My critics have gone directly to a central issue. They do not question that peer groups are powerful socialization contexts for the development of gendered aspects of interpersonal behavior. They do argue, however, that the characteristics of same-sex peer groups are derivative: derived from the sex-typed characteristics of adult culture. Same-sex peer groups, they believe, develop the characteristics they do because individual boys and girls have been shaped in sex-typed ways by their parents and teachers and by their exposure to sex-biased television, among other aspects of adult culture. My claim is that although childhood culture is partly derivative, it is not entirely so. In attempting to understand gender development in childhood, I would urge that we need to give serious thought to some elements that children themselves contribute to their social encounters.

It has long been clear that children's play is in many ways not patterned on the behavior of adults, nor taught by adults. In his studies of the game of marbles, Piaget (1948) noted how the rules and structure of the game were passed on from one generation of boys to another, without adult mediation. Similarly, jump-rope rythmes in a social vacuum, and putative boys were offered toy footballs or hammers. But when it came to the amount of interaction, warmth, and responsiveness, there was no effect of gender label.

A careful reading of the observational studies of parents interacting with infants and toddlers would, I believe, lead to the same conclusion: Parents are equally responsive to their male and female children. A similar conclusion is reached concerning the behavior of school teachers in Tyack and Hanso's (1990) recent review (see especially p. 270 and following). I have no doubt that there are cultures in which male children are favored and where girls as young as two are taught to show deference to men and boys. But in our own culture—at least in the segments of it that have been studied—such differences are not consistently found, and the behavioral differentiation in same-sex children's play groups emerges nevertheless.

Other hypotheses are possible, of course, concerning the relationship between alleged differential socialization and the play styles of the two sexes. Each would have to be examined in detail for supporting evidence, to see whether effects were commensurate with outcomes. We need to remember how powerful the gender stereotypes are and how strong and consistent across families early socialization pressures would have to be, to account for its emergence. Concerning television: Yes, it clearly does convey sex-typed messages about the social roles of the two sexes. No one doubts that these and other societal messages have powerful effects in forming and consolidating stereotypes. But acquiring knowledge about social stereotypes and adopting them in one's own behavior are two different things. Boys and girls acquire the same knowledge about stereotypes, but they adopt different elements from what they have seen. Adoption follows upon the formation of a strong gender identity. Although we cannot doubt the effect of sexist cultures, we must take seriously the role of children's same-sex social groups in forming their gender identities that make children susceptible to these social messages.

Why is the independent contribution of the peer group so important?—because, for one thing, attitudes toward members of the opposite sex are strongly forged there, particularly in male peer groups, in which members sustain one another's exploitative attitudes toward women as sex
objects (see Johnson, 1988, chap. 5), and also, because the interactive styles developed there are carried over into the mixed-sex interactions of adolescence and adulthood, including interactions in the workplace (Maccoby, 1990, in press). The thing that seems to have piqued my critics is my suggestion that the development of intimate relations between heterosexual partners can constitute an opportunity for forgoing an interaction pattern not based on male dominance. Yes, divorce and domestic violence are widespread, and many men are directly power-assertive, and women self-abnegating, in their domestic interactions (although having studied a large group of divorcing couples over a number of years—see Maccoby & Mnookin, in press— I cannot fail to be aware of how coercive women, as well as men, can be when a relationship disintegrates). However, in my 1990 article I was talking about the possibilities inherent in well-functioning relationships. My critics appear to believe that there is no such thing as an equitable relationship between a man and a woman. Is it really the case that if a man and woman are to forge a harmonious partnership that involves joining their domestic lives and (usually) the rearing of children, the woman must buy harmony at the price of subordinating herself to the man's interests and agenda? I think not. Although it is true that men and women carry over into well-functioning relationships some aspects of the interactive styles they acquired in childhood, relationships of mutual respect, mutual satisfaction, and genuine power equity are not only possible, but I believe, quite common, and this is true even when couples have adopted a division of labor for the rearing of children. However, power inequity in the larger society is still endemic, despite the progress that has been made in the 20th century. Some feel that the only solution is gender separatism. For those of us who want to achieve equity in the context of gender integration, however, the challenge is to recognize the socialization impact of childhood peer groups and take it into account as we devise strategies for the next steps toward equity.

REFERENCES


How to Fix the Empty Self

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In the May 1990 American Psychologist, Philip Cushman's article, "Why the Self Is Empty," made some good points about the limitations of psychotherapy in its handling of the narcissistic, consumer-oriented post-World War II self. But because he put psychotherapy largely in a psychoanalytic mold, he missed what is probably the essence of the problem of unconditional self-acceptance and wound up in a pessimistic impasse.

First, Cushman (1990) defined the self as "the concept of the individual as articulated by the indigenous psychology of a particular cultural group, the shared understandings within a culture of "what it is to be human"" (p. 599). This view of the self, following social constructivists like Gergen (1985) and Sampson (1988), rightly corrects the concept of the super-individualist self as presented by Freud (1905/1953), Fromm (1956), Kernberg (1975), Kohut (1977), and other psychoanalytic writers. But it tends to go to the other extreme and negates the individuating aspects of the self that cannot merely be wished away by the social constructivists. If the complex term self can properly be defined at all (which seems somewhat doubtful), it seems inevitably to include both the social context mentioned by Cushman and the individual's unique consciousness (and consciousness about consciousness) in which the social self is embedded. Thus, humans do not seem to have an "empty self" unless they think, feel, and behave as if they do; and their view of their self, as Gergen and Sampson showed, is surely influenced and affected by—but hardly entirely created by—their social milieu.

Following Kelly (1955), constructivist cognitive–behavioral therapists acknowledge that people develop in a historical and social context, but point out that their selves also construct and reconstruct that context; and it is the interaction between their personal and social selves that helps form their personality, their psychological problems, and their reactions to psychotherapy (Ellis, 1990; Guidano, 1988; Mahoney, 1988).

Again, because he leaned too heavily on psychoanalytic formulations, Cushman (1990) seemed to forget that people's views of their self are choices that are partly independent of their historical and social rearing (Ellis, 1962, 1990; Giorgi, 1970; Heidegger, 1962; Kelly, 1955). People frequently rate their self as good or bad, or as empty or full in relation to society's precepts. But they also have a partial choice of not doing this and of not kowtowing to any social, technological, or psychotherapeutic influences (Rychlak, 1979).

There are at least two important solutions to the problem of self-rating that Cushman (1990) failed to consider when he rightly showed that the common psychotherapeutic solutions to self-acceptance are confusing and inadequate. These solutions are based on helping people to rate themselves other than on socially accepted external criteria or on the approval of some therapist, guru, or religious group, which, Cushman showed, do not work very well.

Yes, any rating of one's self, no matter what criterion it is based on, is a very risky business—even when it is rooted in a therapist's approval. For example, when Carl Rogers (1961) and other therapists showed their clients that they accepted the clients unconditionally, and when the clients thereby gained self-acceptance, they were obviously telling themselves something like, "Because Rogers accepts me, I am okay." This is conditional self-acceptance and only works palliatively and temporarily, as the rest of the clients' world is not very likely to endorse their therapists' views.

Two better solutions that Cushman (1990) ignored in his article are presented in rational–emotive therapy (RET) and in