smoking is unacceptable and homosexuality is normal.

It is not the author's intention to pass judgment only to direct attention to the changes society has made throughout history. One may only speculate what changes the future holds. References Eliza, A. D. , Maria, R. S. , & Amy, L. S. (2011). Childhood gender identity . . . disorder? developmental, cultural, and diagnostic concerns. *Journal of Counseling and Development* : JCD, 89(3), 360-366. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/873035547?accountid=35812> Pinel, J. (2009). *Biopsychology*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.