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COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN FEMALES:  
EFFECTS ON SELF-ESTEEM AND ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION

Mary Miller

The recent years, with changing roles for males and females, have in addition generated both questions and research about the psychological nature of men and women. If differences do indeed exist, they are no longer accepted as permanent and unchangeable. If nothing else, recent social change has made us aware that one's ideas and concepts about social order are much more challengeable than we thought previously. Research in these areas is particularly fascinating in that it has direct implications for how we live, relate to one another, challenge ourselves, and even raise our children.

One area that is of interest is the differences that exist in the achievement motivation of males and females. Males have historically been in the valued, achievement-oriented places in society. This is changing somewhat, but still, we find females lagging behind, earning lower wages, working in lower-prestige jobs. There are inevitably numerous reasons why this is true. Many of them are far too subtle, and complex. It is the purpose of this paper to look at some of the factors, particularly those in the area

of cognitive development and socialization, that are significant in playing a role in achievement motivation in females. From the outset, the acknowledgement is made that this is perhaps only a fragment in a much greater picture. However, the research is nevertheless valuable in that there is the possibility that the awareness of some of the factors may bring about at least small change.

Perhaps the most significant question addressed here is the issue of whether differences in achievement between males and females are inherent or whether they are learned and therefore alterable. Studies generally report that females give fewer achievement themes in projective tests such as the Thematic Apperception Test, for example. If girls give fewer achievement themes under these conditions, is this due to their own low achievement or due to the assumption that females are not achievers? It has been found that subjects of both sexes give fewer achievement themes when responding to a story or picture about a female. This suggests that girls' usually lower need for achievement scores may not reflect their motivations but rather their concepts concerning the usual characteristics of women and girls (Monahan, et al., 1974). It is this controversy that will be explored here as well as some of the possible contributing factors. The direct effect of perceptions about females as it affects self perception and performance will also be examined.

Achievement and self-esteem are really like any other personality dynamic or factor. They are qualities learned, reinforced, and incorporated in and by the child. However, it seems that this process is different for males and females, in that we find differences later in life. The years between one year and three or four years of age are crucial in the development of independence and competence. Crucial here means that independence and competence orientations are learned most efficiently then (Hoffman, 1972). This is an important time for building up notions about self and about the world. It has been hypothesized that this period of time entails very different experiences for male and female children. Chodorow (1974) attributes later differences between males and females not to biologic or genetic factors but to the fact that women are largely the primary caretakers of children. As gender identity takes place in response to that caretaker, a different experience emerges for males and females out of that relationship.

Female children, in seeing themselves as like their primary caretaker, come to define themselves in terms of relation and connection, developing a high regard for relationships. Males, however, must come to see themselves as different from their primary caretaker and consequently define themselves through separation, individuation, and autonomy (Chodorow, 1974). This can be seen as a key to explaining many later differences in perception, cognition, and behavior of males and females. This is, however, an

area in which it would be beneficial to have more research. Although this concept makes sense at a face value, very little has been done with it experimentally. It might be helpful, for example, to look at gender identity formation and self concepts in children whose primary caretaker is male or where child care is shared equally. It has been demonstrated that the awareness that the mother is a separate person, a different person, increases strivings for autonomy and independence in children. Boys, according to Chodorow, have a better advantage in those strivings. Females, at a very early age, fall behind in the race for independence and autonomy and subsequent achievement behaviors.

There have been several hypotheses about why women demonstrate lower achievement attitudes and behaviors. One, proposed by Maccoby, which fits into the picture created by Chodorow and others, is the idea that females are motivated to achieve in areas related to interpersonal relations, whereas males strive to achieve in non person oriented areas (Maccoby, 1974). By this hypothesis, it is not so much that females are not interested in achievement but just a different kind of achievement. Also related to this hypothesis, is that when the two sexes are working on a task, boys tend to be intrinsically interested in the task itself, whereas girls work primarily for the praise and approval of others. Research by Garai and Scheinfeld revealed

that males appear to have greater achievement needs directed at successful task accomplishment, while females exhibit greater affiliative or social needs directed towards successful relationships with the people in their environment (Garai and Scheinfeld, 1968). There are other studies which support that same idea. Some of the original research by McClelland in achievement motivation found a lack of response to achievement arousal conditions in females. This lead to the conclusion that women must have less achievement motivation (McClelland, 1953). Later, in another study, social arousal was used as the means of achievement arousal. Subjects in a study by Field were included in a discussion concerning the importance of social acceptance by a group and then told that the best predictor of social acceptance in a wide range of social situations was acceptance in the present situation. Subjects were then given scores which presumably reflected their acceptance by the other members of the group. In response to this arousal, men's need for achievement scores went up somewhat, but not significantly. However, women's need for achievement scores increased sharply and significantly (Field, 1953). This would lend support to the idea that women place more emphasis on relationships, and achievement as it relates to other people.

This leads to another related hypothesis. If females are primarily motivated in their behavior, and in their

actions, by social approval, it follows then that women would seek to avoid those situations that might threaten their relationships and social position. It was this hypothesis that Horner examined in her work in the area of achievement. Horner delineates the most important factors in determining the arousal of dispositions to avoid success, as well as the strength and direction of one's behavior. They are the expectations or beliefs that the individual has about the nature and likelihood of the consequences of his/her actions and the values of these consequences to the individual in light of his/her particular motives. If the expectation of a particular behavior involves negative consequences the resulting emotion is anxiety. Horner postulated that success and competition create conflict that threatens sex-role identity or arouses a fear of social rejection, thereby producing a "motive to avoid success." To test this hypothesis, Horner had subjects respond to stories in which females were in a position of competitive success. "After exams, Anne finds herself at the top of her medical school class." Of the female subjects, 66 percent wrote stories that expected negative results of success for the female subject. Males gave only six percent of the same responses (Horner, 1972). Motive to avoid success seemed to be more characteristic of females than males. There has been a great deal of further research out of Horner's work. Horner went on to find that females who were high on



motive to avoid success preferred noncompetitive situations. While other studies have shown this measure to be variable under other conditions (race, social class, etc.), findings have been generally supportive of Horner's original research. It would be helpful to look here at what are the personality, and environmental differences between women who are high and those who are low on the motive to avoid success. As yet, we do not know whether this is a stable trait, nor how it is acquired.

It has already been stated that the years between ages one and three are crucial in the learning of sex role identity, independent behavior and self-concept. Sex-role learning begins during the first year of life. Sex is a primary status--the first one announced at birth. One of the most influential determinants of an infant's self sex role concept is the mother's behavior towards her child as it reflects her perception of what each sex role should be (Hoffman, 1972). Kohlberg (1966) stresses that sex typed behavior is not made up of a set of independent elements acquired by imitating actions the child has seen the same sexed people perform. It stems rather from organized rules the child has induced from what he has observed, what he has been told. These rules are often a distortion of reality, because they are based upon a limited set of features that are tangible from a child's point of view. The child's sex role perceptions are

all practically cartoon-like; oversimplified, over-categorized, and exaggerated. So rigid and extreme are his categories that he often fails to acknowledge the discrepancies and variations in his own world. Kohlberg cites the example of a four year old daughter of a woman doctor, who insisted that only men can be doctors (1966). This is a poignant example of the powerfulness of sex role attitudes and stereotypes. They have the potential to distort reality and prevent real perception.

It would be appropriate at this point to look at current sex role stereotypes and attitudes to get a more precise picture of the kind of stereotypes that are being communicated to young children. Broverman (1972) investigated the pervasiveness as well as the content of current sex-role stereotypes. Basically his research provided evidence that was contrary to the more popular "unisex" idea which has become prevalent in the media today. Broverman surveyed a group of 579 men and 383 women, both married and single, whose ages ranged from 17 to 60 years and whose educations ranged from elementary school to the advanced graduate degree level. Amongst this group, despite some variation from group to group, high consensuality about differing characteristics of men and women was found on a considerable number of items, and this was independent of the subjects' age, sex, religion, education level or marital status. Male traits form a "competency" cluster, including attributes

such as objective, independent, active, competitive, and self-confident. A relative absence of these traits characterized the stereotypic perception of women. They were perceived as "dependent, subjective, passive, non-competitive," etc. The female traits form a "warmth and expressiveness" cluster. They were described as being gentle, sensitive, passive, and quiet. Interestingly enough, but not surprisingly, it was found from the survey that the characteristics ascribed to men are positively valued more often than characteristics ascribed to women (Broverman, 1972).

Sex role definitions were found to be implicitly and uncritically accepted by a large variety of the population and to the extent that they are incorporated into the self-concepts of both men and women. These stereotypes were considered desirable by college students, healthy by mental health professionals, and seen as ideal by both men and women. The negative implication of some of the female attributes might lead one to think that women would reject these in their own self definition. However, the research showed women do not reject but rather incorporate the negative as well as the positive aspects of femininity (irrationality, relative incompetence) into their self concept. The findings are both startling and a little frightening, especially when we tend to think of ourselves as having undergone such radical change in our attitudes about sex roles and sex stereotypes.

While Broverman surveyed a relatively older population, the attitudes revealed to be held by this group are not limited to the seventeen and older group. Given what is known about the impressionability of young children, and the importance of their perception of the world in forming their own self-concepts, it should not be surprising to find that they are well aware of these same kinds of stereotypes. Hartley and Klein (1969), working with groups of five, eight, and eleven year olds, looked at what were the concepts of these children about men and women. The message was clear that for children, men and women were seen as having separate and distinct attributes and behaviors. Furthermore, there was almost no overlap in their attributions for males and females. The "turf" that was described for women was extremely limited, and narrowly concentrated. Of a total of 640 items mentioned for women by the subjects, over 60% had to do with housework, childcare, and husbands. The findings of this research very much paralleled the findings of Broverman (1972) in terms of sex-role stereotype content.

The child not only understands and incorporates sex role definitions and behaviors into his or her own concept, but incorporates whatever accompanying connotations, negative or positive, as well. The child is not in a position to consciously discriminate those aspects of the sex role stereotype which he or she does or does not like. The entire package is generally accepted. As we have seen, there are far more attributes for the female which carry a negative,

or diminutive connotation. These are being accepted by children for each other and for themselves. Kagan and Lenkin (1960) found that girls viewed their fathers as more competent and as a more powerful figure than their mothers. Yet, when asked, "Who do you wish to be like when you grow up?", the girls answered, "Mother." Thus, the role model that the girls are choosing is not the one they view as the most competent (Kagan and Lenkin, 1960). When forced to choose between competency and appropriateness, the girls are choosing to go with the model that they feel is most appropriate. It is almost as if we hold a model up to the girls to say, "see this is what's really valuable . . ." and then say, "but it's not for you, if you want to be loved and accepted." This and the fact that it is acceptance and approval that is so crucial to females, makes the choice extra difficult. It is probably quite evident what decisions most females will make.

There is more to any stereotypic belief about sex role attributes than whatever the cognitive component may be. Any attitude that is internalized so rigidly and at such an early age, has at least the potential to have an effect upon the individual's self-attitude and moreover the individual's future behavior. If there are discrepancies in behavior of males and females, surely the messages perceived in the stereotypes, which we know that they are well aware of, must have played some kind of role. This is not to say that a stereotypic attitude in and of itself is a behavioral

determinant, but it is not without its impacts. The impact will be strengthened if any of the same tenants are further reinforced in the environment or in social interactions. There is a great deal of research that shows that both of these things do happen and apparently are influential in behavior. Kohlberg, for example, in his work became aware that children think males are strong and competent while females are weak and incompetent. Acceptance of this stereotype for females had the effect of necessitating the lowering of self-expectancy on a whole array of tasks (Kohlberg, 1966). If a five year old views men as generally more competent, aggressive, and intelligent than women, there is reason to believe that he will generalize this expectation to his own father. He will view his father as more endowed with those qualities than he may be in reality (Kagan and Lenkin, 1968). A five year old female, on the other hand, will do practically the opposite. She will see females, her mother, and eventually herself, as less endowed with those qualities than they and more importantly than she herself may really be. Somehow without anyone actually realizing it, we have children who have readily incorporated diminished competence and ability into their self-image.

To what extent this is believed and acted out in children will depend upon what reinforcements are present. At this stage in research, it is somewhat undecided whether maternal and parental behavior in general is a response to infant

predispositions or a cause of these dispositions (Goldberg and Lewis, 1969). There has been evidence to support both concepts. Parsons, among others, found that children responded in behavior to a large extent according to the reinforcements and behaviors exhibited by their parents (Parsons, 1976). Representing the other side, however, is research conducted by Winterbottom which found parental achievement orientations being linked to the child's competence and achievement orientations. Results supported the hypothesis that parents made demands upon their children on the basis of the child's predispositions (Winterbottom, 1958). The majority of the research seems to support the former concept, although some more stable consensus over which comes first--the predisposition or the differential treatment--is needed. In the meantime, for the purposes of this paper and this particular line of research, the focus will be on the data that support the idea of parental reinforcement and attitude preceding infantile behavior and cognition. Whichever one comes first, the impact of parental behavior cannot be underestimated. There is a quantity of work and research which illuminates this ideology.

We do know that even with an adequate affective base, independent behavior does not occur automatically. In very simple terms, independent behavior requires not only opportunity for such behavior but also parental encouragement (Hoffman, 1972). Baumrind's research with socialization practices and competence in preschool aged children also

indicates that competence develops out of parental guidance and encouragement not from permissiveness (Baumrind and Black, 1975). Competent and independent behavior do not occur automatically. They are areas which need special attention and guidance.

Interestingly enough, parents often have different expectations for male and female children about their respective competence, independence, and autonomous behaviors. If independence behavior requires encouragement and guidance, it would follow that discouragement, even if indirect, might have its negative consequences. There is considerable support for the idea that parents have different beliefs and expectations for male and female children. In her research with achievement motivation and women, Horner (1976) reported that the aggressive, and by implication, masculine qualities inherent in a capacity for mastering intellectual problems, attacking difficulties and making final decisions are considered fundamentally antagonistic to or incompatible with femininity. Subsequent behaviors in parents tend not to reinforce those behaviors that might with the appropriate sexual stereotype for their children. Data supports the idea that men and women tend to evaluate themselves and to behave in ways consistent with the dominant stereotype that says competition, independence, intellectual achievement and leadership reflect positively on mental health and on masculinity but are basically inconsistent or in conflict



with femininity (Horner, 1972). It is difficult to look at all the influences on child behavior, but there are some studies which would lead one to believe that, at least to some degree, parents are seeing to it that the stereotype is being maintained.

Lois Hoffman has done extensive research in the area of early childhood experience and women's achievement motivations. Most of her work illuminates the fact that parents, especially mothers, in that they spend so much time with their daughters, treat males and females differently. In girls, treatment leans toward anxiety, overworrying, and overprotectiveness in the parent. Girls, for example, were shown to receive more maternal rapport and protection than their male counterparts. According to Hoffman, this had a debilitating effect upon the girls. This overprotection in early years was attributed to the inability of girls to face stress and demonstrate adequate motivation for autonomous achievement. The suggestion was made that girls need more maternal direction if they are to become more independently competent and self-confident. Hoffman pointed out the existence of a behavior which she called "overhelp" which was more evident in the interaction between parents and female children. Mastery of any task requires the ability to tolerate frustration. The overhelp in parents prevents children from experiencing that frustration. Hoffman found that females withdrew from a difficult task rather than tolerating the frustration in order to

complete the task. Crandall (1975) found that boys returned to more unfinished tasks while girls were more likely to abandon them to pursue other interests. This also supports the hypothesis that boys are more interested in the task itself than whatever reward, social or otherwise, it may offer. The explanation of the more persistent behavior in males could be attributed to several explanations. This is typical of the research in this area. Sex-role stereotypes and the causes of differential behavior are so numerous and complex. At this point, there is a lack of conclusiveness about the causes of such behavior. One can only be aware of the potential contributing factors.

Hoffman also demonstrated that parents have different reactions to achievement and independence behaviors in their children. Parents were shown to take more ambivalent pleasure in sons' achievements than in daughters'. Parents were more likely to respond to fragility of a daughter when demonstrating some autonomous or independent behavior than of a son. A mother's indications of anxiety as the child moves toward independence make the child doubt his own competence. Parents are more likely to experience and exhibit that anxiety toward daughters, as those behaviors are less in harmony with stereotypic expectations for females.

A more direct presentation of the same concept was found in the work of Collard as reported by Hoffman (1972). Collard adapted a measure that had been used by Winterbottom

in her research with the relationship between need for achievement and learning experiences. Collard assessed the attitudes of parents to be as well as actual parents about their behavioral expectations for their children. Collard asked mothers of four year olds to indicate the ages at which they thought parents should expect certain child behaviors. The behaviors included things like the age at which they would expect children to play with scissors, play away from home without telling anyone, and other so-called independent behaviors. Mothers of girls responded with significantly later ages than did mothers of boys. Independent, autonomous behaviors are more characteristic of males and they are expected at earlier ages for males.

In conclusion, Hoffman summarized that girls have less encouragement for independence, more parental protectiveness, less cognitive and social pressure for establishing an identity separate from the mother and less mother-child conflict which highlights the separation. Hoffman attributes these factors to the engagement in less independent exploration of the environment in females. Hoffman goes on to say that consequently the female continues dependency, fears abandonment, and is effective only when eliciting help and protection. How much empirical evidence exists to support the latter may be somewhat questionable, but there are some valid and well supported theories within her research framework.

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If the existence of a stereotype, along with differential attitudes and expectations for males and females, has been established, it then becomes a valuable question to ask what effect, if any, they have on self concept and actual behavior. Rivers, Barnett and Baruch (1979) found that the most profound effect of the sex role stereotype was exhibited in the lowering of competency expectation in females. By school age, their research showed that the sex role stereotype had been fully incorporated and required, in females, a lowering of one's feeling of competence.

Perhaps the most startling evidence in all the research encountered was work which described differences in attribution of ability and failure in males and females. This is a rather blatant example of the pervasiveness and effectiveness of stereotypic beliefs in making people believe that they are true for themselves even in the presence of evidence which speaks to the contrary. Crandall looked at the attribution process of male and female students in elementary school through college. In assessing their generalized ability, boys overestimate while girls will underestimate their ability. It appears that males are more highly motivated when actual performance had been equal to that of females. The difference is that they perceive themselves as having performed better (Crandall, 1975).

Deaux and Emswiller (1974) did extensive research in explanation of successful performance on sex linked tasks,

from which they concluded that for women, success is not attributed to their own skill but rather to luck. They hypothesized that performance on a sex consistent task should be more readily attributed to internal factors such as ability, whereas performance on a sex inconsistent task should be more often attributed to external factors such as chance. Situations were created that were male and female in nature but of equal difficulty in order to test the hypothesis. One hundred and thirty undergraduates listened to a tape recording of a male or female task and then evaluated their performance. It was predicted that when there was equal male/female performance on a male task, male performance would be attributed to skill while the female's would be attributed to luck. Conversely, it was predicted that equal performance on a female task would lead to the attribution of luck in males and skill in females. The results somewhat supported the hypothesis while providing some additional insights. Independent of task, the results showed that males were rated by both male and female subjects as more skillful. A good performance, regardless of task type, was attributed to skill in males and luck in females. A significant main effect was found for~~sex~~ of task such that performance on the masculine task was seen as better than the equivalent performance on a female task.

Also as part of the same research by Deaux and Emswiller (1974), subjects were asked to rate their own expected

performance on the tasks that they were exposed to. Once again, males expected to do better on both the male and the female tasks than the females did. The results suggest that our beliefs about men and women are such that masculine accomplishments, whether in relation to the task or the performer, are viewed as better accomplishments. It was also noted that above average performance is seen as more indicative of a male's intelligence, and internal attributes than of a female's. As they entitled it, "What is skill for the male, is luck for the female."

Another study (Parsons et al., 1976) which examined cognitive-developmental factors in emerging sex differences in relationship to achievement expectancies produced similar results. In a generalized expectancy test boys expressed a higher level confidence in themselves than girls did. Parsons looked at groups of third and fourth graders and found that in general boys expected to perform better than the girls did. This feeling was also applied to the children's feelings about actual tasks they performed and was adhered to despite conflicting evidence. The children in this study were asked to perform a task. Afterwards they rated how well they thought they had done and how well they thought they had performed in relationship to others in the group. A study of these perceptions at different grade levels revealed that girls perceived their ability as low relative to boys in spite of the fact that

girls had actually performed better. In some cases girls were given feedback about their performance, and even when it was superior they did not acknowledge this in their perceptions (Parsons, 1976).

It becomes apparent that females do not clearly see the relationship between their performance and their true ability. They underestimate their potential and do not recognize their successful performances. If for women, the attributes of competence, success, and ability are not included in the list of appropriate qualities for their sex role, it seems that the maintenance of consistency is so crucial that it necessitates distorting reality. With males, however, we do not see that same distortion in perception, at least not in their achievements. Generally, in males we see a clear and positive relationship between expectation and performance. It has been shown that male expectations of intellectual success are positively associated with their intellectual achievement efforts; their behavior generally matches their expectations. However, girls' expectations were found to be either negatively or nonsignificantly related to their intellectual behavior. When minimum achievement standards were set, and self-responsibility for an achievement event, a predictive relationship was shown for male achievement behaviors while an unrelated relationship was demonstrated for females (Crandall, 1962). To what extent our stereotypes, for they



are inevitably and obviously deeply rooted, can be altered is a difficult question. What is unquestionable is that there are real problems, and real damage being done to human potential by a stereotype that inhibits an individual from perceiving his or her own performances and abilities.

As the sex role stereotype is adopted, the inference is that girls are relatively low in ability and they apparently develop out of this a low expectancy attributional pattern. It then follows that they will be less affected by success and more affected by failure than boys (McMahon, 1973). It appears that in order to maintain consistency with the sex role stereotype, the attribution patterns for success and failure in males and females must represent two opposite and different patterns. Research in the area of sex differences in persistence and expectancy change showed a radical difference in the attribution patterns of males and females (Feather, 1966). When a female fails, she attributes it to her own lack of ability (Dweck, 1975). This is possibly because she has not been reinforced for success in general. Dweck found that when a female failed, her subsequent performance tended to remain the same or decline. Males, however, were shown to not be as affected by failure, due to their attribution of failure to forces over which they had no control. In addition, male performance is usually not adversely affected by failure but conversely improves.

This is perhaps only a limited explanation of the factors involved in creating differences in behavior, particularly achievement behavior, in males and females. There are areas in which evidence is only partial, and true cause and effect is not establishable. It is probably fair to say that a stereotype and stereotypic attitudes about males and females and their respective appropriate behaviors does exist. The stereotype persists in the face of social change and remains fairly rigid in content. Our children are sensitive enough, and dependent enough upon their environment, the opinions of others, and the approval of others that they too are well aware of the stereotypes as they adopt themselves to them. Although there may be other factors at work, it is fairly evident that the message to women through parental interaction, in the classroom, and from their peers, is that the same caliber and quality of performance, ability, and achievement is not expected for females as it is for males. That the females are accepting this for themselves is demonstrated in their generalized self-expectancies, performance evaluation, and their success and failure attributions. Unless one comes from the opinion that the achievement-related side of our society is an area restricted for entry to males only, it seems that a limit on human potential is being imposed, at least partially by our stereotypic attitudes and our differential treatment of females. Females are given the message at a very early age that they are different and they will behave, it seems

to the point of distorting reality to maintain behavior that will synchronize with that stereotype. If the attitudes that we have about females do have that affect, we may be handicapping more potential for achievement.

What then, if anything, can be done to alter this? Are our beliefs so deeply rooted that they cannot be subject to being updated or revised? Change in these areas does tend to be very gradual in addition to being resistant to change. Although the stereotypes themselves have not changed much, there are some areas in which change, however slight, can be seen. Part of the problem for women in the past is that their experience was essentially void of female role models who excelled in any achievement areas. Women who did achieve were the exception to the rule. While it may be slow, there are beginning to be effects felt from women who are actually achieving. Baruch (1970) created a measure very much like the original achievement study done by Horner (1972). Female subjects rated an article written by a women. Higher ratings of the articles were made by females whose mothers were working than those whose mothers did not work. The study showed that the daughters of working mothers did not downgrade women, and were also more likely to name their mother as the person they admired most. It was also found by Hoffman (1974) that maternal employment leads to greater admiration of the mother. Also, it was found that the female role concept in daughters of working

mothers included less restrictive and a wider range of activities for females. Whether maternal employment causes more ambition in daughters is not yet fully established.

So there is room for change it seems. Perhaps the most beneficial resource to a developing female is an achievement oriented and encouraging female parent. It is interesting to point out that the lowest self-esteem and sense of personal competence (even about child care and social skills) is felt in homemakers, and in intellectually gifted traditional homemakers (Birnbaum, 1975; Grump, 1972). The irony is that the area we socialize women for is an area that creates feelings of inferiority for women. Judith Birnbaum (1975) puts it well by saying, "Given these findings, that gifted nonemployed women hold themselves in low regard, we cannot in good conscience continue to raise girls to seek primary personal fulfillment and self identity within the family." It is then possible through more conscientious achievement reinforcement, and the provision of better female role models, that an adjustment may be made in the self perception of females.

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