

21 Socialization into Gender

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The Four Questions

1. *This selection tries to evaluate a way of dealing with gender inequality rather than to describe a problem. Yet, it does identify a problem, as you will discover as you read. What is the problem that this selection addresses?*
2. *What makes it a social problem?*
3. *What causes this problem?*
4. *What is the approach to gender socialization that Risman is evaluating? Does it or does it not work?*

Topics Covered:

Gender
Socialization
Family
Inequality
Identity
Stereotypes
Peer culture

Gender socialization is apparent in any observation of children's lives. And while children are being socialized they react to, negotiate, and even reject some societal pressures. Although children are actors in the gendering process, we must not ignore the impact of differential reinforcement of gender-appropriate behavior. The cognitive effects of living in a gendered (and sexist) society, the reality of gender socialization, and the active efforts of boys and girls to negotiate their own worlds interact to shape their daily lives and perhaps to affect their future options.

UNEQUAL OUTCOMES: REPRODUCING GENDER DIFFERENCE AND INEQUALITY

Even when we recognize that children are both actors and reactors in the gendering process, we cannot overlook the strong empirical data which suggest that most boys and girls are differentially prepared for adulthood. Boys are still routinely socialized to learn to work in teams and to compete, and girls are still routinely socialized to

value nurturing (note the relative numbers of boys and girls in team sports versus those dedicated to the popular Babysitters Club book series). Thorne (1993) has shown convincingly that there is much more crossover gender play than dichotomous thinking presumes, yet other research continues to indicate the consequences of gender socialization on children (Lever 1978; Luttrell 1993; Hawkins 1985; Wilder, Mackie, and Cooper 1985; Signorelli 1990; Maccoby 1992; Hutson 1983). There is also much evidence that gender socialization differs by social class, ethnicity, and religion (Peterson and Rollins 1987; Collins 1990).

Socialization clearly happens both in children's play and in their families. Lever's (1978) classic study of boys' and girls' play offers insight into how boys and girls are prepared for a future in which men are presumed to belong in the public, competitive sphere and women in the private, nurturing sphere. Boys' games were more likely to be outside, involve teams, and be age-integrated. Girls were more likely to play make-believe games with one or two others and to break up a game rather than work through conflict. These differences are well developed by the middle of elementary school. Parents and immediate family are also obviously an important source of transmission for gendered expectations (Maccoby 1992). Research indicates that parents participate in gender-typing by often rewarding gender-typical play and punishing gender-atypical play (Bem 1993; Hutson 1983).

While several scholars have documented that some families are moving toward shared parenting and more liberal gender socialization for children, we have little information about how effective such changes in parenting style might be in a society in which gendering processes continue to occur (Coltrane 1996; Schwartz 1994; Segal 1990). It is to this question of how children in egalitarian families fare that I now turn our attention.

CHILDREN IN FAIR FAMILIES

The parents of the children discussed here have attempted to break the chain of gender inequality that typically begins at birth. These children are living in a context different from that in more mainstream families: most of these parents make a conscious effort *not* to replicate what Connell (1987) calls hegemonic masculinities

and emphasized femininities. They have an ideological and practical commitment to organizing their homes and families in an egalitarian manner. Whereas mainstream parents may react with delight when their daughter wants to be Barbie for Halloween and their son wants toy guns for his birthday, these parents are likely to be dismayed. Their children are growing up in a world where gender does not dictate who does what or who has more power, at least not in the family. Rather than receiving reinforcement from their parents when they enact hegemonic behavior, these children are likely to encounter disappointment or concern. So how do these children negotiate gender, given their atypical parents?

To understand these children's perspectives on their own lives we had to create cognitively appropriate research instruments. After six months of planning we decided on three separate formats for the children: an interview schedule with questions resembling stories for the four- through six-year-olds; an interview format that included some questions, some writing of poems, and some free play for seven- through ten-year-olds; and interviews that included open-ended questions and some paper-and-pencil items for the older children. There were twenty-six children in these fifteen families, but five were under four years of age, too young to interview. We interviewed twelve boys and nine girls. Ten of the children were between four and six, seven children were between seven and ten, and four children were at least eleven. Three of the four older children were from the same family, so I refrain from making any generalizations about that group.

These children live in complex worlds. They must navigate complicated social and cognitive landscapes. Three themes emerged from our conversations and observations. First, the parents seem to be very successful at transferring their ideological values to their children. The youngsters believe that men and women are equal, or ought to be. Second, these children's experiences at school and with their peers have taught them unequivocally that boys and girls are not similar, nor do they think they should be. Boys and girls are—in these children's minds—totally different kinds of people. Third, identities seem more forged from experiences with peers than from ideology. The boys in particular seem to struggle to reconcile their identities and their beliefs.

Ideology

Sixteen of the twenty-one children we interviewed had entirely adopted their parents' egalitarian or feminist views on gender, and two of the children without

such views were four-year-olds whose answers were better described as inconsistent than traditional. The children know that occupations are currently sex-segregated but believe they should not be. They do not see any tasks in families that ought to be exclusively for either men or women. One nine-year-old boy actually became annoyed at the line of questioning about what men and women should do. He rolled his eyes and retorted, "I told you I think anybody can do these jobs. . . . I think that saying just men or just women could do these jobs isn't being equal." In contrast, most four-year-olds assign sex-stereotypic labels to activities, occupations, and playthings (Bornstein and Lamb 1988).

Most of the children, both boys and girls, not only believe that men and women should be free to work in any occupation and should share the family labor, but also understand that male privilege exists in contemporary society. A nine-year-old girl told us that she believes very much in feminism because "I don't think that it is the least bit fair that in most places males have the main power. I think that women play an important part and should be free to do what they want to do." Similarly, a fifteen-year-old told us, in response to a question about what he likes about being a boy, "It's probably easier being a guy. At least it is now because of stereotypes and prejudices and everything." Overall, most of these children were sophisticated true believers in the capabilities of men and women to perform the same jobs and family roles. The influence of their parents as ideological conduits and role models is evident in their attitudes.

Experiences

These children may have liberal attitudes about gender equality for men and women, but when that ideology contradicts their experiences as boys and girls, life wins hands down. Despite their post-gender answers to what is appropriate for adults, these children give stereotypical answers about the differences between boys and girls. In order to find out their gut beliefs about boys and girls we probed their experiences with a variety of techniques. We asked how their lives would be different if a magician turned them into the opposite sex. We provided short scenarios using stereotypically male and female adjectives (e.g., weak, strong, fearful, adventure-some) and asked them to tell us which adjectives described girls and which described boys and why. We asked what they liked and disliked about being a girl or boy. We asked them to write poems beginning with the

Table 21.1 Adjectives Used to Describe Boys

Adjective	Speakers by Gender and Age				
Active	7-year-old girl				
Into sports	7-year-old girl	12-year-old boy	10-year-old boy	10-year-old boy	9-year-old girl
Mean	7-year-old girl	15-year-old boy	4-year-old girl		
Bad	7-year-old girl	9-year-old girl			
More free	11-year-old girl				
Sarcastic	15-year-old boy				
Cool	4-year-old girl				
Aggressive	12-year-old boy	10-year-old boy	9-year-old girl		
Athletic	12-year-old boy	10-year-old boy			
Tough	12-year-old boy				
Stronger	6-year-old boy	10-year-old boy			
Into fighting	10-year-old boy	9-year-old girl			
Troublemaking	10-year-old boy	9-year-old girl			
Competitive	9-year-old girl				
Bully	10-year-old boy				
Into computers	4-year-old boy				

line "If I were a boy/girl" using the opposite sex category. We showed them pictures of a boy and a girl, sitting side by side on a sofa, and asked them to tell us a story about each child. We followed up every comment that would help us assess their attitudes.

Although none of the four- to six-year-olds have begun to believe that boys and girls are different, most children from mainstream families clearly have strong gender schemas by this age (Bem 1993). Their egalitarian parents have managed to insulate the preschoolers from typical American norms, perhaps by their choice of paid caregiving arrangements and friends. Once the children reached seven years of age, however, their non-familial experiences broadened considerably, as did their ideas about differences between the sexes. We find the descriptions of school-age children remarkably consistent and stereotypical across sex and age categories. Girls are sweet and neat; boys are athletic and disruptive. And these descriptions are consistent with those given by children, presumably from more mainstream families, in other research (Bornstein and Lamb 1988). Table 21.1 contains adjectives used in direct quotes about boys. The age and sex of the speakers who use each adjective at least once are indicated. Of the sixteen adjectives used, half describe socially disruptive personality traits,

often considered aspects of masculinity. The rest are more neutral descriptors but are still stereotypically male. The world that these school-age children know is one in which boys as a group are athletic and mean.

We elicited more comments about boys than about girls—girls are described almost as a second species. But again the comments were remarkably consistent. All of the adjectives describe traditional feminine stereotypes (Table 21.2). Six of the adjectives are socially valued personality traits, the others more neutral. The children voiced unequivocal belief in major sex differences between boys and girls just minutes after parroting their parents' feminist views about the equality and similarity of men and women.

Three of these children did qualify their stereotypical answers. One eight-year-old boy made a point of telling us that he knew that girls could be into sports or computers, he just did not know any who were. A seven-year-old girl was sure that girls were better behaved and that boys were mean, but she also sometimes wanted to be a boy because they seemed to have more playful and active games. A ten-year-old boy knew that some girls were "like boys," and he was even letting such a girl try out for his spy club. And one five-year-old boy made the acute observation that girls played different

Table 21.2 Adjectives Used to Describe Girls

Adjective	Speakers by Gender and Age		
	10-year-old boy	4-year-old girl	12-year-old boy
Nice	10-year-old boy	4-year-old girl	12-year-old boy
Well-behaved	10-year-old boy	7-year-old girl	
Quiet	10-year-old boy	10-year-old boy	7-year-old girl
Cooperative	9-year-old girl		
Good	9-year-old girl		
Sweet	7-year-old girl		
Not into sports	10-year-old boy		
Not sneaky	12-year-old boy		
Nicer to friends	12-year-old boy		
Less free	11-year-old girl		

games than boys did when at school on the playground, but when in the neighborhood they played the same games together.

When family experiences collided with experiences with peers, the family influences were dwarfed. For example, a six-year-old boy told us that if a magician were to turn him into a girl, he'd be different because he would have long hair. This boy's father had a ponytail that reached the middle of his back, and the mother's hair was hardly below her ears. A four-year-old boy told us that if a magician were to turn him into a girl, he'd have to do housework—this from the son of a father whose flexible work schedule has allowed him to spend more time in domestic pursuits than his wife does.

It almost seems as if these children believe that boys and girls are opposites but that men and women are magically transformed into equal and comparable people. The children know that men and women are equal; it is boys and girls who are totally different.

Seven of these children spoke explicitly about male privilege among peers or at school. An eleven-year-old girl told us that sometimes she wished to be a boy because when

teachers need help like to carry a box to their classroom, they always come in and say, like, "Can I borrow a couple of your boys," and never say, "Can I borrow a couple of your students?" And so the girls never get to do any of the stuff and leave the classroom. . . . It's always the boys that get to leave. And, like, little trips and stuff, when we used to go on field trips, the boys would always have to

carry a basket of lunches and go ahead, and when they had stuff to bring from the car, it'd always be boys that would get to go to the car. . . . The girls, like, had to stay on the bus and just sit there and wait while some boys got to go there and the girls never got to do it, do that stuff. . . . You get left out because you're a girl. . . . But I'm not wimpy.

A seven-year-old girl told us that she was "more hyper" than most girls and that many of her friends were boys because they were more active and playful. A ten-year-old boy mentioned "racism against women" in sports. A nine-year-old girl was an avowed feminist with implicit essentialist notions about girls' innate cooperativeness versus boys' innate combativeness. She thought girls ought to have more power in the world because they were better people.

This is the response an eight-year-old boy gave to us when he was asked to write a poem about what it would be like to be a girl. His understanding of male privilege was widely shared if not usually so well articulated.

If I were a girl I'd have to attract a guy
wear makeup; sometimes.

Wear the latest style of clothes and try to be likable.

I probably wouldn't play any physical sports like
football or soccer.

I don't think I would enjoy myself around men in
fear of rejection

or under the pressure of attracting them.

While both boys and girls "knew" that boys were troublemakers, sarcastic, and athletic, this boy also saw clearly that girls had major disadvantages.

Only a few of the boys were aware that they belonged to a group for which they had internalized negative characteristics. One such boy answered our question about how he was different from other guys this way: "I think I'm taller. I don't like bullying people around that much. . . . When one of my friends starts fighting somebody or arguing with somebody I don't join in. I steer clear of them. I try to get in as few fights as possible." This boy built his identity on sports (his room was a baseball shrine, and his activities were sports, sports, and more sports) but tried to distance himself from the violent aspects of peer group masculinity. Another boy told us that if he were transformed into a girl he would be nicer to his friends. These boys had internalized negative attitudes toward their own group and, at some level, themselves. In no case did any girl tell us how bad girls were as a group. When girls talked about how they were similar to and different from other girls, their answers were idiosyncratic (e.g., taller or shorter, longer hair, better reader). These children "know" that boys and girls are different, they "know" that boys have advantages, but they also "know" that girls are nicer people.

Identity

These children are very consistent when they explain how boys and girls are different. The unanimity dissolves when we begin to look at how they are forging their own identities. Only six of the children seem to have fashioned selves that unambiguously fit their own stereotyped notions about childhood gender. The interview and observational data collected in these families identify six children who describe themselves in consistently gendered fashion and were so identified in observational data.

The first obvious finding is that these children's attitudes and identities are not necessarily correlated. Of the six children with stereotypical gendered selves, one boy and three girls are also self-consciously egalitarian, even feminist. The two other children in this category had more traditional beliefs about gender.

As the tables above show, the children suggested that boys were active, into sports, mean, bad, freer than girls, sarcastic, cool, aggressive, athletic, tough, stronger than girls, into fights, troublemakers, competitive, bullies, and into computers. I use the label "all-boy" boys

and "all-girl" girls to describe children who portray characteristics exclusively in one of the two tables. No child manifested every characteristic on our list, but the two children in the all-boy category and the four girls in the all-girl group could not be described with any of the adjectives on the opposite-sex list. For example, there was no indication that the Pretzman boy was mean or a troublemaker—just the opposite. He followed our directions closely and appeared to be very sweet. Yet all his interests were stereotypically masculine—sports, Legos, *Star Trek*, computers. He described himself as "strong" and used that criterion to differentiate boys and girls. He didn't play much with girls, and there was no indication of cross-gender behavior or traits either in the interview or as we watched him at home. The twelve-year-old Potadman boy was similar. His main interest and identity seemed to be attached to sports. He answered us with short, not-too-reflective comments. In traditionally masculine fashion, he described his friendships almost entirely in terms of sharing activities.

I categorize the four girls as all-girl because they can be described using the characteristics the children provided for us about girls: nice, well-behaved, quiet, cooperative, good, sweet, not into sports, not sneaky, nice to friends. None of these girls embodied every one of these traits, but it is unlikely that they would be described by any of the traits on the other list. One shared characteristic was their distaste for competitive sports. The eleven-year-old Germane girl provides an easy comparison with the twelve-year-old Potadman boy. Her favorite games were fantasies, her favorite activity was dance, her favorite possessions were dolls and stuffed animals. The Stokes ten-year-old was similarly gendered. Her favorite activities were reading, writing poems, and art. She is adamant about disliking sports, and she knows why: she doesn't like any activity where you have to be pushy or aggressive. The six-year-old Green daughter had three dollhouses, and there was not a "boy" toy in the house. Her parents were very conscious of encouraging her to make her own choices and to develop her own potential; the mother told us she was trying to get her daughter to be willing to play some sports, at least at school during recess.

These six children, raised by egalitarian parents and often holding feminist attitudes themselves, have nevertheless fashioned selves that are unambiguously gendered. The following poem sums up what these children think about even imagining being the opposite sex. The

poem was written by the Sykes girl in response to our request to write a verse that begins "If I were a boy": "If I were a boy, I'd know my parents had made a mistake and that I should have been a girl. I'd always feel that I didn't belong because the girls were who I wanted to play with but they wouldn't let me, and I didn't want to be with the boys."

This nine-year-old provides an interesting example of the disjunction between identity and ideology. She lives in one of the most self-consciously feminist and progressive families in our study. They see themselves as outside the mainstream. They have no television set so that their daughter will avoid excess materialism. Both parents and daughter are avowed feminists. The daughter is one of the most feminine in the sample—her long wavy hair flows below her waist. She collects china teacups, hates competitive sports, and loves nature and hiking. She saved a bug from death during my home observation and carried it tenderly outside. In my honor she put on her favorite nightgown, ankle-length and with a pink bow. This child is very smart, and she intends to succeed professionally, maybe in a scientific career. So despite her feminine self-presentation and dislike for most things male, she actually crosses gender boundaries in other ways.

The other fifteen children have also fashioned gendered selves. The boys are much more likely to like sports, the girls to like dance. Despite their parents' role-modeling, despite their own ideology, all these girls are more feminine than masculine and all these boys are more masculine than feminine. But the rest of the children, to varying degrees, cross gender lines in interests and interpersonal style. All but one of the girls is either involved in at least one competitive sport or expects to be when she is a little older. All the boys stand out in some way as exceptions to hegemonic masculinity. An interesting sex difference exists, however. All the girls told us in quite explicit terms just how they were different from other girls, but the boys often denied any differences from other boys—differences that our interview and observational team noted. For example, the Cody daughter knows that she is different from other girls because she loves team sports, and she would like to be a boy except that she knows "they aren't always very nice." A four-year-old girl likes to climb trees as well as play fantasy games about babies. She knows she is "nice, like other girls," but she wants to be "cool," like boys. She told us her future goal was to "be a mommy so I can work hard and like my job." The Cross girl believes that

she is more active than other girls, but she is also "real sweet," likes horses, and is nice to her friends (all characteristics that she says make her different from boys). The Relux six-year-old told us that she is "not like other girls particularly." She has friends who are boys, although her best friend is another girl. But she likes being a girl because she can do whatever she wants.

The boys coded as portraying some crossover behaviors and interpersonal style were much less likely than the girls to notice it themselves. Although some of the data reported here come directly from the interviews, this analysis also relies on subtle inconsistencies in their own words, body language, and to some extent intuition of the part of the interview and observational team, as recorded in field notes. The older Potadman boys (fifteen and seventeen years of age) told us of some hopes and dreams that seemed to cross gender stereotypes. The fifteen-year-old babysits and loves to vacuum and cook. He would like to stay home with his children if his wife could earn a high enough income. His very tall older brother, whose ponytail reaches below his waist, hates to work out and finds it unfair that women can be considered sexy without being muscular but that men cannot. He writes poetry and never has been much into sports, though he does like volleyball. He describes himself as an intellectual outsider and seems comfortable—if somewhat vulnerable—with the status.

Four little boys also reported androgynous preferences. The four-year-old Cody boy likes many boys' games, particularly baseball. But he also wants to be like his sister, plays housekeeping at day care, and enjoys playing dress-up in his sister's clothes. The four-year-old Trexler son has favorite movie characters: Aladdin and the Little Mermaid. The four-year-old Relux boy thinks that being "silly" is the best part of being a boy. While he likes guns and has mostly boys as friends, his answers to most questions seem gender-neutral. Similarly, the five-year-old Cary boy likes boys' toys and baseball, but many of his favorite activities seem to be gender-neutral, such as board games and playing outside with both boys and girls. His body language and self-presentation led to the description of him as "gentle" in the field notes. The six-year-old Staton son prefers stereotypically boys' toys, and he takes tai kwon do lessons, but, like the fifteen-year-old Potadman boy, he would like to not work at all so that he could "spend more time with his kids." These boys never seemed rough or tough; even when talking about their stereotypical behaviors they seemed warm and caring.

There were two boys whose words contradicted their behavior (as reported by their parents) and our observations. The ten-year-old Oakley boy seemed to try too hard at his self-presentation. He wanted us to think he was tough, mean, and sneaky, a "real" boy. But the boy we met was warm, kind, and soft-spoken, even as he told us about his war games. This son of two writers wanted a blue-collar job for which he could wear "lots of armor" and be tough. But these words didn't square with what we saw: a ten-year-old who played gently with his four-year-old sister. He interrupted his own and his sister's interview to take her to look out the bathroom window so that she did not miss the full moon. They fought during our home interview, and he hurt her by mistake. He was genuinely sorry, offering his "butt" for her to hit in response. When we noticed some Barbie dolls in his closet and asked what kind of games he played with them, he answered, "Oh, I mostly kill them in war games. They're my sisters." But his mother told us that both children played fantasy games with the dolls. He alluded to this himself later: "I like the Ken doll because he is a basketball star." This boy twitched when he spoke about gender preferences. I found the interview poignant: he knew that boys were supposed to be mean and sneaky, and he wanted very much to fulfill those expectations, or at least to make us believe that he did. But we couldn't believe it. He was too nice a child.

Another interviewer had a similar experience with the ten-year-old Woods boy. His identity was sports based: he was a baseball fanatic, and his room was entirely in Carolina Blue. He talked about liking to compete. And yet he described his baby brother in loving terms, and in three straight losses in a card game he showed no competitive spirit or disappointment. He emanated warmth, as did his father. He also differentiated himself from other boys because he was not a bully and did not like to fight.

CONCLUSION

... Although gender structure exists at the institutional, interactional, and individual levels, its consequences are far from predetermined. The children discussed here are being raised in social settings in which gender expectations and interactional demands have been consciously changed to value gender equality. And the children in fair families have adopted their parents'

egalitarian views. They say that men and women are equal and that no jobs—inside or outside the family—ought to be sex-typed. But beyond these abstract belief statements these children depend on their own lived experiences for understanding gender. And they "know" that boys and girls are very different.

Boys, as a group, are described—even by boys themselves—as not only athletic but also mean and troublesome. Girls are described as sweet, quiet, and well behaved. And yet it is clear that both boys and girls value, at some level, the masculine over the feminine, or at least the privileges that accompany male status. They notice that boys have more freedom at school and that most boys play harder and with more autonomy. Six of these children met their own criteria for being all boy or all girl; the rest exhibited some cross-gender behavior. The girls knew and reported how they were different from other girls; the boys did not. Gendered selves are changing here, but the change is uneven, with attitudes toward others changing faster than identities. Thorne (1993) shows that children from more mainstream families also cross gender boundaries. Some boys from traditional families also develop soft and gentle selves, and girls from traditional homes can be seen aggressively entering boys' games on the playground. But Thorne gives no indication that children from more traditional families struggle with the inconsistencies among their beliefs, their extrafamilial experiences, and their developing identities.

The parents in fair families are transmitting new cognitive images or gender rules to their children. And though this process is hardly direct or perfectly effective, the children of these families seem to be adopting their parents' gender rules about adult responsibilities. But when it comes to developing their own identities, these children seem to be at least as influenced by the cognitive images and folk knowledge learned from peers as those messages from home. The children struggle with the contradictions between their parentally influenced ideologies and the cognitive images that dominate peer-group culture. In how they fashion their identities, their gendered selves, we can see why social change moves so slowly at the individual level.

Yet, the parents in fair families also were raised in peer cultures with traditional cognitive images about gender and somehow have managed to create new ones for themselves. Their children are the product of a gender structure in flux. Most of them, while clearly developing gendered selves, are also crossing gender boundaries even as they subscribe to the ruling cognitive

images in their own culture, which still define boys and girls as opposites. Each time a girl admits that she is not like other girls because she likes sports, each time a little boy differentiates himself from boys as a group because he does not like to fight, the cognitive image begins to blur. Eventually, perhaps, with some adult intervention, those childhood cognitive images might crack and dissolve, to be re-created in a post-gendered society. What is even more clear, however, is that as these children grow into adulthood and move into more egalitarian settings, they are well prepared to reconstruct post-gendered identities. There is no reason to believe that the identities and selves they adopt to negotiate their sexist and gendered childhood worlds will determine the selves they adopt later in life, as their social situations and the expectations they face change.

These data are very clear on another important point, too. These children are growing up to be happy, healthy, and well adjusted in egalitarian, gender-atypical families. They are doing well in families in which both parents are committed to labor force participation and in which fathers are actively nurturing their children. These families dramatically depart from what many fundamentalist Judeo-Christian traditionalists and contemporary political conservatives have argued is the "natural" family—with patriarchal breadwinning fathers and homemaking mothers. Children raised in families with attentive and loving feminist parents do just fine.

But what is also clear is that changing families alone does not allow children to live post-gendered lives. Parents may have the power to change their marriage and their child-rearing techniques, but effective social change requires collective action and coalitions across families, schools, and friendship networks. Social change cannot be effective at the level of identities only; it must occur simultaneously at the level of identities, interactions, and institutions.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that these children are better off or worse off than children who are socialized in a more traditional way?
2. Does this selection support the idea that boys and girls are naturally different?
3. How were you socialized to believe and act "like a girl" or "like a boy"? How important were your parents, your siblings, and your peers in this process?
4. The author seems to believe that people should live "post-gendered" lives. What does this mean? Are you in favor of this? Is the author?