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2008-06-17

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Hegemonic Preservation of Heteronormativity:

Experiences of Gender in Boyhood

by

Steven L. Rush

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

NURSING

in the

GRADUATE DIVISION

of the

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN FRANCISCO

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by
Steven L. Rush

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is no way possible that the accomplishment represented by this dissertation could have been completed solely by myself. So many others have given me support and the necessary advice, critique and tools in which to realize this dream. I first want to give thanks to the eleven boys for welcoming me into their worlds. Their trust, candor, humor, and at times, sadness, were shared with me and for that I am eternally grateful. I respect their voices and hope I have adequately represented them.

I would like to acknowledge the expertise and guidance of my dissertation committee. Dr. Christine Kennedy served as my advisor and committee chair and was the first to encourage and support my entry into the doctoral program at UCSF. Her incredible insight regarding the developmental aspects of school age children has been amazing. I welcome the transition of our relationship from that of faculty/student to one of colleagues. Dr. Catherine Chesla served as my qualifying exam chair. Her methodological expertise was truly invaluable. She pushed me to analyze and interpret the data at a level I could not have done alone; allowing the lived experiences of the boys to be articulated and for their stories to be heard. Dr. Susan Kools' expertise in qualitative methods coupled with her understanding of pediatric concerns served as a grounding force in this work. Her personal support and belief in this work, and me, gave me inspiration to continue. And the final member of this committee, Dr. Stephen Russell offered a point of view only a sociologist could, often times challenging me into thinking of things in a fresh and broader way.

There were others who took part in this project in a less direct, but in no way less important, manner. My doctoral study group helped me develop an understanding of

interpretive phenomenology. Many group dinners were held where we debated the philosophical underpinnings of *Dasein*, *zuhanden*, and many other questions of “truth”, ontology, and methodology. But more importantly than the intellectual support I found from this group was the emotional support. And for that I am forever thankful to Drs. Garrett Chan, Anne Hughes, and Mijung Park.

Another individual provided immense interpretive assistance, Dr. Maria Gudmundsdottir. Maria has a real gift with interpretation, often times offering insight that literally made me tearful. I cherish the interpretive meetings we shared.

Other individuals, far too many to mention really, were understanding of the challenges I encountered while undergoing this journey. A fellow student, Dr. Kim Baltzell was a true friend, always believing in me. Two others deserve special mention. Jeff Kilmer, Director of Student Affairs at UCSF has been source of unwavering support from my very first day in graduate school. Dr. Audrey Berman, Dean of the School of Nursing at Samuel Merritt College (SMC) has been unbelievably supportive of my juggling graduate work, family life, and my full time teaching position at SMC. She is my colleague and my friend.

I received significant financial support while at UCSF: Cota-Robles scholarship, Johnson and Johnson Promise of Nursing scholarship, T32 training grant, UCSF Alpha Eta Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau Research Award, UCSF Graduate Student Research Award and Nurse Faculty Loan Program.

I must give thanks to my incredible family. When I was 15 years old, my swim coach, Dr. Diane McNeilly saw things in me I had forgotten I possessed. A very troubled family life made me desperate for a living situation that would reawaken the self

confidence and intellectual curiosity I demonstrated as a younger child. She became my foster mother, my support, and my inspiration. She has never faltered in those roles, and today she is not only my mother, but a true friend.

And finally I want to acknowledge, as well as dedicate this dissertation to, my partner Migdiel Hiram Moretta and our beautiful son Maximo. Migdiel entered my life at a point when I did not think I could finish this work. His quiet and gentle demeanor was the strength that I needed to complete this marathon. He has been an incredible partner, a caring and loving papi, and is truly my best friend. He is my rock. And for Maximo, you were too young to understand why daddy had to spend many days writing in the library instead of playing at the park with you. But someday, perhaps during a quiet walk in the park, I will explain to you how you and papi served as my greatest inspiration.

ABSTRACT

Hegemonic Preservation of Heteronormativity: Experiences of Gender in Boyhood

Steven L. Rush

Boyhood gender is a complex and often times misunderstood phenomenon. Difficult to measure and describe it is frequently, but incorrectly, equated with biological sex and thus portrayed as a dichotomous positioning of male or female. Few scientific inquiries have sought to understand the complex interplay of social, biological, emotional and developmental influences on gender behavior from discussions with boys themselves. The purpose of this interpretive study was to describe the meaning and experiences of gender in boys. First person, in depth individual interviews as well as field notes were the primary data sources. Eleven boys between the ages of eight and ten participated in this study. These boys understood gender by describing what boys do; primarily acts of physicality such as sports and games. Although they understood gender as a process influenced by others (parents and teachers) peers were the most salient. They presented themselves as active, agentic participants in how they come to learn about and subsequently embody gender. Rituals of gender behavior maintenance were identified in this study. Rituals of confirmation, punitive rituals, pollution rituals, and enforcement rituals all served as methods of promoting and enforcing boyhood gender. The results support boys who are typical in gender presentation experienced felt pressure to maintain conforming gender behavior and that boys who were atypical in gender presentation also experienced felt pressure to maintain conforming gender behavior. Both groups experienced felt pressure to avoid nonconforming behavior. Boys atypical in gender presentation experienced distress, both in maintaining conforming behavior and avoiding nonconforming behavior; whereas boys typical in gender presentation did not. Understanding the complex worlds of boys and gender is essential for providing holistic care, as well as creating safe and supportive healthcare environments.

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Chapter One

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

One of the most salient and important social categories throughout one's life is gender. Studies of children's gender have been a popular area of research since Kohlberg's now seminal work on the moral underpinnings of gender development (Kohlberg 1966). Years of research have documented that infants attend to gender, toddlers are able to correctly identify themselves and others on the basis of gender, and gender stereotypes guide people's behavior from preschool to adulthood. In the past 20 years these studies have become more sophisticated with many researchers arguing that previous gender work, although helpful, was limited in scope. Even with the apparent abandonment of strongly held essentialist and biological beliefs about the relationships of sex and gender in the 1980's, social constructionists argued that many socialization theories of gender development ignored the active, or agentic, role children take in the creation of their world.

Scope of Chapter

The purposes of this chapter are to: 1) examine and review the extant and relevant literature as it pertains to gender development of middle school, 8-10 year old boys, 2) evaluate this literature as it informs the guiding concepts of current models and theories of gender, 3) review the research as it pertains to both the determinants or antecedents of gender identity and the multi-dimensional aspects of gender, 3) perform a critical appraisal of this body of research on gender, 4) synthesize results of the reviewed literature in an effort to identify gaps in knowledge, and finally, 5) discuss the

applicability of extant research to my current area of research as a possible method for addressing these gaps in knowledge.

Definition of Terms

Contemporary guidelines for the use of the terms sex and gender recommend that the word sex be used to signify biological maleness or femaleness and that the word gender be used to refer to psychological or sociological phenomena stereotypically associated with males or females (Association 1994). Under this definition, Kohlberg's earlier work on gender constancy should really be called sex constancy (Bem 1989; Ruble and Martin 1998). For the purpose of this paper, the current definitions of sex and gender as defined by the American Psychiatric Association will be used. However, in order to accurately represent the extant literature, the terms sex and gender shall be reported in the researchers own words.

The Current Separation of Sex and Gender

It is almost universally accepted that sex is biologically determined. With the exception of noted theorist Judith Butler (1990; 1993) who proposes that sex is a social construct, most researchers agree that little debate remains regarding the biological determinants of sex. Studies of the past three decades, many of which will be reviewed in this paper, have established the social influence and determination of gender. There remains some minor debate over the biological determinants of gender, but the preponderance of literature demonstrates the well-established relationship between social influences and gender development. "While all mental phenomena must have an ultimate biological substrate..." (Byne 1997) it is not the aim of this dissertation to revisit this issue but to acknowledge the faint influence it holds in current research.

Therefore most of the literature reviewed in this paper could be broadly categorized as social environmentalism or social constructivist in nature. Social environmentalism places emphasis on environmental factors that model and teach socially held values, practices, and beliefs regarding gender behaviors. Social constructivists posit that children are not mere sponges absorbing cues from society, but in addition to these social cues, children are active creators of their own gender behaviors (Gelman, Taylor et al. 2004). Within both social constructionism and social environmentalism it is important to examine the messages children receive about gender. This analysis of the literature reviews the different categories researchers have examined.

Various Determinants of Gender

In what is considered a groundbreaking study, Thorne (1993) argued that a top-down, or parent-child approach to research on children ignored the agentic qualities of the child. Thorne also maintained that many developmental theories were limited because they ignore group and contextual factors while accentuating “the constitution and unfolding of *individuals* as boys or girls” (Thorne 1993). Thorne’s study examined the ways in which children actively construct gender in the specific social contexts of the classroom and playground. Thorne’s conceptualization of “gender play” opened many doors for further research examining various social contexts as well as other determinants of gender.

In addition to the critique that gender had been examined in isolated, singular social contexts and via individual determinants, researchers of the 1980’s and 1990’s began to rethink the cognitive aspects of gender. Kohlberg’s (1966) landmark discussion of gender knowledge (apparent when most children 2 to 3 years of age can say “I am a

boy”, or “I am a girl”), and gender permanency (evidenced by a 6 to 7 year old’s ability to state that his or her gender will remain constant throughout life irregardless of phenotypic changes such as clothing or hair length) were essentially based on only one determinant; cognition (Zucker, Bradley et al. 1999). Kohlberg maintained that gender knowledge and gender permanency were responsible for gender identity development in children. The child’s eventual understanding of gender permanency is dependent on the development of concrete-operational thought as described by Piaget (1968). Several researchers and theorists have since bolstered Kohlberg’s work in the social-cognitive aspects of gender identity formation, most notably Bandura and Bussey (1992; 1999) as well as Martin and Ruble et al (2002). While extremely important in their scope and contribution to the understanding of childhood gender, these theorists have traditionally viewed cognitive development as the primary determinant of gender. Several contemporary researchers have begun to challenge these long held assumptions by studying other determinants as equally important constructs of gender.

Cognitive Determinants and Gender Schema Theory

Building on Kohlberg’s (1966) seminal work on the cognitive determinants of gender, several other researchers have focused on cognition as it relates to gender development (Fagot, Leinbach et al. 1986; Bussey and Bandura 1992; Moller and Serbin 1996; Bussey and Bandura 1999; O'Brien, Peyton et al. 2000; Martin, Ruble et al. 2002; Tenenbaum and Leaper 2002). This developmental and sequential appraisal of childhood gender development has been confirmed repeatedly finding nearly all children attain gender identity, or the ability to correctly state either, “I am a boy” or “I am a girl” by the age of three and subsequently attain gender constancy, “I will remain a girl” or “I will

remain a boy” by the age of seven. Therefore beyond this age, this cognitive determinant of gender identity couldn’t account for within-sex differences in other variables, such as adjustment and behavior. Researchers proposed that a child’s gender schema was a better explanatory model for gender development (Martin and Halverson 1981; Martin and Halverson 1983; Carter and Levy 1988; Martin 1993; Martin, Ruble et al. 2002).

Gender schema theory as developed by Bem (1981) is very similar to cognitive development theory but is different in two significant ways. First, the demonstration of complete gender constancy is not necessary to prompt and guide children’s gender-linked behavior. Several researchers have demonstrated that children under the age of six or seven, when gender constancy is established, are clearly able to demonstrate sex-typed behavior. Second, a child’s information processing functions of the schema are given considerable more emphasis than in Kohlberg’s theory (Martin and Halverson 1981; Bem 1989). Gender schema theory maintains that it is the saliency of the schema that motivates a child to adopt and model certain sex-typed behaviors. A child develops an overall gender schematization based on several different important, or salient, concepts. For example, a young boy who does not excel in sports may excel in math in order to balance his overall gender schema and maintain gender typicality. However, this model of gender development has been problematic, in that findings have been inconsistent across different measures of gender schematization (Carter and Levy 1988; Signorella 1993). Originally proposing that gender knowledge, and not gender constancy, was the main determinant of children’s gender development, gender schema theory was beginning to be challenged for its lack of explanatory utility. Signorella demonstrated that most children are aware of gender stereotypes but vary in their gender-typed

behavior. This apparent disconnect between gender-linked knowledge and gender-linked conduct is a weakness of gender schema theory. Other dimensions of gender development must be responsible for gender development and identity.

Social Cognitive Theory

A more multi-determinant approach was proposed by Bussey and Bandura (1992; 1999) in the social cognitive theory of gender development. Bridging the theoretical underpinnings of cognition theorists such as Piaget and Kohlberg with those of social theorists, Bussey and Bandura proposed that it is the social experiences and exposure to gender-related cues that are stronger antecedents to children's gender development. In social cognitive theory, a child's maturing cognitive abilities are but one aspect involved in their gender development. Social influences such as parents, peers, schools, mass media and cultural institutions and norms all play an important role in a child's gender development (Bussey and Bandura 1992). An important tenet of social cognitive theory of gender development is that three primary constructs account for a child's gender development. This "triadic reciprocal causation" consists of social environment, children's knowledge, and their increasingly self-regulatory behavior which all interact to produce gender development and identity.

In their 1992 study, 40 children between the ages of 2.5 to 4.7 years (mean age 3.5 years) from predominantly middle class families were measured on four constructs; gender conception, gender-linked self-evaluative standards, gender linked behavior and, evaluative social reactions.

Gender conception – The children’s level of gender conception was assessed from their knowledge of three components that most children master in the following sequence: 1) gender identity, or the ability to correctly identify one’s own as well others gender, 2) gender stability, or the knowledge that gender remains invariant across time, and 3) gender constancy, or the knowledge that gender remains the same across situations.

Gender-linked self-evaluative standards – Each child was brought to a testing room where the researcher told the child they were helping a friend set up a toy store. The children were trained to rate how they would feel playing with certain toys that were either masculine or feminine in nature: dump truck (highly masculine), robot (moderately masculine), xylophone (neutral), kitchen set (moderately feminine), and baby doll (highly feminine).

Gender linked behavior – In this portion of the research, the child was left alone in a room with the same toys, but told he or she could play with any of them they wished. The children were observed through a one-way mirror and their toy preference was recorded.

Evaluative social reactions – Children watched video clips with the researchers that depicted 7 year olds playing with cross sex-typed toys. In the video a boy was shown playing with a baby doll, feeding it and changing its diapers. The video also showed a girl playing with a dump truck. The children were asked first, “What would this girl’s/boy’s *friends* think about her/him playing with this doll/truck?” They were then asked “What *do you* think...”

Bussey and Bandura demonstrated that the correlation between self-regulating behavior and gender-linked behavior increased with age (three years of age versus four years of age). The researchers report that the overall findings of this study reveal that from an early age children adopt traditional patterns of gender-typed behavior and these behaviors are influenced by children's age dependant knowledge of the social sanctions against cross sex-typed behavior as well as the social approval associated with stereotypical sex-typed behavior. These self-evaluative standards provide the basis for gender-linked behavior and regulate conduct through anticipatory self-sanctions. That is, children model and sanction their own behavior based on the external, or social, sanctions they are exposed to.

Despite the claim in Western culture of gender egalitarianism, the children in this study appear as stereotypically sex-typed as ever. The identification of self-evaluative behavior as an important correlate to gender linked behavior supports a need for research that seeks to identify the factors that influence the self-evaluative behavior and subsequently, self-regulative behavior. These diverse sources of social influence include such things as parents, teachers, peers, and media.

An additional weakness of this study is that all subjects were of middle class socioeconomic status. Also, no mention of ethnicity of subjects is made in the report. I find questionable as well the fact that the three experimenters were female. If the experimenters were male, or both male and female, would the children have responded differently? Considerable literature exists supporting the notion that children often respond the way they *think* they should in observational experiments. Although the researchers went to great lengths in training the children to rate their reactions to limit

this bias, the inherent power imbalance between children and adults could possibly skew the results.

Parental Influence as a Determinant of Gender Development

Bohan (1993) states, “among the most forceful of factors that shape our constructions of knowledge are the modes of discourse by which we exchange our perceptions and descriptions of reality” and that adults of each generation “pass on to each new generation of children, by means of teaching and example, the culture of gender – beliefs, myths, and rules of sex-appropriate behavior – that pervade the particular society in which children are growing up” (Gelman, Taylor et al. 2004). A large number of researchers have focused on the parental determinants of gender behavior (McCreary 1994; Turner and Gervai 1995; Valentine 1997; Lindsey and Mize 2001; Tenenbaum and Leaper 2002; Gelman, Taylor et al. 2004).

Unfortunately, many studies aimed at uncovering a relationship between parental behavior and their children’s gender behavior are inconclusive (Maccoby 1988; Lytton and Romney 1991; Gelman, Taylor et al. 2004) and show either conflicting findings when compared to other studies, or findings that are statistically insignificant. In their meta-analysis of the extant literature regarding the relationship between parental behavior and children’s gender development, Lytton and Romney (1991) conclude that studies continued to yield conflicting findings. However, one finding they found consistent across studies was that parents reinforce gender-typed play activities and toy choices, more so for boys than girls. Whereas some studies (Fagot, Leinbach et al. 1986; Moller and Serbin 1996) hypothesize that sex-typed toy preference is not solely the result of

parental influence, Lytton and Romney (1991) found parental reinforcement to be a statistically significant correlate of children's sex-typed behavior.

Most of the parent/child gender work has focused on parents' behavior as opposed to a parent's own gender schema and its influence on the gender schema of the child. One's gender schema is an internalized set of beliefs, self-concepts, stereotypes and attitudes regarding gender compiled from the larger society's values, beliefs, and practices. A meta-analysis of 43 studies with 48 different samples (total $n=10,193$) showed a small but meaningful effect size ($r = .16$) indicating a significant and positive correlation between a parent and his or her child's gender schemas (Tenenbaum and Leaper 2002). That is, parents with more traditional gender schemas were more likely than parents with nontraditional gender schemas to have children with gender-typed cognitions and sex-typed play behavior. Measures of parent's gender schemas were based on paper and pencil self-evaluative measures including, Spence and Helmreich Personal Attributes Scale (PAQ), Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), Spence and Helmreich Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS), Attitudes Toward Feminism scale, and Physical Stereotyping Index.

These results should be cautiously evaluated. No longitudinal studies were included, and therefore there is no causal link between parental gender beliefs and behavior and a child's gender socialization. Also, there must be many other moderating and mediating factors that influence a child's gender socialization as it relates to parental influence since prior studies have been unable to link a parents' gender beliefs with their own behaviors (Weitzman, Birns et al. 1985). These additional factors were not

considered in this meta-analysis. And a final critique of this study is that of the 10, 193 children included in this meta-analysis, “most” were white (as reported by authors).

Teachers, as Determinants of Gender Development

Multiple studies on peer play among children reveal a robust finding: when boys and girls have a choice of playmates, they are more likely to separate than to integrate (Whiting and Edwards 1988; Tyack and Hansot 1990). In her ethnographic study of gender behavior in schools, Thorne (1993) concludes that strict institutional structures create and preserve this segregation. Thorne studied two separate groups of middle school children (n=400 in each school). She found that all aspects of school life encouraged sex segregation from different assignments for boys versus girls, different activities during physical education classes (with all-boy and all-girl teams being a common finding), and even greater segregation during recess. In an argument against a biological determinism belief that children “naturally” segregate by sex, Thorne presents her findings that the children she studied reported that outside of school, they often engaged in mixed-sex activities such as soccer, or boys playing with girls. These findings are supported by other studies which found gender segregation more extensive in schools than in other social settings and a child’s neighborhood (Ellis, Rogoff et al. 1981; Martin 2003).

Peers and Agency of Self as Determinants of Gender Development

Described as more a social phenomenon than an individual trait, sex segregation at schools may be more than the result of institutional structure. Thorne (1993) and others maintain that children themselves are creators of their own gender development (Thorne 1993; Owen Blakemore 2003). In the Owen Blakemore study of 3-11 year old children in

a midsized Midwestern school, children were shown to be knowledgeable regarding norms of gender behavior, and more importantly, knowledgeable of gender norm violations. Specifically, findings revealed that violations concerning being a parent of the other gender were devalued by both boys and girls; that is the concept of a boy being a mommy or a girl being a daddy. Also, boys with feminine attributes such as hairstyles or clothing were evaluated more negatively than girls with masculine attributes. This finding in particular (transgressions of boys being more devalued than those of girls) is widely supported by other research (Costrich, Feinstein et al. 1974; Carter and McCloskey 1984; Feinman 1984; Jackson and Sullivan 1990; Martin 1990; Moller, Hymel et al. 1992; Moller and Serbin 1996). However, Owen Blakemore reported a surprise finding. Neither toy choice violations nor occupation choice violations were devalued by either boys or girls. The authors do not offer an explanation for this unexpected finding. It may be that both the toy choices and occupations were not strongly gender stereotypical in today's society. The toy choice violations were playing with a kitchen for boys and playing with cars for girls. The occupation choice violations were girl's becoming a doctor and boys becoming nurses, although girls becoming a doctor was more positively evaluated, neither was negatively evaluated.

Teachers are not necessarily the promoters of egalitarian gender roles. In her ethnographic study Martin (2003) demonstrated that as early as preschool children are gendered by their teachers in the control (for girls) of their bodies or lack of control (for boys). Martin's ethnographic study took place in a Midwestern city across five preschool classrooms. A total of 112 children and 14 different teachers were observed. Martin and an assistant spent three days a week over eight months collecting data. Martin found that

teachers acted to control girl's bodies and voice much more frequently than the boy students. Girls were told to be quiet, or to use a "nicer" voice approximately three times more often than boys, even though the boy's play was frequently noisier than the girls. The researcher also noted non-verbal cues from teachers directed at gendering the bodies and actions of girls. These include disapproving glances to girls if they were sitting on the floor with their legs spread, while the boys would not be corrected for the same behavior. Another finding was that by age five, the girls were controlling their bodies frequently without the involvement of teachers. This finding supports the work of Thorne (1993) that found that children create, shape and police the borders of gender. And because these acts appear active and agentic, they appear natural. Their appearance is so subtle, so micro in practice; they are interpreted as essential, or natural.

Media as a Determinant of Gender Development

Boys are doctors; Girls are nurses

Boys are football players; Girls are cheerleaders

Boys invent things; Girls use the things boys invent

Boys fix things; Girls need things fixed

Boys are presidents, Girls are first ladies

*"I'm Glad I'm a Boy, I'm Glad I'm a Girl" – children's book
published in 1970 (Darrow 1970) as cited in (Gelman, Taylor et al. 2004)*

Children spend more time watching television than they do in any other activity other than sleeping (Foundation 1999). In this Kaiser study, children were found, on average, to spend 6 ½ hours per day engaged in media, with the largest time, 2 ½ hours, being television. Media exposure begins quite early – average daily media exposure among 2-4 year-olds is well over 4 hours – and increases rapidly from the preschool

years onward. Media exposure peaks at just over 8 hours daily around 12 or 13 years of age, just before kids enter middle school or junior high school. Then, as they face the academic and social demands of these new school settings, overall media use and exposure begins to decline a bit, and the mix of media making up the total media diet changes somewhat. Clearly, media is an important and influential force in the lives of American children.

A 1990 study revealed a trend toward a more equitable representation of gender roles in adult (prime-time) television, and subsequently a decrease in stereotypical sex-roles (Davis 1990). However a more recent study showed that children's programming continues to feature primarily male characters designed to appeal to male audiences (Thompson and Zerbinos 1997) and also continues to present the gender stereotypes portrayed in Darrow's now infamous children's book. In Thompson and Zerbinos' study, 175 children's cartoon shows revealed that major male characters outnumbered major female characters 3 to 1, and minor male characters outnumbered minor female characters 5 to 1. This study also revealed that male cartoon characters were significantly more likely to show ingenuity, to use aggression, to show leadership, to express opinions, and to show anger. The female cartoon characters were more likely to show affection, and to request protection. These stereotyped portrayals in children's animation have attracted concern and attention from some researchers who maintain that the multiple images of sex stereotyping children are exposed to on television promote gender-role stereotyping, especially for younger children under five years of age (Signorelli 1990). Perhaps more concerning to both researchers and the public at large is that a majority of social science research reports that violent portrayals of men in the media is resulting in a

corresponding increase of violence among children as a means to solve problems (Gunter 1994) as cited in (Oliver and Green 2001).

In their study examining gender based responses to typically male animation versus typically female animation, Oliver and Green (2001) showed 176 children (96 males and 80 females) between the ages of three and nine clips from two animated series; *Beauty and the Beast* and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. The researchers hypothesized that both girl and boy viewers would describe *Beauty and the Beast* as a prototypical female movie and *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* as a prototypical male movie. Other hypothesis tested were that boys would express greater enjoyment and less fear from watching an action scene than would females and, girls would express greater enjoyment and sadness from watching a sad scene than would boys.

The study found that overall there is a marked gender difference among children in emotional response to animated media with the greatest difference being that girls expressed greater sadness while watching a sad scene. These children also overwhelmingly described *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* as a boy cartoon and *Beauty and the Beast* as a girl cartoon. An unexpected finding was although *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* was identified by both boys and girls as a boy cartoon, and, enjoyed more by boys, *Beauty and the Beast* was identified by both boys and girls as a girl film but enjoyed equally by both genders. Perhaps *Beauty and the Beast* is not as female gender prototypical as the male gender prototypical movie, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* and should be considered a potential weakness of this study design. After all, *Beauty and the Beast* has a very masculine, typically male character in the Beast. If another film such as *Cinderella* was shown it might have been viewed as more prototypically female.

Other animated television series geared toward children purportedly have attempted to take a more egalitarian approach to the representation of gender. Both *Barney & Friends* and *Teletubbies* have been described as “nearly a model of what preschool programs should be” (Drs. Jerome and Dorothy Singer, Yale University children’s television researchers), as cited in (Powell and Abels 2002). Powel and Abels evaluated 10 episodes of Teletubbies and Barney & Friends originally aired in 1999 and through content analysis identified eight themes pertaining to gender; gender representation, leadership, appearance, gendered roles, occupations, activity, play roles, and social skills. Their findings would suggest that “progressive” children’s television programming may not be as egalitarian as it is purported to be.

Gender representation - Although Barney is a male star in Barney & Friends, both shows displayed an equal number of males and females.

Leadership – In *Teletubbies*, the male Teletubbie, Tinky Winky leads all activities, although he displays many female stereotyped behaviors such as caring and holding a bag or “purse”. In *Barney & Friends*, Barney leads all activities.

Appearance – In the *Teletubbies*, the male characters Tinky-Winky and Dipsy wear traditionally male dark colors, and the female characters Laa-Laa and Po wear traditionally bright female colors. Both Tinky Winky and Dipsy have deep voices, and Laa-Laa and Po have high pitched voices. Interestingly, when the characters sit, a corresponding high and low tone beeps from their bottoms. Real life videos shown during the show portray obviously gendered stereotypes such as a mother curling her daughter’s hair and a man driving a bulldozer or building a wall. On *Barney & Friends*, the gendered appearance is even more obvious. Miss Etta, a large female bird character wears pearls,

Stella the storyteller wears dresses, and the real life girls on the show usually are wearing pinks and yellows, while the boys are wearing blue and green.

Gendered roles – Other than Tinky Winky carrying a purse, gendered roles are frequently displayed on *Teletubbies*. Girls and their moms are shown braiding hair, and engaging in domestic activities such as washing dishes, and cooking. Boys and their fathers are shown washing a car, building a rock wall while the mother watches passively. Gendered roles are also prevalent in *Barney & Friends*. Scooter, a boy squirrel and BJ, a boy dragon are portrayed as mischievous, active, enjoying playing boy games. BJ Loves sports, and is always shown wearing a baseball cap. He is also shown protecting his sister, Baby Bop, who in turn is portrayed as silly, excitable, and “giddy”. Baby Bop wears a bright pink bow and often is seen pretending to be a female stereotypical character such as a ballerina, princess. The official Barney Website describes baby Bop as “ultra-feminine” and that she loves what all three year old girls love: tea parties, playing make-believe and dressing up.

Occupations – Only one episode of the *Teletubbies* showed a real life video portraying an occupation. This video showed a male, professional basketball player. *Barney & Friends* showed women as storytellers, men as mail carriers, aunts and mothers as home makers, and men as construction workers, truck drivers and architects.

Activity – *Teletubbies* almost always show all characters as cooperative and taking turns engaging in the same activity. However, many episodes were found to show the girls engaged in passive activity such as giggling and eating while watching the boys running and being active. *Barney & Friends* also shows all the children in cooperative play. But the girls are more likely to be shown assisting or helping the boys complete

projects or build things. In one episode, a boy is shown making lemonade, a stereotypically female activity. Scooter, the male squirrel, attempts to help, but only makes the lemonade worse. It is only when Miss Etta intervenes that the lemonade is made correctly.

Play roles – *Teletubbies* revealed no differences of play roles, with boys dancing with boys and girls dancing with girls. The characters on *Barney & Friends* are traditionally heterosexual in that boys and girls are coupled off for activities such as dancing and singing. In one *Barney & Friends* episode, the girls prepare a pretend picnic, carrying the picnic basket, spreading the blanket, and serving the food to the boys who attend the picnic that was prepared for them.

Social skills – *Teletubbies* show equality in social skills with all characters showing love and affection, sharing, and taking turns. *Barney & Friends* is also, overall egalitarian in its display of gendered social skills, showing both boys and girls hugging, sharing, and being nice to each other. However, girls were observed to smile, hug, and touch each other more than the boys.

Researchers Powell and Abels found gendered messages in both animated series, *Teletubbies* and *Barney & Friends*. The females were portrayed as followers rather than leaders, feminine, and were underrepresented in occupations and social roles and activities whereas males were shown as leaders and directors of action. Five of the eight themes identified were shown to be significantly gendered; leadership, appearance, gendered roles, occupations, and play roles. These gendered stereotypes are *potential* influences on children as young as one year of age, since it is the one to four year old that is targeted by the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) with its television show,

Teletubbies. It should be noted that these *potential* influences are the hypothesis of the researchers, as children were not involved in this research in any way. They were not asked to evaluate the videos or discuss their own appraisal of stereotypical gender portrayals. I am not suggesting that children would not confirm the researcher's finding, but rather, merely highlighting that children's voice is not represented.

Video games as an influence on older boys gender roles – Much of the emerging research regarding media and school age boys has focused on media games; particularly video games that are violent. The Journal of Adolescence dedicated an entire volume on the relationship between violent video games and childhood aggressive behavior. Douglas Gentile, director of research at the National Institute on Media and the Family at Iowa State University was a major contributor. In his study, as well as a separately published review of the literature (Gentile 2004, 2005) Gentile demonstrated a correlation between violent behavior and the viewing of violent video games, even when controlled for the amount of games played, a child's gender, and whether or not the child had a naturally aggressive personality. Even the children who were naturally non-aggressive (scored low on aggression indexes) were nearly ten times more likely, if they played a lot of violent video games, to get into physical fights than kids who did not.

In his review of the literature, Gentile (2005) examined 40 peer-reviewed, published studies that demonstrated that playing violent video games increased aggressive feelings and behaviors among children, primarily boys. He also found that video games are significantly more violent than a generation ago. Pac-Man has been replaced by Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, where a man encounters a prostitute, has sex with her and then beats her to death to get his money back. Other common themes found

in current video games included rape, sniper attacks, and cars targeting and killing pedestrians. Although this level of violence in a video game carried an M (mature) rating, 87 per cent of 800 boys, grade 4 to 8, admitted to playing M-rated games (Gentile 2005).

Further discussion of the role and influence video games has on boyhood gender will be taken up in both Chapter 5 (Findings) and Chapter 6 (Discussion).

A Multi-Dimensional Appraisal of Gender

The literature I have reviewed thus far all have examined different *determinants* of gender and gender behavior. Akin to putting the cart before the horse, multiple studies were completed examining the determinants of gender development before any were proposed and completed on the *dimensions* of gender itself (Egan and Perry 2001). Both operational as well as conceptual definitions of gender were proposed and adopted by the research community, but many were never established using research. Many studies were not able to be replicated, or yielded different results when repeated. Most of the research on gender identity of the 1980's and 1990's was based on a rather one-dimensional construct of gender; the gender identity/constancy theories of Kohlberg. Gender schema theories attempted to flesh out this limited view of gender by proposing that gender identity and development is a multi-dimensional collection of self-perceptions of specific sex-typed attributes such as expressive traits, personality traits, toy preferences, activity preference, relationship partner preference, occupation preference, and academic pursuits and success. However, many researchers have found that this "sex-typing" dimension of gender to also be limited (Spence 1993). Many people exhibit only modest consistency in the degree to which they display gender stereotypical behavior across different domains (Egan and Perry 2001; Carver, Yunger et al. 2003; Yunger, Carver et al. 2004).

Therefore, it would be speculative at best to infer an individual's *overall* gender identity from self-perceived sex-typing in any *single* domain.

Recent gender research has focused on building upon the work of Kohlberg's cognitive gender theory (Kohlberg 1966), Bussey and Bandura's social-cognitive theory (Bussey and Bandura 1992; Bussey and Bandura 1999), and Bem's gender schema theory (Bem 1981; Bem 1989). The work of Egan and Perry's multi-dimensional theorization of gender identity has opened many new avenues of research in gender identity studies as evidenced by many contemporary scholars' use of or reference to their work (Carver, Yunger et al. 2003; Carver, Egan et al. 2004; Yunger, Carver et al. 2004).

In their review of the contemporary gender literature, Egan and Perry (2001) sought to answer questions such as: "How well do I fit with my gender category? Must I adhere to the stereotypes for my sex or am I free to explore cross-sex options? Is my sex superior or inferior to the other? The researchers proposed that these questions are first asked beginning in childhood, and that the answers throughout development directly influence a child's psychological adjustment.

In their 2001 study Egan and Perry sought to develop an operational definition of gender identity that was comprised of four constructs: 1) knowledge of membership in a gender category, 2) felt compatibility with one's gender group, 3) felt pressure for gender conformity, and 4) attitudes toward gender groups. They also developed measures of the last three constructs and explored their relationships with adjustment in middle childhood. They chose not to examine the first construct of gender identity for two important reasons. First, the literature supports that this construct was clearly established as valid by Kohlberg's work of childhood gender knowledge and constancy, and proved

reliable by many subsequent studies. Secondly, and more importantly, since nearly *all* two to three year old children can correctly state, “I am a boy” or “I am a girl” and nearly all six to seven year old children can state that their gender will remain constant, “this aspect cannot account for within-sex individual differences in other variables such as sex-typing or adjustment” (Egan and Perry 2001).

Egan and Perry choose to develop measures of three components of gender identity; felt compatibility with one’s gender group, felt pressure for gender conformity, and attitudes toward gender and test their relationship with psychosocial adjustment in middle childhood. Felt compatibility with one’s own gender group was operationalized as a child’s self-perceptions of gender typicality along with whether or not the child felt content with his or her gender. A sample question from the study measuring the construct of gender typicality is “Some girls don’t feel they’re just like all the girls their age BUT other girls do feel they’re just like all the other girls their age.” A sample question intended to measure gender contentedness is “Some girls like being a girl BUT some girls don’t like being a girl”. Felt pressure for gender conformity was measured with questions such as “Some boys think boys they know would be upset if they wanted to play with girls’ toys BUT other boys...” And finally, sample questions designed to measure intergroup bias were “some girls don’t think that girls are more truthful than boys BUT other girls...” and “Some boys think that girls are more annoying than boys BUT other boys...”

One-hundred eighty two children (81 boys and 101 girls) in the fourth through the eighth grades (mean age 11.9 years, 9 months) of a state university school participated. Racial diversity was represented (68% Caucasian, 18% African American, 13% Hispanic,

and 1% Asian). Two instruments were administered in the fall and again in the spring. The first instrument was a self-report questionnaire assessing nine domains (self worth, social competence, gender compatibility, felt pressure, intergroup bias, sex-typed activities, agentic traits, communal traits, and heterosexual identity). The second measurement tool evaluated the remaining domains (liking for girls, liking for boys, and acceptance from same and opposite sex peers). The results of the two times (fall and spring) were averaged for two reasons. First, the results were nearly identical (indicating a temporal stability to the constructs) and second, the time averaged scores of temporally stable measures are more reliable than single-time scores (Burns and Grove 1997).

Results revealed that felt gender compatibility was positively related to adjustment. The study also demonstrated both felt pressure and intergroup bias were negatively associated with adjustment. The study strongly supported the original thesis that gender identity is multidimensional since middle school children demonstrated fairly stable and consistent conceptions of 1) the degree to which they are gender typical, 2) gender contentedness, 3) freedom to explore cross-sexed options, and 4) whether they feel their own sex is superior, and, these different dimensions of gender were shown not to be strongly related to each other, yet are all related to psychosocial adjustment.

An especially noteworthy finding is that gender typicality and felt pressure are uncorrelated and yet relate to adjustment in opposite ways; positively for gender typicality, and negatively for felt pressure. The results show that it is felt pressure for gender conformity, not a perception of the self as gender typical that is harmful to psychosocial adjustment. Therefore, the researchers suggest that a child's psychological well-being is safe-guarded by an environment that allows children to feel secure in their

conceptions of themselves as typical as well as free to explore cross-sex options. This finding also directly challenges previous research that links gender identity and positive psychosocial adjustment with androgyny; that positive mental health is promoted by feeling both masculine and feminine (Bem 1981). In other words, self perceptions of gender typicality do not “necessarily reflect an unhealthy gender-role straightjacket that undermines well-being” (Egan and Perry 2001) rather they appear to contribute in a positive way to psychosocial adjustment.

The results of this study indicate that future research in gender identity should use measures that reflect intended constructs in explicit and concise ways. For example, felt pressure for gender compatibility should be measured directly and not inferred from sex-typing or overall gender typicality. Additionally, generic terms such as gender schematicity, sex role orientation, and even femininity and masculinity should be avoided.

Several limitations to this study warrant comment. First, the design was correlational and no attempt to infer causality should be made. This would support the need for longitudinal studies examining the relationships between determinants and consequences of gender related dimensions. Second, most measures were self-reported and therefore halo effects and response bias cannot be ruled out. These biases are especially cogent when the study participants are children. Finally, although this study identified the pressure children feel for inhibiting cross-gender behavior, it did not examine the pressure children feel for enacting, and propagating same-gender behavior.

Despite the limitations of Egan and Perry’s 2001 study, others have replicated their findings (Carver, Yunger et al. 2003; Carver, Egan et al. 2004; Yunger, Carver et al.

2004). One study (Yunger, Carver et al. 2004) validated Egan and Perry's work on all domains, not only establishing the validity of the measures developed, but also finding similar correlations between these measures and a child's psychosocial adjustment. Specifically they found that a combination of low gender typicality and high felt pressure were positively correlated with internalizing symptoms and poor psychosocial adjustment.

Conclusion

"Don't make up what you could find out."

Howard Becker (1996)

Contemporary research investigating the multi-dimensional aspects of gender has revealed many important findings. Most important as a directional guide for this dissertation are two. First, boys experience greater social retribution for gender norm violations than do girls (Martin 1990; Valentine 1997; Messner 2000; Owen Blakemore 2003). Differences between the sexes have repeatedly been shown to be evident on all four measures of gender identity; 1) knowledge of membership in a gender category, 2) felt compatibility with one's gender group, 3) felt pressure for gender conformity, and 4) attitudes toward gender groups. Boys had higher scores on gender typicality, gender contentedness, and felt pressure, and therefore are more sex-typed and experience greater pressure to remain so than do girls (Ruble and Martin 1998; Owen Blakemore 2003). This "tomboy" versus "sissy" asymmetry in our society definitely deserves further attention. Is it merely that sissies are viewed as rejecting their own sex whereas tomboys are seen as embracing both? (Martin 1990; Rottnek 1999)

Second, boys who demonstrate low gender typicality as defined by low gender contentedness and self-perceptions of low gender compatibility and who also feel high pressure to gender conform are more likely to experience internalizing problems such as depression. Recent studies have examined social sanctions that a child might feel from three sources – parents, peers, and self. Surely other sources of sanctions against cross-sex typed behavior exist, such as media, religion, and teachers, to name a few. How do these sanctioning entities correlate with psychosocial adjustment? Also, the extant body of research has only examined the pressure boys feel for inhibiting cross-gender behavior, and not the pressure boys feel for engaging in same-gender behavior. Since the body of literature examining atypical gender behavior in boys has shown it is not a prevalence of cross-sex attributes and behaviors that define characterize a boy as atypical, but rather an absence of gender-typical traits, these questions are especially cogent.

All but a few of the studies reviewed were quantitative in design. The few qualitative studies could be generally described as ethnographic in design. This preponderance of quantitative research is the norm for scholars conducting research of children (Spodek 1993) as cited in (Graue and Walsh 1998). Reducing a child's complex life to scores on instruments and questionnaires has been repeatedly shown to be problematic and often occurs when a conceptual construct is operationalized, as is needed for nearly all quantitative studies. Graue and Walsh (1998) give an example of this pitfall citing a study by Howes (1988) in which peer contact is defined as “within 3 feet of a peer and at least engaged in parallel activity with mutual awareness.” Graue and Walsh (1998 p. 4) argue that whatever is learned in such a study is also limited by “the distance between the operationalization of the construct, which must be narrow to be technically

defensible, and the construct as lived by the children, which is inherently complex in children's lives." Perhaps many studies of children and their lives masquerade as knowing more about those children than they really do. Why for example, does sex segregation in a school yard not repeat itself in a neighborhood (Thorne 1993)? Why are so many other behaviors of children different depending on whether they occur at school, at home, or in the neighborhood? Where is the understanding of children's lived experiences?

It is clear that although considerable research has been conducted over the past 30 years on gender, much is left to be discovered. I maintain that a crucial element to this heuristic adventure will be revealed by the children themselves. What is clearly the area of greatest paucity in the literature that I reviewed was the presence of the child's voice. Although nearly all the studies reviewed did gather information directly from the children, I would argue this is not the same as valuing and representing the child's voice.

Chapter Two

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

QUEER THEORY AND NONCONFORMING

CHILDHOOD GENDER BEHAVIOR

Can Queer Theory Guide the Exploration?

Overall, my aim is to examine atypical, or nonconforming gender behavior in young boys. My discussion of gender in this chapter serves to inform this more focused analysis.

When gender behaviors are not congruent with the expected societal norms and/or when they are not in congruence with institutional goals, it is then defined as atypical or nonconforming (Rottnek 1999). An abundance of literature supports the position that those in Western culture who do not adhere to the tightly defined norms are subject to multiple methods of punishment and policing such as bullying, teasing, and physical abuse (Fagot, Leinbach et al. 1986; Green 1987; Butler 1990; Foucault 1990; Bussey and Bandura 1992; Butler 1993; McCreary 1994; Richardson 1995; Jagose 1996; Baker and Fishbein 1998; Du Rant, Krowchik et al. 1998; Rottnek 1999; Plummer 2001; Gottschalk 2003; Martin 2003; Weitz 2003; Russell, Franz et al. 2001). Why is such discipline applied to those who do not conform? Queer theorists present a review of the literature that offers a possible answer to this question. They maintain that Western culture is based on, and doggedly invested in, the preservation of heteronormativity. Queer theorists put forth many studies that demonstrate a link between atypical gender behavior in childhood and adult homosexuality (Whitman 1977; Langlois and Downs 1980;

Grellert, Newcomb et al. 1982; Zuger 1984; Green 1987; Zuger 1988; Weinrich, Grant et al. 1992; Bailey, Miller et al. 1993; McCreary 1994; Bailey and Zucker 1995; Bradley and Zucker 1997). Although hesitant to support many of these studies' findings, queer theorists nonetheless present them as an illustration of the institutionally supported cultural belief in an association between atypical childhood gender behavior and homosexuality in adulthood. Queer theorists note that the questions remain focused on the narrow field of cause and effect of childhood sexual interests and adult sexuality. Queer theory however, challenges us to answer the 'bigger question', why does it matter so much?

"Development" will be discussed as a problematic term that may assume essentialist notions of self. Similar challenges exist in the use of like terms "atypical", or "nonconforming" gender behavior. This language is an improvement on the clearly pathologizing 'abnormal' gender terminology but remains fundamentally pathological. To define something as atypical, one must first examine the culturally bound definition of what is normal. Rottnek, (1999, p.2) acknowledges "The very concept of gender 'nonconformity...assumes a normal or acceptable range of gender expression. If our conception of gender were more fluid, would not the very notion of gender 'nonconformity' be nonsensical?" Therefore, pathology is created, based on the definition of the normal.

Perhaps no single theory, model or social movement can fully explain or support the development of gender behavior and identity. One researcher (Stein 1997) stated, "...efforts to explain something as variable and complex as sexuality and relationality – whether they be based in biology, in families, or in any other single factor – do a disservice to us all and will never provide sufficient

explanation.” However, avoiding complex theoretical questions as Stein appears to do would seem to trouble philosophers such as Heidegger (Collins and Selina 1999), an early 20th century philosopher who is credited with the development of phenomenology (philosophy of consciousness) and hermeneutics (the philosophical inquiry into how we make interpretations). Heidegger believed that this evasion of the question indicated a deeply held level of discomfort among the educated and enlightened elite. Heidegger believed that the apparent absence of an answer, or even the possibility of no answer should invigorate its pursuit, which may at the very least increase our understanding of the question.

Many attempts have been made by theorists to understand the phenomenon of gender. A commonly held theory of gender proposes that behavioral markers of gender identity and gender role emerge early, typically by two to four years of age, and become solidified thereafter (Kohlberg 1966). This cognitive-developmental theory maintains that when a child is able to correctly identify boys and girls, men and women, and his or her own sex without vacillation, he or she has achieved gender identity (Fagot, Leinbach et al. 1986). Within this theory, gender roles refer to those behaviors that have been typically studied as those a society designates as masculine or feminine. That is, behaviors considered more “appropriate” or typical for the male or female social role of childhood gender identity and gender roles. In most cases the concurrent development of gender roles and sex-typed behavior is congruent. That is, most children display behavior consistent with their gender identity and role.

Theories such as these came under attack by leading feminist theorists in the 1970s and later by queer theorists in the 1980s. The theories were seen as both reductionistic and deceptively essentialist, and thus their proposed relationships between sex and gender were deconstructed. Challenges to these theories by queer theorists focused upon: 1) the presence or absence of a relationship between sex and gender, 2) the binary opposition of biologically determined versus socially constructed gender expression, and 3) the oppositional configurations of heteronormativity. In exploring these challenges to previously accepted thinking, feminist and queer theorists began developing new ways of exploring these issues of human identity. I will attempt to explain these three challenges in order to provide some of the theoretical underpinnings of queer theory. But first I will offer a conceptual definition of queer theory. Following this I will build upon this framework and expand the definition.

Intellectual History of Queer Theory

The post-structuralist approach to queer theory develops out of a reworking of identity as a constellation of multiple and unstable positions (Jagose 1996). An extremely difficult theory to describe and operationalize, queer theory is purposely vague and challenging. This is not to say that queer theorists have failed to solidify and take on commonly shared interpretations, but rather that its definitional indeterminacy, its fluidity, is one of its constituent characteristics. In fact, some would say any attempt to describe the intellectual history and accompanying philosophical tenets of this, at times maddeningly opaque theory, is an exercise in futility and that much of queer theory's clout rests with its resistance to definition. David Halperin (1995) suggests queer theory is resistant to staking a theoretical

claim arguing, “the more it verges on becoming a normative academic discipline, the less queer ‘queer theory’ can plausibly claim to be.” Judith Butler (1994) concurs by cautioning that normalizing queer theory would be its sad end.

However, I want to follow Heidegger’s move and attempt to not only answer some questions of queer theory, but in the process better understand the questions.

Queer theory is often conceptualized as a set of ideas, or a philosophical movement, which means that seminal ideas and tenets have not remained static but, instead, have been interpreted, challenged, and modified by subsequent scholars. However, certain core tenets do appear through the literature as somewhat stable elements of queer theory. These core tenets are: 1) all categories of identity are falsifications, especially if they are binary and descriptive of sexuality and gender; 2) all assertions about reality are socially constructed; and 3) heteronormativity underpins all aspects of contemporary society, (that humanity and heterosexuality are synonymous), and that virtually any aspect of modern Western culture must incorporate a critical analysis of society’s dogged preservation of heteronormativity.

“Queer”: Pejorative or Empowering?

Before attempting to stabilize by description the mobile field of queer theory, I will first discuss the term ‘queer’ itself. Historically, queer was at best slang for homosexual, and at worst, a highly pejorative term of homophobic abuse. Following the empowerment motives of similar reclamations of formerly derogatory terms such as ‘gay’ and ‘dyke’, ‘queer’ became a term of empowerment for sexual minorities and marginalized groups in the late 1980’s. Post-structuralists quickly adopted this term based on their position that the meanings of words are

constantly redefined each time they are used by individuals, and therefore a reclaiming of the word 'queer' by those it attempts to oppress and injure, strips it of its homophobic power (Jagose 1996) . A fundamental poststructuralist idea, this reclamation relies on the stance that discourses produce meaning and subjectivity of words, and that words and language are not simply a reflection of reality.

The use of the term queer is not completely accepted by those both in and outside of the academy. Some academics argue that there is great danger in neutralizing the term 'queer' into a legitimate and descriptive term by the academy itself, since the denaturalizing cultural work it was originally meant to serve will become ineffectual (Jagose, 1996). If the word 'queer' becomes benign or innocuous it would lose its sting and no longer be radical. Despite these reservations, the "queering of the academy" has been a surprisingly swift process. Michael Warner (1992) notes, "Academics now are talking about queer theory as a Movement and through the process of institutionalization, queer theory cannot sustain its radical critique."

The resistance to the use of queer as a reclamation of power outside the academy is often attributed to a "gay generation gap" (Sullivan 2003). Unable to accept a once pejorative term as a positive self-identification, older gays and lesbians have been resistant to the term 'queer'. Indeed some of the most convincing arguments against the empowering aspect of this cultural reclamation have come from those outside the academy. Many political activists are quick to point out that to merely change the semantic value of the word queer will only promote the adoption of other words, or even neologisms to take on the cultural work queer formally performed. By comparison, they maintain that the attempt to

neutralize the term dyke has not resulted in an end to discrimination against lesbians (Jagose 1996). Further exploration of these contestations as well as a thorough critique of queer theory will be attended to later in this paper.

Development of Queer Theory from Queer

Unlike some philosophical approaches and theoretical constructions, queer theory cannot be attributed to one individual. Viewed historically, queer theory is as much a response *to*, as a result *of* certain historical events and social conditions that occurred during the late 20th century. Dissatisfaction with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) studies departments' post-modernist discourse on sex, gender, sexuality, and identities led many LGBT theorists to attempt to deessentialize sexuality by questioning the epistemological assumptions of positivism. However, they themselves came increasingly under attack for their creating and promoting notions of a unified, autonomous self. Queer theorists challenged the notion that identity is largely, if not solely, determined by something at its core. A decidedly deconstructive undertaking, queer theory critiqued the post-modernist approach because of its ambivalent and poorly defined relationship with positivism (Gamson 2000).

Post-structuralism or deconstructionism as it is often referred to is associated with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Deconstructionism is a critical response to the humanist belief in absolute identities and binaries. Derrida attempted to dismantle what he referred to as "Western metaphysics"; a culturally and historically specific method of meaning making that utilizes polarized absolutes (Sullivan 2003). Deconstructionism is not synonymous with destruction,

as it does not promote the annihilation and replacement of what it challenges with that which is held to be true. Sullivan (2003) explains,

...a deconstructive analysis would highlight the inherent instability of the terms, as well as enabling an analysis of the culturally and historically specific ways in which the terms and the relation between them have developed, and the effects they have produced. (p. 51)

Cultural and Social Events Associated with Queer Theory

Several cultural and social events that occurred in the United States during the late 1960s and early 1970s are often attributed to creating the clearing in which queer theory emerged. I will trace the development of these events and describe how they paralleled the emergence and development of queer theory.

Following in the footsteps of other identity based political movements such as the black civil rights movement and women's liberation, the gay rights movement of the 1960s began primarily as an assimilation movement (Sullivan 2003). The aim of assimilationist groups is to be accepted into, and to become one with mainstream culture. A primary tenet of assimilationist discourse is the belief in a common humanity to which all people belong. This shared humanity, despite one's differences of race, gender, sexuality, class, etc., provides the basis of one's claim to the same human rights. Homosexual assimilationists of the 1960s argued that sexual preferences and romantic attractions were all that differentiated them from their heterosexual brothers and sisters. They argued that these differences should not be viewed as sufficient to prevent them from receiving the same human rights as heterosexuals. In fact, the Homophile Movement (the term gay assimilationists adopted) discouraged the expression of all other differences. Gay

men were encouraged to “butch it up” and act more masculine while lesbians were urged to wear dresses and high heels (Sullivan 2003).

In short, Homophiles proposed that tolerance of homosexuals could be achieved by making differences invisible. Often relying on the concept that homosexuality is biologically determined, assimilationists argued that this genetic difference should not be punishable by law or society. Harris (1997, p.242) argues this position can be attributed to a mainstream cultural portrayal of the homosexual as a victim, or what he has labeled “the propaganda of powerlessness”.

This “victim” or “powerlessness” model of homosexuality quickly led to the “sickness” model of homosexuality (Sullivan 2003, Wilchins 1997) and is an important concept to discuss in order to understand the evolution of queer theory. “The notion of homosexuality as a biological ‘accident’ or anomaly which, whilst not being the fault of the individual, should nevertheless be policed and regulated, had tragic consequences for many” (Sullivan 2003, p. 24). Sullivan points out the many “curative practices” that were developed in the 1960s and 1970s in response to viewing homosexuality as an illness: hypnotherapy, aversion therapy, insulin-induced shock therapy, electric-shock therapy, religious indoctrination, and even castration, removal of female reproductive organs, and lobotomies.

Another philosophical tenet of assimilationists was the belief in a distinction between public and private spheres. As long as certain aspects of homosexual life, especially sexual practices, were kept “in the bedroom”, or what came to be known as “in the closet”, assimilationists argued that these activities did not threaten the public domain (Sullivan 2003; Sedgwick 1990). Feminists were quick to attack this position stating that it depoliticized the private and the kinds of

relations attributed to them. Feminists argued that this type of logic enabled rape within a marriage to go unpunished, and domestic violence and incest to be regarded as personal issues, having nothing to do with “the state and/or with hegemonic institutions and structures of power” (Sullivan 2003, p. 24).

Birth of Gay Liberation

The tactical practices of the assimilationists were to erase differences, and keep those differences and those who were different invisible to the public eye. This encouraged “closeted” behavior in the public sphere. It was acceptable to be homosexual as long as one did not look homosexual, act homosexual, or be perceived as homosexual. This concept alienated many within the homosexual community, especially those who found “passing” difficult. The “butch lesbian”, “effeminate queen”, as well as many in the African American and Latino community were challenged to fit into what was a predominately white, middle class social movement. But it was the drag queen, arguably the greatest liability to the Homophile Movement, who is credited with igniting the monumental events that occurred at Stonewall (Sullivan 2003; Duberman 1993).

Stonewall Inn was the name of a gay bar in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City. By most accounts, the patrons of this bar were mostly drag queens, transgendered individuals, and other members of the homosexual community who would have been considered a liability or threat to the assimilationist movement. However, these individuals, as a whole, were subscribing to the tenets of the Homophile Movement by keeping their actions and socializing hidden from the public sphere. The Stonewall Inn was an unobtrusive establishment, with windows darkened so as to not “alarm” those who might pass

by and inadvertently gaze inside. The Stonewall Inn subscribed to the social message of the time promoted by assimilationists and attempted to remain “invisible”.

These tactics seemed to provide some safety and comfort for the drag queens who frequented the Stonewall. New York City officials had unofficially stated that as long as drag queens did not appear in public, their actions would not be punished. This sentiment prevailed throughout most of the late 1960s, but began to change as a new New York City mayor vowed to his conservative constituency to crack down on public acts of immorality (Duberman 1993).

The actual events of those nights in late June and early July of 1969 are difficult to account. What is generally accepted is this. Repeated raids on Stonewall, with resulting violence and injuries to the patrons, culminated in riots. The subsequent riots, and the media coverage all gave birth to the Gay Liberation Movement.

From Gay Liberation to Queer Theory

LGBT researchers of the 1970s then began a politically charged project of correcting the pathologized and stigmatized status of homosexuals. Previous work by scientists working within a positivist model had “established” homosexuality as an illness, and a deviation from the norm. One only needs to be reminded that until 1973 the American Psychiatric Association’s *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* listed homosexuality as a mental illness to demonstrate the clear institutional establishment and acceptance of homosexuality as an illness. How, ten years later, the Gay Liberation Movement would inform queer theory might not be readily apparent. However, I will detail later in this paper another set of important

historical events that served to ignite and subsequently galvanize the development of queer theory.

Many LGBT scholars with a history of working within a post-modern tradition attempted to counter the stigmatization of homosexuality with research that was actually modernist in nature and design. Attempting to demonstrate empirically the ‘normality’ of homosexuality, many groundbreaking studies emerged during the second half of the 20th century. The work of Kinsey (Kinsey, Pomeroy et al. 1948), Masters and Johnson (Masters and Johnson 1966) as well as more recent work by Patterson (Patterson 1995) all attempted to use modernist scientific methods to overturn previously accepted facts about sexuality.

While it is probable that studies such as these and the identity-based politics that emerged served as tools for incredible social, cultural, and legal advances for marginalized sexualities, queer theorists began to question the counterproductiveness of these LGBT studies. By claiming a uniform gay identity, or that sexual subjects share a core orientation, queer theorists argued that the resulting discourse of these LGBT “post-modern” efforts were counterproductive. Queer theorists began to see this “circling back” of post-modernists working within a modernist frame as only bolstering the essentialists’ position (Jagose 1996).

Queer Theory Is Born

A second critical historical event of the early 1980s was the emergence of HIV/AIDS. The popular discourse of the 1980s and 1990s misrepresented AIDS as a gay disease. This discourse contributed to a backlash of renewed homophobia, and like the events surrounding Stonewall, necessitated a critical examination of assimilationist strategies. It became increasingly evident in the 1980s that

assimilationist tactics and beliefs were not completely replaced by the liberationist ideals of the 1960s and 1970s. What was thought to be a growing level of acceptance of homosexuals during the 1970s was quickly revealed as only tolerance, which with the emergence of AIDS, was becoming intolerance (Spargo 1999). Queer theorists argued that tolerance and acceptance were two very different concepts. Tolerance was described as a superficial adjustment that necessitates ignoring and devaluing the behavior that is being tolerated. Queer theorists claimed that acceptance represented an adaptation, and not merely an adjustment. This adaptation is more stable and enduring than an adjustment, and is less likely to be challenged by significant events such as HIV/AIDS (Spargo 1999). This led to a renewed radicalism in gay and lesbian politics, based not on the assumption of a shared core/essential identity, but rather on a commitment “to resisting the representations that were costing the lives of those with AIDS.” (Spargo 1999, p. 35) Safe-sex education of the day focused not on identities, but instead practices. What one did rather than what one was became the focus. Radical political groups such as ACT UP, Queer Nation, and the Pink Panthers emerged and took to the streets in public protest. Queer theorist David Halperin describes ACT UP as “the most original, intelligent and creative political embodiment of Foucault’s strategic reconceptualisation of sex, knowledge and power.” (Spargo 1999)

For many in the front line fight against the AIDS epidemic, as well as many in the academy, the experience of the AIDS epidemic shattered understandings of knowledge and identity. Many adopted Foucaultian principles of resistance to oppressive and normalizing social forces, and found this to be more tenable than grand revolutionary projects. Queer theorists began to understand that both

knowledge and identity were inextricably bound up with power. It was within the context of AIDS activism and a growing dissatisfaction with the persistence of assimilationist strategies that queer theory was born.

Therefore, queer theory can be described as a largely de-constructive movement. Rooted in humanities-based cultural studies and philosophy (Gamson 2000) as well as the politically charged and confrontational “queer” politics of the 1980’s, queer theory began to take shape in a collection of academic papers and conferences in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The scholars associated with the birth of queer theory shared a common concern with scientists exploring the politics of representation. Queer theorists challenged the already progressive thinking of many in the academy. One challenge by queer theorists that solidified their movement and crystallized their intentions was this: the substantive aspects of scientific analysis of sexuality must be broadened. Queer theorists contended that it is not so much the construction of gay lives and identities that should be the focus of research, but instead the very ways the hetero/homo and gender distinctions underpin all aspects of contemporary life. In addition, they questioned the centrality of heteronormativity in Western culture.

Foucaultian Contribution to Queer Theory

Attempting to answer complex questions, many queer theorists and those who are guided by queer theory rely heavily on the work of the late French theorist and philosopher, Michel Foucault, (Butler 1990; Butler 1993; Wilchins 1997). Therefore, any attempt in understanding queer theory must include an exploration of the contributions made by Foucault.

Foucault drew upon the work of Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst who proposed models of a de-centered and unstable identity, as well as Jacques Derrida whose work sought to deconstruct binary oppositions found in conceptual and linguistic structures. Foucault's work has, according to Stuart Hall (1994), allowed for "the final de-centering of the Cartesian subject." Foucault believed that individuals could not be viewed as autonomous Cartesian subjects who have an innate or essential identity that exists independently of language and thought. This mind/body split portrays the being as a disengaged, idiosyncratic thinker and Foucault refused this concept of self, instead arguing that the 'self' is a socially constructed fiction, a product of language and specific discourses linked to divisions of knowledge. Foucault relied upon this concept of self in his multiple writings on sexuality. Foucault contended that sexual identity, including heterosexuality, is a social creation, and not unique to any one individual. Sexual identity, or any other aspect of identity is according to Foucault, the most naturalized cultural category that each of us inhabits. One always thinks of one's 'self' as existing outside of all representational frames, and somehow marking a point of undeniable realness. It had become so naturalized, so taken-for-granted, that not until the middle of the 20th century were these seemingly self-evident claims regarding identity of the self problematized and eventually deconstructed.

Another important philosophical argument presented and developed by Foucault pertinent to queer theory is his model of discourse and power. Sometimes criticized for having a conservative model of power, Foucault actually argued that power is always producing and never contains resistance. He argued that there are no relations of power without resistances and the latter are all the more real and

effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised. Resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated by being the compatriot of power (Foucault 1990) . This “micro practice” model of power is often misunderstood by students of Foucault, as being a conservative model of power. Foucault’s intention was to show the opposite, that these micro practices of power are actually more constraining and policing than traditional macro practices such as law enforcement, statutes and other regulatory enforcement agencies, as well as institutionally located discourses such as fashion, literature, medicine and the media (Weedon 2000). Foucault’s micro practice model of power portrays a “panopticon” society where individuals and groups perceive both consciously or subconsciously an ever-present policing body regardless of the presence of a juridical power. Foucault maintained that if power were wholly negative and completely juridical it would never manage to control, because society would not obey. Foucault argued that what gives power its hold, what makes it accepted is that it does not simply weigh like a force which says ‘no’, but instead runs through, and actually produces things, such as pleasure, knowledge, and discourse. Power, as a productive force, runs through the entire social body, serving as much more than a repressive force.

Foucault is considered by most to be the primary intellectual catalyst of queer theory (Butler 1990; Butler 1993; Clough 1994; Wilchins 1997). Several papers presented at the 1991 Rutgers conference on Gay and Lesbian issues referred to Judith Butler’s work on queer theory, which indicated Butler was in line to become a well respected present day queer theorist (Jagose 1996). Butler has extended Foucault’s work, which had dealt almost exclusively with sexuality, to the

arena and phenomena of gender, exposing and exploring normative models of gender.

Butler's Contribution to Queer Theory

In Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) the central project is to specify how gender operates as a regulatory construct that privileges heterosexuality. Furthermore, Butler uses a feminist framework to argue for the needed deconstruction of these regulatory constructs since they retard gender variation and expression. In the tradition of queer theory, Butler avoids the investigational temptation in addressing the origins of gender as an authentic, unifying self. That is, she is not interested in revisiting the essentialist versus social constructionists debate. Instead she pursues the history of the political stakes invested in "designating as an *origin* and *cause* those identity categories that are in fact the *effects* of institutions, practices, and discourse with multiple and diffuse points of origin" (Butler 1991, p ix, as cited in Weedon 2001). In other words, Butler argues that one's sex is not the origin or cause of one's gender but that both are the effects of cultural discourses.

Butler's launching point for a critical analysis and theoretical development of gender is "that bodies only appear, only endure, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas" (Butler 1993). Butler theorizes this gender schema through a concept of 'performativity'. Sullivan (2003) states,

"Performativity... is the pre-condition of the subject, the discursive vehicle through which ontological effects are produced. There is not first an "I" who performs, rather the "I" is constituted in and through performative processes."
(p.89)

Butler maintains that there is no sex behind gender, and no gender behind sex. No longer to be viewed as a source of unifying identity, gender is instead a cultural fiction, a performative effect of repetitive acts. Performativity is not the same as performance, although it is often understood that way and so Butler sought to clarify this misconception.

Performativity has been exhaustingly discussed and debated since its presentation in Butler's *Gender Trouble* in 1990. Well aware of the controversy and misunderstanding of her conceptual gender frames, Butler clarified and expanded her definitions of performativity in her 1993 book, *Bodies That Matter*. In this latter book, Butler announced her bewilderment in the multiple reductive uses of her work, and particularly the equating of performativity with performance in terms of drag queens and drag performance. Butler's puzzled response in *Bodies That Matter* are actually somewhat surprising, considering that she refers frequently in her previous book, *Gender Trouble* to the cultural world of drag. Additionally, the word 'performativity' is a neologism invented by Butler. She is often cited for her difficult and opaque writing style, and some have accused her of being intentionally inaccessible (Spargo 1999).

Butler argues that drag is an *example* of performativity, but is not to be seen as *exemplary* of performativity. She maintains that gender is no more willfully performed by a man wearing a dress than by a biological female wearing the same. Her use of drag as an exemplar was used to illustrate a parodic repetition of gendered norms. Akin to no longer viewing heterosexuality as the original (unmarked) category of which homosexuality (marked) is considered the inferior copy, gender should not be organized in terms of original and imitation. Those who

reduce Butler's complex theoretical construction of gender to mere performance, often fail to consider the concepts of agency, constitutedness, and constraint. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler introduces these concepts:

Performativity cannot be understood outside a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (p. 95)

The Foucauldian influence with regard to discourse and power are evident in Butler's examination of agency. She underscores the importance and possibilities of the agentic self, relying on Foucault's position that selves can never be completely free of culture's constraining force. In other words, she suggests we are both constitutive of (agentic) as well as constituted by (constrained) our very existence. Furthering this discussion, Butler states gender is never a choice, like selecting clothing from a wardrobe. Instead, gender is a necessity if one is to have any intelligible identity based on our current cultural gender system.

Misinterpretations of performativity as performance have been attributed to a cultural obsession with radical free choice (Spargo 1999). Radical free choice proposes that selves are a collection of traits and talents that are freely chosen or discarded throughout one's life (Leonard 1994). This notion does not allow for the socially constructed concept of constitutedness. Closely related to the Cartesian

notion that the private subject stands against and above the objective world, radical free choice implies that the self can make *any* choice at *any* time. The Foucaultian concept of micropractices disallows this type of choice; instead it maintains that all choice is bound, and produced by discursive power. Therefore, Butler argues that performance relies on a naïve concept of voluntary and unconstrained actions.

Critiques and Contestations of Queer Theory

Entering its third decade of intellectual life, queer theory has endured considerable criticism during its relatively short lifespan. Lesbian, gay, and queer activists as well as academics have criticized queer theory on many fronts. Often attacked for its abstraction as well as its apparent contempt for the mundane, queer theory seems to receive the criticisms previously targeted at poststructuralists and postmodernist theory in general (Spargo 1999).

Queer theory is criticized for being abstract and inaccessible, a n elite form of thought afforded only to academics. Paris (as cited in Jagose 1996) represents well this line of critique; “This is politics formulated from a point beyond the body by people who are not hungry or cold, people who can theorize in comfort, peering at the world through computer screens, reconfiguring its surfaces endlessly, like a floppy discs” (p.110). The picture Paris paints is of privileged academics, insulated from a reality that they feel obligated to scrutinize.

Further criticized for not serving any real, socially productive purpose, queer theorists predictably counter this attack with a Foucaultian response.

Although the consensus among queer theorists is that the successful institutionalization of lesbian and gay studies within the university *has* given rise to a new generation whose intentions are academic rather than political, they argue

that these scholarly works are just as effective and important in creating social change. Queer theorists base this position on Foucault's principles of power and resistance. They hold that all knowledge is a form of discursively produced power and that academic papers are no less effective than political methods, such as protests, rallies, and setting up pickets.

Another critique of queer theory is that it purposely seeks to deconstruct collective identities such as gay and lesbian. Lesbian theorists have taken the forefront in this argument. Wolf and Penelope (1993) state,

“We cannot afford to allow privileged patriarchal discourse (of which poststructuralism is but a new variant) to erase the collective identity Lesbians have only recently begun to establish. ...The word Lesbian has been placed in quotation marks, whether used or mentioned, and the existence of real Lesbians has been denied, once again.” (p.5)

As previously discussed in this chapter the deconstruction of collective identities holds special appeal for queer theorists. In an effort to undermine essentialist notions of identity they counter notions of natural, obvious, or taken-for-granted identities. Queer theorists often challenge these ‘common sense’ forms of understanding. Edelman (1994, p. xviii) writes “The appeal to so called common sense reinforces the hypostatization (reification) of the ‘natural’ upon which homophobia relies and thus partakes of an ideological labor complicit with heterosexual supremacy.” Edelman and other queer theorists warn against the valorization of common sense, arguing that this unexamined convergence of common sense and knowledge is actually the licensed operation of unexamined ideological structures.

Although some of the criticism queer theory receives is clearly based in a reductive understanding, the objections and criticisms queer theory raises are in large part due to its radical deconstructivist roots. It is ironic that a theory that is clearly considered a ‘critical’ theory, receives such criticism. Perhaps the final words regarding this irony should be Foucault’s (1986): “The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.”

An ‘Asexual’ Queer Theory and Its Utility in Childhood Gender Studies

The abundance of sexuality studies informed by queer theory clearly demonstrates that it tends to occupy a predominantly sexual register. Butler’s work made monumental intellectual strides in extending queer theory’s utility beyond sexuality in her Foucaultian application to gender. However, her deconstruction of the relationship between sex and gender deals almost exclusively with the adult lesbian, gay or transgender subject. In recent works, queer theory has begun to be used as a lens in which to examine the differences and silences suppressed by the homo-hetero binary and to dismantle the hegemonic identities associated with race, class, and ethnicity (Wittig 1992; Hennessy 1993). Gamson (2000) furthers the recommendation of using queer theory outside lesbian and gay studies by stating,

“...A primary substantive challenge currently issuing to and from the field of sexuality studies is...to uncover the ways any social arena (including, of course, the production of social scientific knowledge) is structured in part by

the homo/hetero dichotomy. There is great productive promise for new topics of qualitative research as this charge is asserted and absorbed.” (p. 358)

Childhood Gender ‘Development’?

It is with Gamson’s recommendations that queer theory’s utility is being proposed as an appropriate tool in which to better understand childhood gender. A queer theory examination and approach to better understanding the complexities of gender perhaps necessitates a deconstruction of the notion of gender development itself. For the terms of the debate are problematic in so far as the word ‘development’ implies that gender is essential. To ‘develop’ is to grow and mature, two concepts solidly rooted in essentialism. So the question that begs to be answered is this; “is gender a product of nature, surely nurtured and influenced by society, but nonetheless a natural, essential aspect of self?”

This question, which is far more than rhetorical, is not meant to solicit a re-examination and debate of the nature versus nurture, essentialism versus constructionism debate. All but the most radical of queer theorists concede that biology plays some part in gender. But conceding that gender (and probably all human experience) takes place on a “biological substrate” (Byne and Parsons 1993; Byne 1997) is not the same as conceding that it is *primarily* biological. This important qualitative difference must be appreciated, especially in the examination of gender in childhood. For many of the biological differences of sex do not occur until puberty and the appearance of secondary sex characteristics. And although these are sex differences and arguably not the *source* of gender differences, essentialists as well as some post-modernists confuse the two. Therefore, it could be argued that even if there *are* biological differences of gender, these biological

differences would not appreciably manifest until early adolescence. So if gender development isn't really a biological and extensional form of growth, should it be considered completely constructed?

Many theorists would answer this question with a resounding 'yes'. But queer theory proposes an alternative, if not radical way of viewing the phenomenon of gender in its disdain for the continued nature versus nurture argument. Heidegger (1962) also warns against the binaristic exclusion of essentialism for constructionism. He argues against this primarily Cartesian notion when he states that if all experiences and phenomena were completely socially constructed, there would be no way for the physical being to assert itself. Clearly queer theory implores us to question why we as a society are so emotionally invested in this debate in the first place. That is, even *if* sex determines gender in even the smallest way, why does it matter so much?

Therefore, queer theory might serve well in a quest to better understand the phenomena of childhood gender. Martin (2003) contends that because gendering occurs at such an early age, the seeming naturalness, the subtlety and taken-for-grantedness of such occurrences appear natural, or essential. Her study of the gendering in preschool children suggests a significant disciplining of children's bodies, which logically is but an extension of the same discipline exercised from birth.

Conclusion

If I were to begin my examination of gender and gender diversity illuminated by an appreciation for the natural variance of life itself, free of pathologizing agendas, then I would automatically expand my definitions of the normal. And so

the “discussion returns to what is normal, who decides what is normal, and the reasons for their decisions” (Gottschalk 2003). A review of the literature supports Gottschalk’s assertion in that the majority of research on gender nonconformity serves the agenda of biological determinism. Gottschalk (2003), Rottnek (1999), Butler (1990; 1993), and other theorists such as Savin-Williams (2000) recommend steering clear of these debates, and instead recommend a new direction for future research. Gottschalk suggests,

“Further research that is not focused toward same-sex sexual orientation, or the idea of gender non-conformity as pathology needs to be done to clarify the reasons for, and the *meaning of* (emphasis added) gender nonconforming behavior. ...If conceptions of gender were more fluid and the characteristics and behavior now considered to be gendered were equally available to females and males, then the very idea of something like gender nonconformity or gender identity disorder would be absurd (p.48).”

Chapter Three

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS: A PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY

“The issue is not what methodology is “best” or even necessarily what method is right for the question being asked because method acts as a theoretical screen and often determines the types of questions that are asked. Rather, the issue is, first, what it means to be a person; then, in light of our answer, how we ask our research questions; and finally, how we answer the questions we pose. Too often, researchers facilely seize on a method without considering the more profound important philosophical assumptions that undergird the method and whether those assumptions are consistent with the researchers own view of what it means to be a human being.” (Leonard 1994)

This chapter will describe methodological, philosophical, and ethical issues as they pertain to studying the meaning and lived experiences of gender for 8 to 10 year old boys. Specifically, I will address the philosophical issues of choosing a particular methodology, the methodological principles of interpretive phenomenology (as developed by Heidegger, Gadamer, and van Manen), and the ethical considerations in researching children (such as the crisis of representation, giving voice, coercion, exploitation and issues of consent/assent). The following chapter will address actual study design, process, and procedures of this dissertation.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Methodologies

Using Leonard’s insights as a guide, I often find myself examining the philosophical tenets of empiricist and rationalist thought. My doctoral education encouraged me to consider both quantitative, which is generally empirical or rational in

design, and qualitative, which is generally interpretive in design, as two distinct, yet complementary methodologies. I have been told that neither is *better* than the other, and that each has its distinct contributory promise; if properly aligned with the question being asked.

We are surrounded by an empiricist and rationalist world. Western culture seems to pride itself on the ever present quest for knowledge seeking, and subsequent mastery of same. Attributed first to the works of Plato (428-348 BC), and later Descartes (1596-1650), rationalism is a theory of knowledge that presupposes four basic tenets: 1) it is possible to obtain by reason alone knowledge of the nature of what exists; 2) knowledge forms a single system; 3) all knowledge is deductive in character, and; 4) all things are explicable, or all things can, at least in principle, be brought under the single system of knowledge. (Flew 1979) Empiricism is the philosophical movement that presents knowledge as derived from sense experience. Within empiricism it is assumed that there are no innate ideas or privileged unquestionable assertions. Important representatives of empiricism include Locke (1632-1704), Berkeley (1685-1753), and Hume (1711-1776). Rejecting Platonism, empiricists argue that the human mind is a blank slate. Indeed it is Locke who is credited for coining the phrase “tabula rasa”. Locke argued that all knowledge must be derived from experience and that innate a priori knowledge is a fiction (Tarnas 1991).

The works of 16th and 17th century scientists and philosophers ignited what is referred to as the period of enlightenment, which freed Western civilization from the shackles of religious dogma and its tenets of unquestionable faith as a basis of knowledge. More than 500 years later, this Copernican revolution is as strong as ever (Rush and Harr 2001). One cannot even begin to review the scientific literature without

being bombarded by evidence-based research studies (Titler, Kleiber et al. 1994; Sackett 1996; Kessenich, Guyatt et al. 1997; Rosswurm and Larrabee 1999).

So it appears rationalism and empiricism are “twin perspectives that have come to rule research and theory” (Packer and Addison 1989). Packer and Addison argue that these twin perspectives do little to advance knowledge of the world in which we live, and that they are so incredibly pervasive, dominant in our culture, and in our scientific culture that they go unnoticed and unquestioned. This hegemony provides the foundation for the taken-for-granted background assumptions of scientific neutrality (Taylor 1985).

Packer and Addison (1989) boldly state that interpretive methods are not simply alternative methodologies to be used in place of, or alongside the more familiar empiricist methods, but rather are “*better perspective(s) on the world than the traditional twins*” (p. 14) of empiricism and rationalism. Following Leonard’s (1994) suggestion I have examined my own beliefs about what it means to be human and *what* (ontology) we know and *how* (epistemology) we know what we know. Whereas I cannot completely endorse Packer and Addison’s proposal that interpretive methods are better than rationalist or empiricist methods in all situations, I can believe interpretive assumptions are a *better* way to examine the complex and ever evolving phenomena of *lived experience*.

Interpretive Phenomenology as a Methodological Framework

“Human lives are situated within meaningful activities, relationships, commitments, and involvements that set up both possibilities and constraints for living” (Chesla 1995) . According to Dreyfus (1990), our existence is preceded by the complexities of a world, a culture, a family, a particular time in history that we are born into. The literature supports the notion that we live in a homophobic culture that supports

and promotes narrowly defined gender roles. But we also live in a time in history that perhaps is widening these narrow definitions. These complexities, rich in meanings and practices, and the source for both possibilities and constraints, are appreciated with a Heideggerian phenomenological approach (Heidegger 1962; Dreyfus 1990). The Heideggerian approach also examines how situatedness both allows children to be constituted by, and constitutive of their experiences. This concept is especially important when attempting to understand the lived experiences of children. Situatedness implies both possibilities and constraints, and therefore draws into question the possibility of a popularly held Western ideal of radical free will.

Possibilities and Constraints

The concept of absolute freedom, the notion that *anyone* can accomplish *anything* if one “sets his mind to it”, is idealized in Western culture (Tarnas 1991). Whereas humans do possess the ability to exercise free will in certain situations, radical free will implies that regardless of the situation, any and all choices are available to a person at any given time. Children especially are bound by their Situatedness; parental, social and institutional authority limits their range of possible movement and action, lack of direct access to resources complicates their options and their own intellectual development while creating certain possibilities limits others. These factors, along with many others, eliminate the possibility of radical free will. This “situated freedom” is especially cogent in the understanding of children’s lives. The taken-for-granted, pervasive and often times hegemonic world in which we are situated and thrown must be considered when examining being.

Engagement

Another philosophical assumption of Heideggerian phenomenology is that humans are engaged (Dreyfus 1990; Chesla 1995; Benner, Tanner et al. 1996; Collins and Selina 1999) . We spend the majority of our time completely and unreflectively engaged in practical activity. This type of engagement has been labeled *zuhanden* in German and translates as “ready-to-hand” in English. This ready-to-hand activity is the seamless way a person makes his or her way through life. It allows us to walk across the room, open the door and exit without ever consciously considering our path, our method of turning the doorknob, etc. (Dreyfus, lecture, August 27, 2002). It allows a child to ride a bicycle, never contemplating reaching for the brakes as she speeds down the hill, but rather simply reaching for them. However, there are times when we might sit quietly and contemplate our walk across the room, our coasting down a hill on a bicycle, what it means to do so, and why we engage in this activity, etc. This type of engagement is what Heidegger describes as *vorhanden* or “present-at-hand” and refers to a mode of “detached contemplation or observation, *not of immediate utility*” (emphasis mine) (Collins and Selina 1999) . And the third mode of being (unready-to hand) might be illustrated if while exiting the room, the doorknob comes loose in your hand, temporarily and quite unexpectedly jolting you from your seamless, unreflective state of *zuhanden*, or if while reaching for the brake, the cable breaks on the rear wheel. A quick (differentiating it from *vorhanden*) and conscious assessment of the situation might lead you to exit via another door, or while cycling, to carefully and gently squeeze the front wheel brake, after which time you would re-enter the state of ready- to-hand.

For Heidegger, the practical, or ready-to-hand has primacy, and is closely related to his concept of *understanding* (Dreyfus 1990). He had a particular suspicion of treating things as present-at-hand although this is the preferred method of traditional philosophy

and arguably, modernist scientists. He argued that present-at-hand was *one* way of being, but that it was not the “only, the first, or the most usual way”(Collins and Selina 1999) . Heidegger maintained that ready-to-hand is *our first and most fundamental way of being* in the world and our awareness of entities are derived from our everyday use of, and experience with, these entities. Therefore, Heideggerian phenomenology posits that understanding is not intellectual, not conscious, and not theoretical and perhaps cannot even be articulated. But since it is the primary source of making meaning, our methodological approach must attempt to capture this unconscious and at times, inarticulable phenomenon. Schwandt (2000) states “understanding is interpretation”. He cites Gadamer (1970, p.87) to further illustrate the point that understanding is not “an isolated activity of human beings but a basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something *as* something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate.” Or in the words of van Manen (1990, p.23) “phenomenological questions are meaning questions.” . Interpretive phenomenology does not seek to *solve* a problem, but rather, to better explain and *understand* a problem.

Concerns, Fore-structure, and Situatedness

Another Heideggerian philosophical assumption important in guiding my inquiry is that humans are concerned, and that our concerns both limit and set-up, or allow, for our engagement in the world (Chesla 1995; Benner, Tanner et al. 1996) . Our concerns influence how we act and what we see or do not see upon approaching a situation. I would imagine that a young boy’s concerns with the reaction of his peers would in some

way limit his expression of gender. However, it is to the relationship of concern and fore-structure where I would like to turn my attention.

I have already mentioned that a researcher's own philosophical beliefs influence their choice of research question. The notion that researchers "study their own issues" (Chesla 1995) causes some discomfort in the research community. Perhaps one source of this discomfort is that even among post-modernists, there is still considerable loyalty to a Cartesian, or "God's eye" view in research. However, a closer examination of the Heideggerian philosophy of concerns and fore-structures might help lessen the chokehold of this positivist view, allowing researchers to go beyond questions of epistemology to those of ontology, even in studying their "own issues".

I believe we frequently study our own issues. Our own worlds, our own situatedness, and our own concerns lead us to have the questions that we do, and to see the possible answers that we see. Heidegger speaks of this as fore-structure, which is comprised of three aspects; fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception.

Fore-having refers to the taken-for-granted synthesis of all the entities that make up the phenomena of interest (Dreyfus 1990) . All interpretation begins with *Vorhabe*, or fore-having, a taken-for-granted background. Fore-having opens for us different possibilities in how we ask the question and what answers we seek. However, it also constrains us as well. It will eliminate certain approaches and blind us from possibilities both in how we ask the question and the answers we allow. For example, I must seriously consider my own experiences as a child with atypical gender behavior. Will it, or better asked, "*how* will it", limit the questions I ask or the answer that I see? How does my own *worldhood* both open as well as close my existence? *World*, in a phenomenological sense

can be described as, “the meaningful set of relationships, practices, and language that we have by virtue of being born into a culture,”(Leonard 1994)

On a further level, to mark the significance of existence, Heidegger gave the name *Dasein* to this type of being. *Dasein* translates as "being-there". So, according to Heidegger, before anything else, we exist, we are "there", we are in the world and that is how we should conceive ourselves if we are going to understand our lives. To stress the importance of this existence, Heidegger gave to *Dasein*'s activity of existing, the term *being-in-the-world*. The use of the hyphens emphasizes that there is no distance between us and the world. We are as much a part of that world as it is part of us. The "in" is precisely an indicator of involvement, Heidegger thought that no distance, either physical or mental, should exist between ourselves and the world. *Dasein*'s interest and involvement with its world is intrinsic to *Dasein*. There is no existing, no "being-there", without a world in which to exist. A person without a world makes no sense. The world and *Dasein* are one and the same (Heidegger 1962; Dreyfus 1990).

Next, we approach our research with what Heidegger called fore-sight. This is our point of view, our own interpretive lens (Leonard 1995; Dreyfus 1990). My fore-having has led me to my fore-sight, my point of view of boyhood gender behavior. Fore-sight gives me a particular access point into my research, but can also limit my inquiry. How will it limit my use of new and emerging data that will naturally be revealed throughout the research process? While having a clear understanding of my fore-sight, I must be open to challenging it, to adding to my fore-having the experiences of the research process itself, thereby creating new fore-sights along the way.

The third aspect of fore-structure is fore-conception. Heidegger maintained that humans always have a sense of what we will find out when we approach an area of

interest. That is we hypothesize (borrowing from a positivist's vocabulary) what we will find. Researchers must examine their own fore-conceptions and be open to those being challenged, or perhaps even ruptured.

Therefore, the totality of fore-structure (fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception) opens the door to the hermeneutic circle in the right way. Although consistent with the understanding of Dasein, we are all *in* the hermeneutic circle in that we exist, one could easily attempt to *interpret* the circle without any examination or understanding of his or her own fore-structure, but according to Heidegger (Dreyfus 1990) , this is not the “right” way. The interpretive process (hermeneutic circle) should not intimidate us, as this limits our involvement and might in some cases prevent us from entering at all. Or as Heidegger stated (1962) “...if we see this circle as a vicious one and look for ways of avoiding it, even if we just ‘sense’ it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up.” We must instead understand that the circle takes place on a background that influences from the start the formulation of questions and what satisfies one’s definition of a satisfactory interpretation.

As previously stated fore-structure both opens possibilities and closes others. This pre-understanding remains largely in “the background and as taken-for granted.”(Packer and Addison 1989) The interpretive tradition concedes that there is no detached, scientifically objective standpoint that a researcher is privileged to take, a view which contrasts with rational empiricists’ striving for a detached, “objective” examination of data. This Cartesian “mind-body” split privileges the mind as master of the body and all worldly experiences. That is, the power of the mind and the uniquely human capacity to control the body and other phenomena is the primary philosophical tenet of rationalism.

Interpretive methodologists recognize that attempts to remain outside of the research process are fictional; a God's eye view is not achievable when studying human activity (Packer and Addison 1989).

“As a researcher, I must examine my own fore-structure for several reasons. My fore-structure has led me to an interest in the phenomenon of gender atypicality in young boys. My interpretation is not completely free of my background. I cannot help but to bring to the research process the totality of my experience and background. Therefore, examining the fore-structure of my understanding and its effect on my research is an important endeavor.”

My Own Fore-structure and the Potential for Influence in this Study

“Even though it is never possible to divest oneself completely of preunderstandings, it was important for me to become clear as possible about the way the fore-structure of my understanding influenced my account; otherwise the account would be in danger of becoming my own preunderstandings projected onto the process I was investigating.”

Packer and Addison (1989, p. 53)

Reducing bias is a goal of all researchers (Burns and Grove 1997; Cozby 1997). Phenomenology uses critical reflection as one method to reduce bias. In other words, I must reflect upon my own fore-structure in an attempt to identify my preconceptions, assumptions, and prejudices as they relate to my research. These reflections are recorded in written form and used as a checking point as analytical conclusions are made (Cohen, Kahn et al. 2000). Therefore, in order to more carefully examine my own fore-structure, I will now offer my story.

I was born in a rural community in central Illinois. I am the third of four children. I have one older sister, one older brother, and a younger sister. I was definitely a child

considered to be a “sissy boy”. My sisters were fairly gender typical, whereas my brother was strongly gender typical. That is, he was hyper masculine. My parents had differing views on the importance of gender conforming behavior in their children. My mother always seemed to protect and nurture me, supporting and encouraging my wide range of gender expression. I was encouraged to assist her with domestic tasks such as cooking and sewing. She also encouraged my futile attempts at playing sports. However, my father held a more traditional and stricter view of acceptable gender behavior. He would tell me that cooking, music, art, reading, crafts, and other similar activities were for girls and “sissies”; a name he often called me. I was once beaten for refusing to go outside and play baseball with my brother. It was a sunny summer day and I had instead chosen to stay inside and read a book.

My brother excelled at sports and all things “boy”. My father made it very clear to me, as well as friends and relatives, that he was proud of him, and ashamed of me. It is traditional in the rural Midwest to have your name and sons’ names painted on the side of your pickup truck (e.g. “Father and Sons”). My father threatened to have his truck repainted to “Father and Son” so people would know that he only had one son and three daughters if I ever cried in public again.

Both of my parents were alcoholics and were prone to fits of extreme rage when drunk. This drunken rage was often directed toward each other as well as me and my siblings. Extreme physical abuse was a frequent occurrence in my household. I learned to hide my sissy behavior in order to avoid physical, verbal, and emotional abuse. My mother was more defiant. She would challenge my father and his narrowly held views on gender for both her children as well as for herself. He would not let her work outside the home because “real women” did not do this. He would not allow her to enroll me in piano

lessons as only sissies played the piano. When she enrolled me in piano lessons anyway, she made me swear that it would be our secret. My father found out, and broke my mother's nose, left arm, and held a knife to her throat, stating that he would kill her if she ever disobeyed him again.

Of course a huge part of my father's extreme position on what constitutes manhood comes from his homophobia. Along with being called a sissy, I was also called a "faggot" by my father. He would often state that "no son of mine will grow up to be a faggot!" Eventually, I learned to edit my own behavior sufficiently enough to avoid my father's physical and emotional abuse. I have since labeled this behavior as "self-edification". I became very adept at always thinking ahead and crafting my behavior based on this "pre-thinking". For example, I wanted to share in my sister's joy as she unwrapped her dolls and other feminine toys at Christmas. However, I paused, thought of how that would play with my father, and instead told her I thought the doll was a "stupid" gift. Later that Christmas night I snuck into my sister's room, and in tears apologized for making fun of her doll. She said it was "ok" and offered to let me play "house" with her and her dolls. After promising each other not to tell our father, we played together. It was that night that I realized that I had another ally in the family; an allegiance that was tenuous and based on secrecy and shame, but an alliance none the less. Secrecy and shame became an integral part of who I was.

I did however continue to witness several attacks on my mother. My only real protector was continually abused by my father. Ultimately my parents divorced after my father abandoned our family. I was about 12 years of age at the time and I remember being struck by the irony of his desertion. My maternal grandmother told my mother that a "real man" would never leave his family like that. My mother died a few years later,

and my father a few years after my mother. My father remained estranged from my family, and I never spoke with him again.

I have offered this brief glimpse of my childhood as a method of self reflection. I often refer back to this, as well as other writings I have completed throughout my doctoral studies as a way of understanding my own fore-structure, as well as my fore-sight and fore-conception(s) and how they will impact my research efforts. This constant dialogue of a researchers own point of view and his evaluation of explanatory accounts does not take place on two ends of a straight line. Instead, “they are on the circumference of a circle; the hermeneutic circle” (Packer and Addison 1989). This circular appraisal of my own background, apparent as well as hidden and taken for granted, will be an evolutionary process. As I study my phenomena, I must remain open to challenging my own experiences, as well as discovering the meaning of things from my past.

My own childhood experiences both open possibilities and close others in my study of young boys’ nonconforming gender. I believe it has opened for me a sense of understanding, compassion, and genuine concern for the rejection, and possibly abuse, these young boys may experience. It could however have closed down for me an understanding of a child’s experience that is free of rejection or familial ostracism. Did I fully understand a child who is not distressed? Did I fully understand the child who has loving family support? Did I fully understand a child whose experiences were *different than mine*?

Voice and the “Crisis of Representation”

“When someone with authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing.”

Adrienne Rich, “Invisibility in Academe” as cited in (Rosaldo 1993)

Researchers trained in qualitative methods value the first-hand accounts and stories by their participants; however the majority of pediatric research is not based upon the child's account. Rather, the account is understood as it is told by an adult, most often the mother (Speier 1976) as cited in (Morse 1991). Traditionally viewed as being unable to describe and understand their world due to varying degrees of developmental immaturity, researchers instead rely on the voice of adults. A competing viewpoint is that children are indeed capable of providing a valid, meaningful description of their world.

During the mid 1980's many researchers (Rosaldo 1993; Clough 1994; Fine 1994; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Gamson 2000; Lather 2001) began to question the objectivity and accurate representation of research of human activity. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) termed this the "crisis of representation". An aspect of this crisis that is particularly applicable to research with children is that of "othering". Emerging from a colonizing discourse of the participant subject, othering is a complex act of positioning the researcher and participant apart from each other; privileging the researcher for his or her knowledge. Othering occurs when a researcher either consciously or unconsciously believes he is better at telling the participant's story than the participant. bell hooks in her ground breaking anthology, *Talking Back: Thinking feminist, thinking black* (hooks 1989) eloquently describes her experiences with othering:

"I am waiting for them to stop talking about "Other," to stop even describing how important it is to be able to speak about difference. It is not just important what we speak about, but how and why we speak. Often this speech about the "Other" is also a mask, an oppressive talk hiding gaps, absences, that space where our worlds would be if we were speaking, if there were silence, if we were there. This "we" is that "us" in the margins, that "we" who inhabit marginal space that is not a site of

domination but a place of resistance. Enter that space. Often this speech about the “Other” annihilates, erases: “no need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speak subject, and you are now at the center of my talk.” (pp. 151-152)

This elitist positioning of the educated researcher is often present in research on children. Lather (2001) recommends that a researcher refuse to play the expert and to let the participant explain the phenomena. In their research of women with HIV and AIDS, the Lather and her colleagues viewed the women as co-researchers, allowing them to read transcripts and interpretive analyses (Lather and Smithies 1997). But can such a technique be used with eight to ten year old children? As Huber and Clandinin (2002) suggest, children can and should be considered co-researchers. They warn that although many researchers do not view themselves as the expert, and children as incapable of telling their own stories, the customary method of *presenting* research findings does follow this model. That is, the academic journals and conferences present findings outside of the worlds of children, and this decontextualized presentation is viewed as expert knowledge (Huber and Clandinin 2002). Researchers are encouraged to publish their findings, and these publications are rarely, if ever, made available to those who are researched. Researchers are introduced as experts, and the findings they produce and present are used to develop policies and directives. When stories are taken from their relational contexts, they risk being misunderstood and may misdirect the policies affecting children. New plotlines will be developed and played out in society. Children

who live at the edges of the culturally dominant plotline, such as young boys who are nonconforming in gender, are especially vulnerable to this crisis of representation (Huber and Clandinin 2002). I appreciate the suggestions made by some researchers that school age children are quite capable at serving as co-researchers (Deatrix and Faux; Thorne 1993; Graue and Walsh 1998; Docherty and Sandelowski 1999). Their improving linguistic and cognitive abilities make them excellent research participants for qualitative inquiry in that they are good narrators and accurate historians of past events. Children as young as 6 years of age have been found to be 91.7% accurate in recalling events, and were even more accurate than their parents and physicians (Steward and Seward 1996). As one researcher describes, children are competent social actors whose competencies are different from that of adults, but are competent none the less (Punch 2002).

Chapter Four

METHODOLOGY AND STUDY DESIGN

In this study I used interpretive phenomenology as a methodology to better understand the lived experiences of eight to ten year old boys' gender. This dissertation aims at making explicit gendering practices of young boys and seeking common meaning between the children and researcher. There were two primary aims in this research dissertation:

1. Describe the participants' definitions of gender and boyhood as they experience it in their daily lives in an effort to clarify conceptions of conforming (stereotypical) and nonconforming (atypical) gender behavior and elucidate ambiguities, conflicts, and notions surrounding gender.
 - Elaborate the lived experience of boys and gender across the spectrum, from inhibiting cross-gender behavior to reinforcing and propagating same-gender behavior.

- Systematically describe the external sources (determinants) from which boys receive social cues and sanctions regarding gender. Specifically, influence from parents, peers, and self will be explored.

2. Analyze the gendering process through participants' descriptions of past experiences via individual interviews.

- Understand and interpret the lived experience of boys who exhibit nonconforming gender behavior and articulate the factors that create distress or dilemmas resulting from this behavior.

- Understand and interpret the lived experiences of boys who exhibit conforming gender behavior and articulate the factors that create distress or dilemmas resulting from this behavior.

- Explore boys experiences of multiple dimensions of gender (felt compatibility, felt pressure for gender conformity, and attitudes toward gender groups).

Several questions that guided this inquiry are as follows:

1. How do the boys make meaning of their gender?
2. How is gender experienced in the day-to-day lives of eight to ten year old boys?
3. Where do these boys receive their messages about expected gender behavior?
4. Do they experience pressure to conform, and if so, where, and from whom do they experience this pressure?
5. How does the combination of nonconforming gender behavior and felt pressure affect self-esteem and/or overall sense of well being?

6. How is gender conformity expressed, and, how is gender nonconformity expressed?
7. If gender nonconformity is defined by “others” (society, peers, family, media, etc) at what age do boys become aware of these definitions? At what age do they begin to participate in the creation and preservation of these definitions? What causes most, but not all boys to modify their behavior to fit within these culturally prescribed definitions?

Sample

CHR Approval

Approval from the University of California San Francisco’s Committee on Human Research (CHR) was obtained prior to contacting any participants.

Sample Selection

Boys were eligible for inclusion in this study if they met the following inclusion criteria: 1) they were over eight years of age and under 11 years of age, 2) they were English speaking and, 3) were able to give assent and their parent would give consent.

Boys will be considered ineligible to enroll if they meet any of the following criteria:

1) they were unwilling to participate or, 2) they had been diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder (GID) or had received any medical or psychological treatment for a gender related condition.

The exclusion of young boys who had in the past, or who were currently undergoing treatment for GID was not arbitrary, but rather stems from the work and recommendations of Minter (1999) and Rottnek (1999). They suggest that future research on gender-atypical children take a different direction, free of inherent preconceptions of

pathology. They cite several studies, as well as the American Academy of Pediatrics that have found 1) gender nonconforming children who have adequate social support are no more likely to experience psychological disorders than children who are gender conforming, and 2) the most effective interventions for gender atypical youth are those that seek to alleviate external stressors and isolation. Therefore, it appears that many of the problems that children who are gender nonconforming experience are not psychological in nature, but instead stem from external stress and lack of support. Young boys who are being treated for GID have already received a strong message that their gender atypicality precludes them from a productive and fulfilling life (Minter 1999). There is an important qualitative difference between defining gender nonconforming children as having a disorder (as does GID) and in identifying gender-variant children as a distinct group who may be at risk for psychological distress because of social stigma and rejection.

Sample Characteristics

The study sample was comprised of 11 boys. All boys lived in the San Francisco Bay Area. Of the boys in this study, five were in traditional nuclear families, five were in two mom (lesbian) families, and one had two dads (gay). The ethnicity of the sample was diverse. Three boys were Caucasian North-Americans. Two boys were Caucasian European. Two boys were Hispanic with Caucasian parents. One boy was Hispanic with Hispanic parents. And two boys were of Persian ancestry.

Four boys were eight years old, six boys were nine years old, and one boy was ten years old. The eight to ten age range was fully represented as one boy was enrolled in the study the week he turned eight, and another turned eleven a week after his final

interview. Six of the boys attended private schools, and the other 5 attended public schools.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited from multiple sites in the Bay area with the primary sources being from elementary schools. Entrée into these schools was achieved first through informational meetings with school administrators where I explained the nature of my study. I requested that a general letter describing my study be sent to parents of eight to ten year old boys. Being aware of the social stigma attached to nonconforming gender behavior I was clear in my letter of introduction that the letter was being sent to parents of *all* age appropriate boys. If a parent expressed interest in having their child participate they were requested to contact me and an introductory meeting with the parent was scheduled. After consent was obtained, I met privately with the child.

In addition to my primary source of recruitment, flyers were posted at locations potential participants and their parents might frequent. This method did not prove helpful as no parent contacted me via this method. A local parent group that I belonged to allowed me to post my flyer and study information on their interne listserv. This resulted in five boys being recruited. And finally, word of mouth was responsible for four boys being enrolled in this study.

Reimbursement

According to the UCSF Committee on Human Research (CHR), caution must be exercised in deciding how much reimbursement or payment a participant receives to participate in a study. If the payment is too large, it might serve as undue inducement and therefore be coercive. Payment of participants holds special risk when the participants are children (Rice and Broome 2004). Ethical considerations concerning children and

payment that needs to be discussed when designing a research study include not allowing parents to profit from enrolling children in the study, and never using an incentive that could coerce a child to do something he would normally be uncomfortable doing.

In order to determine if the monetary or material compensation was the sole reason a child agreed to take part in this study several other methods of willingness needed to be considered. I explained to the children the nature of the study and how I am truly interested in hearing their stories. I also explained my intent to engage the children as co-researchers. Only after these measures were taken did I discuss compensation with the boys. The boys were then told they would receive a \$10 gift certificate after each interview. Assent was then obtained from the boys.

Data Collection

Data was collected from multiple, individual, in-depth interviews. In my previous pilot study examining eight to ten year old boys and emotions, individual interviews provided richer, fuller, and more interpretable data. Confidentiality of data was stressed and explained to the boys as my pilot data revealed the importance of confidentiality for this age group when discussing potentially stigmatic topic matter (i.e. boys crying or feeling sad). All interviews were audio taped for later transcription and analysis.

Drawings have been shown to be an effective method for obtaining data from children, especially if the researcher asks the child in an open way to explain *what* their drawing means to them and *why* they decided to draw it, as opposed to *what* they have drawn (Punch 2002). I offered paper and art supplies to all the boys as a method of expression. All boys declined, except one, who used the paper as a way to spell out swear words.

The use of prompts and props as interviewing aids have been discussed in the literature (Docherty and Sandelowski 1999). Prompts can be either verbal, such as questions regarding past experiences or external cues in the form of toys, games, pictures, etc. Props are these external cues that stimulate the recall of particular past events. I utilized a video clip from an Emmy award winning HBO children's special entitled "Happy to Be Nappy and Other Stories of Me". The clip I showed was the "Story of Henry", a 9 year old boy who likes to dance. (A further description of the clip is in the appendix). This clip was well received by the boys and led to many interesting and rich discussions regarding boys and gender. Props can also serve another purpose. They can provide a safe method for the child to discuss issues more generally, and less specifically (Docherty and Sandelowski 1999), especially when discussing socially stigmatized topics. I found this to be true with many of the boys. They were more comfortable with discussing Henry, and the imaginary scenarios we would create around him than discussing their own personal lives.

Most boys were interviewed twice, with only one boy being interviewed once, and two boys being interviewed three times. This resulted in a total of 23 interviews. Most interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes, but ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. All interviews were transcribed verbatim so they could be interpreted.

There was an interview guide designed to help loosely structure the conversation. Heideggerian interpretive phenomenology seeks to obtain understanding and meaning primarily from the everyday practical and engaged activities. Therefore many questions were aimed at eliciting narratives of the boys' everyday lives.

Data Analysis

Fundamental issues in phenomenological data analysis are: forestructure of understanding, interpretation, the hermeneutic circle, and modes of involvement (Plager 1994). Investigators are situated within their local practices and life worlds that draw upon experiential knowledge, shared meanings, history, and skills which are not fully articulated but present nonetheless (Benner et al. 1996). Interpretive projects strive to capture engaged practical activity through the use of full narratives and observations of direct practice situated in a historical and cultural context in order to access the ready-to-hand modes of involvement.

Themes that were consistent with the research questions were identified and analyzed following the hermeneutic phenomenology tradition as described by Benner, Tanner and Chesla (1996) and van Manen (1990). The interviews and observation memos were read and categorized by myself as well as others on the research team. Themes were identified and analytic memos were written for each interview as well as each theme. General observation memos were also written following all interviews. Initial meetings with Dr. Catherine Chesla, as well as Dr. Maria Gudmundsdottir assisted in the development of interpretations of the texts; identifying potential differences and agreements in interpretation. Common themes were identified and illustrated with narrative examples (paradigm cases and exemplars) and thematic analysis (Benner 1994).

Paradigm cases are the usual point of entering into dialogue with the text and are “strong instances of concerns or ways of being in the world, doing a practice, or taking up a project” (Benner, 1994, p. 113). The researcher arrives at a new understanding and recognizes a pattern from which he or she can understand other paradigm cases as either similar or contrasting (Gudmundsdottir 2000). While paradigm cases allow for

perceptual recognition and understanding of the text, they cannot be reduced to a set of elements to be used in prediction of behavior or practice (Benner et al. 1996; Gudmundsdottir 2000).

Exemplars are stories or narratives of a situation as described by the participant. Exemplars illustrate aspects of a paradigm case or a thematic analysis and include the participant's habits, actions, concerns and practices (Benner 1994; Leonard 1994). While the interpretive researcher, with the aid of an interpretive team, attempts to articulate and interpret the situation, the situation can never be fully articulated independent of historical and cultural context (Benner et al. 1996).

Thematic analysis was done across cases to clarify distinctions and similarities. Meaningful patterns, stances, or concerns were identified rather than elemental units such as words or phrases (Benner 1994). This method of analysis allowed for a broad understanding from comparing and contrasting different cases, narratives, and exemplars (Benner et al. 1996). Moving back and forth between portions of the text and portions of the analysis allowed me to develop a better understanding and generate new interpretive questions (Benner 1994; Gudmundsdottir 2000).

A Team Approach to Interpretive Analysis

The interpretation of the data was not an individual accomplishment. Frequent and regular meetings with my dissertation committee members, Dr. Catherine Chesla and Dr. Christine Kennedy assisted and challenged me. Dr. Maria Gudmundsdottir also provided regular and insightful interpretations as did all the members of my dissertation committee. Fellow qualitative research students were an active part of the research team as well.

Evaluating the "Validity" and "Reliability" of the Data

Because qualitative research is based on different assumptions and ontologies than quantitative methods, a different set of evaluative criteria must be used (Beck 1993; Kahn 1993; Burns and Grove 1997). Beck (1993) suggests that the quantitative terminology of internal validity, external validity, and reliability be replaced with credibility, fittingness, and auditability, respectively.

Credibility – In qualitative research, credibility refers to how vivid and faithful the description of the phenomenon of interest is. The readers and those who are familiar with the phenomenon should recognize it as their own. Detailed field notes as well as rich excerpts from the transcripts were used to help insure credibility.

Fittingness – External validity is a quantitative criterion that measures how well the findings of a study can be generalized to other populations. Fittingness is more appropriate to qualitative research and measures how well the findings fit into a context other than the one from which it was produced. Checking for data typicality (through the use of thematic analysis and other methods) as well as assuring that the study results “fit” the data from which it was generated. One way to test the “fit” is to have different people read the same text to determine if a consensus is obtained in the interpretation. As previously detailed I utilized the methodological expertise of a team in the analysis of my texts.

Auditability – In quantitative inquiry reliability is the ability of an instrument to obtain similar results over repeated tests. Auditability is the ability of another researcher to follow the decision or interpretive trail. Tape recording is an important method of establishing this audit trail. Extensive field notes are also an important tool. Colleague review of the data also assists in the auditability process. All of these methods were utilized in this study.

Steps to Minimize Error

I utilized the suggestions of Punch (2002) to minimize error and distortion of my findings and subsequently improved the likelihood of accurate representation. Punch suggests that several assumptions need to be challenged when working with children. First, we cannot assume that since we were all children once, we inherently understand the child's world. As adults, we unlearn, abandon or simply forget our childhood experience. Secondly, we must forgo the assumption that an adults' knowledge is superior to that of a child. This notion is especially cogent when interviewing children, as they are not used to expressing their views freely or being taken seriously in an adult dominated society (Punch 2002).

Another assumption of adults is that children lie and can't be believed. It is recommended that a rapport be established with children to minimize this possibility, although many adults lack experience in building rapport with children. Prior to asking the research questions I spent time talking with the boys about neutral, non-threatening subject matter. I also have been a pediatric nurse for more than 20 years and have refined my skills in building rapport with children.

Also, I was constantly aware of the adult-child power imbalance in our culture that might encourage children to respond in order to please me as well as the child's fear of my reaction to something they perceive as negative. Engaging children in research methods that are fun for children, such as drawing pictures or playing games can help minimize this power imbalance and increase rapport (Punch 2002). The use of a video clip proved fun and engaging for the children in this study.

Limitations of Method

There are limitations to interpretive phenomenology. Interpretive phenomenology is well-suited to investigate questions surrounding human issues, concerns, and practices in order to understand world, self, and other (Benner 1994; Plager 1994). Interpretive projects seek to remain close to the original text and notes while uncovering biases and blind spots. If the interpretive research begins to decontextualize the interpretation from the original text, there is a risk of attempting to theorize away from the lived experience which is more in the tradition of natural science (quantitative research) where prediction, prescription, and explanation are the goals.

Risks/Benefits

Any publications resulting from this research will not have any linking identifiers but participants/parents might identify with certain data. Therefore, despite precautions, there could be a loss of anonymity. Also some questions may have made the subject feel uncomfortable or upset. Loss of time and boredom were two other risks to the subjects. There was no monetary cost to the subject but loss of time is a foreseeable cost to the participants.

There were no direct or general benefits to participants. However, findings from this study will aid researchers, educators, and health policy personnel in understanding gendering practices. As previously noted in this proposal, a profusion of literature supports the that boys who do not adhere to the constraints of gender “norms” are subject to multiple methods of punishment and abuse such as bullying, teasing, and physical abuse. Nurses are particularly poised to address these issues with children and parents. A better understanding of this phenomenon can greatly impact the health of young boys in our society.

Conclusion

It is clearly supported by the literature that we have underestimated the abilities of children in Western culture (Whiting and Edwards 1988; Graue and Walsh 1998). Long standing theories of child development such as those presented by Piaget have not stood up to critical investigation. In what is considered a watershed volume, Donaldson's *Children's Minds* (Donaldson 1978) showed that children's cognitive abilities were severely underestimated by Piaget. Many other post-Piagetian researchers have bolstered Donaldson's findings and shown that children are more cognitively competent than had been previously believed, and adults are much less so (Graue and Walsh 1998). What Donaldson found is that when tasks logically equivalent to Piaget are presented to children in meaningful situations, children perform much more competently than described by Piaget.

Perhaps this post-Piagetian approach could yield richer and more meaningful understanding of children's experiences of nonconforming gender behavior. Graue and Walsh (1998, p. 44) state:

“When we give (children) tasks that are familiar and significant – that make sense to the children – and when we attempt to look carefully at their understanding and adopt sensible criteria for judging their understanding, children appear very competent indeed.”

This approach aligns nicely with the methodological traditions of interpretive phenomenology in that narratives are often sought that describe that which is familiar and significant. I am optimistic that interpretive phenomenology is a method that can uncover the meaning making experiences of young boys who are nonconforming in gender behavior. The philosophies of Heidegger, as well as van Manen and Gadamer are positioned to serve as sensible criteria for judging they boys' understanding.

Chapter Five

FINDINGS:

BOYHOOD GENDER AS UNDERSTOOD BY BOYS

We tell our lives through our stories. Our stories tell our lives. It is through these “life stories” and narratives that researchers are able to better understand the lived experiences and everyday lives of families (Benner 1994). In this study, 11 boys shared their stories that allowed me to reach a deeper level of understanding of boyhood gender. These stories ranged from the ordinary and mundane to the incredibly eloquent and personal. The styles of story telling ranged from age appropriate reports to wonderfully poignant and incredibly insightful metaphors. Regardless of the boy’s level of maturity or sophistication level, most interviews yielded data that was both informative and interpretable.

The boys told stories of how one becomes a boy in their worlds. They spoke of how they knew what were boy things, and what were not. They were able to report what happened when boys did “girl” things. And they clearly described who made the rules, who broke the rules, who enforced the rules, and who punished those who broke them. Additionally, they were able to shed light on what rewards were given for those who maintained the rules, either by self adherence or enforcement of others. I will discuss these stories in two broad contexts. In Part One of this chapter I will present narratives that illustrate the phenomena of “becoming a boy”. Within this section, I will first discuss what the boys told me that boys “do”. What did the boys define as “boy”? Second, I will discuss the external sources, or determinants that boys reported as influencing their

definition of “boy”. In Part Two of this findings chapter, I will discuss the phenomena of maintaining gender boundaries. How are these boundaries maintained? What are both the rewards for adherence, and conversely, the punishments for venturing outside the boundaries? And finally, who maintains these boundaries?

Part One - Becoming a Boy

Eight to ten year old boys were able to describe in concrete terms what boyhood comprised. They described fairly clear and distinct categories of behavior that were gender appropriate and were quite articulate about the social processes through which they learned the boundaries of gender specific behaviors. Many of these stories focused on observations boys made of other boys in different arenas such as school, home, and media. Frequently, a contrasting method of definition was used; girls’ activities were described and, by contrast, boys’ activities were something other than that. Some stories revealed the gradual nature of learning to become a boy. Descriptions presented make evident what was salient about gender to boys at this developmental stage. They highlighted practical activities in which boys engage. The most outstanding characteristics of the “boy” activities they highlighted were physical activity – particularly sports, and activities that allowed expressions of aggression, sometimes violence.

What Boys “Do”

Boys Do Sports

Bradley: Um, well, they especially like tackle football.

I: Okay.

Bradley: Like after school uh- um, they were playing football and everyone wanted to play tackle football.

I: Versus just touch football?

Bradley: Yeah.

I: Okay. Are you guys allowed to play tackle football at school?

Bradley: Yeah. Yeah.

I: You are?

Bradley: Yeah. Only- well- but you can't do it, so uh, violently. It has to be just...yeah.

I: It has to be like what?

Bradley: Well, like um, you- it ha- well, you can't like- like after you like touch the ground or something, people can't like start jumping on you, like pretend to piggy pile. On top of each other like they do in professional football.

I: So tell me, what is it about um- you said boys like violence like um, football and- what is it about that that boys like, do you think?

Bradley: Well...they um...they uh...well, they um- like they um...they're more like- well, boys uh, are sometimes- some boys are like more active and hyper than girls, but sometimes they're calm. And they...well, they like um, fighting and stuff.

I: Because they're more active?

Bradley: Yeah. And not only boys but men.

As told by Nathan:

Nathan: Hum. I like, what boys like to do are um, like things that are not girly.

I: That are not girly. So what- give me some examples.

Nathan: Like...uh, like playing sports games [...] And well, I don't know, like maybe- oh yeah, more of the spor- they- they- not that many girls like boxing, and more boys like that [...] and fishing and...maybe going snowboarding [...] and boys watch more like boxing movies and like sport movies, like the World Cup and things like that.

And by Bill:

Bill: Well...we do a lot of s- we like to do sports.

I: Uh-huh.

Bill: A lot of the times. Um, and personally I like- I mean, I love sports....

All eleven boys in this study reported sports as a key component to being a boy, even if the boy being interviewed did not himself enjoy or engage in sports. It appeared early in the interviews with each boy, as if it laid the framework with which to further define boyhood. Several further references throughout many of the interviews described

being a boy as sports moderated, and as being “non-boy”, or feminine, when one either did not engage in sports, or performed poorly in sports.

Sports played a central and pivotal part in the boys’ culture in relation to defining masculinity. All boys in this study were able to articulate this overarching presence sports had in their lives. The omnipresence of sports in the world of young boys had incredible power over the young boys concerns and actions. Although I did not ask any direct questions about sports, I did ask directly what the boys thought of when I said “what are boy things?” Again, not only did all boys mention sports, it was the first thing they mentioned, indicating the centrality it played in all the boys’ lives.

Some of the boys clearly spoke of their individual difficulties in engaging or competing in sports or other activities that require athletic prowess. Some boys described a method of coping with these difficulties that involved their choosing to not engage. Others described participating in these activities but acknowledging that they performed poorly and thus risked possible teasing from other boys.

Sports appeared to be intricately linked with social status for these boys. The “popular” boys described by the boys in this study were often the ones who were “strong” or “good at sports”. Only one boy mentioned that popularity was due to a boy being “nice”. In fact, one boy shared that the most popular boy in his school wasn’t very nice at all, but he was big, strong, and excelled at “wall ball” and soccer.

Boys Do Violence

Boys often noted that boyhood was defined by activities that were aggressive. Sometimes these stories of aggression were eclipsed by stories of violence. The use of words such as “violence” and “violent” throughout the discussion portions of this chapter

was not arbitrary. Some stories were clearly violent; stories of murder and kidnap for example. Others were not as clear. However, respecting the voice of the participants in this study made clear that the boys themselves viewed and described the behaviors as violent. An interesting developmental reveal, the boys rarely, if ever, used words such as “aggressive”, “assertive”, or “masculine”. The word used to describe boys’ behavior, as well as differentiate it from girls’ behavior, was “violent”.

The stories were told as if violence was a positive quality, allowing some boys to be viewed as superior to other boys; a higher rank of sorts. And boys were better at violence than girls. Again this was presented as making boys better than girls.

Bradley: Um...usually boys- well, in our school boys are usually um, ranked higher than girls because um, like the boys...the girls don’t like act up as more. Like um...if um- if a boy and a girl get up um, like in a fight, it’s usually gonna be the boy who wins because the girl isn’t really- like boys are um...more...they do more violence or they’re better at violence.

I: Better at violence. Tell me more about that. What does that mean, boys are better at violence?

Bradley: Well, they- boys are like- well, usually they’re stronger or something, and they um- boys just um- uh...like violence some- usually and uh, they um...they’re just like stronger and stuff.

Many of the boys stated they liked video games, and that there were certain video games for boys and others for girls. The presence of violence in video games seemed to make those video games more attractive to boys and less attractive to girls. When Thomas was asked what he liked in a video game he shared the following:

I: And you said specifically you like violent video games.

Thomas: Yeah, I play on a website that you have to be 13 years old.

I: Okay. Okay. And what is it um, about that website that you like?

Thomas: Well, I like it how I get a sword that’s made out of steel and how I kill this big rat thing. I like the violence and the monsters and the...lizards and stuff. I like anything really...violent... or monsters in it.

Violence as a salient aspect of boyhood gender expression emerged most clearly in a role play activity I asked some of the boys to engage in. Since several of the boys mentioned playing with action figures as a boy thing and playing with Barbies as a girl thing, I asked the boys to describe in more detail both the difference between the two types of toys as well as how they would play if they had both toys present in front of them. All the stories quickly evolved into stories of violence.

I: Okay. Okay. So tell me, I'm sometimes curious as to what is different between an action figure and a doll?

Bradley: Well it is they're both plastic, but um...

I: They're both plastic people.

Bradley: Yeah. Well, action figure...well, mostly all boys like action figures and dolls mostly all girls do. But um, well, action figures usually looks more fierce and...and might have a weapon or something.

I: Uh-huh.

Bradley: Where Barbie usually...well, Bar- Barbies are usually girls and um, like there's a- they usually like you can comb them or something. You can like play with them and s- some girl- Barbie girls now come with like things that you can do on yourself too, like mostly girls like they have like this uh, combing thing.

I: Oh, okay. Now um, there are boy Barbie dolls though, right?

Bradley: Yeah.

I: And there's one called Ken.

Bradley: Yeah.

I: Now, is that a Ba- is that a doll, or is Ken an action figure?

Bradley: I think Ken- well, Ken is um, probably...I'd say um...a Barbie. Because um- well, it depends what he looks like. But like if he looks like, "Hmm, I'm gonna kill you," that's sort of a action figure...If like it looks fierce and - like, "I'm a- I'm gonna hurt you."

I: But does Ken look like that?

Bradley: Well, not really. He looks more like the kind of one that Barbie...more like a Barbie because um, the Barbies are um...they have- Barbies are ha- usually like have um...uh, string hair or something. And usually have like- don't usually have very many moving parts. And some action figures don't either, but they usually are kind of...and you like move them and say, "Ah!"

I: So you play with them differently too, right?

Bradley: Yeah. Yeah.

I: And when you play with um, Barbies, how do people play with those?

Bradley: Well...if you had both, you might have like a action figure uh, kidnapping a Barbie or something. But if you had like just a Barbie, you would like uh- well, maybe you could buy a- like a car and you would go around and- like some people um, get a bo- boy and a girl and have them dating or something.

Um...yeah, and some...are uh...some just hang around with some and drop them from heights [chuckles] or something.

I: Okay. Well, you said something interesting. Um, you said uh, if you could have like Ken playing with um, an action figure. So let's imagine that, Ken is playing with which action figure? What should we use? What's like one of your favorite action figures?

Bradley: Um, I like uh- like uh, the Incredibles [chuckles] action figure.

I: Okay, so like one of the Incredibles. Um, and which Incredible?

Bradley: Uh, Mr. Incredible.

I: Mr. Incredible. The dad, right?

Bradley: Yeah.

I: Yeah, I like that movie. So Mr. Incredible is playing with Ken, and you said he could kidnap him, but what else could he do?

Bradley: He could uh- well, you could actually make it like Ken- is Ken here? Now...he goes into the changing room. Now he's Mr. Incredible. Or you could- like you could have them- Mr. Incredible save Ken.

I: Oh, okay. What else? That's interesting.

Bradley: You could like um...have Mr. Incredible like um, save the day by uh...by stopping Ken the Horrible [giggles].

Bradley clearly described action figures not only as looking “fierce” and “carrying weapons”, but also as the ones who “do”, or act, and are not “done”, or acted upon. He offered the example of combing a Barbie’s hair as a way of explaining how in his meaning story Barbie’s are “done”. Some of the other things that action figures “do” far exceed looking fierce. Bradley suggested that action figures also kidnap and kill.

The boys made it clear that although Barbie’s friend Ken was biologically a male toy, he was a “Barbie”, and not an action figure. Therefore by association, Ken was a “female”, and clearly belonged in the category of humans who are acted upon (or “done”) category, and not in the category of those who initiate action (or “do”) category. The boys clearly saw Ken as a sort of gender oddity, belonging neither in the masculine nor feminine world.

Many of the Barbie role play exercises demonstrated a plot line where males were dominant and females submissive. This plot line is consistent with a cultural master

narrative of gender (Martin 2003). This kind of interdependency between personal stories and culturally circulating plot lines offered the young boys in this study a way to position themselves in relation to social and cultural expectations. Most of the boys expressed in interviews an understanding that boy-ness comprises agency, and that agency is most distinctly male in vibrant physicality, as in sports, or in aggression. The Ken doll may be physically a male, but does not comfortably fit into this categorization because of his apparent absence of masculinized, aggressive, characteristics.

Another boy preferred Bionicles as his action figure of choice. This is his story:

Gregory: But Bionicles are like battling mostly.

I: OK. So you might have pretend battles with your friend. And what else might you do?

Gregory: Well, they like attack each other. Or sometimes it tells if they already have it like on the thing, so we uh- so we like let them play. We like battle each other. Then um, one that wins, we j- that one goes back on to the shelf.

I: Oh, so he wins and he- he gets kind of a- a rest.

Gregory: Yeah.

I: And the other ones have to keep battling it till what?

Gregory: Till the end.

I: What? And what's the end?

Gregory: The end means like until you kill the other Bionicle.

I: Sounds very interesting. And I wanna ask you one more thing about- OK, so you gave me a really good idea of like what you're doing with the Bionicles, um, and- and maybe what the girls are doing with the Barbies. So what if Bionicle meets Barbie? How would that play out? If you were like there, what would happen with those two?

Gregory: The Bionicle would kill the Barbie.

I: You think so?

Gregory: Yeah.

I: Yeah?

Gregory: Like if they're alive, yes.

I: What's that?

Gregory: If they were really alive, yes.

I: Uh-huh. But since they're not alive, they're just toys, you would just pretend?

Gregory: Right.

I: Wow! And there's no way Barbie could win?

Gregory: Nope.

I: No way?

Gregory: No.

Gregory continues to expand upon the cultural plot line of masculine aggression, often toward woman. In his story not only did the action figure *threaten* to kill Barbie, he actually *committed* the fatal act, and it is important to note that Gregory wanted to clarify that that was how events would transpire “if they were really alive”. Although it was clear that this was a story generated by a role play exercise and Gregory was not telling a story of an actual real life experience, perhaps this border play of negotiating real life violence and replicating that which has been modeled via cultural representations such as media, is a method of incorporating socially dominant domains of masculine behavior. (Later in this Chapter, the important influence media holds in influencing boyhood gender will be discussed.) Gregory had a story of real life violence as well. He told of a time he had a fight with another boy of similar age, revolving around who could use the swing set.

Gregory: So um, I was on the swing, but then the- the kid next door was there too and he’s like, “But that was my um, swing. I was on there first.” And I’m like, “Well, you got off.” Then he’s like...he just glared at me and then he went into his house. He came out with a belt. Um, then I’m like...I stande- I stood up. He wrapped it around my neck, but then I punched him in the stomach.

I: Hmm! That is um- doesn’t sound like a very fun experience.

Gregory: Nnno, but I had to.

I: You had to, why?

Gregory: ‘Cause I could’ve been dead.

I: You think so?

Gregory: If he choked me.

I: You think so? He was really gonna try to do that? And do you think a girl would’ve tried to do that to you?

Gregory: No

I: Why- what is it about being a boy that makes it OK to try to choke somebody?

Gregory: Maybe to show that they’re tough or something.

Nathan also had a story to tell about action figures. Whereas Nathan's story was about violence, he also included other socially corrective and policing behaviors; exclusion and humiliation.

I: Okay. So let's say like uh- or let's say one- what would a boy play with? What kind of action figure?

Nathan: Um, maybe a wrestling action figure or a...

I: Okay, let's go with the wrestling action figure. Like which wrestler has an action figure out? So let's say there was a boy playing with the um, wrestler. And he also had the Ken doll.

Nathan: Yeah.

I: What- what would he be doing with those two dolls?

Nathan: Um, making probably the wrestler beat up the Ken doll or just be playing with the wrestler by itself.

I: Oh, and not playing with the Ken doll at all?

Nathan: Yeah.

I: And what if one- what if the action figure he was playing with was like a superhero, like Mr. Incredible?

S: Um...Probably- I don't know. Maybe hitting each other or...he might be playing like when- when Mr. Ken like falls off the table and hits himself on the head and falls off from a really, really high building or something.

I: So he- Mr. Ken falls and gets hurt. What would Mr. Incredible do?

S: I don't know. He might just watch. And laugh.

Aggression and violence were both revealed by boys as a salient marker of boyhood gender. Whether the stories were those of aggression or those of violence was at times unclear. However, utilizing simple definitions of "violence" as a "force used so as to injure, damage, or destroy; extreme roughness of action" and "aggressive" as "full of enterprise and initiative; bold and active; pushing" (Webster 2000) the borders became more evident. These definitions, coupled with the boys own voice of describing their experiences with words such as "violence" and "violent" showed that violence is a salient component of boyhood gender. Violence appeared across social domains of gender experiences; in what boys do (sports), what they watch (movies), what they play (video games) and how they play (with action figures). Therefore, the complex fabric of

boyhood agency and being appears to be intricately woven with threads of physical activity, competitiveness, physical strength, aggression and sometimes even violence.

External Sources (Determinants) of Becoming a Boy

Peers

One of the aims of this study sought to determine from what sources boys received their messages about being a boy. All eleven boys reported that their peer group served as the greatest influence. Many boys reported “observation” of other boys as a key source of direction in navigating their gender. What other boys did greatly influenced what the boys in this study did.

One boy, Daniel described himself as the “quiet” type; one who liked to “observe” others. Although he admitted he often did not engage in stereotypical boy behavior, he still defined “being a boy” as what he observed in others, more stereotypically presenting behaviors. He began by describing how boys play.

Daniel: Because when I go to school I observe that mostly boys play those things.

I: Okay. Okay.

Daniel: And that less girls play them. So more boys play them.

I: Okay.

Daniel: So they’re probably a thing that more boys like.

I: Okay. That’s very good um, like scientific thinking.

Daniel: In my looking, that is. I’ve seen girls on TV and in school play them, but mostly I see more boys do it.

I: Okay. Okay. So what is it- do you think- and I think that’s a good observation. I think um, you’re right, when you look, mostly boys are playing those things.

What do you think it is about, let’s say football, that- the reason the- there’s more boys than girls? What do you think?

Daniel: Well, it just sort of just comes to mind when you just kind of see everything, when you observe the world, we see that- what boy things are and what girl things are just by looking.

I: You see it where? You see it in-

Daniel: Books.

I: Books.

Daniel: Movies.

I: Movies.

Daniel: Life.

I: Life. Life meaning what? Just walking down the street you see it, right?

Daniel: Yeah. In the playground, everywhere really. That kind of stuff.

I: Yeah. Everywhere.

Daniel: Living.

I: Living. It's just there "everywhere".

Daniel: Uh-huh.

Daniel perceived the presence of gendered behavior "everywhere". This perceived omnipresence demonstrates how unbounded or universal gender was in this young boy's world. Although Daniel repeatedly remarked that he rarely engaged in masculine behavior, he was able to beautifully articulate his awareness of the socially dominant gender discourse. Perhaps it was precisely because Daniel was not particularly masculine that he was acutely aware of the importance masculine gender played in his world.

Daniel's parents had shared that they purposely sought an elementary school that would be a safe haven for his feminine qualities. The school he attended received national attention for its "gender free" curriculum and the administration's support and celebration of gender nonconformity. Unfortunately, Daniel still did not feel completely safe, even in this progressive and protective environment. He explained:

Daniel: Yeah, usually it's not really 100 percent safe. There are kids who like-like...don't follow the rules sometimes.

I: So you said it's not 100 percent safe.

Daniel: No.

I: And what would that percentage be, do you think?

Daniel: Probably about maybe just 70 percent safe.

I: And 30 percent...?

Daniel: Unsafe.

I: Unsafe. Tell me about that unsafe. Explain that to me.

Daniel: Well, I've never really been teased at, but I know there are a few kids who are not so nice at the school.

I: And they would tease?

Daniel: Probably.

I: What is- what are the boys- the boys that are being teased, what are they doing that might get them teased, even if only 30 percent of the time?

Daniel: Probably something weird, something that happened weird.

I: Okay. How do you know that?

Daniel: Because they act like the kind of person who they would t- who would tease someone.

I: What is that? What- tell me what those kind of people act like.

Daniel: Well, they're not nice. They yell at people. They disrespect teachers.

They...I don't know. They get really mean at people. They chuck balls at you.

I: They what?

Daniel: They chuck balls at you. When we're playing ball tag, they're like super hard on you.

I: Uh-huh.

Daniel: It would make me think that they would tease people sometimes.

I: I understand. Have those guys chucked balls at you?

Daniel: Yeah.

I: Yeah. What- what do you think about that?

Daniel: I don't- I don't like it, but then...there's nothing you can really do against them.

Although initially Daniel stated that he had not been teased when he was in the “30% danger zone”, he shared that he had been the victim of physical attacks when balls were “chucked” at him. He also shared a sense of helplessness against his attackers (“there's nothing you can really do against them”) indicating a lack of support in his school; a school that had gained national recognition for its gender free curriculum and policies.

Other boys also shared their “observations”. Irving explained that he came to know through observation that Barbies are for girls, and therefore not for boys.

I: But we- we meaning everybody around us, says that's a girl thing [playing with Barbies].

Irving: Uh-huh.

I: Well, how do we know? How did we learn that?

Irving: Well, I think like, other people observing what other people have done.

Nathan had observations to share as well.

I: Okay. Okay. Um, so if, let's say um, playing Barbies is a girl thing, 'cause that's- that's what you told me, right?

Nathan: Yeah.

I: And maybe um, fishing is more of a boy thing. (Nathan shared that with me earlier in the interview)

Nathan: Yeah.

I: Okay. How do we know that? How did you learn that? How did you know Barbie was a girl thing?

Nathan: Um, because I've never seen a boy play with them. And I've only seen girls play with them. And fishing's because I don't see that many girls fishing, but a few.

I: A few-

Nathan: Do. Yeah.

I: Yeah. So it's what you see?

Nathan: Yeah. Um, so if you see boys doing it, it must be a boy thing. If you see girls doing it, it must be a girl thing. Yeah. More...more likely.

I: More likely? So you're pretty sure on those things?

Nathan: Yeah.

For Nathan and Irving the use of observation seemed to be a relatively straight forward process. That is, observational evidence is an age appropriate and developmentally expected method for understanding the world. I will discuss further this method of meaning making in the world later in this chapter.

Media

Media was revealed as an important influence on gender for the boys in this study. All boys reported there were boy movies, and girl movies. In fact, the boys segregated nearly all media into either boy or girl categories. Bradley shed some light on this.

I: Okay. Okay. Um...some people tell me there's even boy movies.

Bradley: Yeah.

I: What would be a boy movie?

Bradley: Well...lots of boys like Transformers and Power Rangers.

I: What is it about Transformers or Power Rangers that boys like?

Bradley: Well...like I said, like the violence and stuff. But um, even there- though there are some girls in them, it's like um...well uh, like the um...have like uh...like usually boys are the ones that- that- and like necessarily boy movies uh, are- like boys are the ones that uh, that usually are like uh, the heroes and stuff.

I: Uh-huh, uh-huh. And what is it about that movie if- if boys like Transformer movies? What would it be about that movie that girls wouldn't like?

Bradley: Well, not all girls like uh, violent movies, and they sometimes are offended when they- when uh- if they- if like the girls are- are lower and the boys are like usually the bosses.

A qualifying factor for a movie to be a boy movie was the presence of violence.

Bradley's story above demonstrated this as did Bill's:

I: ...when we talked last time, we were talking about uh, movies and uh, you had told me some movies you thought were like boy movies and movies that you thought were like girl movies.

Bill: Yeah. Movies.

I: And do you remember which ones those were? [pause] 'Cause I- I remember, I can tell you. Uh, you said a boy movie was like Star Wars.

Bill: Oh yeah!

I: Okay. Well, is there another movie that's more like, like a girl movie?

Bill: Barbie's the Island of Princess.

I: Is that a movie?

Bill: Yeah. I see all these commercials on it when I'm watching cartoons.

I: Okay. So let's- let's talk about those two movies then. Let's talk about Star Wars and Barbie's the Island of Princess. Is that the name of it?

Bill: Well, [chuckles] you could just say Barbies.

I: Okay, Barbie movie. Let's call it the Barbie movie. Star Wars and the Barbie movie. What makes Star Wars a boy movie?

Bill: Well, I think because it has like- I think girls like things like Barbie princesses and stuff. And boys like a little more like fighting and stuff like that and like action and stuff.

I: Okay.

Bill: Like um- like guns and stuff. And that's kind of like what they like.

I: Okay. So I've seen Star Wars many times.

Bill: Yeah.

I: So I know that in Star Wars there's fighting and action and guns and you said laser beams. [Bill shared with me earlier in the interview why he likes Star Wars.]

Bill: No, not laser beams, light sabers

I: Light sabers and...what else in that movie makes that a boy movie?

Bill: Um, maybe just like spaceships shooting things, explosions.

I: Spaceships, explosions. Okay.

Bill: Um, like there's this guy that shoots this like this laser energy stuff.

I: ...let's talk [more] about Star Wars 'cause of all these things in it: shooting, action, uh, spaceships, light be...- light uh- what is it called? Laser...

Bill: La- uh, light sabers.

I: Light sabers and those types of things. Okay. What is it about- what do you think about those things that boys like it and girls don't like that?

Bill: Well...I think- I think it starts out like boys are always...like I think it actually can kind of go back to where b- where boys are kind of the strongest and stuff. And...and I kind of- things like girls like things that's just kind of common stuff and like not really- not really like- not really like Star Wars because they're- they just like don't wanna- don't wanna have things happen so violently. Like they don't...they don't like violence pretty much.

I: So girls- girls just don't like violence.

Bill: I don't- yeah. Yeah.

Consistent with the previous discussion of violence as one of the key defining elements of boyhood, violence, once again appeared as a salient marker of boyhood media. But many other aspects of boyhood were revealed in this story as well. Bill identified themes of action, battles, power, superior physical strength, and an affinity to intense visual stimuli such as explosions and shooting spaceships as uniquely boy. Bradley shared that boy movies portrayed boys as “the bosses” of girls, and that girls find this offensive. The world of these boys as told through their stories supports that media serves as a crucial aspect in the backdrop of cultural expectations of boyhood.

Although many of the stories shared by the boys did not address how media *directly* influenced gender, there were multiple indirect reports and stories. Many boys told stories that involved action figures, all of which can be directly linked to media sources. This marketing strategy involves most often the use of a toy (e.g. action figure) as a branding and/or selling vehicle (and vice versa) for the media source. Gone are the days that a boy's action figure is a stand alone item; not associated with any movie, video game, television cartoon or show, as was the case with a popular action figure of the 1960s, GI Joe. In fact, two boys in this study mentioned they had never heard of GI Joe. All of the action figures mentioned by the boys in this study were clearly associated with media. Present day action figures cited by the boys such as Star Wars figures, Bionicles,

The Incredibles, and World Wrestling Federation (WWF) figures have all been marketed and produced by various media sources. So although media in the traditional sense (movies, television, print, etc) was not revealed as holding much forefront gender influence by these boys, the role action figures, and therefore media, played in the background understanding of gender for these boys cannot be underestimated.

Parents and Teachers

Contrary to what the literature suggests (as cited in Chapter One) the boys in this study rarely mentioned their parents or teachers as a determinant of gender. If the boys did not share a parent story, I asked them directly if their parents influenced their own gender understanding and expression. The response from Thomas was representative of most the boys:

I: Okay. But what about um, other- sometimes people say, “Well, my parents told me that’s a boy thing or that’s a girl thing. Or my friends told me that’s a boy thing, or my teachers.” Have you ever heard that from anybody?

Thomas: No.

I: No?

Thomas: No.

Bob tells a story that supports this as well:

I: Okay. Okay. How about anybody else like um- uh...your parents or your teachers or anything like that?

Bob: Not really. They don’t really decide what’s a boy thing and what’s a girl thing.

I: They don’t?

Bob: No. No. The boys do and the girls do.

I: Okay. Um, what do your parents say about boy and girl things?

Bob: They don’t really say anything. We never talk about it.

Well, they wouldn’t really care...

For the boys in this study, the influence of significant cultural components such as parents, teachers, schools and community fall to invisibility in their perceptions. As

discussed more fully in Chapter Two, Foucault (1990) and Butler (1990, 1993) argue that the presence of gender, although a social construction, is undetectable, and therefore unable to be challenged. Consistent with the notion of gender holding no overt power in our culture; it is the invisibility and lack of cultural awareness that defines it as a micro-practice of power. Both Foucault and Butler assert that it is this hegemonic nature of micro-practices that affords it greater power than overt macro-practices as a form of socialization and adoption of socially regulatory behavior such as gender. This inability to question gender aligns nicely with the maturational process described by Kohlberg's (1966) theory of gender development that states gender constancy, or the belief that one's gender is permanent and unalterable, is well established by grade school. Perhaps parents and teachers are more influential in the earlier stages of gender development, before constancy is established. Several studies Martin, K (2003), Martin, C (1981, 1983, 1990, 1993, 2002) reveal that younger children (preschool and early grade school) report parents and teachers as greater influences on gender than do older children.

However, two boys did share a contrasting narrative that demonstrated their perceptions of the influence that parents and teachers had on gender. First, a parent story as told by Gregory:

I: OK. So tell me um, just what comes into your head when I say, "What are boy things?"

Gregory: I can do that!

I: OK.

Gregory: Um, playing video games, going on the computer and- well, playing card games. And let's see...what else are boy things? Um...sometimes playing rough house. That's what me and my step dad do sometimes.

I: Uh-huh.

Gregory: And um...maybe like...playing rough games like where you can get all your energy out like wall ball, four square, football and soccer is my favorite sport.

I: Yeah. Um, so you had said sometimes just playing roughhouse with your step dad.

Gregory: Yeah.

I: What does that mean? Roughhouse, describe that for me.

Gregory: Um, like mostly playing with each other like, but rough. Like roughing around with each other, like we fight a little.

I: Uh-huh.

Gregory: Like play fight, but we don't really like wanna hurt each other.

I: Uh-huh. How do you know when you're rough enough, but you're not- you have to kind of not get too rough so you don't hurt each other, right?

Gregory: Right.

I: How do you n- how do you do that?

Gregory: Well, I just pretend to attack him, like I um, just run at him and he like catches me or something.

I: Uh-huh.

Gregory: And he slams me on the couch.

I: OK.

Gregory: But sometimes he might hurt me, but I- i- it doesn't really hurt a lot.

Gregory provides an exquisite example of the complexities of being thoroughly a boy. In defining boyhood he fully identifies: "I can do that!" He also has ready responses for boy-identified activities; video games, computer games and cards. He clearly revels in the motion and emotion of physically demanding tasks; activities that serve as abundant fuel for his energetic expression of being a boy. Several times throughout the interviews, Gregory shared stories that portrayed him as an extremely active boy. Without stating it directly, he suggested that less physically demanding tasks might leave him frustrated, with energy to spare. In fact, Gregory shared with me that he had been sent to the principal's office several times for his excessive physical activity ("cause last year I went to the office about 26 times or something").

For Gregory, rough-housing was a valued activity. Gregory spoke lovingly of his step-father during the interview and clearly admired him. The complexity for Gregory was that rough-house play with his step-father provided an outlet for his abundant energy,

a way to bond with an important adult, and sometimes it hurt. It's not clear why Gregory didn't give voice to any physical discomfort when rough-housing with his step-father.

But the combined experience of fun, freedom, connection and occasional discomfort were important lessons about what it was to be a boy, participating in a gender-identified activity.

Additionally one boy provided a narrative of a teacher's influence on his gender understanding.

Bill: Um...well, everyone- once in my class um, I remember there was this tea party and our teacher, our second grade teacher, and like this was only like four months ago. We um, we were doing this tea party, and it was really embarrassing because she was um- she was really like very tidy and stuff...and like...and then so we had to push the chair. We had to make the chair- the girls sit in the chairs and push the chairs in for the girls and do all that and I really didn't like it, it was embarrassing I think.

I: Oh, I see. So it was really clear that it was like the boys were supposed to be doing a certain thing for the girls?

Bill: Yeah.

I: And that was embarrassing, you didn't like that.

Bill: Yeah, it was kind of embarrassing.

I: Hmm. 'Cause you were supposed to be doing that 'cause that was the boy thing to do?

Bill: Well, yeah. Yeah. The teacher, she says- it says like in very adult voice, like tea time, you know, "Take your seat, madam" and push the chair in and everything.

I: Oh. And you didn't like that, that was-

Bill: And I didn't really like that.

In addition to the previous discussion earlier in this chapter of the diminished influence on gender parents and teachers have for children this age, additional factors unique to this study should be highlighted. In regards to schools, five of the boys attended public schools and the remaining six attended private schools. Regardless of whether they were public or private, all boys attended schools in affluent communities within the San

Francisco Bay area; arguably one of the most progressive regions in the U.S. Although not directly addressed in this study, the academic institution's positioning within a progressive environment might have greatly impacted and influenced the role that schools had on the messages boys received regarding gender.

Parental composition as shown in Table I (chapter four) reveals that six of the boys had gay or lesbian parents and the remaining five had heterosexual parents. This nontraditional parental composition might also account for the lack of parental data reported by the boys as influencing factors in their own gender schemas. This composition does however support an important finding of this study; that boyhood agency is an important aspect of the boys' creation of gender. Similar to multiple studies (Patterson 1997; Perrin 2002), children of lesbian and gay parents show no measurable or identifiable differences from children of heterosexual parents across many domains, including gender expression. Neither the boys of gay and lesbian parents nor the boys of heterosexual parents in this study reported parents as key sources or influences of their own gender schema.

Observational Evidence as an Important Method for

Young Boys' Understanding of the World

The boys in this study shared a common background that may have provided the context that led them to take up their expression of boyhood gender in a particular way. One aspect of this common background is an apparent constraint in verbalizing the origins of gender construction. This constraint is a clear reflection of their developmental level related to their age. Although clearly able to cite examples and observations of gender, the boys in this study could not verbalize the "how and why" or origin, of gender.

Clearly it would be unfair to expect an eight to ten year old boy to possess the ability to discuss gender at a level that would address issues of ontology; that is, to discuss the nature of being and knowledge. For many of the boys in this study, observational experiences constituted and explained their understanding of the world. This “a priori” or self evident view of gender is apparent among most of the boys.

However, consider a different understanding of the gradual representation of gender in a story told by Daniel. He thinks boys start to hide their behavior when they first begin to suspect it will not be accepted as masculine. He called this “enclosing” behavior.

I: Sure. Sure. At what age do you think boys start doing that? You know, stuff they don't wanna be teased about, they keep that “enclosed”. At what age?

Daniel: You know, I don't know. I don't remember. I think it just develops slowly. So it's pretty much all the time. But when you're a baby, you pretty much have, pretty much nothing. It's like filling up a cup of water. You slowly fill it up over a time.

I: And it was so slow over time, you don't even know...

Daniel: Pretty much. Then at some age it's completely filled up.

I: And you don't even remember when it was empty?

Daniel: Well...probably when you first were born...after that.

I: Uh-huh.

Daniel: Once you learn to talk or listen is probably once you start getting it filled up, 'cause before that, you just do anything you want and pretty much doesn't matter what you do.

I: And so as soon as you start to be able to talk and listen, you start to fill it up like meaning what?

Daniel: Fill up the...the cup of water.

I: Which means?

Daniel: In terms of the more you enclose some of your actions. The more you know to do that kind of stuff in private.

I: That's- that's what I thought you meant. I just wanted to make sure I got it right.

Daniel: Once you can start communicating, the world will start thinking more of what you're doing and more of what you think is getting embarrassed and what is not.

It was in this “filling of the cup” metaphor that Daniel beautifully offered a narrow wedge in which to better understand the creation of gender. Ironically, as a boy who repeatedly stated he did not engage in typical masculine behavior, Daniel was the only boy in this study who described the gradual process of taking up masculine traits in boyhood. Therefore, an “a priori” assumption that essentializes masculine gender (as defined by aggression, violence and superiority to women) as a natural part of being a boy is disputed by the narrative of a nine year old boy.

Part Two - Maintaining Boyhood

In this study I have attempted to understand where boys receive cues and messages regarding gender. The study aims were focused on parents, media, teachers, and other external sources as potential *creators* of boyhood gender as well as entities that *maintain* gender. And, although frequently cited in the literature, the boys in this study rarely mentioned them as entities that maintain gender. Rather, the boys in this study portrayed a much more agentic aspect of self, often telling stories of self regulation, and influence from others, primarily their peers. They spoke clearly and vividly of the rewards for maintaining expected gender roles, and of the punishment and repercussions of transgression. Thus, from the boys’ perspectives, the border work of maintaining boyhood gender was accomplished primarily by the boys themselves.

Confirmation Rituals

One way masculine gender expression revealed itself in this study was through interactional and institutional rituals of confirmation. By confirming physical dominance and superiority over one another, boys invested in and reproduced meanings of

masculinity. An exceptionally descriptive story was told by Bob of a particular rewards system in his school. His description of the rank system clearly rewarded and thus confirmed boys who maintained masculine behavior while simultaneously punished those who did not. His comments followed the viewing of a video clip of Henry, a young boy who is a ballet dancer.

I: Um- uh, what if he- what if Henry was your friend? Or could he be your friend? Would he be your friend? Would you be friends with Henry?

Bob: Probably not since uh, my friends would get really mad at me. And make me "it" every time, which is no fun at all.

I: They would do what with you every time?

Bob: Make me "it" since my friend's like in charge of a lot of people. So it's a really high up place to be his friend. And that would really be bad. [Being "it".]

I: Tell me more about that. That's really interesting to me. So you have a friend who you said is what? In charge of a lot of people?

Bob: Yeah.

I: And you said um, it's a high up place to be his friend.

Bob: Uh-huh.

I: So since you're his friend, that means you're pretty high up.

Bob: Uh-huh.

I: And if you were- let's say Henry moved to your town and he went to your school and Henry came up and talked to you one day and you thought, Oh, he's a pretty nice guy. I think he could be our friend. And then he says, "Oh" and- and you say, "Hey, what do you like to do?" And he says, "Oh, I'm a dancer. I do ballet dancing and I do jazz dancing" like he was doing in that video. Then you would think what?

Bob: He's really strange.

I: And you couldn't be his friend?

Bob: Because um, would possibly not because uh, of my friend who's kind of high up.

I: He wouldn't wanna be your friend anymore?

Bob: Yeah. Well, he'd still be my friend, but he would put me in a lower rank than pretty high up.

I: Really?

Bob: Uh-huh.

I: So what would that- what would that be like to be in a lower rank? What would that do?

Bob: Be pretty scary since the people who are in a lower rank are mostly "it" most of the time. But the people who are in a higher rank aren't "it" much.

I: What's "it"?

Bob: Like in tag and every other game you're probably gonna get "it" if you're a lower rank down.

I: So is- is being “it” kind of like being the one who gets picked on a lot?

Bob: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

Bob: So if he [Henry] joined in, he’d probably be “it” a lot.

I: He’d be “it” a lot and that would be a way of showing that um, you guys don’t like him too much, huh? You’d be picking on him.

Bob: Yeah, but after a while he- my friends would just stop and get someone else to be “it”.

Later, Bob continued his description of rank.

Bob: Well, I think that we like to play only boy games and we think that girl games aren’t good.

I: Uh-huh.

Bob: Except some kids do girl games. That’s why they don’t get to be at the higher rank.

I: Some boys do girl games?

Bob: Uh-huh.

I: So they don’t get to be on higher rank?

Bob: Uh-huh.

I: Oh. But it’s okay for girls to do the boy things?

Bob: Yeah.

I: Do you think girls have that kind of a rank system?

Bob: I don’t really think so. I think just boys do.

Another boy spoke of a rank system that clearly rewarded boys for engaging in masculine behavior. In his first interview Bradley described a rank system between boys, where the more athletic and the stronger boys were ranked higher than other boys. He also explained that because of athletic prowess and strength, boys overall ranked higher than girls.

I: Um, you had said something to me that was interesting. I went back and listened to our tapes from the last interview. You had said something interesting to me about um, boys and girls having different ranks.

Bradley: Yeah.

I: Tell me more about that. Do you remember that?

Bradley: Well...in like different sports, girls and boys have different ranks. Like mostly in like kickball boys are better than girls. So the boys are higher ranked.

And so um...like um...um...and usually in sports the higher ranked are usually the better and the- the...big ones. And so yeah. And...

I: But you had said um, something that um, outside of sports that's like not considering sports at all, but just kind of overall in our society that boys sometimes are ranked higher than girls, or men are sometimes high- ranked higher than women. Do you know why that is or what you- why you think that is sometimes?

Bradley: Um...usually boys- well, in our school boys are usually um, ranked higher than girls because um, like the boys...the girls don't like act up as more. Like um...if um- if a boy and a girl get up um, like in a fight, it's usually gonna be the boy who wins because the girl isn't really- like boys are um...more...they do more violence or they're better at violence.

I: Better at violence. Tell me more about that. What does that mean, boys are better at violence?

Bradley: Well, they- boys are like- well, usually they're stronger or something, and they um- boys just um- uh...like violence some- usually and uh, they um...they're just like stronger and stuff.

I: Yeah. Well, it sounds like- you tell me if I'm using a word- a good word for that. It sounds like that boys have more power than girls.

Bradley: Yeah. Yeah.

I: Yeah. Do you think that's true pretty much all the time?

Bradley: Well, usually yeah.

Rank was revealed as an effective method of gender regulation among these boys. Those who controlled rank were viewed as powerful and masculine. Other boys jockeyed for position to improve their status and rank. Often the method for maintaining or increasing rank was by confirming masculine behavior, or conversely by punishing others who did not display acceptable masculinities. Interestingly, maintaining even a lowly rank (or absence of rank altogether) with boys was viewed more positively than being excluded, or having some position of rank among girls. The ultimate success of a rank system is inherently dependent on the presence of subordinates. If the highest ranking boy can keep the lowest ranking boy(s) within the ranks by threatening total exclusion or worse, banishment to the company of girls, the rank system, and the regulatory power that it holds, prevails.

Punitive Rituals

Some of the boys' stories clearly described a form of punishment for those who did not maintain gender typicality. Stories of teasing, bullying, name calling, humiliation, being ignored and ostracized were all shared. Sometimes it was the mere threat of being punished in some way that resonated strongly with the boys. Threats of potential punishments held substantial power and strongly curbed boys' behaviors. From the perspectives of 8 to 10 year old boys, peers were largely responsible for enforcing gender maintenance.

Humiliation and Teasing

Daniel provided a very good definition of "humiliation". He said, "Pretty much [its] when people laugh at you and then you're like the center of attention... in like a bad way. Like you're being like teased and laughed at in a bad way." Teasing was the most common form of humiliation described by the boys in this study. Daniel told a memorable story of being teased. Daniel attended an extremely progressive private elementary school, where children might be divided into teams according to the type of shoelaces they were wearing that day instead of by their gender. This school even promoted a "pink tutu day", where everyone, boys and girls alike, were encouraged to wear outlandish clothing like pink tutus. When asked if he had ever seen a boy wear a tutu to his school Daniel said no, he had not. Apparently even in this school, teasing, or the fear of teasing, persisted.

I: What would you imagine if that boy went to school in a pink tutu?

Daniel: I bet everybody would tease him. All the boys would like tease him.

I: Yeah? And how would they t- what would they be trying to do to make him feel- how would they make him feel?

Daniel: Probably not so good.

I: And do you think he'd keep wearing that pink tutu?

Daniel: No.

I: No. Why not?

Daniel: Because he doesn't like how they react. So he'd probably stop wearing it so they could stop teasing him.

I: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Because you think he wants to be teased?

Daniel: No.

I: No. Not many people do. I would think.

Daniel: And if they want to do girl things, they wouldn't. 'Cause then they think that um doing the girl thing is wrong because um everybody'd think they're messed up, and they wouldn't.

I: They think ahead and think, "Hmm, if I did this, I might get teased and I'm not even gonna do it."

Daniel: Hmm...yes.

In addition to Daniel's story of teasing, additional stories by other boys revealed bullying, name calling, being ignored and being ostracized as important factors in maintaining gender.

Name-calling

Many names were used to publicly identify boys that transgressed gender boundaries.

Bradley: Well...they sometimes...one time maybe I think they might've- they like...called me a name or something.

I: 'Cause of your long hair?

Bradley: Yeah.

I: Do you remember what they called you?

Bradley: Um...I don't know. No, I don't think I remember. But uh, something like "girlie" or something.

Thomas: They'd laugh at you a lot...and pick on you.

I: How would they pick on you? What do they do?

Thomas: They would be mean to you and call you names.

I: What kind of names would they call you?

Thomas: They would call you cootie-brain.

I: Cootie-brain?

Thomas: Yeah, or something like that. Just any insult. Basically any insult with cootie on- as the first word.

In addition to “girlie” and “cootie-brain”, other words were revealed by the boys in this study as holding varying degrees of punitive power. Names such “fatso”, “sissy”, “gay”, “wimp”, “weird”, “strange”, “retarded”, “loco”, “dumb”, “messed up”, “hella messed up”, “idiotic”, and “annoying” were all names that boys in this study have been called, or heard others called, for engaging in activities that were considered unacceptable for boys. But the name that was shared most frequently and seemed to have the most pejorative power was “stupid”. The following are but only a few instances of boys using the word “stupid” as a form of name calling.

“Well, I think by the color- it’s kind of funny. It’s really funny, but they think by the color of someone’s shirt or by someone’s hat, they think that someone’s dumb or stupid.”

“They were dumb, stupid, didn’t know much.”

“...stupid because you’re playing girl game, doing a girl thing.”

“Well, they call him strange and stupid for playing with the girls and not boys.”

“Well, sometimes people say “stupid,” but any word that’s mean.”

“Well I’ve heard a lot of bad words for boys like that. Yeah. But the worst name I guess you could use is stupid.”

Being Ignored and Ostracized

I: Okay. You said you would get teased and ignored.

Irving: Yeah. It’s almost as bad as getting teased, to get ignored.

I: And what is it about being ignored that is so bad?

Irving: Well, a lot of kids and people like attention.

I: Uh-huh.

Irving: And um, like it’s- like if at recess if you’re being ignored, it’s like not really fun.

I: Uh-huh.

Irving: Because sometimes you might want to talk to someone or play a game.

I: Uh-huh.

S: Yeah, and some- it sometimes happens um, it- at um, my school. Like if someone is...not good at like kicking in kickball and the fielders might say, "Easy out," and something like that.

I: What does that mean, "easy out"?

Irving: Well, it will be really easy to get this person out. It's like a slow runner or bad kicker. So if he gets up to kick the ball and he's not very good, then somebody on the other team will call him an easy out, which is kind of a um...a way of just ignoring him really.

Bill shared that on occasion he played "tea party" with his little sister. When asked if his friends knew that he did this he replied, "no". When asked what might happen if they knew, he responded,

Bill: I think that they- they'd pretty much have to ignore me. I think.

I: Yeah. But what would they-

Bill: Well, on the outside they might ignore me, but, but inside they might think like, "Oh, that's not really what Bill would do."

Clearly rituals of teasing, humiliation, name calling, and being ignored all held significant punitive power for the boys in this study in regards to expression of gender outside of the acceptable range. Peer approval and acceptance, especially that of same sex peers, is an especially cogent aspect of eight to ten year old boys. Approval and acceptance which is conditional upon the adherence of gender norms served as an authoritative method of gender maintenance.

Rituals of Pollution

Treating Others as if They Were Diseased

"Cooties" narratives have been described by Thorne (1993) and others as a method of social regulation for children and are entwined with rituals of pollution. Individuals with cooties are treated as contaminated or carriers of germs. Being invisible, cooties are only known through their degrading announcement such as "Bill has cooties!"

Children have elaborate rituals for the transferring of cooties. Thorne found in her study that girls were far more often to be vectors of cooties than boys. It was only if boys were gender atypical, or of a minority ethnicity that they became more susceptible to cooties.

Eight year old Tyler shared this cootie story:

I: ...if you saw boys playing Barbies with the girls – they were boys your age, 8 or 9 years old – what would you think?

Tyler: Well, if some other boys were there? They would do this test on the boys. Like if they'd test to see if we had cooties.

I: Oh, tell me more about that. That's very interesting.

Tyler: Cooties like they're turning into a girl.

I: So the boys would do a test on those boys-

Tyler: Yeah.

I: -and see if they have cooties.

Tyler: Yeah.

I: How do you do that?

Tyler: Like what was your favorite toy? There are certain toys.

I: Okay.

Tyler: Like there's girl toys, and if you said a girl toy, that would be one test. And then your favorite food would be another test. And their favorite game.

I: Favorite game. So- let's say I was that boy and you were doing the test on me.

Tyler: Hmm.

I: And you said, "What's your favorite..." Well,...you ask me the questions.

Tyler: What's your favorite food?

I: Food. And I said pizza. (This answer seemed to evoke no response from Tyler)

Tyler: Hmm, what's your favorite game?

I: Um...playing with my Barbies.

Tyler: What's your favorite electronic toy?

I: Um...my um, Barbie's pink go-cart.

Tyler: Hmm...(Tyler is clearly confused and intrigued by these answers. I intentionally answered with girl responses)

I: Now, would I- would I be getting cooties? Would you be giving me cooties? Is that how it works?

Tyler: There'd be a very high chance that you had cooties.

For Tyler the seemingly innocent childhood game of “cooties” held significant power in the maintenance of gender. As adults we may trivialize the “juvenile” behavior of playing “cooties” perhaps because the term “cooties” has lost some of its pejorative power since it originated in World War I as slang for head lice. Of course with new times come new terms for contamination. A modern day version of cooties seems to have arrived. One boy told me he heard someone once say to a “sissy” boy, “Don’t touch me! I don’t want your AIDS!”

Rituals of Enforcement

Who Are the “Police”?

Boys in this study rarely mentioned parents and teachers as enforcers of masculinized gender expression. Repeatedly boys suggested that the boundaries of acceptable gender expression were controlled by the boys themselves. One boy, Oscar, said it was the boys themselves who were the law makers (by defining what gender expression was acceptable and what was not), the law breakers (when they committed crimes of gender transgression) as well as the law enforcers (deciding what punishment would be bestowed upon those who transgressed). His story was both humorous (he hummed the Dragnet television show theme song to make his point about the policing nature of his analogy) as well as compelling. Following a discussion about musical instruments being viewed as gendered, Oscar shared that he liked to play the piano but that he had been teased by other boys for playing a “girl” instrument.

Oscar: But there’s that, again, double standard or two laws about even instruments.

I: I know.

Oscar: It’s kind of crazy.

I: Yeah. Like- I mean, everything you wanna do there’s like a law you can’t- it says you can do it, but you might get teased.

Oscar: Yeah.

I: So there's the penalty for breaking the law.

Oscar: Dun-tu-duh-duh. (Oscar hums the theme song from Dragnet)

I: Yeah, huh?

Oscar: Yeah.

I: It's kind of like that, right?

Oscar: Yeah.

I: 'Cause you're the one who's called it a law. So- I mean, there isn't really a law-

Oscar: Law, no.

I: Right. The police can't come give you- arrest you if you play jump-rope. (Oscar had also shared with me that jumping rope was consider a girl thing)

Oscar: [Chuckles] No.

I: Like- but it's a law.

Oscar: Yeah. It's like a kid law.

I: It's a kid law. And who enforces it?

Oscar: Kids.

I: The kids.

Oscar: Yeah.

I: So they're the what?

Oscar: The lawmakers.

I: The lawmaker and?

Oscar: The police. So they make the laws and enforce the laws.

I: You're pretty smart to figure all that out.

Oscar: Thank you.

I: Thank *you*. Yeah. I mean, you just figured out a lot of stuff. Kids are making the laws, and if the kids break the laws, the kids enforce the laws.

Oscar: And they get the penalty of getting teased.

I: Right, and the penalty is like instead of going to jail, you'll get teased.

Oscar: Yeah. That's the jail. That's the kid jail. And it's pretty um...it's juvenile...going to juvie, juvie hall. Yeah.

I: It's pretty...effective. It works. Don't you think?

Oscar: Yeah.

In this study, rituals of confirmation, punishment, pollution and enforcement all emerged as salient markers of boyhood gender maintenance. The key participants in all of these rituals were the boys themselves. Challenging the assumption that children are passive recipients of social directives and scripts, the boys in this study told stories of active engagement, creation, and maintenance of expected boyhood gender expression.

Conclusion

Through multiple interviews with the boys in this study, the boys' own definitions of what it is to be a socially acceptable, i.e., masculine, boy emerged. This definition of "boy" was often detailed through stories of what boys "do", mainly sports, video games, and playing with action figures. A unifying factor apparent in many of these activities was the central and dominant presence of physicality, aggression and sometimes violence.

The presence and relative strength of external sources of gender messages were also revealed in this study. These determinants did not align completely with those described in much of the literature cited in chapter one of this dissertation. Contrary to extant gender literature, parents and teachers did not surface as important sources of gender understanding for the boys in this study. Although media was mentioned more frequently as an influence on gender than parents and teachers, from the boys' perspectives, media was a less profound influence than the literature suggests. It was in observing others, primarily peers, that boys crystallized their views of gender.

The complex and artful maintenance of gender boundaries were described by the boys as rituals of confirmation (rank), punishment (humiliation, teasing, name calling, ignoring), pollution (treating someone as if they were diseased), and enforcement (policing). The agentic qualities of the boys were revealed through these stories.

Chapter Six

DISCUSSION - THE GENDERED WORLD OF BOYS

“the difference of sex, if there is any, need be forgotten”

Susan B. Anthony, 1856

My overall intent of this study was to increase the level of understanding of gender in the lives of young boys. I purposely included boys whose expressions of gender were varied and diverse in hopes of capturing a rich and informative collection of stories. It was through these stories that a deeper, more articulate understanding occurred.

This study provided insight into the complex and often times difficult journey of gender in which boys embark. It is through the text and subsequent interpretations that I have sought to ground and develop the claim that gender is socially constructed. I was pleasantly surprised to find that boys are often significantly agentic in the creation of their gender.

Previous studies and the abundance of literature cite adults as the carpenters of this gender construction. But by examining boyhood gender via engaging the boys directly, within a process of detailed and involved dialogue, the active hand of the child in gender formation was revealed. As a result, I have been able to give full attention to boys as social actors situated in a presence abundant with social messages about boyhood gender.

As previously discussed in chapter three of this dissertation, we have clearly underestimated the abilities of children in Western culture (Whiting and Edwards 1988; Graue and Walsh 1998). Long standing theories of child development such as those presented by Piaget have not stood up to critical investigation. This study supports

Donaldson (1978) in that it showed that children's cognitive abilities were severely underestimated by Piaget. When tasks and conditions logically equivalent to Piaget are presented to children in meaningful situations, children perform much more competently than described by Piaget. Indeed in this study guided by phenomenological principles, when boys were asked to share stories that were meaningful to them, and not necessarily to me as the researcher, these advanced levels of cognitive functioning emerged. Graue and Walsh (1998, p. 44) state:

When we give (children) tasks that are familiar and significant – that make sense to the children – and when we attempt to look carefully at their understanding and adopt sensible criteria for judging their understanding, children appear very competent indeed.

Aligning myself with the methodological traditions of interpretive phenomenology, I sought narratives that were familiar and significant. Allowing the children to elect which stories to share allowed me to understand that which is of concern to them.

Utilizing the philosophies and tenets of queer theory and recommendations of leading queer theorists (Butler 1993; Foucault 1990; Gamson 2000) previously discussed in Chapter Two, this study purposely employed queer theory as a lens in which to examine the ways any “social arena is structured in part by the homo/hetero dichotomy” within an asexual register (Gamson 2000). That is, sexuality was neither an area of concern nor inquiry in this study, but the hegemonic influence heteronormativity has on childhood gender expression was. This approach to understanding boyhood gender was validated multiple times during interviews in this study.

Contribution to Science

Unlike the dichotomous categorization of biological sex, gender is much more contextual, fluid in its boundaries, and therefore can be difficult to define. Lacking clear definitions, a concept can be even harder to understand and explain. This study attempted to better understand gender as told by boys, and to explain those understandings to health care practitioners. Challenges and limitations within this study exist; nevertheless, this research contributes to the exploration and understanding of boyhood gender in several ways. I will discuss these contributions within two broad frames; first the findings of this study both support (and challenge) concepts and understandings of gender that are present in the extant literature and, second, the findings of this study contribute uniquely to the existing body of literature.

Before discussing these contributions, a brief review of the aims of this study will be offered to contextualize the contributions. Understanding gender as lived experiences of boys was the overarching and primary aim of this study. In an attempt to make explicit the gendering practices of young boys and to seek common meaning between the children and researcher, two specific aims guided this research:

1. Describe the participants' definitions of gender and boyhood as they experience it in their daily lives in an effort to clarify conceptions of conforming (stereotypical) and nonconforming (atypical) gender behavior and elucidate ambiguities, conflicts, and notions surrounding gender.

- Elaborate the lived experience of boys and gender across the spectrum, from inhibiting cross-gender behavior to reinforcing and propagating same-gender behavior.

- Systematically describe the external sources (determinants) from which boys receive social cues and sanctions regarding gender. Specifically, influence from parents, peers, and self will be explored.

2. Analyze boyhood gender through participants' descriptions of past experiences via individual interviews.

- Understand and interpret the lived experience of boys who exhibit *nonconforming* gender behavior and articulate the factors that create distress or dilemmas resulting from this behavior.

- Understand and interpret the lived experiences of boys who exhibit *conforming* gender behavior and articulate the factors that create distress or dilemmas resulting from this behavior.

- Explore boys experiences of multiple dimensions of gender (felt compatibility, felt pressure for gender conformity, and attitudes toward gender groups).

These specific aims will now serve as a point of reference for discussing findings that both contribute to as well as challenge the extant literature.

Boys were clearly able to describe their experiences of gender, as well as gendering practices. Most often these practices were experienced in what boys “do”; primarily activities of physicality such as sports and playing games. Boyhood gender as experienced and demonstrated through sports and other physical activity is not a new finding and is well supported in the literature (Kindlon 2000; Pascoe 2007; Thorne 2004). The often times violent undertones of this play revealed in this study is not as strongly supported in the literature however. The complex relationships of boyhood, gender, physicality, heteronormativity and violence are not sufficiently understood, especially in

eight to ten year old boys. The Columbine tragedy of April 20, 1999 that left 12 students and one teacher dead as well as 23 others injured created an immediate awareness for the need of a better understanding of violence among young males. Since then, much attention and research has been directed toward increasing this understanding (Kindlon 2000). However, younger, preadolescent boys have often not been included in this inquiry (hooks 2004). Future research specifically addressing and examining the relationships of masculinized gender, boyhood, and violence could perhaps make articulate specific risks and concerns for younger boys.

Returning to aim #1, boys in this study clearly understood both conforming as well as nonconforming gender. This understanding was often experienced and explained as a boy versus girl dichotomy. That is, anything girl was nonconforming. This finding is also not new to the existing body of literature (Thorne 2004).

Aim #1 also sought to understand the sources from which boys receive cues regarding gender. A significant challenge to the literature materialized within the course of this study when boys rarely, if ever, mentioned parents and teachers as significant influences. Granted, teachers and parents were not interviewed in this study, but specific questions regarding the influence of these important adults were included in each interview (see Appendix B, In-Depth Interview Guide). In this study a much more agentic portrayal of young boys as it pertains to gender was revealed. Several rituals of maintenance as discussed in Chapter 5 appear to be in large part both created and delivered by the boys themselves. Although these rituals are contextually bound by societal norms and expectations, the active hand that boys have in their gender experience has not been described as clearly and fully as it was in this study.

Aim #2 sought to better understand key constructs of boyhood gender, primarily felt pressure and felt compatibility, previously developed by Egan and Perry (2001). Egan and Perry's results were supported by the dissertation findings in that all boys, irregardless of their own gender presentation, shared stories and narratives clarifying the relationship between felt pressure and gender conformity (compatibility). Gender conforming boys shared stories that demonstrated a positive relationship between gender conforming behavior and felt pressure. That is, even though they were able to describe a pressure to maintain their gender conforming behavior, this pressure was not described in a negative way. Conversely, boys who were gender nonconforming described the pressure to maintain conforming behavior (most often by avoiding nonconforming behavior all together or perhaps engaging in that behavior only in private spheres) as distinctly negative. This work is a unique contribution to the existing body of literature in that it is the first study to confirm Egan and Perry's description of the multidimensional aspects of gender.

Possible Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be considered. Only boys between 8-10 years of age were interviewed, therefore boys outside of this age range as well as all girls were excluded; narrowing the generalizability of the findings. Neither parents nor teachers were interviewed and therefore the full extent these important individuals influence how boys understand and experience gender cannot be completely understood. All boys were from middle to upper-middle class families and resided within the San Francisco Bay Area. And finally, although I was acutely aware of the possibility of a researcher/participant power imbalance, issues resulting from this unbalanced

relationship were probably not avoided at all times; especially when the researcher was an adult and the participants were children.

The positioning of this research within the extant body of knowledge serves to inform and guide our current understanding of boyhood gender, and perhaps will also serve as inspiration for a fresh perspective on boyhood gender.

A Fresh Perspective on Gender

Biological sex is most often unquestionably understood, and therefore described by young children as dualistic and mutually exclusive. It therefore follows that children understand gender in a similar way. Kohlberg's (1966) landmark discussion of gender knowledge (apparent when most children 2 to 3 years of age can say "I am a boy", or "I am a girl"), and gender permanency (evidenced by a 6 to 7 year old's ability to state that his or her gender will remain constant throughout life irregardless of phenotypic changes such as clothing or hair length) were essentially based on only one determinant; cognition. Although many researchers and theorists (as cited in Chapter One) have challenged and subsequently broadened Kohlberg's theory of gender development, most of this later work was with older, adolescent children, for whom concrete, operational thinking was not as strong an influence in gender understanding. The children in this study were between eight and ten years of age, firmly planting them in a cognitive developmental stage where most of their worlds are understood in a concrete, "black and white", rule driven way. When this developmental "constraint" is coupled with the enormous hegemonic cultural influence of masculinized gender, it is understandable that most of the boys in this study were unable to *challenge* and question the role gender holds in their lives.

Adults however, can benefit from the past three decades of feminist and queer theory that has pushed the examination of gender beyond unexamined dualisms. Often times antagonistic, these dualisms that exist within adulthood have been significantly deconstructed and understood as greatly complex, guiding and informing many studies and intellectual projects. However these levels of understanding have not often been applied to research with children. Perhaps our inability as health care providers (as adults really) to see beyond the influence that biological determinism has on gender has clouded our vision. Has it even dampened our inspiration to see more clearly? Perhaps it is the dichotomous nature of biological sex that is evident at birth that accounts for this continued dichotomous categorization of gender throughout childhood. After all, with rare exception, one is born either a boy or a girl, never both. By describing boys and girls as mutually exclusive social categories, i.e., in terms of “pink” and “blue” or “strong” and “weak”, we ignore the complex interplay of gender meanings and variable gender expression between boys and girls, as well as within and between boys themselves.

Implications for Change

The boys in this study sometimes shared stories and experiences that if found within an adult context would surely be disturbing. But somehow the stories shared with me of teasing, humiliation, torture, degradation toward women, kidnap and murder are frequently accepted as a normal part of American boyhood. Is it that we as nurses and healthcare providers attribute these social transgressions to be an integral and necessary part of growing up; as an expected part of boys becoming men? Or are these illustrations of masculinity such a paradigmatic ideal that they fade into the ever present, and therefore hegemonic, background? After all, as eloquently stated by Gudmundsdottir (2008), “one can never really get behind the background.”

Although the stories of the boys in this study revealed that they were much more agentic in the creation and maintenance of gender than previously thought, we in health care must be aware that this agency exists within a larger social arena that by and large views children as unable to “write their own scripts”. In essence, this renders children as mere supporting actors in the story of their own lives. If we are unable, unwilling, or at times arguably justified in disallowing children to write their own scripts, perhaps we as adults could at least write for children a more fluid and contextual gender script. A script that allows for more “ad lib” acting and modification based on a child’s own personal gender expression as well as the ever changing, shifting, and complex cultural context in which they are thrown.

Specific Implications for Nursing Practice

Nurses are no less an active participant in society than any other individual. The controversy lies not in the fact that nurses are “no less” responsible agents of social change, but in the belief that they are “no more” responsible than other members of society. I maintain that as nurses we are “more” responsible for social change than members of the general population because we have the health and welfare of children, (by definition an “at risk and vulnerable population”), as a primary charge in our professional duties. A review of differences of gender expression that have direct impact on healthcare issues such as bullying, physical and verbal aggression and injury, depression, suicide, substance abuse, and overall mental well-being were all included in Chapter One of this dissertation. And as detailed in Chapter Five of this dissertation, the boys in this study reported several instances of name calling, teasing, humiliation, bullying, as well as aggressive and violent behavior, supporting the studies reviewed in Chapter One. As nurses and as pediatric nurses in particular, we are given many

opportunities to interact with children and parents and actively and genuinely discussing gender issues. The boys in this study have made transparent the importance of these discussions. The stories of these boys have led me to delineate specific implications for nursing practice.

1. *Affirm and reinforce all forms of gender expression among children.*

As a matter of routine during my interviews in this study, I asked the boys at the end of each interview if they had any specific questions or concerns that did not surface during our time together. One boy said that yes indeed, he did have a question for me. This was a boy who had shared with me that he secretly played with his younger sister's dolls in her bedroom where he would be safe from discovery. His question was presented to me in a nervous voice and with his eyes filled with tears. He asked if as a child, I ever played with dolls, and if not, did I think any other boys in the "whole world" played with dolls. Taking refuge in the role of the objective investigator would have allowed me to sidestep the question all together. But I was compelled to alleviate the obvious discomfort of this child by assuring him that yes, many other boys in the world play with dolls, and yes, even I played with dolls as a child. I further explained that when I was his age I too felt as if I was the only boy in the "world" who did so, but now as an adult I know it's completely alright to do so. I feel as a researcher, as I do as a nurse, it is my moral obligation to lessen suffering whenever possible.

As nurses we will not often have the opportunity to have dialogues with our patients as I have described above. But we will increase the odds if we first create an environment of trust and mutual respect. Private time with the child, away from parents or primary caregivers will often allow a child to share feelings of "not being like the other boys" regardless if these feelings are based in gender differences or not. Questions asked

by the nurse such as, “Do you ever feel different from other boys?” or “Do you ever feel like you have to do things secretly?” can shed intense illumination on issues of shame and guilt. These mental health issues are as deserving of intervention as any physical ailment or concern.

2. *Challenge the notion that there is safety in expression of nonconforming gender behavior in a private setting.*

Previous work done by psychiatrist Edgardo Menvielle, MD and Catherine Tuerk, RN (Crawford 2003) recommended that nurses, physicians and other healthcare providers encourage young boys who were nonconforming in their gender expression to continue with their expressions. It was recommended that these boys be supported in a loving and nurturing manner however, these boys were to continue with these activities in a place of privacy. After personal discussions with both Tuerk and Menvielle, I have come to understand the intention of these recommendations was for the physical and psychological safety of the child. A young boy could continue to play with dolls and he would be “free” of the bullying, taunting, teasing and actual physical harm inflicted by other boys. But it was through multiple interpretations of not only the story of the boy in this study playing with his sister’s dolls, but with other stories of shame in this study, that I advocate a different approach (see #3 below) in addressing boys who engage in atypical gender behavior. These stories have led me to believe that engaging in atypical gender behavior, or play, in private is inherently a shameful activity. After all, “are we ever really “free” to play, or do whatever, if we are not free of shame?” (Gudmundsdottir 2008). Future research might address this phenomenon of private versus public spheres of gender expression. It was Daniel who suggested that “enclosing” behaviors begin very

early in childhood, and its relationship to “closeted” behavior among adults should be examined and understood through the stories of children.

3. *Reversing the approach to gender equalization.*

For years a primary goal of feminism was the attainment of sexual equality between men and women. Undeniably this goal was justifiable in light of the gross inequities between men and woman in terms of social status, power, and income to name but only a few. The primary tactic of this movement was similar to the assimilationist movement of the gay liberation era described in chapter three of this dissertation. If women could only become more “like” men, gaining the societal respect, earning the same wages, and enjoying the same power, then a majority of the inequality would disappear. Similarly, if homosexuals could only be more “like” heterosexuals, then their inequalities would also disappear. Both leading feminists and queer theorists have realized that this assimilationist approach is wrought with misgivings and inability in addressing disparity. At their core, assimilationists must denounce their own internal value system as unworthy in their attempt to adopt those of others.

A similar approach has been undertaken by many in an attempt to eliminate the gender inequities of childhood. If girls could only be more “like” boys, surely many of these injustices could be eliminated. However, the stories of shame, as well as the stories of maintaining gender conforming behavior revealed in this study, make clear for me that this assimilationist approach has also failed.

Borrowing Rottnek’s (1999) suggestions, a new model for tackling gender differences in childhood could be proposed. Rottnek suggested a new paradigm for addressing the inequalities of gays and lesbians where instead of “centering the queer” we “queer the center”. That is, instead of encouraging gays and lesbians to behave in a

more heterosexual manner, he suggested that we as a culture “queer the center” or that is, expand, encourage, and celebrate gender differences in the mainstream. Similarly, I suggest that in addition to creating positive models in which girls are logical as well as emotional, we create parallel models where boys can be both emotive and logical. And in addition to encouraging girls to include in their repertoire ‘boy-like’ behaviors we encourage boys to include ‘girl-like’ behaviors.

4. *Discussions with parents.*

Perhaps this is the area where practitioners can have the greatest impact. As pediatric nurses we have many opportunities through discussions of anticipatory guidance to facilitate these discussions. We have many opportunities to portray a new landscape of gender fluidity to children and parents alike. Parents are at times understandably concerned with a child’s gender expression. They are concerned that their child with nonconforming behavior will experience psychological distress or physical harm from peers, or that their gender conforming child will have problems resulting from aggressive masculinity. Normalization through acknowledgement and validation of concerns will likely serve as a springboard for further discussions. Identification of particularly distressed or at risk families will assist in referral for further supportive services.

5. *Discussions with boys.*

Identification of boys who are at risk or actual victims of teasing and bullying should be an important aspect of pediatric nursing care. This study revealed that teasing is a common punitive method of gender regulation for boys. All boys who told stories of teasing and bullying portrayed those stories as negative and distressful, regardless of whether they themselves were the victim of said teasing. Breaching a gender norm or expectation posed a significant risk for, or was an actual cause of teasing. This finding

supports others (Horowitz et al 2004; Russell 2001; Garrity et al 1997; Friedman et al, 2006) who found that teasing and bullying behavior is a common consequence of nonconforming gender behavior.

Health care practitioners should be aware of both the role gender expression plays in whether or not a child will experience consequential teasing and bullying, as well as the level of severity these consequences might entail. Horowitz et al, (2004) found that 70 unique items served as sources for teasing and bullying. These 70 items were grouped into four categories: 1) physical appearance, 2) personality and behavior, 3) family and environment, and 4) school related. Of the 17 items in the “personality and behavior” category, 10 were clearly related to nonconforming gender behavior. Examples of these items were, “acting too much like the other sex”, “how much I cry”, “acting ‘gay’”, “not being good at sports”, and “being ‘chicken’ or scared”.

The consequences bestowed upon boys who cry, act gay, do not excel in sports, or act like girls can far exceed a playful and humorous level of teasing. Healthcare practitioners should be aware that teasing and bullying can have detrimental and dire consequences for children such as anxiety, low self-esteem, social withdrawal and isolation, depression, violent retaliation, and suicide (Boulton & Underwood 1992). Additionally, a study by Friedman (2006) found that among elementary school boys, a lack of masculine traits increased a boy’s suicide risk. This risk was significantly increased even further if he was teased or bullied about the lack of masculinity. Although social support did not serve as a protective factor for the at risk boys, parental support did. These findings, coupled with the findings of this study, suggest that healthcare practitioners should routinely ask boys about possible acts of teasing and bullying. If these acts are revealed, an inquiry into whether or not the child is withdrawn, depressed,

or suicidal should be made. If a practitioner notices, or a parent or child reveals gender nonconforming behavior, the same inquiry should be initiated. And citing Friedman's work, (2006) parents should be informed that withdrawal of their support has direct, and negative, implications.

Implications for Nursing Theory and Research

In this study I have provided a framework for practitioners as well as theorists to challenge their own beliefs and understanding of boyhood gender. As the title of this dissertation suggests, and the boys in this study confirm, the complex phenomena of masculinity is well established by the time a child reaches school age. The hegemonic background of taken for granted practices, is by definition, rarely, if ever recognized by adults. The following are topical areas deserving further research.

1. Further studies addressing the embodied nature of gender.

The inability to articulate many of the complexities of gender by the boys in this study would lead some to theorize that boys this age cannot serve as informants in understanding the phenomena in question. But the metaphors of embodiment shared by some of these boys leads this researcher to believe that gender is very much an embodied experience, and future research should address this concept of embodiment on a deeper level.

2. Promote further studies to understand the meaning of gender as it is expressed across the spectrum, and not the origins of nonconforming, or atypical gender.

By examining gender and gender diversity illuminated by an appreciation for the natural variance of life itself, free of pathologizing agendas, researchers and theorists would automatically expand the definitions, and the understanding of, the phenomena. And so the "discussion returns to what is normal, who decides what is

normal, and the reasons for their decisions” (Gottschalk 2003). I support Gottschalk’s assertion in that the majority of research on gender, the researcher defines what is normal in the design and implementation of the research. Based on the research findings, I underscore Gottschalk’s suggestion that:

“Further research that is not focused toward ... the idea of gender non-conformity as pathology needs to be done to clarify the reasons for, and the *meaning of* (emphasis added) gender nonconforming behavior. ...If conceptions of gender were more fluid and the characteristics and behavior now considered to be gendered were equally available to females and males, then the very idea of something like gender nonconformity or gender identity disorder would be absurd (Gottschalk 2003, p.48).”

3. *Longitudinal research on children and gender.*

Phenomenological understanding of both temporality and of context should be encouraged in future research to account for the difference in understanding gender across maturational timelines and in different settings. The incredibly insightful metaphor shared with me by Daniel about the glass (of gender) being filled with water over time suggests that a longitudinal approach across different age ranges might yield yet an even deeper understanding of boyhood gender.

4. *Continued research valuing the voice of children.*

As the literature review chapter of this dissertation reveals overwhelming, research regarding boyhood gender does not directly involve boys, but rather parents, teachers, or at best, retrospective studies asking young men to recount their childhood experiences. This study demonstrates that children are competent and capable in their ability to share meaningful, and interpretable, stories.

Conclusion – Thinking “With the Data”

Much has been written in the nursing leadership literature regarding nurses as agents of social change. I enthusiastically subscribe to the belief that nurses can and should be agents of social change, and nurse researchers have a particularly important role. It is as much an obligation to “go beyond” one’s data as it is to publish and disseminate one’s data. I do not mean going beyond the data in the sense that one is reaching conclusions or making interpretations that are not justified or supported by the data. What I mean is thinking, or theorizing what the data and the interpretations might mean in a broader, sociological perspective. As Steeves (2000) states, “what is the point of doing this kind of work, investigating human experience, if thinking about the human condition in its largest sense is not allowed?”

Geertz (1973) prefers to call this process thinking “with” the data, versus going “beyond” the data. I support Geertz’s position of thinking in this way; that thinking in broad terms about the human condition may be useful for researchers, theorists, or practitioners with the intellectual curiosity to care about boyhood gender issues. And although thinking “with the data” is not the same as making specific recommendations to clinicians or policymakers, this thinking “with the data” might change the mindset and beliefs of those in charge of policy and practice.

Therefore, it is within this spirit of thinking “with the data” that I return to a particularly noteworthy finding by Egan and Perry (2001) that was supported by this study. That is, that gender typicality and felt pressure are uncorrelated and yet relate to adjustment in opposite ways; positively for gender typicality, and negatively for felt pressure. Because this study purposely included boys who varied in their gender expression one might think “with the data” and see that it is felt pressure for gender conformity, not a perception of the self as gender typical that is harmful to psychosocial

adjustment. Whether the boys in this study were gender conforming or not, many of the boys were able to share stories of the unpleasant nature of either being forced to conform or observing others who were. Boys in this study who were gender typical did not share stories that would lead me to believe that they were experiencing distress based on their gender conforming presentation. And again, “thinking with the data” would suggest, as did Egan and Perry, that a child’s psychological well-being is safe-guarded by an environment that allows children to feel secure in their conceptions of themselves as typical as well as free to explore cross-sex options. This finding also directly challenges previous research that links gender identity and positive psychosocial adjustment with androgyny; that positive mental health is promoted by feeling both masculine and feminine (Bem 1981). In other words, self perceptions of gender typicality do not “necessarily reflect an unhealthy gender-role straightjacket that undermines well-being” (Egan and Perry 2001) rather they appear to contribute in a positive way to psychosocial adjustment.

Many of the implications and suggestions delineated in this chapter may, at first blush, appear “lofty” and difficult to operationalize. After all, many support a paradigmatic shift and cultural challenge of how healthcare providers understand gender and the influence it has on young boys. Changing cultural norms is indeed daunting. Perhaps an approach which challenges and creates new *subcultures* might serve as a more effective method. Consider the following quote from feminist bell hooks in which she suggests a new approach to tackling the pervasive presence of aggression and violence in boyhood by first actively seeking to create a new subculture within a culture. The culture

of nursing is indeed a subculture and her approach might very well have significant utility.

“To truly protect and honor...boys we must challenge...culture. And until that culture changes, we must create subcultures, the sanctuaries where boys can learn to be who they are uniquely, without being forced to conform to patriarchal masculine visions. To love boys rightly we must value their inner lives enough to construct worlds, both private and public, where their right to wholeness can be consistently celebrated and affirmed, where their need to love and be loved can be fulfilled” (hooks, 2004, p 58).

Children are poised, by the mere virtue of being children themselves, to help us as adults and healthcare providers better understand boyhood gender. And by “thinking with the data” those adults involved in health care can create those new subcultures and thus help children imagine, as well as experience, different futures, write new scripts, and craft new life stories. A better understanding of the dynamics and complexities of gender within contextual constraints as well as openings for varied expression can help broaden what is possible. After all, implicit in the belief that gender is socially constructed is the notion that it can be reconstructed as well.

Appendices

Appendix A	Introductory (Brief) Interview Guide
Appendix B	In-Depth Interview Guide
Appendix C	Demographic Data Sheet
Appendix D	Recruitment Letter
Appendix E	Consent Form
Appendix F	Assent Form
Appendix G	Letters of Support
Appendix H	Video description of “Happy to be Nappy and Other Stories of Me”
Appendix I	Recruitment flyer

Appendix A

Introductory (Brief) Interview Guide

Introductory (Brief) Interview Guide

1. Let me tell you a little about myself and why I am interested in talking with you.
2. Tell me about yourself. Who are your friends? Who is in your family? What school do you attend? Who is your teacher?

Appendix B

In-Depth Interview Guide

In Depth Interview Guide

1. Tell me about some things that boys do. Tell me about some things that girls do.
2. Tell me about some of the boy things you like to do.
3. Are some of these boy things harder to do than others? Tell me of a time when you found a boy thing hard to do.
4. Do boys sometimes do girl things?
5. Do you ever do girl things? Was this hard to do? Can you tell me about this time?
6. Have you ever seen another boy do girl things? Can you tell me about it?
7. How do you feel about boys who do girl things?
8. Was there ever a time you didn't want to do boy things?
9. Who tells/teaches us about what are boy things and what are girl things?
10. What do your parents say about boy and girl things?
11. Tell me about your favorite TV shows.
12. After watching the clip from "Happy to be Nappy", I will ask the following: Tell me about what you just watched. How would you react if Henry was at your school? If Henry was your friend? What if you were Henry? What do you think about Henry saying "all boys like to dance?" What do you think your friends/parents/teachers/siblings would say/do?
13. Tell me about a time when you were uncomfortable about a boy or girl thing. What about this particular event made you feel uncomfortable? What did you do? What would have made it feel less uncomfortable or better? How did you decide what to do? Did you talk to your family or anyone else about it? What did they say?

Appendix C

Demographic Data

Demographic Information

Pseudonym chosen _____

Age _____

Grade in School _____

Type of School (Private, Public, etc) _____

Members in immediate family

Ethnicity: White Black American Hispanic Asian

Other _____

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter

Date

Steven Rush, RN, PhD(c), MS, PNP

Doctoral Student

University of California, San Francisco

2 Koret Street, N411Y

San Francisco, CA 94143-0606

(415) 846-7086

Hello,

You have been given this letter because you are the parent or guardian of an eight to ten year old boy.

I am a PhD student at the University of California, San Francisco and I also have been a pediatric nurse for over 20 years. I am doing a study exploring how young boys behave in our culture. More specifically, I would like to understand how boys understand gender. That is, how do boys feel, and what do they think about the many messages in our society regarding how boys should act? These messages range from masculine to feminine and I am interested in how boys sort through and incorporate these messages into their own development.

If you agree to consent for your son to be in the study, I will interview him privately, two to four times, one interview every two to four weeks. The interviews take between 1/2 to one hour. I would also meet with your son prior to enrolling him in the study to assure his willingness to participate.

I am enclosing a copy of the informed consent form for your review. If you are interested in participating in this study, please feel free to call me at any time at (415) 846-7086. I look forward to meeting with you and explaining in more detail the goals and aims of my study.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Rush, RN, MS, PNP

Appendix E
Consent Form

**University of California, San Francisco
Information for Research Subjects**

Young Boys Meaning Making Experiences of Gender

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Steven L. Rush, RN, PhD(c), MS, PNP (Doctoral Graduate Student) and Christine Kennedy, RN, PhD, Professor in the Department of Family Health Care Nursing are conducting a research study to discover how young boys understand and interpret gender in their lives. You are being asked to give consent in this study because you are the parent or legal guardian of a young boy between the ages of 8-10 years of age.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree for your son to be in the study, the following will occur.

1. Your son will be interviewed for 30 to 60 minutes two to four times during a six month period. The interviews will be scheduled every 2 weeks at your convenience.
2. The interviews will be audio taped. The purpose of recording the interviews is to allow the researchers to accurately transcribe what your son said during the interview for analysis.
3. The interviews are semi-structured questions. The types of questions that will be asked are attached for your review. As new information is discovered, the interviewer may follow the line of thinking of the child.
4. Your child will be shown a brief clip from the PBS children's special "Happy to Be Nappy" depicting a 10 year old boy dancing. If you would like, I will show you this clip before you agree for your son to be in this study.
5. Your child will be given paper and crayons/markers and encouraged to draw as a way to express his feelings. No child will be required to do this, and all drawings will be destroyed upon the completion of this study.

6. The interviews will take place in a private room convenient for you and your child.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

Some questions may be personal, and may make your son may feel uncomfortable or upset. However, your son will be informed that he is free to skip any question that he does not want to answer. Your son will be free to decide to not continue with the interview or with the study at any time. Your son may experience boredom.

Confidentiality: Participation in research might involve a loss of privacy. To minimize this risk, a pseudonym (code/fake name) will be chosen by your son and the pseudonym will be used throughout the study. Only Mr. Rush and Dr. Kennedy will have access to the study records and audio/videotapes. At the end of the study, the audiotapes and drawings will be destroyed. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications that may result from this study.

D. BENEFITS

There will be no direct benefit to you or your son from participating in this study. However, the information that your son provides may help health professionals better understand the gendering experience of young boys.

E. COSTS

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study.

F. PAYMENT

You will receive no payment for allowing your son to participate in this study. Your son however, will receive a \$10 gift certificate upon the completion of each interview.

G. QUESTIONS

You have spoken with Mr. Rush, or Dr. Kennedy and have had your questions answered. If you have further questions, you may call Mr. Rush at (415) 846-7086 or Dr. Kennedy at 415-476-4114.

If you have any comments or concerns about participation in this study, you should first talk with the researchers. If for some reason you do not wish to do this, you may contact the Committee on Human Research, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the committee office between 8:00 and 5:00,

Monday through Friday, by calling (415) 476-1814, or by writing: Committee on Human Research, Box 0962, University of California, San Francisco/San Francisco, CA 94143.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline your son to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point. Your decision as to whether or not to participate in this study will have no influence on your present or future relationship with the University of California, San Francisco.

If you agree to have your child participate, you should sign below.

Name of Child

Date

Signature of Study Participant Parent or Guardian

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Appendix F

Assent Form

University of California, San Francisco
Assent Form
Young Boys Meaning Making Experiences of Being a Boy

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

My name is Steven Rush and I am nurse who is interested in how boys your age learn how to be boys. That is, how you understand boy things and girl things. I am asking you to be in my study and talk to me about these things because you are a boy who is between 8 and 10 years of age.

B. PROCEDURES

If you agree to be in the study, the following will occur.

1. After I have met with your parent or guardian and they tell me it is ok, I will select a day to come and meet you. This meeting will be about 10 or 15 minutes long.
2. You and I will meet together again to talk about things you know about growing up as a boy. These will be private meetings and no one except you, me, and my teacher who is helping me will know what we talked about. I will never use your real name when I talk about this. I will meet with you 2 or 3 times, and these meetings will last between 30 minutes and one hour.
3. If you would like, you can draw pictures while we meet to help explain to me what you are thinking or how you are feeling.
4. We will watch a short video clip.

C. RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

If we talk about anything that might make you upset or sad or if you do not want to talk about something we will stop. You can tell me anytime you do not want to continue with the interview or with meeting me for more interviews. Telling me you want to stop is ok, and will not make me mad or upset.

D. BENEFITS

Some of the things you tell me might help me or other nurses better understand what it is like to be a boy. This may or may not help you but hopefully it will help others.

E. COSTS

It will not cost you anything to be in my study. You might have to give up a couple hours of your play time to talk to me, however.

F. PAYMENT

I appreciate your taking the time to talk with me. I will give you a \$10 gift certificate when we finish each meeting. We might meet 2 to 3 times and each time you will get the \$10 gift certificate.

G. QUESTIONS

You have spoken with me, Steven Rush to ask your questions. If you have further questions, make sure you let me know. If you

have questions you do not want to ask me, please talk to your parents. I have told them what to do. I have also met with them and they say it is ok for you to talk to me, but even so, if you do not want to, you do not have to talk to me.

**PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY WHICH
MEANS IT IS COMPLETELY UP TO YOU TO MEET WITH ME
OR NOT.**

SIGNATURE OF PERSON CONDUCTING ASSENT DISCUSSION

I have explained the study to _____ in language he/she can understand, and the child has agreed to be in the study.

Signature of Person Conducting Assent Discussion

Date

Name of Person Conducting Assent Discussion (*print*)

Appendix G
Letter of Support

Letter of Support

Christine Kennedy, PhD, RN, Principle Investigator
Steven Rush, RN, MS, PNP, Co-Investigator
Department of Family Health Care Nursing
University of California San Francisco
2 Koret Street, Box 0606, Nursing 411Y
San Francisco, CA 94143-0606

RE: Your request for cooperation on recruitment of participants into your study

Dear Dr. Kennedy and Mr. Rush,

As the Director of Aurora School in Oakland, California, I have read your proposal entitled "The Lived Experience and Meaning of Gender in Young Boys" and support fully this project. I will facilitate the recruitment of our students into this study. I have met personally with Mr. Rush and understand the goals and aims of his proposal.

Since there is no ethics review board in our organization, we will accept the approval of UCSF's Committee on Human Research and look forward to working with you after approval is gained.

Sincerely,

Rey Almeida

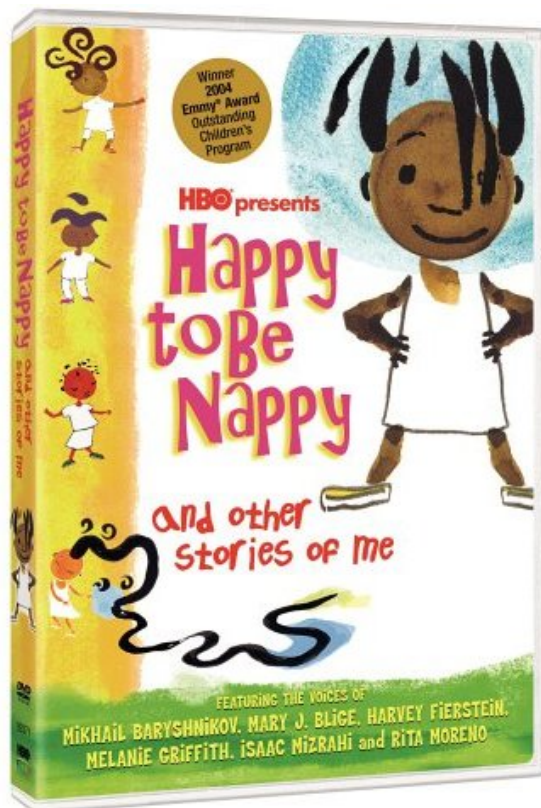
Appendix H
Video clip description

The 2003-2004 Emmy Award-winning (Outstanding Children's Program) *Happy to Be Nappy and Other Stories of Me* features captivating animated adaptations and illustrations from classic children's books.

These tales share poignant stories of special children who are empowered by their own uniqueness and correspond to real-life children featured in *Happy to Be Nappy and Other Stories of Me*. For example, two African-American girls discuss feeling different from their classmates. A young boy who is blind still attends a mainstream school. An eight-year-old girl grows up "little" among her peers due to dwarfism. The only boy in a dance class overcomes teasing by others.* A young boy with cerebral palsy shows how he fits in with his more mobile friends.

Through these stories, kids learn that the world is a better place when they love themselves for who they are, and when they embrace the individuality of others, no matter what their differences may be.

*This approximately 2 minute long clip will be shown.



This film has been rated G by the National Association of Broadcasters.

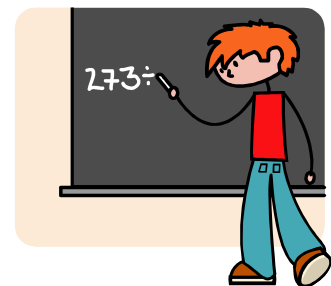
Appendix I
Recruitment Flyer

Are you the parent of an 8-10 year old boy?



A study examining gender and boyhood is seeking participants. Boys will be interviewed and asked to discuss how they think and feel about being a boy in our society. There will be between 3 and 4 interviews, no more than 60 minutes each. Your son will receive a \$10 gift certificate for each interview.

If interested, please call **415-846-7086** and speak to the researcher conducting this study, Steven Rush.



Mr. Rush has been a pediatric nurse for more than 20 years and is a doctoral student at the University of California, San Francisco.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven F. Rush". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Author Signature