



Ginger Hudson and Chris Dominy

Androgyny: Freedom from sex roles

By PATTI FLINT
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You'd probably never know it by looking at me — fair hair, blue eyes, freckles — and I'm not sure that this is something I should tell my mother, but move over Grace Jones because androgyny is more than cosmetic and I'm out to demonstrate that. Fear not, Grace; you still sing better than I do.

"A person having characteristics of the opposite sex" seems to be the general definition of androgyny, at least around The Battalion.

"Androgyny is really a fusing of the two," says Dr. Barbara Finlay, associate professor of sociology, giving the psychological definition. "It's a mixture without emphasizing either one or the other.

"The way androgyny is used in the media refers more to fashions and styles. In psychology it's usually defined as somebody who's not either strongly masculine or feminine."

Like "biodegradable," "androgyny" is one of those scientific words that has always been around, but is only recently falling off of everybody's

lips. Many people think that androgyny began with Boy George. Wrong. There has always been androgynous people, but androgyny has only recently become hip.

Dr. Larry Hickman, associate professor of philosophy, believes that androgyny is a natural result of our society.

"I believe that technology, and more specifically the information explosion, has made available to us all, many different lifestyle possibilities that we didn't have before this new technology," he says.

"If (Carl) Jung told us anything, he told us that males in western society are capable of responses denied them by their culture," Hickman says, and this also applies to females.

Jung said that there are, in all of us, elements that have been traditionally identified as male and female, and a lot of what passes as male and female differences are culturally bound.

Hickman believes the emergence of androgyny was inevitable because of modern technology.

"The more we know about

one another, the more we're going to be accepting of one another. Not only is the new acceptance of androgyny, as far as it's been accepted, not only is it inevitable, but also desirable."

"We see more possibilities because we know more about the world," he says. "We see objects as more clear cut and obtainable."

Androgyny is often (erroneously) associated just with fashion. Finlay says that Grace Jones is a good example of physical and behavioral androgyny because she is in the middle of the sexes, not expressing strong characteristics of either. But, she says that Jones also emphasizes her ability to be unisex in order to be unique because in pop music one has to be unique to be noticed.

In other words, androgyny is not what you look like; it's what you are.

"In the physical forms, it is a form of rebellion," Finlay says. "I don't believe in the tradition. I can flaunt it and still be me." But it is becoming a fashion — conformity. In and of itself, it is not rebellion."

Androgyny is personality traits, it's an approach to life that says "I'll be whoever I want to be, not who society dictates."

"It's something you learn through experience, something you decide," Finlay says. "Nobody is born androgynous or not androgynous. Often people decide that they can work to being more human. That often means that you don't just follow already defined sex roles. All of those things are a combination of experience, thinking, deciding what you want to do in life."

Men are now allowed to be sensitive and have weaknesses and women may be self-assured and have their own goals, she says.

Hickman says, "The core of what androgyny means is that there are a whole range of experiences that we are capable of, that you can only do part of, because society has reserved some of those experiences for the opposite sex."

Finlay says it is better not to be "either/or," but to have characteristics of both sexes. Research has shown that androgynous people are usually

more stable, more adaptable, more satisfied with who they are. Why?

"I suppose they're not as determined by others and role expectations."

She says, for example, that super-macho men are often hiding their insecurities and super-feminine women are often afraid of their own emotions.

"But most people don't accept these extremes any more," she says.

Many of America's heroes are androgynous, such as Alan Alda and the character Mary Tyler Moore played on her show.

Everybody knows that Alda supports women's right and seems to be deeply sensitive, but Mary Tyler Moore? Finlay says that the character Mary Richards is androgynous because she was a career woman who expected to be treated as a person, not as a sex role.

In brief, Hickman says, "There is a continuum which has been culturally defined male and female, and there are some people who are caught in the middle." **A E**