

# **A Viable Theory of Female Development**

**Gerald Schoenewolf PhD**

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**By Gerald Schoenewolf Ph.D.**

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## ***About the Author***

Gerald Schoenewolf, Ph.D. is a New York State licensed psychologist who has practiced psychotherapy for over 33 years. He has authored 25 professional articles and 13 books on psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. His books include *101 Common Therapeutic Blunders*, *The Art of Hating*, *Counterresistance* and *Psychotherapy with People in the Arts*. He has also written and directed two feature films— *Therapy* and *Brooklyn Nights*. He lives in the Pennsylvania Poconos with his wife, Julia.

## A Viable Theory of Female Development

Ever since Sigmund Freud explained his theory of female development, those theories have come under attack. They were criticized from the moment he wrote them, but in the years since his death they have been almost completely discarded; yet the theories offered to replace Freud's theory are flawed. This paper reexamines his theories and the views of his critics, primarily feminists, and attempts to point the way to a viable theory of female development.

When I wrote this paper two decades ago, psychoanalysts were still debating Freud's theories of female development. Nowadays, that debate is no more. After years of emotionally charged complaints about his theories, thousands of articles assailing them, and wide-spread repudiation of the man and his theories, the debate is over. The feminists have won, and any man who invokes Freud's name or defends his theories about women is dismissed with a shake of the head and a roll of the eyes, indicating that such a person must be incredibly backwards to still be carrying on about Freud.

Several years earlier, I wrote a book called *Sexual Animosity between Men and Women* (1989). It was described by one reviewer as "a book for misogynists" (Sauzier, 1990). When I made a presentation of the book at the Washington Square Institute in New York, I received a similarly hostile reception. A woman psychoanalyst read an angry response to my presentation that chided me for drumming up theories, including Margaret Mahler's, that

were no longer acceptable. At that time, the feminists had not completely won; there was still scattered resistance to their take-over of psychoanalytic theory; I was allowed to present, but only in order for a “party member” to immediately repudiate me. What was the thesis of the book and presentation that was so repellent? For the most part, I was reiterating Freud’s views on female psychology—on male and female castration complexes and how they contribute to the animosity between men and women. Yet, the repudiation of my thesis was overwhelming. Indeed, one might safely argue that, of all the repudiations of Freud’s theories over the years, those leveled at his theories about women have been the most intense and complete. Therefore, anybody who still sees Freud’s theories on women as mostly valid, as I do, will likewise be repudiated.

It is clear that many women do not accept Freud’s theories about women, but it is not clear how they would replace them. A recent paper by Young-Breuhl (1994) entitled, “What Theories Women Want,” sheds light on this phenomenon. Young-Breuhl observes that there has been a shift in theories about women since Freud—from Oedipally focused drive theory to pre-Oedipally focused relational theory. Seen in a larger social context, she sees a change from the “rejecting mother” causal theory of neurosis of Freudian psychoanalysis to the “abusive masculinity theory” of the new feminist psychoanalysis. This new system, Young-Breuhl contends, serves to valorize rather than analyze female pathology, making women’s psychic illnesses into

heroic endeavors at rejecting masculine bias and oppression.

Her point is well taken. A sizable majority of female psychoanalysts has insisted that women psychoanalysts—and not Freud or his followers—should decide which theories about women are acceptable and which are not. However, they have often repudiated Freud's theories not by offering new research or by debating the issues he raised in calm, reasoned tones, but by *ad hominem* criticisms. Meanwhile, they have suggested substitute theories of female development that do not adequately explain female psychopathology or sexual development.

Psychoanalytic theorizing from the outset has been a complicated business. As long as Freud was alive, he remained the final judge of whether or not new theories were valid. Those who strayed too far from his own view, such as Adler and Jung, were ostracized. Since his death, new schools of psychoanalysis have emerged, and differences in the theoretical framework of these schools have widened. Feminist psychoanalysis is one that has emerged most strongly, if not as a separate school, at least as a distinct perspective, particularly with regard to female psychology. How do we determine in these post-Freudian days whether the theories of feminist psychoanalysts or other schools are valid?

Determining the validity of theories in psychoanalysis will continue to be



complicated. However, as with any scholarly or scientific endeavor, there are certain rules that should be followed: (1) theories should be based on clinical research, consisting of either direct observations of parents and children (Mahler, 1968; Roiphe and Galenson, 1981) or reconstructive analyses of child and adult patients that can be replicated by other psychoanalysts; (2) investigations should be an open-minded search for the truth, not biased towards a particular finding; (3) investigators should not be prohibited from a particular finding because it may be deemed religiously, ethically or politically incorrect; (4) theories should be validated through objective replication of research and calm debate.

These are not my rules, but the rules passed on from generation to generation since the scientific era began. Abandoning them now would mean, I think, the end of psychoanalysis as a cohesive body of social science and the beginning of psychoanalysis as a belief system, such as communism. Using these criteria, it is possible to look at both Freud's theories and those of feminist psychoanalysts in an effort to determine which aspects of each are convincing, and to move beyond them in formulating a viable theory of female sexual development.

### Feminist Psychoanalytic Theories

Although I can understand Young-Bruehl's view of a shift from Oedipally

focused drive theory to pre-Oedipally focused relational theory, I disagree with her in characterizing classical Freudian theory as a “rejecting mother” causal theory of neurosis. Freud looked at many factors—mother, father, siblings, biology and society. The Oedipal triangle, the cornerstone of the Freudian theory of neurosis, involves many variables, among which are: the child’s innate wish to get rid of the parent of the opposite sex and marry the parent of the same sex; the child’s relationship with both mother and father, and the relationship of siblings. I do agree that more recent feminist psychoanalytic theories of female development have shifted to an “abusive masculinity theory” of female neurosis—attributing neurosis to male oppression. However, I would characterize the shift that has occurred since Freud a bit differently: I see it as a shift from a psychodynamic causal theory (women’s mental disorders are caused by complexes and fixations engendered during early childhood) to a sociodynamic causal theory (women’s mental disorders are either trumped up by male bias or caused by male social oppression).

One of Freud’s earliest supporters, Adler (1929), became one of the first to cast aspersions on his theories of women. He denounced Freud’s libido theory as well as the concept of penis envy and replaced it with his theory of “the masculine protest”. Even though Adler himself coined the term “Organ inferiority,” describing individuals who due to some physical defect develop feelings of inferiority about themselves, he did not apply this term to women and their feelings about their genitals. Women’s problems were not due to a

complex about their sexual organs, he decided, but were the result of their inferior status in society. Adler seems to have been influenced by the philosopher Nietzsche, using phrases such as “will to power” as the underpinning of his new theory of women’s development. Horney (1926) joined Adler in attacking penis envy, contending that the term was a “male concept.” She was the first woman to resort to polemical arguments, the first to use the term “male bias,” in her writings. Although she did not go as far as Adler in substituting a different theory, such as the “masculine protest,” she also cited social conditions as partly responsible for female psychopathology. By using polemical arguments, Horney set an example for all subsequent writers to follow. From that time on, psychoanalytic writing about women’s theories began to take on an imperious and uncivil tone.

It is not penis envy, many feminist psychoanalysts have since contended, but men’s privileged position in society, which women resent. “I believe,” Thompson states, “that the manifest hostility between men and women is not different in kind from any other struggle between combatants, one of whom has a definite advantage in prestige and position” (1943, p. 53). Like Horney and Adler, she dismisses the concept of penis envy, asserting that it is a “male conceit” stemming from phallic narcissism. She concludes: “Characteristics and interiority feelings which Freud considered to be specifically female and biologically determined can be explained as developments arising in and growing out of Western woman’s historic situation of underprivilege, restriction

of development, insecure attitude towards the sexual nature, and social and economic dependency. The basic nature of women is still unknown” (1942, p. 84). This argument attacks Freud’s maleness and does not adequately address his theoretical discussion of the issue. She contends that the male role in society involves more privilege and status, and that women’s envy of men is caused entirely by that fact, but she offers no alternate theory of development and suggests that female psychology remains unknown. It is as though she is saying only women can know women, and maybe even they do not know. And while alluding to phallic narcissism, she does not consider the possibility of “vaginal narcissism.” I believe this comes about from penis envy, and represents a narcissistic injury to women resulting in repression of the original injury and the formation of a shell of female pride; so that in adult life women no longer remember the primary envy but are aware only of the secondary envy of the male role.

Miller (1973) was in the vanguard of women who objected to the classical psychoanalytic “cultural stereotyping” of women, which held that a normal women should embrace the role of wife, mother and nurturer of children and that any deviation from this role was a sign of feminine psychopathology. “The belief that women could or should accept and adjust to the stereotyped role has been a cause, not a cure, of their problems” (p. 381). She sees this attempt to fit women into a stereotypical mold as a kind of social oppression in and of itself. While Freud regards a woman’s fulfillment of this traditional role as the

road to mature development, Miller regards it as a road to neurosis. Hence, her theory of development again suggests that women's neurosis stems from social oppression—that is, being forced into a stereotypical role. Mature development revolves around women shrugging off this social oppression and rejecting the traditional female role.

Although penis envy has been the most controversial aspect of Freud's theory of female sexual development, other concepts such as female masochism and female superego development—as contrasted with male superego development—have also been attacked and dismissed. In an interview, Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985) takes issue with both these concepts. Differing with those who label Freud as Victorian, she suggests instead that his writings on female psychology were influenced by his cancer. In particular, she alludes to Freud's assertion that penis envy leads women to have a less developed sense of justice and fair play: "I cannot escape the notion (though I hesitate to give it expression) that for women the level of what is ethically normal is different from what it is in men" (1925, p. 257).

Citing this passage as well as his theories of the life and death instincts, Chasseguet-Smirgel observes, "I believe that he introduced this particular theory of the instincts because of his cancer and that his theory about female sexuality is connected to his cancer and his concern about his own death." Asked to elaborate on this idea, she explains that Freud saw female sexuality

as something mysterious, a “dark continent” to be feared. “This could be seen as a disguise, a reaction-formation against his fear of femaleness as something that is linked with death, for all of us” (pp. 534-535). Again, although Chasseguet-Smirgel’s interpretation of Freud may or may not be correct, this represents a continuation of ad hominem refutations of Freud and does not engage Freud’s assertions or offer a substitute theory of superego formation.

Klein does provide an alternate theory of superego development. She places the beginning of the masculinity complex, penis envy and superego development in the oral-sadistic stage. Her theories, unlike those of others, is based on her observations of children during play theory. She notes: “Not only do the envy and hatred she feels toward her mother color and intensify her sadistic phantasies against the penis, but her relations to the mother’s breast affect her subsequent attitude towards men in other ways as well” (1932, p. 207). Klein’s theory retains the castration complex but maintains that an oral-sadistic envy and hatred of the breast precedes the envy of the penis, and that both factors affect the girl’s superego formation. I agree with Klein that superego development starts earlier; in my own research I have found that superego development begins during the anal stage, when children first hear the words “good” and “bad” applied to their behavior. Klein’s breast-envy theory does not seem valid to me. When an infant gets its first teeth, it bites the breast, not out of envy, but to try out the new teeth.

Sulloway (1979), Masson (1984) and Kroll (1986) are among the many who criticized Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory and saw it as proof of Freud's male bias. Masson concludes that Freud dropped the seduction theory in order to cover up the "crimes of the fathers," as well as to gain acceptance in the patriarchal scientific community of Victorian Europe. In other words, Freud's abandonment of the seduction theory was an attempt to make mothers and not fathers culpable, and to deny the "abusive masculinity" etiological factors in female sexual development. This argument is not only ad hominem, but is also a distortion of what Freud said. In fact, although Freud abandoned the notion that all cases of hysteria were due to childhood sexual abuse, he never doubted that sexual abuse exists. He fully believed the memories of incest by Katherine, Rosalia H., Elisabeth von R., and the Wolf Man, maintaining that the abuse was crucial to their development. "You must not suppose...that sexual abuse of a child by its nearest male relatives belongs entirely to the realm of phantasy" (1916, p. 460).

To restore the seduction theory, as these writers suggest, while dismissing Freud's other theories about female development, would again be a way of attributing female psychological disorders to male oppression—in the form of sexual molestation. But Freud discarded this theory for a good reason; he found that most cases of hysteria were not precipitated by father-daughter incest. In my own experience, I have found that hysteria is often engendered by a hostile or competitive response by a maternal caretaker during the girl's

period of sexual discovery. One patient was severely chastised by her stepmother when she was caught masturbating at the age of six, which included a spanking in front of the whole family. She grew up to be rebelliously sexual as a young adult, as though she were constantly saying, "You see, my sexuality is just fine." At times hysterical patients recall vague memories of incest but are, in actuality, bringing up fantasies they once had at an early age and then repressed because they were of a forbidden nature. Freud was always willing to change theories when new ideas or information came to light. Theory building, as Freud noted, must be done cautiously, taking into consideration the complexity of human psychodynamics.

Gilligan is another who addresses Freud's theories and finds them flawed by a masculine bias. Unlike her predecessors, she offers a new theory to replace them. She takes to task for its bias not only Freudian psychoanalysis but virtually all theories about women in all fields of social science. In the place of Freud's theories, she espouses a developmental line that "delineates the path not only to a less violent life but also to a maturity realized through interdependence and taking care" (1982, p.9). She argues that "Freud's negative and derivative description of female psychology," with its emphasis on the rejecting, close-binding mother, should be replaced with a "positive and direct" account of female development that stresses "the positive aspects of the attachment to mother" (1982, p.9). If looked at through men's eyes, she posits, "women's failure to separate then becomes by definition a failure to develop,"



but when looked at through women's eyes, it can be seen instead as a strength, a capacity for attachment which leads "to loving relationships, empathy and altruism," while male tendencies toward separation "lead to disruption and violence" (1982, p.9).

Gilligan does not flesh out her "attachment theory" of women's development, but seems in agreement with Miller and others that abnormal development is somehow connected with women attempting to live up to male standards. At the same time, she dismisses Freud's theories by branding them as "negative views of women" or "products of male bias." Her contrasting of a male developmental line in which separation fosters "disruption and violence" with a female developmental line in which attachment leads to "loving relationships, empathy and altruism" is first of all a misinterpretation of Freud. Freud's (1925; 1931)—and later Mahler's (1968)—emphasis on separation and individuation was based on Freud's analyses of many patients and on Mahler's observation of many mothers and infants. To suggest that attachment to mother leads solely to loving relationships while separation leads to disruption and violence shows a lack of understanding of their research and of the complex process of separation and individuation. Moreover, Gilligan's theory seems to be exactly what she accuses Freud's theory of being: it is a "negative and derivative description" of male development and a rather idealistic depiction of female development. Finally, although she points to a new account of female development that stresses the positive and direct aspects of the

attachment to mother, she does not provide us with details that would enable us to understand abnormal development. The implication is that abnormal development occurs if women separate from their mothers, but she does not back this implication up with any hard data.

Clower is one of several feminist psychoanalysts to cite research in other fields to disprove Freud. She points to research in endocrinology by Gadpaile (1972), which shows that in the beginning of fetal life both sexes are under the influence of female sex hormones and both have female sex characteristics. This evidence, she suggests, invalidates Freud's contention that females at first have a masculine orientation. "The clitoris is not, as Freud thought, an inferior substitute for the penis" (1979, p. 307), she concludes, since both men and women have clitorises before men have penises.

She is referring to Freud's assertion that "The sexual life of the woman is regularly split up into two phases, the first of which is of a masculine character, while only the second is specifically feminine" (1931, p. 230). He theorized that until the phallic stage little girl think of their clitorises as little penises, and fantasize that they are little boys trapped in a girl's body. However, Clower, like others, misinterprets Freud's language. He does not believe that the clitoris is an inferior substitute for the penis or that little girls are inferior to little boys. When he writes that upon discovering that differences in the sexual anatomy of males and females the girl "acknowledges the fact of her castration, the

consequent superiority of the male and her own inferiority (1931, p. 238), he is using a figurative style to convey the internalization that occurs in the girl. In her mind she views her clitoris as inferior and herself as inferior. Freud did not actually believe that the anatomy of either sex was inferior, only that the differences led to a differing interpretation and developmental line.

Clower's attempt to connect the events of fetal life with those of a toddler's sexual development does not make sense. The fact that both sexes are influenced by female sex hormones and bear female sexual characteristics in fetal life does not nullify the observation that little girls, during a certain stage of development—the stage of auto-eroticism—think of themselves as little boys. Those are two separate processes, one biological, the other psychological. But, even if you see them as parallel, the fact that in fetal life girls are always girls does not mean that in infantile life they might not go through a stage in which they want to be boys and, in fact, act as if they are boys. Humans often imitate those whom they envy and admire, so it stands to reason that if they envy boys having a penis they would want to be like them.

Similarly, Clower points research by Masters and Johnson (1966), which could find no distinction between a vaginal and clitoral orgasm, using it to refute Freud's assertion that the mature female denounces the clitoris in favor of the vagina and accepts the traditional role of heterosexual intercourse and motherhood. "Neither as a woman nor as a scientist have I ever been able to

believe that femininity is derived from castrated maleness,” she states (p. 230). Again, Clower misinterprets Freud’s language, taking it literally rather than the figurative way it was meant. And her argument misses the point. The fact that Masters and Johnson could not find a difference between the vaginal and clitoral orgasm does not really detract from Freud’s theory. The main point of Freud’s theory was not about whether a vaginal or clitoral orgasm was more important or prevalent among women, but about how, for both males and females, mature sexual development involves traversing the stages of autoeroticism, resolving gender narcissism and developing fulfilling and genuine object relations with persons of the opposite sex.

Clower refers to research by Stoller (1968), Money (1965), and Money and Ehrhardt (1971) to support claims that gender identity is shaped by parental attitudes and expectations. Therefore she argues against Freud’s claim that anatomy is destiny, contending that there is no biologically determined masculine or feminine identity role. This argument has been taken up by other feminists writers (see Miller, 1973; Mitchell, 1974). While it may be true that gender identity can be, some extent, shaped by parents, this does not preclude biologically determined sexual traits. Innate mating and nurturing rituals have long been noted in lower animals (Montagu, 1976), so would it not follow that some aspects of human sexuality are innate as well? Moreover, when Freud said that “anatomy is destiny,” he did not mean that anatomy and only anatomy is destiny, but that anatomy helps to shape destiny in concert

with environmental factors—as when a brother is favored by a parent over a sister (Freud, 1925). For sure, Freud somewhat neglected object relations for drive theory, but he did manage to describe them to some extent. (Incidentally, I have noticed that feminist writers will argue for genetics when genetics proves their argument, but will cite environmental factors, as Clower does above, when that is convenient. For example, Gilligan uses genetics when she implies that men are born with a masculine bias.

Although Clower sets herself apart from feminists who distort Freud, she herself misinterprets him again and again. She also spends several pages recounting a feminist history of male oppression of women, which implies that she too, like the feminists she sets herself apart from, considers women's abnormal development has more to do with “abusive masculinity” than with classical women's theory. Taken together, her criticisms of Freud suggest that she is in agreement with those who believe that the cultural stereotyping of women lies at the root of many of their problems.

More recently, Prozan has written a book that takes the feminist psychoanalytic theories to another step. *Feminist Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice* (1993), recapitulates all the cited arguments against Freud and supplants them with theories of women's development based on their being victims of male stereotyping, bias and oppression. In her view, nearly all the psychological and organic ailments of women are the result of masculine social

oppression (i.e., the sociodynamic point of view). “Feminists believe that women have been prevented from developing their full potential by social mores and not by their anatomy, because society has confined them to roles of wife and mother, subordinate to and financially dependent on their husbands” (1993, p. xvi). Like Thompson and Gilligan, she asserts that only females can understand female psychology and therefore only they should write about it. “Just as psychoanalysis has been subject to revision, so too feminist theory is being debated *among feminists*” (p. 336). She also implies that only female psychoanalysts understand females and should therefore treat female patients (whereas either female or male psychoanalysts may treat males).

Obviously, writing this paper demonstrates that I disagree with this last point. To say that only females can understand females and that only females should treat females implies, first of all, that males are biased but females are not. I would argue that both have their particular biases, including biases resulting from gender narcissism. Nearly all psychotherapists have had patients who have told them, “You can’t understand me because you’re too conventional and I’m an artist,” or “You’re Christian and I’m Jewish,” or “You’re white and I’m black.” In actuality, I would contend that due to the gender narcissism that inhibits insight into one’s own sex, males may be more objective about females, and females may be more objective about males.

In nearly all of the feminist papers I have detected an implied rejection of

the concept of the unconscious mind, another cornerstone of psychoanalytic thought. For example, Clower states, “Neither as a woman nor as a scientist have I ever been able to believe that femininity is derived from castrated maleness.” So if she has not experienced it and doesn’t believe it (the feeling of castrated maleness), then it doesn’t exist. If she doesn’t remember ever having had the feeling, then the concept must certainly be invalid. Yet, if she calls herself a psychoanalyst, then I would think she should always consider how the unconscious works.

### Psychodynamic Theory and Sociodynamic Theory

At the core of the debate between Freudian and feminist psychoanalysts is whether or not women’s abnormal development derives from psychological factors (the castration complex, separation) or from societal forces (cultural stereotyping, male oppression). This debate parallels a broader public dispute stirred up by the feminist movement that began in the Victorian era and has grown to the point where it has now wrought wholesale changes in standards of normality.

The traditional roles of women have not been accorded the same prestige as the traditional roles of men. All societies from the beginning of recorded history have been patriarchal in nature, beginning with the male-dominated tribes of the cave men, up to the present, in which men still hold most

leadership roles in government. Whether this constitutes oppression of women, or is a natural evolution of civilization from agrarian to industrial to technological modes in which the roles of males and females have changed according to the situation, is a matter of continued debate. Likewise, it is questionable as to whether such societal factors are entirely, or mostly responsible for women's problems, as many feminist psychoanalysts would maintain.

This debate reminds me of the nature-nurture controversy that has existed in the behavioral sciences for some times. The answer to this question seems obvious when you study the available information: both genetics and the environment contribute to the formation of personality and behavior—it is not one or the other. Likewise, a combination of genetic, psychological and social factors undoubtedly contribute to the development of both male and female sexuality.

This is not a new idea. Many psychoanalysts, including Freud, have devised theories of female psychology that attempted to consider genetic and social; factors. Among them are Mahler (1968), Kestenberg (1968), Nagera (1975), Buxbaum (1979), Socarides (1979), Kernberg (1980), Roiphe and Gallenson (1981), and McDougall and Siegel (1988). However, these voices have been largely disregarded when it comes to debate about women's psychology. Indeed, Socarides acknowledged recently that he can no longer get his papers published in most journals that had formerly welcomed them



(Socarides, 1995), and his developmental theories, which combine genetics with environmental factors, no longer count.

Politics has devalued Freud while research has validated his theories. Two major studies validated the theory of the castration complex. In observing 38 children and 22 mothers over a period of four years, Mahler and colleagues (1975) confirmed the existence of penis envy in girls (as well as castration fear in boys). During the rapprochement subphase (beginning at about 15 or 16 months of age), girl discover the difference in anatomy between themselves and boys. Upon this discovery, according to Mahler, girls tend to masturbate desperately and aggressively. The discovery “coincides with the emergence of the affect of envy” (p. 105). Mahler describes how various girls acted out their feelings of envy and anger, noting that they “tended to turn back to mother, to blame her, to demand from her, to be disappointed in her, and still to be ambivalently tied to her. They demanded from mother that she settle a debt, so to say” (p. 106).

Roiphe and Galenson (1981) also confirmed the existence of penis envy in their intensive study of about 70 infants. Like Mahler, they point to a definite genital awareness at the beginning of a of the second year and a sense of gender identity by the end of the second year and assert that girls universally react strongly to the discovery of the difference in sexual anatomy, noting that it brings about the “recrudescence of fears of object loss and self-disintegration”

(p. 272). They supply numerous case histories of the reactions of little girls to their sexual discovery. One of them, Suzy, first showed an interest in her genital area at about 15 months—at the time when she first saw a boy's penis. With her eyes “riveted on his penis,” she pointed at it and then touched her own genital area. For the next few months she often tried to lift the skirts of the women in the nursery (looking for penises). She did the same thing at home with her mother, who became upset at her behavior. The authors speculated that she might also have tried to touch her father's penis during showers with both parents. When she was 20 months old, after touching a little boy's penis upon following him into the bathroom, she went through a period of intense masturbation and lifting of her skirt and the skirts of women around her. At the same time there was a complete deterioration of her toilet control, which persisted over the next few months. “Michael has a pee-pee. I have no pee-pee. Why?” she asked her mother. This was accompanied by a general behavioral regression and negativism. When she was brought to the nursery, she refused to leave her stroller. “Sitting there for a considerable time looking sullen and distressed, she screamed if any of the children tried to touch her (pp. 144-145). They conclude that “penis envy and the feminine castration complex exert crucial influences upon feminine development” (p. 285).

My own research, reconstructing the memories of adult patients, has also confirmed the existence of the castration and Oedipus complexes and a difference in female and male superego development. However, I am aware

that numerous psychoanalysts claim they have never encountered evidence in their own practices of the castration complex. Since a number of psychoanalysts confirm it and a number do not, how can we resolve the issue? It is my contention that enough research has been done to confirm the theory. Psychoanalysis is not a hard science in which research can be replicated precisely. We must rely on whether the available arguments or case histories are convincing, whether the investigator demonstrates an open-minded search for the truth (rather than a bias), and whether others who show the same scientific objectivity have replicated it. Moulton, like many feminist psychoanalysts, suggests that the concept of penis envy is destructive to women. However, she admits that negative attitudes towards men, such as hostility, envy and competitiveness must be dealt with, "attributing them to biological inadequacy, which must be accepted as inevitable, perpetuates a vicious circle by enhancing women's rage at men, whose superiority is thus confirmed" (1970, p. 100). Like others, Moulton misinterprets Freud. I repeat, Freud did not believe that women's sexual organs are biologically inferior; only that little girls at first believe them to be inferior, just as some men feel inferior because they have small penises. Women are not doomed to inferiority by their anatomy; they are doomed only if they develop fixations at that stage due to inappropriate parental responses and are resistant to psychoanalysis or other reparative experiences. Penis envy is a psychological, not a biological phenomenon. A man's inferior feelings about having a small penis (the male

castration complex) and a woman feeling of inferiority about not having one, can be worked through in psychoanalysis.

Referring to a comment Freud made at the end of a lecture on femininity, “If you wish to know more about femininity enquire from your own experiences of life” (1933, p. 135), Moulton concludes that Freud was suggesting that women themselves would have to develop a suitable theory of women’s development. My own sense of that lecture was that Freud was feeling pressured by the questions of feminists, not only at the end of that lecture but toward the end of his life; he made such statements in order to appease the questioners. In essence, Freud held the line with regard to his theory of women. And I think it is essential that we also continue to hold that line. If we, as psychoanalysts, cannot stand up against pressures that would silence us and take control of certain of our theories, we no longer have a social science. We have a belief system.

### A Viable Theory of Female Psychology

A viable theory of female psychology might utilize ideas from the cultural realm as well as the psychological realm, without dismissing one or the other. Social factors play a role in the formation of sexual attitude, orientation and identity. The values and standards of a particular society influence the child-rearing practices of that society. If masculinity is given a higher value than

femininity, as it is in many societies, then it will have an effect on feminine self-esteem and sexuality. If the standards of a society are excessively frustrating for one gender or another, due to restrictive designated roles, then those standards will likewise have a destructive effect. More research needs to be done in order to establish how and when social factors influence development of both males and females.

Yet, these factors in and of themselves are not enough to explain female psychology. Classical psychoanalytic theory must not be discarded through polemical arguments or because a consensus has found it to be “biased” or “Victorian” or “out of date.” Classical concepts about female development—drive theory, the castration and Oedipus complexes, and the importance of separation and individuation—have not been refuted by reasoned arguments. To say that a woman’s envy of men is solely related to societal unfairness is too absolute and dispenses altogether with any notion that females may suffer from disorders related to traumatic situations in their childhoods having nothing to do with society’s unfairness.

Development of the castration and Oedipus complexes has been observed with consistency in males and females by many convincing investigators. These consequences of these complexes have also been documented. Elsewhere (Schoenewolf, 1989) I have pointed out how male and female narcissism emerge out of these complexes. Males who have not

resolved their castration complex (castration fear) may be driven both by an unconscious guilt that causes them to appease women or attempt to degrade them, and by a pride that causes them to focus on their size of their penis and on sexual conquest. Females who have not resolved their castration complex (penis envy) may be driven by a primitive envy that causes them to either idealize men or to attempt to compete with them and devalue them.

Freud's theory about the differences in male and female superego development has found less replicating research. Researchers differ with him about when moral development occurs, and it seems clear that it begins much earlier than the Oedipal period. However, even if we accept that moral development is different for males and females, we must not suggest that females are less moral than males (or the reverse, as some feminists seem to suggest). Milgram's (1975) experiment, in which an experimenter had subjects administer electric shocks to "actors" who pretended to be fellow subjects, showed that both men and women were willing to be cruel, since about 65 per cent of both males and females went up to the highest level (450 volts). In the relations between the sexes, women may tend more towards emotionality and men more towards aggression. The difference in the male and female morality is a matter of style, not degree.

With regard to what constitutes normal sexuality, some modifications may be in order. The term *female masochism*, seems unfortunate and misleading.

To denote mature development as masochistic is inappropriate. Should we then call mature male development sadistic? Rather, we might say that the mature male give up the auto-eroticism of the Oedipal stage and becomes active in seeking intercourse with a female; and the mature female's journey toward giving up auto-eroticism and becoming receptive to vaginal intercourse and motherhood should be retained—recent views about homosexual rights notwithstanding. This does not mean that all women must be mothers; only that it is normal for them to want to be. This view of women's development is in harmony with animal behavior in general, where it is the role of the female to give birth to and nurture children. However, neither Freud nor any other classical psychoanalyst ever meant to suggest that women might not do other things in life—as was demonstrated by the number of women Freud encouraged to be psychoanalysts.

Masters and Johnson (1966) perhaps led the way to establishing a more viable theory when they concluded that there were not one but three variations of the female sexual response, each considered a normal variation. Similarly, there could be more than one normal developmental line for females. The classical psychoanalytic developmental line, ending in marriage and motherhood, would be one line, whereas another line might be that of women who eschew motherhood and opt instead to have a career. A third option could and would be women who choose to have both a family and a career. Humans are much more complicated than animals, so that the range of what might be

considered normal development should be wider.

However, whatever the theories end up being, they should be verified on the basis of their viability, not because of their perceived religious, ethical or political correctness.

### A Final Comment

I showed this paper to a woman acquaintance and her comment was, “It’s feels irrelevant to me. Dated. People aren’t writing about that anymore.” However, another woman acquaintance liked the paper and recommended it should be published. “I think there are still questions that haven’t been answered,” she said.

Along with the Feminist Movement of the twentieth century have come sweeping changes in sexual roles, values and morality. These changes have also influenced psychoanalytic theory. Indeed, the influence is now so great that in many quarters Freudian theories of female psychology are seen not only as passé, but also as an offence to women. They are no longer tolerated, and people shake their heads and smile at anybody who still mentions them. In a sense, we have come full circle since the early days when Freud ostracized those who strayed from his theories. Freud was wrong and feminists are wrong.



Censorship has no place in any scientific or scholarly pursuit. Censorship negates our attempt to develop a theory of female psychology or any other theory. Rather than censorship, a calm, open-minded discussion of the issues is most likely to produce a theory that is finally acceptable. As far as I am concerned the contest is not over. It is ongoing. Theories that link psychopathology solely to psychodynamic factors and neglect completely the sociodynamic or genetic factors are not viable. And theories that consider only the sociodynamic or genetic factors and disregard the psychodynamic factors are likewise not valid. Only by considering all factors can we develop a theory that works.

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