

Defeminization and Adult Psychological Well-Being Among Male Homosexuals

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Whitam's hypothesis that a majority of gay men exhibit a cross-gender role preference during childhood but that most defeminize by adulthood was tested and supported by data on 1556 gay men. Gay and heterosexual males were found to differ strongly in cross-gender characteristics during childhood but considerably less so during adulthood. By categorizing gay respondents simultaneously by both childhood and adult cross-gendering, sizable differences were found in measures of psychological well-being. No or minimal differences were found between homosexual and heterosexual males on these measures. It was suggested that these two groups may differ not at all or minimally on purely psychological measures but that major differences may be found in cultural variables and particularly in gender culture.

KEY WORDS: homosexuality; gender role preference; self-esteem; effeminacy.

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of the present paper are (1) to test Whitam's (1977) defeminization hypothesis and (2) to examine the relationships of defeminization with measures of adult psychological well-being. Whitam (1977), Saghir and Robins (1973, pp. 18-21), Thompson and Bentler (1973), and Bell *et al.* (1981) have found that a large majority of adult gay men report having exhibited during childhood a variety of interests and preferences characteristic of girls. These include having been considered

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sissies, preferring to play with dolls, avoidance of rough games and sports, having wanted to be girls, and cross-dressing. The percentages in the various studies found to possess such characteristics during childhood vary from Saghir and Robins's (1973, p. 18) finding of 67% of gay men versus 3% of heterosexual males possessing multiple such characteristics to Whitam's (1977) finding of 96% of gay men versus 26% of heterosexual males possessing at least one such trait. Whitam (1980) has subsequently replicated these large differences during childhood in the possession of cross-gender characteristics between gay and nongay males in Brazil and Guatemala.

These differences in cross-gender characteristics parallel the longitudinal study by Green (1974, 1976) in comparing effeminate and conventional boys. In such prospective comparisons of children, it cannot be known whether such boys may grow up to be homosexual, transsexual, or transvestite or, possibly, heterosexual. It should also be noted that in studying effeminate boys who may be prehomosexuals, one is eluded by the minority of homosexuals who were not effeminate during childhood, since the latter are not visibly different and are not referred to the attention of clinicians.

Whitam (1977) has hypothesized that, since the majority of adult gay men are not markedly effeminate during adulthood, there must have occurred a defeminization process prior to adulthood. Green and Money (1966) have also noted a tendency for effeminate boys to become more muted in their cross-gender expressions during childhood and to substitute activities and interests that are more socially acceptable. While there seems not to be any direct evidence on the causes of such defeminization, it appears very likely that it occurs due to parental and peer pressure to conform to standards of gender-appropriate behaviors and interests. Saghir and Robins (1973, pp. 19-20) reported that many of their homosexual respondents were teased mercilessly during childhood for their nonconformist characteristics. Hence, it seems that defeminization, to the extent that it occurs, may be imposed on the boy predisposed to effeminacy, rather than being a spontaneous development.

In the analysis below we do not commit ourselves on the question of what causes cross-gender (or gender-conventional) behaviors in persons. Also, we do not infer psychopathology from the presence of nonconventional gender characteristics. Our interpretation of the presence of cross-gendering in a person is that it represents a cross-gender role preference at a given phase of the person's life. Such a cross-gender role preference should be conceptually distinguished from a cross-gender identity. While the latter is, virtually by definition, characteristic of transsexuals, to conceptualize the possession of cross-gender characteristics as implying a cross-gender

identity would be to merge both effeminate homosexuals and transsexuals into a single category and to have no basis for distinguishing between them. Money and Higham (1976) have recognized the need for a criterion distinguishing these two types of cross-gendered individuals and have offered the concepts of "total" and "partial" gender identity. This suggestion, however, seems more a semantic than a substantive solution to the problem since it provides no indication of how to distinguish total from partial gender identity. In the analysis below, we view both transsexuals and effeminate homosexuals as possessing a cross-gender role preference, while transsexuals, in addition, possess a cross-gender identity. Such a conceptualization seems more consistent with the findings of Freund (1974) and Freund *et al.* (1977), who report that transsexuals differ massively on their Feminine Gender Identity Scale from heterosexual males, while homosexual males are distributed all along that scale but have their median between the other two groups. Since role preference is a relatively continuous variable permitting of degrees, while gender identity is a dichotomy, one would expect such distributions and differences.

METHODS AND MEASURES

The principal data for the present work are derived from 1556 gay men from the Chicago area, the central city and the suburbs. The very large majority of these respondents—1494—were obtained through *Gay Life*, the major Chicago area gay newspaper. This publication, with a distribution of approximately 18,000, is a "throwaway" or a "shopper" rather than a subscription publication and is distributed to nearly all gay establishments in the area. Piles of the paper are placed weekly in 104 gay establishments, although this number varies slightly from month to month. Of the 104 places, 56 are gay bars, and the others are gay organizations (5), steam baths (7), gay hotels (2), adult bookstores and arcades (17), restaurants (17), a movie house (1), and a medical clinic (1). *Gay Life* is also distributed at a number of nongay supermarkets and restaurants located in or near the Newtown "gay ghetto" of Chicago.

Bundles of questionnaires totaling 17,600 were distributed to these establishments along with the regular copies of two issues of the paper during November 1978. These questionnaires contained prepaid return envelopes and had stamped on their covers in large letters "Lifestyle Style of Gay Men" to increase visibility. It is believed that since *Gay Life* is not a subscription publication, using it as a means of questionnaire distribution would not be subject to the usual sampling biases toward the more educated

as is the case with subscription readership surveys. It should be noted that our *Gay Life* respondents do not constitute a readership survey since the questionnaires could just as well have been distributed by the beer or bread deliveryman.

It was anticipated that the respondents obtained through *Gay Life* would underrepresent homosexual men over 50 years of age. All major studies of homosexual males to date appear to have seriously underrepresented older homosexuals if we assume that the age distribution of adult gay men should approximate that for the general male population (Saghir and Robins, 1973, p. 15; Weinberg and Williams, 1974, pp. 95-96; Harry and DeVall, 1978, p. 25; Bell and Weinberg, 1978, pp. 274-276). In order to obtain greater numbers of older respondents, research cooperation was obtained from a Chicago gay organization for men over 40 years of age. Questionnaires were mailed to the membership of 275 by the secretary of the organization, and 62 were returned. The median age of these respondents was 50.3 years, as compared with 29.7 years for the *Gay Life* respondents. (There is reason to believe that the actual membership of this group is rather less than 275 and that a sizable although unknown percentage of this number are members in name only who have been retained on the mailing list long beyond their last dues payment.)

There were 1770 questionnaires returned. Of these, 214 were excluded because they did not meet at least one of several predetermined criteria, 21 were excluded because they were from exclusive or nearly exclusive heterosexuals (Kinsey 0's and 1's) or probable heterosexuals, 48 were excluded because they were received after our cutoff date for returns of February 1, 1979, and 116 were excluded because they did not meet our geographic criterion of living within the city of Chicago or its suburbs. Our geographic area of acceptability was defined as a "social commuting area" smaller than the Chicago SMSA and also smaller than a work commuting area. We conceived of a social commuting area as an area within which one might reasonably commute to the central city on a weeknight for purposes of recreation and return home in time for work. While 10% of the questionnaires distributed were returned, it is not possible to calculate a traditional response rate because of the modes of distribution. In the case of the *Gay Life* distribution, it is unknown how many questionnaires actually got into the hands of potential respondents.

The resultant sample revealed the following demographic characteristics. It was 91% white, 7% black, and 2% "other." The median age was 30.1 years, with a standard deviation of 9.7 years. Median education was 15.6 years, with a standard deviation of 7.8 years. In regard to marital status, 84% were never married, 2% were married, and 14% were separated, divorced, or widowed. In regard to economic status, 48% had

incomes under \$15,000, and 9% reported incomes over \$30,000. Residents of Chicago constituted 79% of the sample, with the remainder being from the suburbs or nearby Indiana.

These respondents are quite similar in their demographic characteristics to the groups studied in the other major studies of gay men. For example, while 84% of our respondents reported at least some college education, the corresponding figure reported by Weinberg and Williams (1974, p. 95) was 82%; Gagnon and Simon (1973, p. 141) reported 70%; Harry and DeVall (1978, p. 26) reported 69%; and Bell and Weinberg (1978, p. 274) reported 76% with at least some college education among their recruitment pool of volunteers. The corresponding percentage of the national adult white male population for 1977 was 34. The educational differences between the national male population and groups of gay men appearing in these studies suggest either that there is a massive overrepresentation of the highly educated in studies of gay men, or that gay men are in fact more educated than heterosexual men, or both to some unknown degree.

For comparison purposes, a systematic sample of the male students at the author's university was obtained through a mail-back questionnaire. This group numbered 204 respondents, constituting a 55% response rate. Any self-reported homosexuals were deleted from this group. A further group of 32 gay male students at this university was also obtained, principally through the local gay student organization, largely a social organization sponsoring dances and speakers. The Chicago gay respondents were then divided into the two groups of students and nonstudents. This procedure produced the four groups of Chicago gay students, Chicago gay nonstudents, other gay students, and other nongay students. Gay-nongay comparisons were then accomplished through two means. First, comparisons were made among the three gay groups to see if there were any student-nonstudent differences on a measure. If there were none, the gays were compared with the nongays. Second, comparisons were made between gays and nongays for those individuals under 25 years of age. In none of the results to be reported below does age or student status make a difference.

We adopted the scales of psychological masculinity and psychological femininity developed and validated by Spence and Helmreich (1978, pp. 31-38). Since the seminal research of Bem (1974), it has been recognized that psychological masculinity and femininity are not the polar opposites of a single dimension which earlier research had assumed and built into single bipolar scales such as the MMPI. The scales we used also permit one to test, rather than assume, whether cultural masculinity and femininity—gender roles—are associated with psychological masculinity and femininity. These two scales are adjective self-rating in format, and each contains eight items.

Our self-esteem scale included the following three items: "On the whole I am quite a happy person"; "I take a very positive attitude toward myself"; and "On the whole I am satisfied with myself." This scale should be interpreted more as self-acceptance rather than self-esteem in the sense of superiority over others. While some researchers (Spence and Helmreich, 1978, pp. 234-236) use self-esteem scales of the latter type, it was felt that these scales tend to define self-esteem excessively in terms of dominance and superiority, thus inflating the correlation between self-esteem and masculinity and introducing thereby a sex bias and, perhaps, a value judgment. The four items of our interpersonal dominance scale were "When I am in disagreement with other people my opinion usually prevails," "When in a group of people I usually do what the others want rather than make suggestions," and self-ratings on "not at all aggressive-very aggressive" and "very dominant-very submissive." The four items of our competitiveness scale were "It is very important to me to perform better than others on a task," "I feel that winning is very important in both work and games," "I really enjoy working in situations involving skill and competition," and "When a group plans an activity I would rather organize it myself than have someone else organize it and just help out." The respective Cronbach standardized alpha-reliabilities of our measures of masculinity, femininity, self-esteem, dominance, and competitiveness among our Chicago respondents were 0.76, 0.77, 0.81, 0.53, and 0.65. Among our heterosexual respondents, the corresponding reliabilities were 0.70, 0.73, 0.81, 0.49, and 0.61.

The items employed in the development of our cross-gendering scales for childhood and adulthood, adapted from Whitam (1977) and Freund *et al.* (1977), were the following six: "Were you regarded as a sissy?"; "Were you usually a loner?"; "Did you ever wish you had been a girl rather than a boy?"; "Did you prefer playing or associating with girls rather than boys?"; "Did you ever dress up in female clothes (drag)?"; "Did you want to be a movie star, actor, or entertainer?" This block of questions was asked for each of three periods of the respondent's life: childhood (before age 13); adolescence (ages 13-17); and since adolescence (18 years and over). The available response categories were yes, no, and don't know. Since the interrelations among these items are of both substantive and methodological significance, their analysis is deferred to our results section.

RESULTS

Table I presents each of our six cross-gendering items for each of the three time periods for our four sample groups. For childhood, there are

Table 1. Cross-Gendering Items for Childhood, Adolescence, and Adulthood by Sample Group

	Sample group								χ^2	P
	Chicago gay nonstudents		Chicago gay students		DeKalb gay students		DeKalb nongay students			
	%	N (100%)	%	N (100%)	%	N (100%)	%	N (100%)		
	Childhood items									
Sissy	42	1460	47	89	47	32	11	204	77.44	.001
Actor	40	1463	47	89	41	32	34	204	4.54	ns
Loner	47	1457	62	90	47	32	27	203	39.72	.001
Be a girl	22	1466	23	90	34	32	5	204	36.82	.001
Play with girls	46	1463	58	90	50	32	12	203	91.41	.001
Cross-dress	36	1465	39	90	44	32	5	204	80.75	.001
	Adolescent items									
Sissy	33	1454	38	87	44	32	3	203	79.23	.001
Actor	48	1458	53	90	50	32	40	203	5.71	ns
Loner	50	1449	60	90	59	32	31	202	33.90	.001
Be a girl	15	1458	12	90	9	32	5	203	15.57	.01
Play with girls	27	1456	37	90	47	32	25	201	10.10	.02
Cross-dress	17	1458	14	90	16	32	3	203	25.14	.001
	Adulthood items									
Sissy	8	1452	9	86	13	31	2	203	12.45	.01
Actor	36	1456	40	88	45	31	37	203	1.27	ns
Loner	39	1446	36	88	39	31	28	203	9.85	.02
Be a girl	5	1454	6	88	6	31	2	202	3.11	ns
Play with girls	9	1454	16	88	23	31	41	201	158.92	.001
Cross-dress	17	1456	14	88	6	31	2	203	32.06	.001

significant differences on all items but that of actor/entertainer among the four groups. There are no significant differences among the three gay groups on any of the six items for childhood. These data replicate the findings of Whitam (1977, 1980) and show that gays are three to six times more likely to have displayed these cross-gender characteristics during childhood than are nongay males. Turning to the items for adolescence, we find significant differences on the same five items, but the differences tend to be smaller. This is due to the gays having decreased the extent of their cross-gendering for the items of sissy, be a girl, play with girls, and cross-dressing and also to the heterosexuals having increased their preference for associating with girls. Turning to the measures for adulthood, we find significant differences across the four groups for sissy, loner, cross-dressing, and preferring to associate with girls. However, the differences are now much smaller than during childhood, and for the item of associating with girls the direction of the difference has reversed. This reversal evidently indicates that the significance of a male preferring to associate with girls depends heavily on the period of life in question.

The hypothesis of defeminization is tested by vertical comparisons of the differences in Table I across the three time periods. Two different trends are revealed when the items are grouped into the two of actor and loner versus the four others. For the four-item cluster, among the gay groups there is a strong trend for the elimination of cross-gender characteristics as we proceed from childhood to adulthood. Among the heterosexuals there is either no similar trend or only a very slight one. However, we note that Bates and Bentler (1973) and Vener and Snyder (1966) reported a defeminization process for conventional boys that occurred between the ages of 4 and 10. Thus, there may be a defeminization process that occurs much earlier among heterosexual males and to a lesser degree. Such an early defeminization process seems substantially beyond the ability of our recall methods to measure. The two-item group of actor and loner shows no tendency to decline across time and among all groups.

Table II presents each childhood item against the same item for adulthood among our Chicago respondents. The purpose of this table is to explore persistence since those responding affirmatively to an item in adulthood need not have responded affirmatively during childhood. It can be seen that for all six items the greatest stability across time is in the "no" responses. Since the "no" responses are the most socially acceptable for all time periods, we would expect the greatest stability in them across time. In contrast, the "yes" responses for childhood reveal quite variable persistence into adulthood and can be divided into the two groups of actor plus loner versus the other four. Among the latter four, the highest percentage possessing a given trait at both times is 25% for the cross-dressing item.

Table II. Childhood Cross-Gendering Items by Adult Cross-Gendering Items among Chicago Respondents (Percentage)^a

Childhood items		Adult items			
		Yes	No	<i>N</i> (100%)	
Considered sissy	Yes	12 (68)	88 (40)	649	$\chi^2 = 34.27, p < .001$
	No	4 (32)	96 (60)	887	$d_c = 0.28, d_A = 0.08$
Be an actor	Yes	60 (66)	40 (25)	620	$\chi^2 = 241.58, p < .001$
	No	21 (34)	79 (75)	921	$d_c = 0.40, d_A = 0.39$
Was a loner	Yes	55 (69)	45 (35)	736	$\chi^2 = 164.31, p < .001$
	No	23 (31)	77 (65)	796	$d_c = 0.34, d_A = 0.32$
Be a girl	Yes	14 (59)	86 (20)	336	$\chi^2 = 68.13, p < .001$
	No	3 (41)	97 (80)	1206	$d_c = 0.40, d_A = 0.12$
Play with girls	Yes	16 (81)	84 (43)	714	$\chi^2 = 76.21, p < .001$
	No	3 (19)	97 (57)	826	$d_c = 0.38, d_A = .13$
Cross-dress	Yes	25 (52)	75 (32)	549	$\chi^2 = 36.57, p < .001$
	No	13 (48)	87 (68)	994	$d_c = 0.20, d_A = 0.12$

^aThe column-based percentages are within parentheses; the row-based are without. For each sub-table, a childhood measure is cross-tabulated against the same measure for adulthood. In the far right column, d_c is Somer's asymmetric d predicting the childhood measure; d_A is Somer's asymmetric d predicting the adult measure.

These low percentages of persistence directly reveal the defeminization process, i.e., nonpersistence is the majority case.

Additional information about the defeminization process is revealed if we examine the column percentages (in parentheses) of the sub-tables of Table II. For all six items, a majority of those possessing a given trait during adulthood also possessed it during childhood. This implies that the acquisition of cross-gendering during adulthood is less likely and that by far the most common pattern is early acquisition rather than late. Hence, in these data it is considerably easier to predict from adult cross-gendering to childhood cross-gendering than in the reverse direction. This asymmetry of predictability is shown in the different values of the asymmetric Somer's d 's

for each of the items in the group of four. In contrast, the greater persistence (nondefeminization) for the actor and loner items results in asymmetric Somer's d 's of equivalent magnitudes, e.g., 0.40 and 0.39 for the actor item.

Briefly reporting the analysis of childhood to adulthood persistence among the heterosexual group, we found no significant associations for the items of sissy, be a girl, and cross-dressing. Indeed, of the five nongay respondents who cross-dressed during adulthood, none were among the ten who cross-dressed during childhood. These data suggest that the possession of cross-gender characteristics by heterosexuals during childhood is of minimal significance as indicators of enduring aspects of their selves and largely arises out of transient situational influences. We did find a significant association between childhood and adulthood among the heterosexuals for the times of preferring to associate with girls, being a loner, and wanting to be an actor/entertainer. The association of associating with girls is probably indicative of early heterosexual interests among the heterosexuals, while being indicative of cross-gender interests among the homosexuals. That the actor and loner items show considerable persistence among both heterosexuals and homosexuals is consistent with the notion that such traits are more socially acceptable than the others and are not subject to such intense pressures for gender role conformity.

We developed overall cross-gendering scales for each of the three time periods for the Chicago heterosexuals. Only the items in the four-item cluster formed scales with adequately high standardized item alpha-reliabilities. The respective reliabilities for childhood, adolescence, and adulthood were 0.65, 0.57, and 0.49. Among the heterosexuals, the intercorrelations among the six items (or the subset of four) were not sufficiently high to permit development of cross-gendering scales. The very low correlations of these items among the heterosexuals as compared with the much higher ones among the homosexuals is a substantive finding again indicating that cross-gender traits among heterosexuals are of minimal significance as indicators of enduring personality characteristics and are probably due to ephemeral situational influences. The declining magnitudes of the alpha-reliabilities over time among the Chicago homosexuals suggests a tendency for the cross-gendering cluster of items to decay, at least among the items here measuring cross-gendering. This process of decay appears to be an additional process to that of defeminization. However, we reserve judgment on this decay process and invite replication or nonreplication.

We developed two additional scales called "persistent interest in being an actor" and "being a persistent loner." These two scales included the three items from each of the time periods. Their respective alpha-reliabilities are 0.79 and 0.72 among the Chicago respondents and 0.69 and 0.73 among the heterosexuals.

Table III. Childhood and Adult Cross-Gendering by Each Other and by Self-Assessed Masculine-Feminine Appearance (Percentage)

Adult cross-gendering	Childhood cross-gendering ^a		
	None	Some	High
None	88 (35)	69 (46)	53 (18)
Some	11 (12)	28 (51)	41 (37)
High	1 (8)	2 (38)	6 (55)
<i>N</i> (100%)	433	723	370

$\chi^2 = 124.03, df = 4, p < 0.001, \gamma = 0.49$

^aRow percentages in parentheses; column percentages outside parentheses.

Table III presents overall childhood cross-gendering by adult cross-gendering among the Chicago respondents. These data reveal a strong, although asymmetrical, relationship between cross-gendering in childhood and adulthood. While those cross-gendered during childhood may or may not also be cross-gendered during adulthood, those highly cross-gendered during adulthood were virtually certain to have been cross-gendered during childhood. Only 8% of those highly cross-gendered during adulthood displayed no cross-gendering during childhood. These data imply that effeminacy is a trait very unlikely to be acquired during adulthood in the gay world. It is brought there by the individual from childhood. Of course, the reason for the asymmetry of the relationship is that large numbers of those cross-gendered during childhood defeminized by adulthood.

Table I does not show a replication of the findings of Green (1974, p. 148) and of Bates and Bentler (1973) that feminine boys have a notably greater interest in acting than do conventional boys. We found no gay-nongay differences on the actor item for any time period. However, this appears to be due to our different data-gathering methods. These researchers' nonconventional boys had come to clinical attention due to effeminacy, whereas a sizable minority of our gay respondents were not effeminate during childhood. (Also, our data gathering was retrospective.) However, among our Chicago respondents we do find a sizable association between overall childhood cross-gendering and a persistent acting interest ($\chi^2 = 96.56, df = 4, p < 0.001, \gamma = 0.34$). Among those with no childhood cross-gendering, 54% were always devoid of acting interests, as compared with 24% of those highly cross-gendered during childhood. Hence, it would appear that the inclusion in our gay samples of men who were not cross-gendered during childhood reduces or eliminates gay-heterosexual differences. This is borne out by the fact that, if we exclude from the analysis those gay respondents who were not cross-gendered during

childhood and hence would not have been referred to clinical attention, a significant difference between the heterosexuals and the Chicago respondents appears ($\chi^2 = 7.40$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.03$). This difference remains significant if we look only at those persons under 25 years of age ($\chi^2 = 15.86$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$). There are no significant differences among the three gay sample groups in persistent acting interest ($\chi^2 = 4.46$, $df = 4$, $p = ns$).²

DEFEMINIZATION AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Having established the existence of a large-scale defeminization process among gay men, we now turn to an analysis of the relationships between defeminization status and measures of adult psychological well-being. Dichotomizing the measures of overall cross-gendering during childhood and adulthood at the point of some versus none and cross-tabulating these two measures yielded the four categories of the never effeminate, the defeminized, the persistently effeminate, and the newly effeminate. The relationships between these four categories—collectively referred to as defeminization status—and the psychological measures were then examined. Tables IV, V, and VI show the respective relationships of defeminization status with adult self-esteem, masculinity, and femininity. Table IV reveals significant zero-order and first-order partial associations among self-esteem, childhood cross-gendering, and adult cross-gendering. Those who were cross-gendered during adulthood have lower self-esteem than those who were not. Also, the defeminized have higher self-esteem than the persistently effeminate ($\chi^2 = 15.52$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$, $\gamma = 0.20$), although they are still somewhat and significantly lower than the never effeminate ($\chi^2 = 9.37$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.01$, $\gamma = 0.16$). We should note that, lacking measures of self-esteem prior to the occurrence of defeminization, we cannot determine whether those with higher self-esteem subsequently defeminized or defeminization resulted in higher self-esteem.

²Our persistent acting-interest measure was found to be significantly related to adult cross-gendering ($\chi^2 = 54.60$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$, $\gamma = 0.32$) both with and without childhood cross-gendering controlled. Of those never with acting interests, 45% had no adult cross-gendering, as compared with 18% of those high on persistent acting interest. This implies that persistent acting interest is associated with persistent cross-gendering. The significance of these acting interests remains somewhat puzzling, but we believe it involves the investment of somewhat primitive achievement motivations in the cross-gender role among effeminate homosexuals, while among heterosexuals there is also much persistence of acting interests, but they do not become tied to cross-gender self-portrayals.

Table IV. Likelihood Ratio Analysis of Self-Esteem by Childhood and Adult Cross-Gendering

Effect	df	Partial (1st order) associations		Marginal (0-order) associations		Adult cross-gendering (A)	Childhood cross-gendering (C)	Self-esteem (S) (percentages)			N (100%)		
		LR	χ^2	p	LR			χ^2	p	Low		Medium	High
SC	2	9.61	.008	18.02	.000	Some	Some	39	42	19	391		
SA	2	20.13	.000	28.53	.000	None	None	31	52	17	52		
CA	1	84.41	.000	92.81	.000	None	Some	28	46	26	697		
SCA	2	1.60	.448				None	21	46	33	377		

Psychological masculinity has been found by various researchers to be the major predictor of self-esteem among heterosexual males, heterosexual females, and homosexual males (Spence and Helmreich, 1978, p. 67; Bem, 1974; Kelly and Worell, 1977). Among our Chicago respondents, the respective Pearsonian correlations of self-esteem with masculinity, femininity, dominance, and competitiveness were 0.56, 0.17, 0.30, and 0.19; among our heterosexual respondents, the comparable correlations were 0.51, 0.18, 0.37, and 0.16. Since these are the major predictors of self-esteem, we explored how defeminization status relates to them. Table V reveals that masculinity was significantly related to both childhood and adult cross-gendering at the zero-order and partial levels among the Chicago respondents. Also, the defeminized were significantly more masculine than the persistently effeminate ($\chi^2 = 6.83$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.04$, $\gamma = 0.13$) while still significantly less masculine than the never effeminate ($\chi^2 = 13.89$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.001$, $\gamma = 0.17$). It seems that these differences in masculinity may account for some of the parallel differences in self-esteem. In the cases of our measures of dominance and competitiveness, only adult cross-gendering had significant relationships, with the adult cross-gendered scoring lower on these measures (data not presented).

These data show that cross-gendering, particularly persistent cross-gendering, is associated with lower levels of the "masculine virtues" of masculinity, competitiveness, and dominance. These findings are similar to those of Siegelman (1972), who found no or little difference between homosexual and heterosexual males on various measures of psychological well-being but also found that masculinity-femininity—as measured by the MMPI Mf Scale—was an important correlate of these measures. Among both homosexuals and heterosexuals, he found that the feminine had less psychological well-being. It should be noted that the Mf Scale is more a measure of culturally feminine interests—gender role—than a measure of psychological femininity and is thereby similar to our cross-gendering measures.

It is useful to observe that while *cultural* femininity in our data and in Siegelman's data has been found to be negatively related to measures of psychological well-being, *psychological* femininity is positively related to self-esteem ($r = 0.17$) and to masculinity ($r = 0.22$) among the Chicago respondents. Associations of similar magnitude for femininity were also reported by Spence and Helmreich (1978). Collectively, these findings imply that one must distinguish psychological from cultural femininity when evaluating their implications for psychological well-being. Table VI shows that, among our Chicago respondents, childhood and adult cross-gendering are significantly positively related to psychological femininity at the zero-order level but that the partial relationship of adult cross-gendering with

Table V. Likelihood Ratio Analysis of Masculinity by Childhood and Adult Cross-Gendering

Effect	df	Partial (1st order) associations		Marginal (0-order) associations		Adult cross-gendering (A)	Childhood cross-gendering (C)	Masculinity (M) (percentages)			N (100%)
		LR χ^2	p	LR χ^2	p			Low	Medium	High	
MC	2	9.85	.007	15.12	.000	Some	Some	35	42	23	382
MA	2	12.68	.001	18.95	.000	None	None	40	42	17	52
CA	1	82.92	.000	88.19	.000	None	Some	28	44	28	691
MCA	2	4.81	.090			None	None	24	37	39	372

Table VI. Likelihood Ratio Analysis of Femininity by Childhood and Adult Cross-Gendering

Effect	df	Partial (1st order) associations		Marginal (0-order) associations		Adult cross-gendering (A)	Childhood cross-gendering (C)	Femininity (F) (percentages)			
		LR χ^2	<i>p</i>	LR χ^2	<i>p</i>			Low	Medium	High	<i>N</i> (100%)
FC	2	11.32	.004	15.20	.000	Some	Some	32	32	36	388
FA	2	3.92	.141	7.81	.020	None	None	32	42	26	50
CA	1	91.11	.000	95.00	.000	None	Some	33	36	30	693
FCA	2	1.86	.394			None	None	42	36	22	375

femininity vanishes once childhood cross-gendering is controlled. Childhood cross-gendering thus appears to be a principal correlate of psychological femininity. The implications of these data appear to be that, while psychological femininity and cultural femininity are positively associated, they have opposite relationships with adult self-esteem. While those psychologically feminine or expressive have higher self-esteem, those committed to the feminine cultural role have lower self-esteem.

Briefly reporting the results of comparisons of our gay and heterosexual respondents, we found no differences in self-esteem or dominance between the heterosexual group and the combined gay groups. We also ran gay-nongay comparisons among those under 25 years of age and found no differences. There was no difference among the three gay groups on self-esteem, masculinity, femininity, dominance, or competitiveness. We did find that the combined gay groups were significantly higher on femininity than the heterosexuals and lower on competitiveness. On masculinity the gays differed significantly from the heterosexuals, but that difference seems to be one of heterogeneity more than one of direction. Either the gays are higher on masculinity or they are more heterogeneous.

Our findings on gay-heterosexual differences in these measures are partially consistent and partially inconsistent with those of other researchers. Heilbrun and Thompson (1977) found no differences between gay and heterosexual males on psychological masculinity or femininity, although there were trends toward the gays being more feminine and the heterosexuals more masculine. Spence and Helmreich (1978, p. 66) found gay males to be significantly higher on femininity and lower on masculinity than heterosexual males. The inconsistency of these various findings seems to indicate that any gay-nongay differences in these measures are either nonexistent or minimal and that the major variation is to be found within sexual orientation groups rather than between.

DISCUSSION

The above data replicated the findings of Whitam (1977, 1980) and of Saghira and Robins (1973) in that a large majority of gay men have a feminine gender role preference during childhood. How large that majority is is somewhat debatable, since it depends heavily on the nature of the cross-gendering scales used. In future work on cross-gendering, it would probably be desirable to employ scales with larger numbers of items than those here used. A greater number of scales would permit greater degrees of discrimination and would get at less blatant forms of cross-gendering.

The data presented show that approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of those cross-gendered as children defeminized by adulthood and thereby became substantially indistinguishable from conventional males. This defeminization process helps to explain the fact that the majority of gay men appear visibly gender-conventional while having been unconventional as children. It should be noted that, while most of the defeminization process probably occurs between childhood and early adulthood, it may for some gay men continue far into adulthood.

Gagnon and Simon (1973, pp. 147-149) have observed a high degree of visibly effeminacy among young gay males who have just "come out," typically at approximately the ages of 18 to 21. While not disputing their interpretation that such effeminacy may function as a means of symbolically expressing identification with other gays, that effeminacy seems also to be a straightforward extension of earlier cross-gendering. The latter interpretation is lent considerable support by our finding that extremely few gay men acquire cross-gendering during adulthood without having been cross-gendered during childhood. Hence, effeminacy does not appear to arise out of either labeling or group influences. It is brought to early adulthood from childhood, or possibly resurrected from childhood. Of course, it may later be lost as the defeminization process continues.

Our data suggest that comparisons by sexual orientation on measures of psychological well-being do not seem particularly fruitful. Hart *et al.* (1978), in reviewing the literature on such comparisons, came to a similar conclusion. However, while there appear to be few differences by sexual orientation in psychological measures, differences in gender role preference and gender culture seem substantial and profitable lines for future research to pursue. Our categorization of gay men according to past and present cross-gendering proved productive of noteworthy relationships.

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