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Macedonian and US Students' Perceptions of Gender and the Opportunity for Change

by

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Introduction

Undergraduate students' perceptions about gender suggest many influences, not the least of which is culture. In this project, students from Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), a public university in the Midwestern United States, and South East European University (SEEU), a private university in Tetovo, Macedonia, were asked to tell stories about gender—such as lessons learned from parents, peers, and institutions including school and the workplace, the influence of role models, feminism, and media, and the types of games and activities engaged in as a child. Throughout the stories, several themes emerged. This essay will discuss the dominant themes and assess the students' perceptions of gender and gender roles, taking into account cultural similarities and differences. Through the analysis of the stories, we found much optimism toward positive change in the Balkan region even if the US students did not identify with the need for such systemic change in their own culture, suggesting complacency with the status quo. Facilitating partnerships among US and Macedonian students and faculty not only enrich those individuals involved, but provide tangible benefits of the Higher Education Linkage Program (HELP) to which these universities have committed valuable time, resources and personnel.

I. Student Population

Before assessing the emergent themes in the stories, it is helpful to understand the student populations who participated in this study. All students were enrolled in either an Advanced Gender and Communication class during the winter 2005-06 Semester at SEEU or the same class in spring 2006 at IUPUI. Specifically student characteristics are as follows:

	US students	Macedonian students
Year in School	Junior or senior (3rd-4th year)	Senior (4th year)
Age	20-55; most 20-26 years of age	22-25 years of age
Sex	18 Female, 9 Male	8 Female, 6 Male
Race/Ethic Background	3 African American 1 East African 23 Caucasian	8 Macedonian 5 Albanian 1 Turkish
Major Area of Study	10 School of Science 18 School of Liberal Arts	Communication Sciences

II. Thematic Analysis

We asked the students to tell eight stories (see Appendix A). Responses were content analyzed and dominant themes emerged. The themes clustered in the following ways.

- Stereotypes are Alive and Well
- Independent and Professional are Human Qualities
- Female Athletes and Wonder Woman
- To Be or Not To Be a Feminist
- Education as the Means Toward Change

This essay will interpret the themes in light of the research on gender and culture and point out the interesting exceptions to each. The essay ends by noting, in particular, the Macedonian students' optimism for the future and the hard work ahead in achieving gender equity.

II. 1 Stereotypes are Alive and Well

Each Macedonian student recounts numerous stories about the gendered lessons received as a child from "*boys don't cry*" to "*girls should be quiet and polite*" to boys are "*naughtier*" to you can't be an architect because it's "*not a woman profession, because [you] will have to work long hours [and] . . . not have time for house works and family.*" As one student summarizes: "*Well I say this generally that every little girls and boys are brought up and raised by those unwritten guidelines in the society where girl is a girl and she should be raised in the manners of a woman, building her education based on girly courses like ballet, dancing... and then the boys are raised in a manly way, of course, by teaching them to be tough, not to show emotion.*" These distinct gender characteristics are found in numerous studies cited by Julia T. Wood (2007) in her chapter entitled "Becoming Gendered."

The family is by far the most significant agent of socialization, even being called "sacred" by some Macedonian students. The socialization process encourages gender-appropriate norms leading to separation and independence for males and connection for females. As was written in one of the Macedonian stories: "*I remember well that the time I was a kid I used to play in the street with the boys and my grandmother would say to me: 'Why do you play with boys? You should play with girls, because boys are different, you are going to end up being like them.'*" Another male student writes, "*The role that my father gave me, during my puberty, was to develop my body, and later to develop my spirit. His expectation was for me to get stronger, to grow more and to straighten my body. That's how all males should look like.*" These stories confirm what Virginia Satir wrote in the introduction of her book *People Making*, calling "the family the 'factory' where the person is made" (Satir, 1972).

While the US students insist that they in fact embrace a range of gendered behaviors, that is not always the quality that comes

through in their stories. US students very clearly see polar opposites in masculine and feminine. They know the stereotypes, lived by them as children, and seem rather comfortable in sharing those stories today. For example, one female student writes: *"I can remember noticing that my mother always did all of the cooking and laundry. Occasionally my father would help pick up toys and straighten up the house, but it was my mother who always did the bulk of the housework. I also noticed that my father was the disciplinarian, which had in the past always been seen as the father's responsibility. As a result, at a young age, I began pretending to cook in my little Playskool kitchen and demonstrating female gender roles."* Another student writes: *"I remember playing house and being the "mom" and wanting to be a princess for Halloween... I was always a quiet and reserved child who preferred to sit and read a book than to play basketball."*

Sometimes the US students reinforce gender polarity in their discussion of rebelling against the stereotypes. To rebel is to do the opposite. For example, one female US student openly rebels at the gender expectations her parents put on her, refusing to wear the "frilly" girly socks that her mother put on her as a child. Her solution was to wear no socks or wear what the boys wear. A seemingly innocent story, but it illustrates the expectation that "appearance still counts" (Haag, 2000; Greenfield, 2002). It is also an interesting contrast to the Macedonian student stories whose rebellion is in embracing a range of options depending on the person rather than on the gender of the person.

Perhaps that these students see the stereotypes isn't necessarily news, but what they do with the stereotypes might be. By comparison, Macedonian students are relatively progressive in their views of gender in that they are more likely than their US counterparts to view masculine and feminine as two ends of a continuum that holds a range of options. Further, instead of just living with the stereotypes, Macedonian students call them "ridiculous" or admit to being "mad and upset" by differential treatment. A female student writes about the various gendered lessons she's been taught growing up: *"I mean that these are that kind of lessons that I haven't accepted and which I don't plan to put in practice."* Such a view may be the product of the culture in which these Macedonian students have come of age. As one male student explains: *"Republic of Macedonia gained its independence after the breakdown of ex Yugoslavia. Since then, 16 years passed in construction of democracy and tolerance, the process which required a lot of efforts and patience. Almost with the same difficulty was to create an economy development plan which led the country into a transition period. Males were the persons who guided and still guide Macedonia through this period of changes. The main question to be asked is: Why males? The answer is simple. Macedonian history is patriarchal. Always man was the 'head of the family'. He was the breadwinner, protector and fighter for the family. It was [a] blessing if somebody got a son. . . . If you add the fact that for five hundred years Macedonia was occupied by the Turkish Empire, you will find out some cultural norms and mixtures with the Islamic traditions on the roles of women in society which usually prescribe woman as mother, housekeeper distracted from active participation in political life or any sphere of important decision."*

The overall theme in these stories from the Macedonian students is that gender roles are very much defined through communication with family, culture, and institutions and there is nothing "natural" about women's or men's work and nothing wrong with performing a variety of tasks because that is simply what a good person does. One male student insists, *"I respect women and do think that they should have totally the same rights as men, not because they are women but because they are human beings and we must not maltreat them, or think that they are just an object that will clean our mess that we left behind."* Finally, another male student expresses: *"I believe that if the leader of my country is woman, I will have more beautiful life in this country."* One step toward productive change may be in seeing the continuum of masculine and feminine as communicative choices rather than oppositional structures attached to a biological sex.

II. 2. Independent and Professional are Human Qualities

A second theme that developed in both groups of students was the use of two terms: independent and professional. While both terms are gendered masculine (Farrell, 1991; Doyle, 1997), these students see the terms as something that any human being can embrace. Stressing that professionalism (not gender; not physical appearance) is that which matters, in one Macedonian story there are sentences like: *"I believe the most respected women from the political or cultural (and entertainment) life in Macedonia are the ones who are professional in their jobs. But whatever the case is, if the woman is professional in what she does, I don't believe that she would have trouble that considers her looks. Maybe she would be laughed at by people who don't have any other or smarter thing to do, but . . . We should work first of all, with people and second, with professionals. Other group divisions are irrelevant to organizations."*

Not only are professionalism and independence important, but also the Macedonian students could name specific public women who embodied these qualities. One student names a prominent woman politician and describes her as “*smart, ambitious, directive and independent. Her style of dressing is little bit conservative but still, she is the perfect female professional.*” Similarly a US woman writes the following: “*My mother never went to college and had to depend on my dad and step dad for money. She did not like this so ever since I can remember she has taught me to be independent and responsible so that I would never end up in tough situations like she did. From the time I was a little girl, I was praised for getting good grades, and deeply encouraged to go to college*” And another proudly declares: *I am a born-again liberal feminist. Life has taught me the vital lesson that every woman should control her own destiny, claiming her own power and mapping out her own future. But more important than my future is what I teach and demonstrate to my two daughters. For the past six years, I have tried to tell them and show them that being a strong, smart, independent woman is the best gift they can give themselves and anyone else who loves them. I believe in the equality of the sexes. I believe women should take steps to insure their own health and happiness. I believe women have the responsibility to fight for political, civic, and economic power. I believe higher education is the key to reaching all of those goals. I believe in liberal feminism.*” This student’s declaration is the most forceful of all the US students, but she also happens to be the most senior student and one who has performed the duties of a single-mother raising two daughters. Her standpoint is different from that of the rest of her classmates.

What is interesting is that even though the US students, mostly women, identify as independent, highly motivated women who want a career outside of the home, some still present in their stories a highly internalized distinction between the genders and the proper way to run a household. Women cook, raise children, care for the husband, and have a career, while men do yard work and work outside the home. In this way, US women set up for themselves an unreasonable expectation as the next theme illustrates.

II. 3. Female Athletes and Wonder Woman

US women, while acknowledging the binary stereotypes, embrace for themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics. In this way, the boundaries for women are opening, but not so for men, and resonate with research by Shaw and Edwards (1997) who found that narratives for US women emphasize both connection and independence, whereas US men’s narratives are more likely to emphasize the gender-stereotypical characteristics of being active and independent. One area in which women embraced masculine behaviors was in the area of athletics. According to one female student: “*I must say that as a child, and still today, society would call me a tomboy because I didn’t really play feminine games. By feminine, I mean the traditional house, playing with dolls, playing dress-up with friends that were girls, etc. The games I played were with boys such as tackle football, army games, videogames, or just “rough housing” such as wrestling for fun. The games I played taught me that you could be a girl and be “tough”, but one thing that I did notice is that I was usually the only girl playing these games with my friends that were boys.*”

Female Macedonian students expressed similar sentiments. One female student says “*But I was having fun time in playing both types of games, not sorting them whether they are for girls or for boys. It was more often case to see girls to play with guns for example, than boy with dolls, which for me is nothing frightening.*” One interesting side note to the Macedonian students’ stories is the protection impulse explained as the reason for it being more acceptable for girls to play “male games;” they will be protected by males who are physically stronger. We can see that impulse through these sentences: “*The games taught me that boys must always win (this was only a case when I was just a child), that the girls are softer, complain more, and cry a lot. Boys appeared to be always stronger, but they protected us girls from the boys of other companies.*”

It is all right for young women to be tomboys and play games with the boys but those boys do not have the same latitude. Many stories from both groups indicated that “*boys must always win*” and this resonates with research that boys and men must be successful, athletic, competitive, and aggressive (Doyle, 1997; Cohen, 1997; Messner, 2000). Male students write that it is not allowed for boys to be involved in “girls games.” Male games are full of power, competence, aggression and dominance, as it is in the following example from one Macedonian male student: “*Nevertheless, there were far more dangerous games . . . like passing the narrow tunnel which connected two bunkers near our buildings. That task was the scariest thing that we could imagine in that time. Only the brave ones and 'real boys' could do that.*” Another male student recalls: “*I played a lot with little electric cars that run on batteries and also to not forget my famous bicycle*

riding and racing. In this last one racing bicycles we had girls too but of course we often laughed at them by saying that they have no chance to beat us in this boy game.”

One problematic observation is that the increased latitude for young women translates to young women who grow up and expect to have it all. Wood (2007) writes about the superwoman theme that is emerging in cultural expectations about women. Coltrane & Adams (2001) and several other sources document the stress placed on women who try to do everything themselves. Superwoman is the norm rather than the exception. The US students are no exception. One US female writes: “*Part of the reason I decided to work was because we need a dual income in order to have the things we want and need. The other reason is because I like to work. It gives me a sense of self-confidence and accomplishment. Although, I would love to stay at home with my daughter, right now in my life I need to work. . . . I believe women should have the equal opportunity to work if they want just as men do. . . . I like the unique characteristics I have as a woman. Yes, I like to feel sexy, sweet, and sometimes innocent which are stereotypical characteristics of women. I do not want to have to wear pant suits to work, although sometimes I do. I do not think I am being hypocritical because as a woman, there is a difference between having equal rights, and celebrating your individuality and along with that, your feminine side.*”

Increased latitude from women does not always translate in adopting the feminist label. To the contrary, US women are not necessarily comfortable with the label even though they benefit from the gains made during the feminist movement. The next theme articulates this apparent paradox.

II. 4. To Be or Not To Be a Feminist

Wanting to have it all encompasses the US students’ definition of feminism, if they claim the term at all. Some embraced the term feminism but only when they could define it first. However, most admitted to a fear of using the word because of negative connotations and they would not openly label themselves a feminist in public. One student called this phenomenon a “frustrating paradox.” Liss, O’Connor, Morosky, and Crawford (2001) explored the perceptions, attitudes and experiences differentiating those who supported the goals of feminism without claiming the label and those who supported the goals and claimed the label. Their findings suggest that a positive identification of the word is predicted by a positive evaluation of feminists and a belief in collective action. For the students who shared stories about their feminism, independent and professional are the key words rather than feminism or feminist. Their focus was on self-reliance and individual achievement rather than collective goals. It may be that the word feminism itself appears to be outdated for these students who see change not in the collective, but in themselves—independence, self-reliance, the way they raise their families, much smaller scale social change. As one female student described it, “*In the grand scheme of things I tend to adapt my beliefs to a viewpoint which some may consider passive, but I believe I am my own activist. I am in charge of manipulating the variables in my life as best I can. Fair or not, I will play the cards I am dealt .*”

The three strongest claims to the label feminist in US students were by women. One woman proudly proclaims, “*I am a born again liberal feminist.*” Another states: “*I have always had a strong sense of fairness/justice and hate being told what I “can’t” do just because I am female. Because of this and after much thought, I decided that there are some biological differences in men and women but that almost everything else is exaggerated in order to make a “polar” society. We, as a culture, enjoy opposites and this is easy to see in our view of good and evil, heaven and hell, woman and man, black and white. All of these issues are strong areas of conflict because we do not easily accept the idea that most things fall in the middle, without extremes. For the reasons stated above, I consider myself a liberal feminist.*” And a third explains, “*I guess that relates to my currently being a feminist because I still get that frustrated feeling when I feel like I’m being told I can’t do something now. I knew that people expected me to act differently and more modestly as a woman and I resented that. I think also I was rebelling somewhat against the ideas of what a girl was supposed to do, and against the body shame that is forced on kids so often. Of course, I had that negated by the teacher and my mom, so I learned to be a good girl and I learned to dislike my body, but I didn’t learn to like it. I think that’s what makes me a feminist: not liking it, and wanting things done differently.*”

What these students express rather clearly is that I’m a feminist because no one is going to tell me what I can and cannot do. I am my own person and can make my own decisions, resonating with earlier themes of independence and self-reliance that appear to be so important to these students.

Interestingly, the majority of the Macedonian students did embrace the word feminism. It was very illuminating to see. When they were asked, “Do you believe that women and men should receive equal treatment and opportunities in all aspects of life?” they replied with a confident, hearty affirmative. And, what we have found was interesting, the opposite of the US students, the Macedonian students are not afraid to use the “new F-word” (De Francisko, 1992). Most of the students very bravely expressed their identification with liberal feminism and clearly declared that they do consider themselves as feminist. For, example one female student has declared *“Until I read the chapters on Gendered Lives I haven't accepted that I am a feminist. But now proudly I can declare: Yes, I am a feminist. And I feel great while I am saying it in front of the others. In Albanian it goes like: Une jam feministe! Very softy; but you know, with a meaning! There is a certain little light in the eyes while I am saying it.”*

Only a few students (three males) believe in gender equality but do not want to be called this new F-word. This is a consequence of the image of feminists that is still dominant in Macedonia, related with man-haters, radicals, masculine women, frustrated women who are trying to gain superiority over men. These negative connotations in large part come from the low level of public awareness about gender equality, low knowledge for women’s and men’s movements in the world, and selective and sometimes chauvinist images that media transmit to the audience. As one student has written in one of her stories *“Unfortunately, here in our country, Macedonia, these feministic movements are still unknown and you'll be surprised to see how many people have never heard about at least one of them. To some of them even the word Feminism will seem to be strange, but still they will not try to understand the actual meaning of this word, because they will not ask you to explain it.”* Or these sentences of another student: *“Men still connotate the word “feminism” with “anti-men”. And for me Feminism means gender equality. I am a feminist; I am not a man – hater or bra-burner.”* But the question remains, what to do to change perceptions and advance a more egalitarian society?

II. 5. Education as the Means Toward Change

This US male student appears to possess the most progressive attitude for the future out of all the US students. In his response he signals the final prominent theme in the stories: the role of education in advancing social change. *“True social reform is more likely to occur if the general public is educated about gender equality in the workplace. . . . Finally, many current policies and laws hinder women’s development in economic sustainability and independence. Many laws currently limit women’s ability to advance in the workplace, as there are very few protection laws for women who have been sexually harassed in the workplace. Furthermore, women, who are more likely [than men] to care for their children, are rarely offered the opportunity to receive work compensation for sick days taken to care for their children, nor are they likely to receive complimentary child care services. These are some of the many reasons why I believe I am a liberal feminist. In an ideal society, both men and women will be viewed equally in society.”* This student shares many of the same values as the Macedonian students who express strong views in support of feminism, equality in the workplace, and the opportunity education offers to change things for the better.

Like the US students, Macedonian students agree that education is very important and highly valued, as a means to reach goals and end oppression, as a way to gain independence and equality. Particularly, they stressed the new modern way of teaching and learning, which is a part of the SEE University educational system. One SEEU student, a female, is quite forceful in her description of gender roles and the necessity for change, illustrating optimism about the attitude or possibility of change. *“We should work in order to change people’s view about [the] bad image of feminism and try to educate them about gender equality. I don't think that women are better than men or vice versa, but that men and women are equal, and should be valued equally. I think that men aren't superior to women and they should not dominate us or order us what to do and what not. That's basically like saying we can't think for ourselves. I do absolutely reject the idea that because of some differences, one sex should “preside” the other.”* One SEEU male writes: *“Where I live (my small sub cultural environment) almost everybody thinks that being a teacher or working as a nurse are the main professions dedicated for the girls. And yes, sometimes there are some hidden messages by teachers for girl students. I have to admit that this thing is changing very fast in positive way. I like to believe that this result came because of educational ‘globalization’.”* The progress that these students have seen and envision for the future can be credited, in part, to the strong partnerships that have been developed by the universities where these students attend and the educational opportunities afforded at SEEU that were not present even a decade ago.

Conclusions

Several insights can be drawn from these themes. First, both groups construct very tight boundaries around what it means to be masculine. This conforms, for example, to research conducted by Doyle (1997) and others on the expectations of masculinity. But interestingly, the Macedonian male students more than their US counterparts were more likely to express comfort with a range of gendered behaviors. Second, while women's gender role expectations appear to be expanding, there is still the binary notion of masculine and feminine behaviors as evidenced in the US student stories. Perhaps because of the cultural and linguistic proclivity in the US to see things in terms of opposites, the US students did not offer a new or different orientation toward the way that the range of gendered behaviors fits together. Further, for US women, the expanded role options create the norm of the Superwoman and the impression that she must do everything well. However, the primary characteristic that was emphasized for women, and in particular as a result of feminism, is independence. Whether it is by virtue of culture or wanting "what men have," women seek independence and value their education as a means of achieving that independence. So the end goal desired for US students isn't necessarily making society or community a better place, but personal independence is the key.

Schwartz (1993, 2001) identifies Macedonia as an "ethnic mosaic," an area "in the middle" full of "contested identities." Unlike the Midwestern US, Macedonia is a culture full of cultures, identities, and peoples. Comfort with multiple answers and ambiguity is a way of life and is displayed in the Macedonian students' stories, accounting for their insistence of a range of behaviors that are human behaviors and not necessarily gendered behaviors.

Finally, the women's movements in each country may be useful in framing the themes as well. The US has a long history of women's activism, from suffrage beginning in the 1840s to the second wave feminism of the 1960s to current women's movements. Young women today enjoy the freedoms for which earlier women's activists fought and may even take those freedoms for granted because they were realized before many of the students were born. This fact may account for the undercurrent of complacency expressed by some of the US students who never experienced women's prohibition from high school or collegiate athletics, for example, and most expect to have a high paying job, get married, have a family, and "have it all" and consider doing so the "norm." The idea of gender discrimination in the workplace couldn't be further from the minds of the US students. Macedonia, by contrast, has experienced much turmoil during the lifetimes of these students, including ethnic wars, gender discrimination and violence, and women's political activism encouraging quotas and voting law changes to effect more women in politics. Although the political parties observed the legally prescribed gender quota of 30 percent with impeccable mathematical precision, as was shown by the Gender unit of the NGO Info Center in Macedonia, in-depth analysis of the candidates' lists shows that their efforts for equal participation of women in local level politics are more virtual than real and true (GUDI- NGO Info Center, 2005). Not only is university education about gender a relatively new phenomenon, but the political system itself has undergone change and may contribute to the students' relative optimism for the future and their place in it.

Macedonia bares a heavy burden from the patriarchal way of living and the traditional patriarchal conservative society. We are seduced by the picture we have about our environment and ourselves. It looks like we are living in an emancipated society, together with aware and self-conscious individuals who don't have problems or questions about gender and sexuality, but the facts show us something opposite. Attempts for raising awareness about gender issues are few and restricted to NGO activities, one or two services on the governmental level and several gender related courses at schools and universities. From there comes our hypocrisy connected with this issue as well as further complexities in the psychophysical development of young people. That is why the number of domestic violence acts is increasing, as well as the number of sexually abused women and children, divorced marriages, traumatized children from divorced marriages, drug addicts and alcoholics, the number of abortions, sexual infectious diseases, and dishonesty and disloyalty in marriage and partnership relations is considered to be normal.

Some of these problems come out from our own gender perspective and the perspective of the others, and are our responsibility. Our goal is to get these questions out in the open transparently and to offer solutions for them. One of the concepts in solving this problem, as it was suggested in SEEU students' stories, is through education (conversations, interactive learning and teaching, locating the problem and main gender issues, inducing cooperation, distributing educative materials, education of educators, offering methods and techniques in discovering, understanding and solving the problem). Every individual success in education may contribute to success in general, by cultivating public opinion and raising awareness about the meaning of the importance of gender equality.

As we all know, feminism, women's and men's movements, and gender issues, are terms that provoke in the south Slavic countries, sometimes even in the intellectual circles, astonishment, (un)meaningful laughing and very often depreciation. Gender identity is an integral part of the personality of every human being. The complete development of gender identity has essential meaning for the individual's personal and the social well-being. It is long overdue, and it is the one of the duties of the teachers of the next generations to transform gender issues from the personal to the public sphere. We need to humanize, demystify and remove the taboo from sex and gender as well as to start respecting their roles in our lives, as our students have demonstrated already in their stories. It's time to tell our students, parents, our ministers and national leaders that gender equality can be promoted only if *everyone* accepts this challenge.

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Story One: Please tell a story that describes one interaction from your parent(s) or guardian(s) (the earliest you can remember) that communicated expectations for your gender. Also tell a story that describes the most recent interaction with someone who communicated expectations for your gender.

Story 2: Please tell a story that illustrates why you do or do not consider yourself a feminist. In the story, try to illustrate why you might identify with a particular branch (or branches) of feminism OR why you do not identify with any branch of feminisms discussed in the text.

Story 3: Tell a story or two that illustrate(s) the answers to the following questions. Who were your heroes as a child? How would you describe your play as a child? If you have children, nieces, and/or nephews, compare and contrast their heroes and play with your own as a child. What does this tell you about the rhetorical shaping of gender? What might we take for granted? Also, tell a story that illustrates an artifact that represents gendered communication to you. Describe it and how and why it represents gendered communication to you.

Story 4: Tell a story that illustrates your family dynamics. Here are some questions to help you compose your story. Think back on your childhood, on family dinners. Did they exist? If so, who organized them? Where did everyone sit? What type of table did you have? What types of chairs? Who communicated with whom? What can you observe about the gendered dynamics of your own family? Tell a story that illustrates the messages your family gave you about gender identity. Here are some questions to get you started. Thinking about the early years in your family, recall an incident or the messages that were given to you by your family that told you what it meant to be a boy or a girl. Reflect on how these messages helped shape your gender identity.

Story 5: Tell a story that illustrates the games you played as a child and what those games taught you about being a girl or a boy? In addition, tell me a story that narrates what you have learned about society's messages concerning the importance or nonimportance of friendships. Which did you learn to value the most: family, friends, or romantic partners? Why?

Story 6: Tell a story that illustrates the messages you were given by teachers about gender. Here are some questions to help you. Think back to when you were in grade school or high school. Recall messages that were given to you by your teachers. For example, recall if any teachers gave you gendered messages such as, "boys are better at math and science and girls are good at language and reading." Think about how these messages may have affected how you viewed what career choices were available to you. Do you feel these types of messages have had an impact on other areas of your life today?

Story 7: Narrate one gender and/or sexuality lesson you have been taught in your life. The following are questions to help you brainstorm that moment. Who or what was it that taught you that "lesson?" Did you act or speak in particular ways to provoke this incident? What was the justification or occasion for your "lesson?" What were you told would be the consequences if you did not change? Would you pass that "lesson" on to others?

Story Assignment 8: Hillary Rodham Clinton is mentioned as one woman who was portrayed by the media as an "iron-maiden." Tell a story about another woman who may also represent the book's definition of an iron maiden. What are the benefits of a woman changing her appearance and communication style to fit into a traditional male job? Should women have to worry about being too feminine or too masculine in the work place? Use your own experiences and theory from this chapter to justify your responses.

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