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THE CONCEPT OF GENDER : AN OVERVIEW

BY JAYANTI BASU

Introduction

Gender is one of the most basic parameters utilised by human beings in perceiving any social situation. Studies have indicated that children learn their identity in terms of their gender from a pretty early age (Slaby and Frey, 1975) and subsequently, this learning is conserved throughout their life. Thus gender is an integral part of perception of self. At the same time gender serves as one of the most basic categories for perceiving the other (Biernat et al, 1991).

Earlier in psychological research, gender was incorporated as one of the givens, and rarely endowed with special attention. But, during the last two decades gender itself has become the focus of considerable research endeavour. Volumes have been written on it (McCoby and Jacklin, 1974 ; Eagly, 1987), but its nature and function is not yet thoroughly understood. The present paper intends to indicate that atleast some of this drawback is due to the lack of an integrated research approach in psychology that incorporates contributions from other fields of study, particularly, sociobiology and anthropology. Much of the psychological theories are based on a piecemeal approach to gender, emphasizing one aspect or the other. It is suggested that the issue of gender should be addressed on more than one levels, beginning from the ontological to the phylogenetic one.

However, before launching the discourse, it would be wise to clarify a number of definitions often used in the context of gender research.

The Definitions

Essentially, gender is the perceived sex and sex-related characteristics of an individual. According to Unger (1979), "The term gender may be used to describe those non-physiological components of sex that are culturally regarded as appropriate to males and females." (P.108). This definition has three components; (1) Gender entails a nomothetic approach (2) Gender is concerned with the non-physiological aspects of the person—a broad term involving a whole gamut of cognitive, affective and social phenomena; (3) Gender entails an element of value judgement—it refers to the appropriateness or desirability of certain qualities or behaviours.

A few other closely related terms are gender identity, gender role, gender role stereotype and gender trait stereotype.

Gender identity refers to the individual's belief about oneself in terms of gender relevant qualities. Here the concept of masculinity and femininity are relevant. These two terms refer to the state of the organism reflecting or displaying the appearance, trait and behaviour patterns characteristic of the male or female of the species (Reber, 1985).

Gender identity presupposes a number of social behavioral characteristics that goes with maleness and femaleness; These characteristics form the baseline of gender stereotypes. Technically, gender stereotypes refer to preconceived simplified assumptions and generalizations about sex typical behaviour (Shepherd—Look, 1982). When these assumptions are centered round what the members of a given sex should do, the issue is that of gender role stereotype. When the question of specific traits and qualities is dealt with, one embarks upon the concept of gender trait stereotype (Archer, 1980)

Keeping the above definitions in mind we shall proceed to clarify the fundamental questions of gender research.

The Basic Questions

A comprehensive gender research should seek the answers to the following questions :

- 1) What are the cultural prototypes of gender ?
That is, what roles and traits are considered to be ideal and/or characteristic of a given sex within a particular culture.

This is essentially the study of the content of gender stereotype.

- 2) How are these cultural stereotypes developed ?
How they are related to other basic features of the given culture ; what are the factors that contribute to their sustenance ? In other words this aspect is concerned with the process of transmission of gender stereotype throughout a given culture.
- 3) When in an individual's life span the concept of gender is introduced ? This is to be dealt on an individual developmental level. How early does an individual learn to recognize his/her own gender ? When is it crystalized ? When does s/he learn to categorize others in terms of gender ? What are the factors that contribute to this development ? This aspect deals with the developmental study of gender identity and gender schema.
- 4) Why is gender such a basic element in our cognitive-emotional sphere ? What are its adaptational implications ? What significance does it bear upon the existence of the species ? This is concerned with the evolutionary implication of gender.

In the following sections we shall scrutinize the contributions and drawbacks, of various psychological theories, in understanding gender and suggest how it can benefit from an interdisciplinary approach.

The Major Psychological Theories

Psychologists have thoroughly investigated the nature of gender differences and have endeavoured to account for them. The classic study by Mccoby and Jacklin (1974) gives a beautiful summary of the differences and similarities between the sexes. It is observed that abilities of men and women are not very different, but some substantial differences in some areas are discerned, e.g., in linguistic and visual-spatial ability. But their behaviours are often quite different, e.g., boys engage more in physical aggression than girls.

However, a detailed discussion of the findings is not done here. In the following sections we proceed to discuss the various explanations of these differences.

(a) The Psychoanalytical Theory

It was Freud who first seriously enquired about the nature and cause of gender difference. His approach was of course developmental, intended to explain the observed differences in behavior of boys and girls.

In his 1905 edition of "Three essays on the theory of sexuality" Freud formulated his theory of psychosexual development in children and framed his concept of oedipal complex. It was predominantly a masculinity theory: the boy developed intense attachment to the mother out of which evolved the fear of the powerful rival father and castration anxiety. Subsequently the boy resolved the issue through developing incest taboo and identification with father.

Freud posited a parallel model for girls—except that he had to take into account the fact that in early age a shift had to occur in their initial love from mother to father. This shift occurs along with the awareness of anatomical distinction—the knowledge that boys have a penis and the girls do not—and hence her penis envy. She renounces her clitoris—her inferior penis, albeit it is her seat of pleasure, becomes jealous of her father, at the same time wooing him in hope of having his baby which is a substitute for having his phallus. The wish to have a baby moves the girl toward a passive feminine identification.

Freud's view, particularly that of femininity was largely criticized by his female colleagues. Helene Deutsch (1932) was the first to consider the split in women between the image of themselves as motherly (Madonna Complex) vs. sexual (Prostitute Complex). More extensive revisions were forwarded by Karen Horney in her 1920 papers. She deemphasized the role of fantasied castration, but located it to the real life situations of the girl—the real smallness of her genitals. At the same time she studied the envy of breast and pregnancy in men.

Extensive reformulations of Freud's view have been conducted by Melanie Klein (1928). She hypothesized that the early split between the good and bad mother image is the fundamental locus of psychological conflicts. The real castrator is not the father, but the mother for both sexes. Both Klein and Horney consider 'masculine superiority' as a reaction against the boy's early identification of the mother—resulting in a narcissistic over-estimation of the penis.

Among the subsequent ego psychologists, Erik Erikson was concerned with formation of identity and in this context took up the issue of gender. From extensive observation of children's play Erikson (1977) found a reassertion of Freud's original idea—boys were more concerned with outer space—in building towers and protrusions; girls made scenes and enclosures evincing concern with inner space. Erikson noted that the two sexes experienced themselves according to the grandplan of their bodies—then perhaps anatomy is destiny. Ofcourse this was reinforced by cultural history.

Evaluation of the Psychoanalytical Theory

From the above discussion we observe that there is no one single psychoanalytical theory—but a number of theories under the same banner. The emphasis of all these theories are on the developmental aspect of the individual. The essence of all the theories is that males and females are genetically predisposed toward different cognitive and affective behavior, and they are attached to different kinds of objects. The culture contributes to maintenance and modification of these basic predispositions and develops what we subsequently see as sex difference among adults. The theories differ among themselves regarding the details of these predispositions and cultural effects.

Thus in terms of our basic process, the psychoanalytic theory emphasizes the how and when aspects of the problem. Also, the comparatively recent additions in information through infant observation of the developmental psychologists and the findings of the genetics and sex research are not well integrated in the theory, although some attempts have been done by workers like Gillespie (1975). And finally, inspite of numerous innovative attempts, the basic tenets of this theory remains unavailable to experimental manipulation (Eysenck, 1952). On the whole, psychoanalytical point of view provides a valuable theoretical basis to the developmental aspect of gender research, but its applicability remains limited.

(b) The Social Learning Theory

Like the psychoanalytical theory, the social learning theory also emphasizes the developmental aspect of gender. The major proponent of this theory was Walter Mischel (1966) who stated that children are rewarded for sex appropriate and punished for sex inappro-

priate behavior. It is evinced, for example, in the toys that parents encourage their children to play with. (Rheingold and Cook, 1975), Social learning theory thus locates the source of sex typing in the practice of sex differentiation in the process of socialization. Thus, it attributes no special consideration for gender, but states that the same general principles of learning applicable elsewhere are also operative in case of gender. It entirely eschews the role of predisposing factors, and emphasizes the role of stereotypes operating within the child rearing practices of a given society.

Evaluation of the Social Learning Theory

The merit of this theory is that it considers gender development in terms of definite observable operations of the socialization process within a community. In comparison to the psychoanalytic theory it takes into account to a greater extent the nature of the gender stereotype prevalent in the society—thus encompassing the “what” aspect of the problem in addition to the “how” and “when” aspects. The feminist section of researchers also finds it somewhat more acceptable, because it provides the scope of greater modifiability of gender-related behavior through change of societal attitude toward gender.

But the theory has been criticized for being over simplistic. The vast complexity of intersex and intra-sex differences can not be explained adequately by early reward-punishment system alone (Bee, 1985). Also it pictures the child as a passive recipient of the societal commands. It ignores the active manipulations and modifications that children do to organize and comprehend the social world (Bem, 1984).

Therefore, this theory was in urgent need of modification and other versions started to emerge.

c) The Cognitive Developmental Theory :

Some of the proponents of this theory are Kohlberg and Ullian (1974), Lewis and Brooks—Gunn (1979). In contrast to the social learning theorists these authors consider the child as an active agent of his/her development of gender identity and gender stereotypes. The major focus is on the child's cognitive aspect. In every child there is a need for cognitive consistency and self categorization. The major basis of this categorization is gender—a feature most discernible

in society. Once the gender concept is acquired, the child behaves in a gender-consistent way, and values objects and ideas that help him/her to sustain this gender identity. According to the principle of cognitive consistency she/he rejects whatever information disrupts this basic homeostatic condition.

An implication of this theory is that extensive gender congruent behavior will take place only after gender concept is acquired. This hypothesis has been supported by a number of studies (Ruble et al. 1981).

Evaluation of the Cognitive Developmental Theory

The cognitive developmental theory has received extensive support from the psychologists working in this area. But there are two major drawbacks. One is that it does not account for the fact that some gender typical behavior is observed even before the gender concept is crystalized (Slaby and Frey, 1975). Secondly, it fails to state why gender is considered the basis of categorization, why is it perceptually so salient to a child (Bem, 1984).

(d) The Gender Schema Theory :

The gender schema theory is closely linked to the cognitive developmental theory. Its basic idea is that stereotypes are developed on the basis of schema. A schema is a sort of personal naive theory—a cognitive structure to organise experience by determining the kinds of information to be looked for in the environment and the way of its interpretation (Martin and Halverson, 1983). Schematic information processing is therefore, selective in nature. It provides a dimension on which the informations are to be sorted out.

As far as gender schema is concerned, Bem (1984) suggests that sex typing derives from a gender schematic processing, from a generalized readiness on the part of the child to encode and organize information about self and others. The gender schematic processing itself, however is a learnt phenomenon derived from the sex differentiated practices of the community. Thus the basic process of schematizing can be modified if the sex differentiated practice of the given society can be altered. In this context Bem studied androgynous persons whose character traits was a combination of stereotyped masculine or feminine traits and undifferentiated persons in whom

neither was prominent. She found androgynous persons to be psychologically healthier.

Evaluation of the Gender Schema Theory

In comparison to the cognitive developmental theory, the gender schema theory provides a more organized view of development of gender identity and gender stereotype. The concept of androgyny has also at one time been heuristically valuable and inspired much research work. But there is a gradually accumulating research evidence that androgynous individuals are not essentially more adjusted than other categories (Silvern and Ryan, 1979)—a finding that was claimed by Bem (1975) and some other researchers (Nevill, 1977). This of course does not disprove the gender schema theory, but much of its applicability declines and renders it almost equivalent to a combination of the social learning and cognitive developmental theories.

Summary of Psychological approaches to Gender Research

In sum it can be stated the psychologists are unanimous in recognizing some differences in perception, emotion and action of males and females. There are ofcourse inter-group and intra-group differences, but inspite of all that an overall picture can be drawn.

As to its genesis, emphasis is merely on environmental factors—the way the environment imbues information into the individual. The organismic factor is recognised to the extent of a cognitive readiness, and a predisposing genetic cause is occasionally hinted at. But the full significance of this predisposing factor is not yet grasped.

One major reason of this lacuna might be in the researcher's resistance to investigate the 'why' aspect of gender. Part of this resistance was due to the difficulty in experimenting with culture and its adaptational significance of behavior. But it may also be due to the feminist outlook of many researchers who felt comfortable if gender difference in behavior could be attributed to the societal tradition (Bem, 1984).

Due to this neglect of the 'why' aspect in gender research, the contemporary theories seem piecemeal in effect. An overarching theoretical framework is lacking and the various theories have ended up in being isolated attempts to explain some discrete observation; but none of them has attained the desired integrity.

On the other hand, some other disciplines have already contributed to the understanding of this predispositional factor in studying gender difference. In the following sections we would proceed to discuss some such findings from anthropological and sociobiological points of view.

The Anthropological approach to gender

Unlike psychological approach, the anthropological view puts less emphasis on causation or development of sex difference; its primary interest is in the patterned accommodation human beings have made to these differences. Lee (1976) points out that basically there are four questions that an anthropologist asks about sex roles:

- i) How variable vs. universal are sex roles across human cultures?
- ii) What means are used to teach and persuade members of a culture to assume the sex role which corresponds to their biological sex?
- iii) In what way is sex role adaptive or maladaptive?
- iv) In what way does sex role fit into the total pattern of a given culture?

As to the first question anthropologists have observed that there are ofcourse some universal aspects of sex role. For example, anthropologists agree to the fact that there is no society in which women are unequivocally the dominant sex, although there are some where they share dominance with men (Munroe and Munroe, 1975). At the same time there is scope of diversity among cultures in various other aspects. For example the classic study by Mead (1935) of three New Guinea Societies revealed marked variation in sex-temperament. Thus, there is universality in case of some traits and diversity in case of others.

A similar conclusion can be reached at regarding prescribed roles for various sexes. In almost all societies males are the major earners, while females are the homemakers. However, there are societies where an opposite pattern can be discerned. Housekeeping and baby tending are proper male jobs there (Linton, 1936)

As to the second question how sex role learning is transmitted to the members of a particular sex, anthropologists observe two major sources. One is the family structure and direct teaching. And the

second is the initiation rites observed for boys and recognition of the bearing age through various rituals in girls.

Parsons (1955) have described how instrumental role in boys and expressive role in girls is learnt in typical nuclear families. But nuclear families as autonomous units constitute only 25% of human societies. There are other types ranging from extended families to extreme matrilineal ones. Along with this change in structure goes a change in social status of sex and a pattern of interaction between the sexes. These changes affect the children in various ways. The direct teaching by parents varies along with change in family structure. At the same time other indirect influences also change, for example, the model role played by the adults, that serves as the basis of imitation. Important in this context is the status envy hypothesis that states that the status of an envied person serves as the basis of identification (Burton and Whiting, 1961).

A second source of sex role learning resides in the boy's initiation rites at puberty and the girl's rituals at menarche and later menstrual phases. According to Burton and Whiting (1961) the initiation rites in boys is most meticulously followed in societies where earlier in infancy male sex role was not greatly imprinted. These rites are status symbols as well as traumatic events at the same time. Morris (1969) pointed out that this trauma serves to make a stronger imprint on the whole teaching. Similarly the menarche demarkates the status of girls and define their roles. In some societies menarche demarkates a second change in status. In Comanche Society, women are attributed the status of shaman, only after the bearing age is over. Thus sexuality is utilized to teach sex roles and utilized as a major marker in life. (Burton and Whiting, 1961).

As to the third and fourth questions, one has to think in terms of relative utility and interrelationships of various factors. In this context, Linton (1936) distinguished between ascribed and achieved status. An achieved status is whatever the individual can get in his/her life through competition or qualification. But most societies can not afford to provide ample opportunity for every individual to compete for achieved status. Therefore arbitrarily members of a given society are ascribed predetermined statuses on the basis of categories like sex, race or social class. The ascribed status according

to sex correspond to the basic physiology of sex, e.g. dominance behaviour in males who have greater size and strength. In this sense, the ascribed roles accord to the natural capacity of human beings and entails utilization of this capacity. Hence this is adaptive.

Secondly, there are economic and kinship factors which tend to dictate the degree of sex role differentiation found in a given society. For example where economic requirements such as hunting large animals prevail, the superior muscular strength and skill of men is needed. In this sense, sex role differentiation is adaptive. This factor of sex role differentiation touches upon our fourth question, i.e. the extent to which this role differentiation is intertwined with the whole cultural pattern. Sex roles are woven into the entire cultural matrix; it is really one part of the complex network of other social roles, statuses and codes.

The Sociobiological Approach to Gender

Sociobiology is a relatively new discipline which applies evolutionary biology to the study of animal and human social behavior. It is primarily concerned with the adaptive significance of behavior i.e. its ultimate causation as opposed to proximate factors. The central principle of sociobiology is that individuals will tend to behave in a manner that maximizes their inclusive fitness, their success in projective copies of their genes into succeeding generations (Barash, 1982).

Applied to sex role differences, it would mean that males and females would engage in those behaviors, sexual or asexual, that promotes maximum reproductive probability. Most obvious reflections would be in case of mating behaviour, but it would also overshadow many aspects including aggressive, co-operative and other features of social intercourse.

Sociobiologists have extensively studied the evolutionary implications, of various sexual behaviors in lower species (Lorenz, 1970; Tinbergen, 1960). But what is easier to study in animals is extremely difficult to study in human beings for various reasons. Therefore human socio-biology is as yet an underdeveloped subject. Much of the arguments are discrete and a total integration is not yet achieved. But yet some of these aspects demand attention and open new avenues to study gender difference.

For example, Lovejoy (1981) pointed out that bipedalism and upright posture of human beings, contributed to adaptive difference in sex role. It allowed early hominid males to carry food over considerable distance for the females who cared for their offsprings and thus it is related to sex role differences, since their own copies of genes benefited from this difference.

Man's unique sexual nature can also be subjected to evolutionary explanations. It is observed that male orgasm in human beings is more or less, automatic, but female orgasm depends largely on being in love, feeling of trust and intimacy (Fisher, 1973). Two explanations of this state, is observed. One is to ensure female's interest in sex through intermittent reinforcement, inspite of the fact that the consequence of sex is often painful to women (Diamond, 1980). The other is to aid the woman to decide who is the best fit person for caring for her offsprings. In a similar vein Belsky et. al. (1991) points out that children from father absent homes engage in earlier and promiscuous sexual relationships because they are not sure that they would readily find a person who would really be beneficial to their offsprings.

Thus, on the whole, the socio-biological approach suggests that like all other behaviors, gender related behavior also is not random. It serves a purpose in the evolutionary history, and only those behaviors persist which somewhat facilitate survival through sustenance of the genes.

Relevance of the Anthropological and the Sociobiological Approaches in Psychology : Toward an Integration

The above discussion indicates that the anthropological and sociobiological approaches consider the problem of gender difference from an angle which is different from psychological approaches. All these approaches are similar in considering in detail and recording the nature of gender differences within a given culture. Ofcourse this serves as the basic datum. But subsequently, the psychologist studies the influences within an individual's life ; the anthropologist studies the influences within the culture at a cross section of time ; and sociobiology views the problem as embedded in the evolutionary history of the species itself and considers individuals as a part of it,

In other words, the psychological approaches emphasize the what, when and how aspects of the problem but neglects the why aspect. Anthropology takes into account this why aspect in the context of cultural adaptation. Certain behaviors are encouraged to the extent they facilitate the optimum functioning of the members of a given society within a predetermined norm. Sociobiology, on the other hand, deals with this why aspect elaborately in terms of adaptation of the species, thus entailing a phylogenetic approach.

There are further practical implications of these various approaches. If gender related behavior is just a learnt phenomenon then it can be modified easily by changing the outlook of the society. But if this has a stronger anchorage to the survival of the species then its manipulation becomes not only difficult but also entails a greater risk. At present our knowledge in this context is inadequate.

Psychological research might gain from an approach to the problem of gender, which incorporates the adaptational implication of the behaviour. This would of course be exceedingly difficult, for two reasons. One is that cultural or species adaptation cannot be subjected to experimental manipulation. Secondly, the problem of proximal vs. distal adaptation confuses the issues. Proximal adaptation refers to whatever is convenient in immediate present. Distal adaptation refers to whatever is adaptive in the long run. Due to the contradiction in distal and proximal effects, often the behavior of an organism may seem counter-adaptive. This apparently counter-adaptive behaviour may either be the resultant of the evolutionary lag, i.e. this particular behaviour was adaptive when it originated, but drastic environmental changes have presently rendered it non-adaptive. Or it would be adaptive for the species in the long run, but at the present moment it may not seem so.

Research in this line would require perhaps a drastic change in methodology. A molar approach rather than a molecular one would be required and the ultimate adaptational significance would have to be cautiously judged for each response. For this purpose, an interdisciplinary approach may prove to be of immense value, since it would bring together the scattered informations about the subject.

According to the 'Interaction Principle' accepted by all the authorities, any behaviour, and to be more specific, gender-related

behaviour is the resultant of interaction between genotype and environment. Whereas this is accepted as a truism, no systematic effort is rendered toward understanding the relative contributions of each in the study of gender. It can be suggested that some aspects of gender-related behaviour would be more determined by genetic codes, and of course they would be more significantly related to maximization of fitness of the species. Some other aspects may be rather perfunctory as far as survival is concerned, and they would be more environmentally controlled. Psychological theories, so far, do not make up this discrimination adequately. For example, dominance behavior in males have many facets and for properly accommodating the various influencing factors of dominance, all these facets must be scrutinized separately.

It is suggested here, that for properly understanding gender, hypotheses should be formed at various levels. The implication of the segment of behaviour under scrutiny in terms of the individual's life, the cultural support and the adaptation of the species must be understood. Then predictions at each level may be made. Finally support for the predicted behaviour should be sought either from scientific observation or through experimental manipulation. Of course, this is easier said than done; but unless we can conduct this thorough research work, the mystery of gender would remain elusive to us.

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EGO AND THE BODY IMAGE

BY ARABINDA N. CHOWDHURY

Body image is a complex applied concept, widely used in psychiatry and psychology. In spite of its extensive use in personality theories, in psychodynamic formulation of psychiatric symptom formation and use of standard procedure of its measurements, a clear consensus about its definition and meaning is still awaiting.¹⁻⁵

Originally, Head⁶, a neurologist introduced the basic concept as 'schemata,' where he delineated the brain's ability to detect weight, shape, size and form of an object. This perview was termed as 'body percept' and has been defined as the accumulated sensory experiences of the body that determines the pre-conscious body schema and postural model. This entire process is dependent on the developmental maturation of the central nervous system and starts in utero with proprioceptive sensory impressions from the vestibular systems and receptors in muscles and joints. Kinesthetic and tactile modalities of perception are regarded as the basis of postural model.⁷ The importance of early sensory experience in the formation of body image is supported by the observation that children who have a limb amputated before the age of five years rarely show the 'phantom' phenomena.^{8, 9}

Psychological construct of body image incorporates the process of individuation, personality development and socialization experiences

of the individual. Schilder¹⁰ thus defined body image as, "the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say the way in which our body appears to ourselves." Others^{7, 11} have stressed the inclusion of attitudes and feelings towards the body which constitute the individual views and experiences his body with others, and this aspect of body image has been defined as 'body concept.'

Psychoanalytically, body image is viewed as the internalised representation of the body, both as a whole and as its component parts, within the individual's psychological organization or 'inner world.'¹² The term 'body ego' is usually used in relation to the ego and its incorporation of body image along the developmental axis.¹³ The relationship between the body image and the psychoanalytical ego construct has created a number of propositions.¹⁴ Schilder¹⁰ and Fisher¹⁵ considers body image as a personality construct and stressed on the importance of both the components, i.e., perceptive and expressive. Federn¹⁶ differentiates body image from ego and considers that the mental ego is experienced as inside the bodily ego in awakening state. Szasz¹⁷ proposed that the ego related to the body as an object and postulated a process of progressively more complex ego-body integration. Conflicts may arise out of the discrepancy between the concepts and percepts that an individual holds of his body and the ego maintained a 'body image ideal' as the referential background. The term 'ego' and 'self' can be used more or less interchangeably. Nietzsche¹⁸ described ego as being: "..... of reason. It is this which sees everywhere deed and doer; this which believes in will as cause in general; this which believes in the ego, in the ego as being, in the ego as substance, and which projects its belief in the ego-substance onto all things." Freud¹⁹ on this assumption stated that ego stood "for reason and good sense while the id stands for the untamed passion." He also stated the working protocol of ego in response to reality principle as: the ego "has been modified by the

proximity of the external world with its threat of danger. ... the poor ego has to serve three severe masters and does what it can to bring their claims and demands into harmony with one another. These demands are always divergent and often seem incompatible. No wonder that the ego so often fails with its task. Its three tyrannical masters are the external world, the super-ego and the id."

The external world and the super-ego represents the cultural influence and the learning process encompassing the coping and adaptation strategy of the individual. It also includes the different dimensions of personality functioning and innumerable external cues which helps to form the mental blueprints for the organization of our social behavior.²⁰

A variety of different terms are used to describe self concept and body image. Schilder¹⁰ stated that body images are not isolated but encircled by the body images of others. The formation of body images is not limited to the perceptions of one's physical self only. It also includes the perceptions of the appearances of others. These images are termed as extraneous body images. The perceptual and functional properties of the extraneous body images are the same as those of one's own body image. The extraneous body images form the basis of our concepts of others and they serve as referential frame for the interpretations of their social behavior and their non-verbal expressions of physical and emotional feeling states.²¹

'Self-esteem' and 'ego-ideals' are two related concepts very often used in relation to body image construct. Self-esteem reflect how one measures up to the desired self-image. Self-esteem may be positive (what one sees in oneself approximates what one would like to be) and negative which is characteristic of chronic dysphorias, depression and situational failures.²² A great deal of self-esteem is tied up in body image, many individuals spend considerable effort attempting to

perfect their bodies and adorning them. Anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa are glaring examples.

Bahnson²³ described the body image development in terms of maturational time scale. He described it as the "phenomenological selves are superimposed on each other like the layers of an onion." The whole process, started from the core nucleus of 'somatic self' in prenatal year, is a dynamic interactional model which incorporates the external stimuli and progress towards the direction of gender-specific social role (Fig. 1).

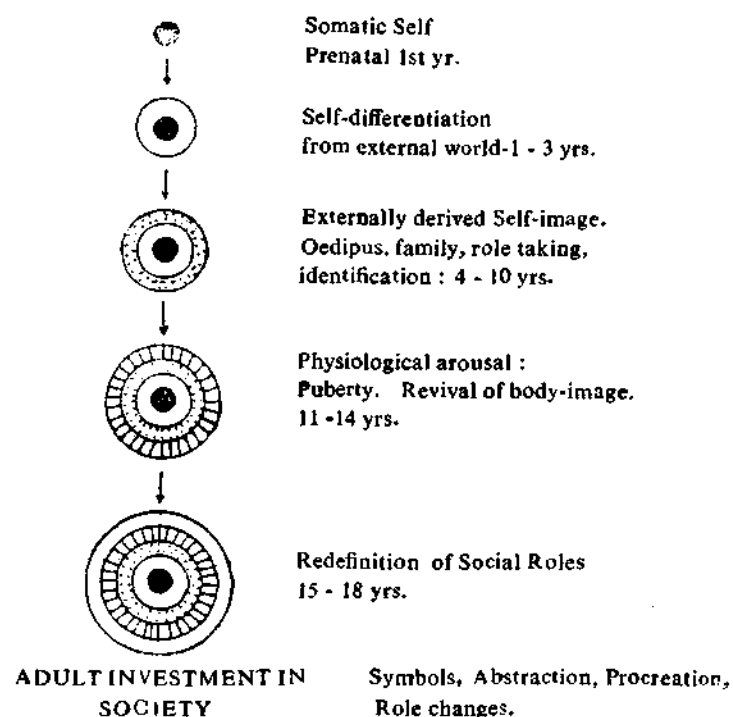


Fig 1. Developmental interactions between Somatic Self and Environment in the formation of Body-image.

Images of the bodily self is the mental representation of past sensory experiences or percept.²¹ The percept has two distinct categories, viz. internal body perceptions and the external body percep-

tions. Internal body percepts are defined as one's perception of acute physiological states evoked by nociceptive, thermal, visceral, tactile and proprioceptive stimuli that are internally conducted from peripheral nerve endings to corresponding cortical layers of parietal sensory area.²⁴ So awareness of all internal sensations (pain, touch, postural changes, thirst, sexual feelings) are contingent on their actual occurrence, they can not be mentally reproduced after their cessation. These body percepts are mnemonically stored and do not result in body images. External body percepts, through the visual and auditory sensory pathways, constitutes the perception of one's various body parts. They are mentally reproducible after cessation of their original sensory experiences and thus helps to form the body image.

Head and Holmes²⁵ stated that body schema is formed as the "composite experience of sensations." Schilder¹⁰ also stressed the role of all the accumulated sensory experiences in the formation of body image. Freud stressed on the function of ego in the formation of body image in the process of personality development. He stated, "the ego is firstly the body ego." Though role of sensory experiences occupy an important part in the formation of body image, yet it is not the whole story behind it. For example, a hypochondriacal patient may have no abnormal sensations, yet convinced that he has cancer or the transsexual, who inspite of his normal sensory experiences of his body, believe that he is actually a woman trapped inside a male body.²⁶ This disturbed body image is not the result of disturbed sensation. The question of conflict between ego and the body image comes into the picture, i.e. the way he experiences himself and the gender he ascribes to it. So all body images, our own and extraneous, consist of two components: a physical component (represent a given bodily feature or movement) and a psychological meaning often symbolic in nature, which reflects our feelings, thought and personal quality.²⁷

Self-awareness is the core psychological background upon which the dimension of body image revolves. Jaspers²⁸ described four formal characteristics of self-awareness: (1) feeling or awareness of activity; (2) awareness of unity (of self); (3) awareness of identity (of self throughout life) and (4) awareness of the boundaries of self. These four characteristics interact in differential manner and influence

the body image perception in different psychopathological states. Negative self-awareness is related with the perceptual phenomena of depersonalization (where patients feel that they have lost their personal identity and therefore feel strange and unreal regarding their person). Inflated self-awareness may be seen with narcissistic traits and personality disorders. Awareness of identity and boundaries of self has been found weak or lost in neurotic and psychotic disorders respectively.

The correlation between body image disturbance and mental health is a fascinating area and because of the complex concepts of body image, operating at many levels, the manifestations are also diverse.²⁹ Body parts take on significance and symbolic meaning both within the family and within the culture, and distress concerning a particular feature may reflect an underlying psychological conflict. Meerloo³⁰ stated that a complaint regarding physical appearance is always a symptom of an underlying neurosis. Schilder¹⁰ analysed that through identification, part of the body of another may be incorporated into one's own body image. So nose may be unconsciously identified as father/masculine and a female's request for rhinoplasty may represent symbolically a desire for separation from father.^{31,32}

The nose may be the symbolic representation of a phallus and in Freud's 'Wolf Man', specially in the analysis with Brunswick,³³ his delusion that his nose was deformed was seen as rooted in castration anxiety. There are several studies on men^{34,35} with anxiety concerning hetero-sexuality (with latent or overt homosexuality) who requested for effeminate noses. Similarly, the breast symbolizes femininity; sensuality and the ability to nurture.³⁶ Women seeking augmentation mammoplasty is seen as an attempt to recover a sense of femininity and attractiveness. They have difficulties with adult sexuality and the breast may be experienced as hated 'things' and not as a part of the self.^{37,38} The psychodynamics in patients with breast cancer, who were operated, is just the opposite. Many mastectomy patients reported severe problems in adaptation to breast loss. They described themselves as 'feeling a freak' or 'feeling like half a woman' and severely disturbed by the 'mutilation'.³⁹ They found themselves unable to look at magazines or TV where attractive women are displayed, without getting upset and experience an intense jealousy and

emotional distress at watching other women with two normal breasts. Organ image of penis symbolically represents the spectrum of male power (to penetrate a female). The shape, size and the erectile capacity and penile volume—all are equated in terms of masculinity. Cultural and social influences contribute to a substantial degree and in the absence of any noticeable deformity, many Koro patients⁴⁰ and patients with impotency⁴¹ experience psychological distress regarding the penile morphology and in sexual functioning.

Organic illnesses may produce both organic and psychological disturbances of body image, for example, following amputation or colostomy. In addition to physical symptomatology, they also produce profound feelings of loss, shame and mutilation. Orbach and Tallent⁴² have described the body concepts of colostomy patients 5-10 years postoperatively. These patients had a conviction that: "their bodily intactness and integrity had been violated . . . many patients on a fantasy level perceived the operation as a physical or sexual assault. Patients who fantasised the surgery as a sexual assault were supported in this belief by the colostomy stoma, a new opening in the front of the body. Most men regarded this opening as evidence of having been feminized while women often interpreted it as the addition of a second vagina. The bleeding from the stoma reinforced the fantasy of a second vagina because it was interpreted as comparable to menstruation." Trimble⁴³ also documented this combination of organic and psychogenic factors in body image disturbance in temporal lobe epilepsy.

Body image is a complex construct, theoretically and clinically drawing upon knowledge from inter-connected disciplines, e.g. neurology, psychiatry, psychology and sociology. A comprehensive understanding of the body image dysfunction in psychiatry could only be conceptualised if all these interacting dimensions are viewed from a single perspective.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF AGGRESSION OF CRECHE AND NON-CRECHE CHILDREN

DR. NILANJANA SANYAL & MISS INDRANI BHOWMICK

Mother-child bondage has a significant role in the proper developmental sequence of the child. In the early years the mother is the key figure among other family members with whom the child has a close psychological relationship. Freud (1940) has designated this relationship as unique without parallel, established unalterably for a whole life-time as the first and strongest love-object and as the proto-type of all later love relations. The mother is perceived as the provider of the routine nurturant care, emotional stability and discipline to the child, and thus occupies a central position in child's life.

Thus it is pertinent that insufficiency of mother-child interaction specially if gross and prolonged has been found to have serious effect on the child's mind and leads to negative consequences (Flugel, 1934). This lack of interaction between the mother and the child, inadequate maternal care often takes place due to mother's employment which keeps the mother away from the baby as they go out to attend to their jobs. In this respect it has been found that maternal employment has a great impact on specific aspect of the children's psychological adjustment (Johnson and Medinnus, 1969). From such research evidences it is surmised that the child's eventual personality adjustment depends upon a close relationship with his mother during his early years and unless there is a continuous mother figure available to the child harmful consequences are likely to ensue.

In the present society because of much improved educational level of woman, rising prices of essential commodities, more consci-

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ousness to improve standard of living, greater industrialisation and urbanisation, it has led many woman to acquire a job outside home. The resultant feature of such situation is the establishment of child-care centers. Hence with the rapid increment in the proportion of women working outside their homes, there has been felt an increased need for substitute care for their children. Because psychologically it is quite evident that the personality of a child and his ego integrity, are deeply dependent on his surrounding environment in which he is brought up and specially the emotional atmosphere of his home. Owing to mother's employment when this home seems empty of emotional support of its key figure to the child, its temporary replacement is sought in the daycare-centers or creche for children.

The creche or child day-care centers cover the large and diverse set of arrangements families make to care for their children while parents are at work (Pattygrove, 1981). The creche is a type of child-care centre where children of varying ages are kept for the whole day. Their age varies from that of an infant to school going older children. Here the children are bathed, clothed and fed and even they rest during resting hours. During play-time they play together and in this way they have to go through the fact of routine absence of the mother. They get the attention of care-givers in all respects, whereas the non-creche situation for children usually calls for an informal home setting where children stay with their parents, siblings and other relatives who are their care taker. Hence it is expected that personality-wise non-creche situations where children are commonly exposed to mother's attention and care will have a better effect on global or partial aspect of child's behavioural domain. Brown (1970) reported that children of working mothers performed poor in class achievements. Another study by Hoffman (1970) reveals that maternal employment puts infant at risk for developing emotional insecurity and social maladjustment.

Of the common forms of maladjustments in the children the prime one seems to be related to their excessive aggression. Dollard et al (1939) defined aggression as "any sequence of behaviour, the goal response of which is the injury of the person toward which it is directed" Again aggression may also be present in emotional state where intent to harm and injury are present without anger. The emotion which may be depicted as cold aggression. The elements

of aggression are present in all individual from a very early years of life. But pronounced pattern of aggression in children varies due to various factors. In this context it may be said that a child is exposed to different environment from the day he is born. Parents and particularly the mother may serve as a model of aggression. If by any chance the important mother-child relation is disturbed, the child gets frustrated as his basic need for love, security etc. are not fulfilled which may enhance his degree of aggression. So maternal employment which separates the child from his mother, and the nuclear family set up that prompts his stay at creche may be a cause of overt aggressiveness. In the absence of significant study of creche childrens' behaviour, the present attempt will be to unfold the fact whether there exists any difference in aggression between the creche and noncreche children in our cultural contexts.

Methodology

Sample : The present sample comprised two groups of children (N=60) of four to six years old. All of them belonged to Hindu nuclear families. The socio-economic background of all of them was more or less same. One group of children (N=30) stayed at creche during the day time owing to their mothers' employment and they studied at nursery classes in the schools within the creches their counterparts, another 30 children (non-creche ones) used to stay at home with their non-employed mothers and they studied at nursery classes in different schools of Calcutta. Equal number of male and female children (15 in each group) were selected in both creche and non-creche children sample. All of the children were single issues of their parents.

Tools :

- 1) An information blank was prepared and given to all the subjects in order to get the details of the family background along with their socio-economic status. Information were sought regarding the personal identity of each child.
- 2) Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices Test was used for measuring the intellectual level of the children.
- 3) The Bengali version of the Indian adaptation of Rosenweig Picture-Frustration Study was used to see the degree and pattern of childrens' aggression (Kundu & Basu, 1988).

Procedure :

In order to fulfill the purpose of present work data were collected from fifteen boys and fifteen girls of different creches of Calcutta and their similar counterparts of non-creche children of different schools. To get the data of creche children, the authorities of different creches were personally approached and to collect data of non-creche nursery school-going children, the school authorities were directly contacted. The information blanks were first given to the selected children of four to six years of each group individually. Then on its completion the Raven's Coloured Progressive Matrices test was given. On the basis of the results on this test only the children whose intellectual level was found to lie at average level, were selected for our study. This test was solely used for screening purpose. Then Rosenzweig's P-F study was given to them. The scores were obtained for six dimensions of direction and mode of aggression, i.e., Extra-aggression (E), Intra-aggression (I), Glossing over (M), Obstacle-dominance (O-D), Ego-defensive (E-D), and Need persistence (N-P) along with Group-Conformity Rating (G C-R) score. After scoring the responses, necessary conversions of scores were done and the data were treated statistically.

Results

Mean and S. D. values were computed for each of the six dimensional scores of the test along with the G-C-R score for each of the two Groups of creche and non-creche children. The male-female distinction did not yield much difference in Mean and S. D. values within their groups. The reason may be the homogeneity of the sample in respective perspectives. Then t-values were computed between sets of scores of two selected groups and this result was interpreted to establish the hypothesis of the study.

TABLE SHOWING THE MEAN, S. D. AND t-VALUES OF CRECHE AND NON-CRE
CHILDREN IN SEVEN DIFFERENT RESPECTS

	G.C.R.		O-D		E-D		N-P		E		I		R		
	Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t	Mean	S.D.	t
Creche Children (N = 30)	11.37	7.5	1.19	3.23	2.2	13.88	3.03	6.55	3.19	18.7	3.25	4.93	1.94	7.35	2.81
Non- Creche Children (N = 30)	9.5	4.5	2.63	1.5	18.77	3.44	6.6	3.56	10.9	4.17	5.35	1.56	7.72	4.03	
									5.99*	.06	8.21*	.94			.42

* Significant at .01 level of significance.

Discussion

The result of the present study yielded the information that the children of average intelligence of both creche and non creche groups did not differ much on all the dimensions of studying childrens' degree and mode of aggression. For example, significant difference was not observed in the 'group-conformity-rating' score which meant that the degree of aggression among the children of these selected groups was more or less of equal amount, though the magnitude of the mean value of creche children was found to be little higher than the mean of their counterparts. It signified that although age-appropriate aggression pattern is common in these children, most probably owing to their homogeneous cultural and educational set ups, the creche children tended to manifest more of their aggressiveness in terms of higher degree of frustration. This fact may be accepted as a reflection of their life condition that even though being children they had to stay away from their mothers for considerable hours in most of the days, and hence encountered greater frustration within their systems. Moreover, though the test scores did not show any amount of significant difference in the dimensions of Obstacle-Dominance (O-D) or rigidity in aggressive pattern, Need-Persistence (N-P) or solution getting behaviour to frustration, I or internal direction of aggression and M or glossing over tendency to evade aggressiveness, significant amount of differences were located in two dimensions of Ego-Defensive (E-D) aggression and E or externalised direction of aggression. In the context of controlling aggression through ego-defenses, the magnitude of mean value was found to be much higher in non-creche children, indicating the fact that as they are more exposed to mothers' consistent affection and restrictions, they learn to tolerate their frustrations or aggressions through different ego-defensive attitudes or behaviour patterns. Through these they want to get mothers' approval and hence remain secured in this fashion. But their counterparts, the creche children showed greater magnitude of mean value in E or external direction of aggression, proving that in the absence of mothers' direct affection and contact for a prolonged period in most of the days of a week they remain dissatisfied in their association with the professional mother-substitutes at creches, develop more aggression within themselves feeling deprived at mothers' love and overtly manifest such aggression either through tan-

trum behaviours or destructive ones to others. The findings seem to be in the line of others' works like Hoffman (1970); Brown (1970); Bhattacharya (1980) etc.

Before concluding the discussion it can be said that psychoanalytically aggression may be conceived of as a manifestation of narcissistic injury. The point of aggravation of this inherent drive may be any aspect of libido, where there is lack of fulfilment of any desire or wish. But of all these stages threat to oral libido seems to be more primary since the stage is the initial one and is highly associated with maternal love and care. Mother being the primary love object occupies the central most important place in the child's mind and hence the craving for her association is natural and usual. The moment the situation calls for the absence of mother for a prolonged time period at home being away from the child, the deprivation effect sets in. Owing to lack of gratification of a primary need the child develops greater aggressiveness. This is why it seems that the creche children in this study have been found to be more aggressive in degree and outward manifestation than their counterparts.

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