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THORSTEIN VEBLEN: A NEW PERSPECTIVE\*

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*In spite of his extensive writings, Thorstein Veblen is an American sociologist most students of sociology know very little about. The obscurity of Veblen's work within the discipline is explained by two parallel trends: the selective utilization of his economic theory, and the failure to legitimize or develop his generalized social theory. Veblen's sociology explains class divisions under capitalism as outward manifestations of the desire for dominance in order to gain self-esteem and prestige. The division between pecuniary and industrial occupations illustrates this process; however, the first and most important division from which all others follow is the division between the sexes. The lack of acknowledgement in sociology of Veblen's emphasis on the primacy of the sex role division in the development of human society suggests an inquiry into either the legitimacy of his position and/or academic selection which rejects the importance of sex role divisions.*

*Through an examination of both Veblen's writings and later analysts of his work, this paper (1) reclaims Veblen's sex role analysis, (2) demonstrates male bias in the social sciences, and (3) considers the applicability of Veblen's theory with contemporary feminist theory.*

Thorstein Veblen was an economist and sociologist who regularly incorporated anthropology, philosophy, and psychology into his numerous written works on American society during the early 1900s. In his writing, Veblen transforms keen analytical observations of "normal" social structure and processes into cynical social criticism. To develop his ideas, nearly every aspect of social, economic, and political life is examined; thus, his topics included capitalism, bureaucratization, occupations, education, sex differentiation, government policy, economic structures, and class divisions.

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Diversity usually indicates fragmentation; there is, however, a common thread of continuity which runs through Veblen's work: domination in order to gain prestige. This theme is found most clearly with regard to the divisions between the sexes, and between pecuniary and industrial occupations. Veblen devoted most of his work to these divisions; however, only the latter, along with his economic theory, has been promoted and utilized in the social sciences. His theory of the relation between the sexes has largely been obscured or ignored, even though he clearly asserted this as the first division from which all other class distinctions followed.

This paper will examine Veblen's sociological theory from a feminist perspective with a threefold purpose and aim: (1) to highlight and analyze Veblen's analysis of sex role divisions; (2) to use the omission of this aspect of his work as an illustration of male bias in the discipline; and (3) to examine the importance of Veblen's theory for contemporary feminist theory.

#### VEBLEN'S ANALYSIS OF SEX ROLE DIVISION: REPRESSION OR OMISSION?

Since the late 1960s when the Women's Movement challenged the status quo of male/female relations, theories of sex role division have proliferated. Hundreds of articles, books, and college courses developed over the last 15 years attest to the validity of the investigation of this subject matter. One method of analyzing an area of study is to examine the writings of earlier theorists—this process has the advantage of establishing long term relevancy over time, and further can reveal the submersion of important aspects of previous theoretical patterns of development. The omission of Veblen's theory of sex role division by later analysts can not easily be accounted for as an unimportant aspect of his work. On the contrary, the basis for much of his later writing followed from his initial investigation into what he considered the base characteristic of society: the masculine and the feminine (Veblen, 1918, 1947, 1973). The failure to perceive the social, political, and economic role of

sex division as the foundation of Veblen's theories reveals a researcher's orientation rather than Veblen's.

In a recent book, John Diggins (1978:41) cites T.W. Adorno for having praised Veblen as "one of the last significant philosophers who dares to take the woman question seriously." Diggins elaborates Adorno's observation by presenting Veblen's critical analysis of masculine domination and then questions why Veblen has never been incorporated into women's studies. Although Diggins and another Veblen researcher, Carlton Qualey (1968), ask why feminists have not utilized Veblen's theory of sex inequality in their analysis, one wonders why they do not question this same omission by Veblen's biographers and expositors. Why indeed? There have been more than 35 books, anthologies, and introductions written by male authors on Thorstein Veblen, and in the same way that male historians have excluded female participation in their interpretation of history, the feminist portion of Veblen's social analysis has been left out (among others, see Daugert, 1950; Dobriansky, 1957; Dorfman, 1934; Dowd, 1958; Lerner, 1950; Reisman, 1953; and Rosenberg, 1956).

The "feminism" in Veblen's work is not totally neglected, as several authors make passing mention of it. Forest G. Hill, notes Veblen's sympathy for the "underdog" which he demonstrates by the fact that he always "spoke up for the feminists" (quoted in Dowd, 1958:143). David Reisman (1953:2), in presenting a psychological analysis of Veblen, argues that he was a man "who felt deficient in the usual manly virtues of self reliance, aggressive comeback, social effectiveness and so on" which explains his preferring the "feminine as against the masculine elements in civilization." He describes Veblen as having a lack of conventional masculine prowess which led him into:

An attack on the institutions and human types of a predatory capitalism, and into a defense of the more peaceable types who throughout history had been overcome by masculine force and fraud. Much of his work may be seen as a passionate defense of women; Veblen regarded women as the great oppressed cadre (Reisman, 1953:41).

Reisman seems to feel it is necessary to explain Veblen's defense of women in a disparaging manner, i.e., a deficit in his personality. If the interpretation of Veblen's defense of women is a weakness in his character, perhaps that is why other researchers have not seen this in his work (would they not also fall into the same trap and be thought of as "unmanly")? But, if Veblen was not so flawed, the question might instead be to inquire if the male interpreters of his work themselves had a weakness—not of "unmanliness" but of too much "manliness." Whatever the case, they either did not see this implication, or more likely, they were not interested.

Non-interest parallels a fallow time in the history of feminist writing or general awareness. Except for Diggins who wrote in 1978, the other books were published between 1930 and 1968. In 1920 the Suffrage Movement had won the vote and the large populist part of the movement folded. From that point until the late 1960s, there was very little publishing done based on an analysis of women's secondary position in society. Historically there were adverse events which detracted from such probing interests. The 1930s brought the Depression, the 40s the war, during the 1950s there was a general period of affluence and rising expectations along with the ideal family life syndrome. The media and ideology of the country at this time expounded the happy adjusted family with the institution of the glorified wife/mother role. The "problem which had no name" described by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was hidden because of its vagueness in women's minds. The turmoil of the 1960s brought a re-awakened response to dissatisfactions and a new women's movement was born. It is in light of this new focus and awareness that Diggins draws attention to that aspect of Veblen which has been submerged for the last 75 years.

Because secondary sources tend to bring out their own biases, one must read the original writings in order to discern what is or is not there. A reading of Veblen's early work reveals the distinction and disparities between the sexes as the basis for all further class divisions.

In the barbarian's own eyes he is not a laborer, and he is not to be classed with the women in this respect; nor is his effort to be classed with the woman's drudgery, as labor or industry. . . . His work may conduce to the maintenance of the group, but it is felt that it does so through an excellence and an efficacy of a kind that cannot without derogation be compared with the uneventful diligence of the woman. . . . There is in all barbarian communities a profound sense of disparity between men's and women's work (Veblen, 1973:23).

Subsequent publications are concerned with business and capitalism but at the root of these analyses is sex role division. "Virtually the whole range of industrial employments is an outgrowth of what is classed as woman's work in the primitive barbarian community" (Veblen, 1973:23).

In actuality, the omission of the sex role distinction by researchers who have analyzed Veblen's work seems not to be attributable to a lack of awareness; rather it is the lack of a sense that it is important. As to why feminists themselves have not utilized Veblen, there are several probable explanations. At the time Veblen wrote, feminists were concerned about women's equality in a much narrower sense. When the movement first began in the mid-1800s, most women did not envision a very different family life; they wanted legal protection such as the right to speak in public, attend universities, obtain a divorce, keep legal custody of their children, retain an inheritance, and the most controversial "request" (the only resolution of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention which did not pass unanimously), the right to vote (Flexner, 1975). Most of the women who later joined the movement were there only in support of suffrage and many of these women desired to vote in order to pass prohibition. The majority of women never considered or desired sex equality such as the contemporary movement addresses. In short, Veblen was too radical for a large part of the early feminist movement. Veblen, who believed people usually act irrationally, did not talk about equality as a right and just principle, nor did he limit himself to civil law. Using the relations between the sexes, he reached into the deeper, more elusive regions of

attitudes and the causes of differentiation which eventuate into hierarchical status positions. Certainly Veblen came closer than other theorists of that time in grasping the significance of the historical origins of women's oppressed status for their secondary position in modern society.<sup>1</sup>

In summary, there are a number of reasons why Veblen's analysis of sex relations has not been recognized. First and foremost, researchers who have done biographies and analyses of his work have left out the sex role part of his theory. Second, he had a much larger vision than most early feminists; he appeared to be a radical. Third, it is possible that serious acceptance of his writing on women's oppression is held in question due to his reputation of being a "womanizer." Fourth, because he begins his analysis with pre-history and ends it in the early 1900s, there may be some doubt about the usefulness of his ideas for present day feminists. This last point has two aspects: (1) the question of the validity of Veblen's assumptions about early societal relations; and (2) the relevance of a comparison between the strictly defined role assignments of that time period with the sex role expectations of today.

Feminist activists typically focus on present day problems and solutions rather than the historical or philosophical underpinnings of a dominant/submissive relationship between the sexes. Activist campaigns centered around single issues are necessary in order to make incremental gains; however, the lack of theory can result in limited possibilities for long term social change of major significance. To the extent that Veblen did present an inclusive theoretical scheme for sex role divisions, the omission of this work by later sociologists constitutes a lost contribution in the process of developing feminist and sociological theory.

#### VEBLEN AND FEMINIST THEORY

The problems of how women's lowered status came to be and what needs to be done in order to change this situation is an important and controversial issue in feminist theory. If women's secondary position was instituted by the rise of private

property as Marxist feminists suggest, then communism should bring equality for women. However, in societies purporting to be communist, this has not been the case (Rowbothan, 1972; Saunder, 1979). If the division is because of women's biological reproductive function, then women should forego giving birth as the radical feminist Shulamith Firestone suggests (1970). Firestone does not advocate genocide; for her the solution is technological advance with test tube babies and a societal structure that provides communal child care. This is an altogether unacceptable thesis for most people, particularly for matriarchs such as Elizabeth Gould Davis (1971) who sees this as a denigration of women's more highly valued role in reproduction.

Liberal feminists argue it does not matter when, how, or why the division between the sexes was instituted, the important issue is that there is no logical basis for its continuation: sex inequality must end. This is a reasonable position; however, no matter how illogical inequality of the sexes may appear, the problem remains. The deeper question is the one Veblen raised: not how the division of labor came about, but why women's work suffered a loss of esteem. The *perception* of "less value" is the problem rather than that women's contributions *are* less valuable. What Veblen does raise for contemporary theorists is why the relationship between the sexes continues to be based on a social order dominated by men, particularly when we have such different social worlds than in the past.

The specific outline of Veblen's theory can be found in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1973). In this, his first book, he proposes that originally there was a peaceful savage stage in human history with communal sharing and equality. Because of sex differences in stature and muscular development, there was a division of labor, but this division was not seen as a superior/inferior relationship. He then utilizes his evolutionary leanings to explain that over time through selective adaptation for strength, (needed at this time of historical development for survival), a cumulative difference between the sexes occurred. This evolutionary process takes civilization into the barbarian stage.

In the barbarian stage the physical dominance of males develops into a predatory nature of aggression and exploit. Any work that does not involve prowess comes to be seen as unworthy of men, and women's work, although industrious, is seen to be diligent and dull.

The distinction between exploit and drudgery is an invidious distinction between employments. Those employments which are to be classed as exploit are worthy, honorable, noble; other employments, which do not contain this element of exploit, and especially those which imply subservience or submission, are unworthy, debasing, ignoble. The concept of dignity, worth, or honor, as applied either to persons or conduct, is of first rate consequence in the development of classes and of class distinctions (Veblen, 1973:29).<sup>2</sup>

The predatory nature of humans is brought to the fore only after a surplus product is achieved in society; a level which comes about with the development of technical knowledge and the use of tools. Veblen sees the beginning of ownership originating through the practice of males capturing women in raiding activities. Captured women were displayed as trophies; "emulation" being the motive behind this original form of ownership. Eventually the institution of slavery and ownership/property marriage is established. The importance of Veblen's analysis is his reversal of Engels; he argues that the origin of ownership and private property *started with the oppression of women* rather than the oppression of women beginning with the origin of private property. All invidious distinctions then originate in a division of the sexes.

In the present, this division is expressed in a pecuniary manner, which distinguishes the leisure class from the industrious class. The leisure class is comparable to the barbarian (males) and the industrial class is comparable to the savage (females). The leisure or upper class exploits and lives off the labor of the working industrial class. Capitalism institutes a system where division is encouraged by conferring high value and rewards to the exploiters while considering the workers inferior,

thus deserving a subservient position in society. Those employed in politics, war, religion,<sup>3</sup> sports, and pecuniary employment are members of the leisure class and are guided by these masculine barbarian traits. Veblen recognized that employment distinctions persist "with great tenacity as a commonplace preconception even in modern life, as is shown, for instance, by our habitual aversion to menial employments. It is a distinction of a personal kind—of superiority and inferiority" (Veblen, 1973:25).

The reluctance to admit women to universities is based on their historically subservient position in society where there has prevailed a strong sense that the "admission of women to the privileges of the higher learning. . . would be derogatory to the dignity of the learned craft" (1973:243). Dignity and self-worth are highly valued and this is one of women's greatest losses. Those who suffer loss of esteem in the eyes of their contemporaries consequently suffer also in their own estimation of their esteem and self-respect. This is the greatest injustice done to women. Self-worth is a difficult thing for women to acquire in light of their position in society; "only individuals with an aberrant temperament can in the long run retain their self-esteem in the face of the disesteem of their fellows" (1973:38).

Veblen advocated that women become independent through paid labor since he felt the exclusion of women from the productive forces diverted their energies into interests other than self-regarding ones. Although he did not address the question of child care or the redistribution of traditional female responsibilities, his socio-psychological analysis of women's position in society goes much further than a strict materialist or liberal "rights" position—this is evidenced by his argument that allowing women into the work force, while retaining a lowered valuation of them as human beings, perpetuates differential status levels.<sup>4</sup> Thus he concludes that the differential status between the sexes is much *deeper than the division of labor*.

Veblen illustrates how the division of labor argument is insufficient by demonstrating the irrational and arbitrary assignment of status and prestige awards. By his account of prehistorical development, during the savage stage men and women did different work based upon the sexual division of labor but

neither was considered more valuable than the other. For Veblen, achieving esteem and prestige are the motivating forces which initiate and perpetuate discrimination, even when it is irrational. Superiority over others is gained by initiating and perpetuating class structures, racism, and sexism. Changing laws will not eliminate this tendency because of the psychological importance in keeping other groups in a low valuation category in order to elevate your position.

Veblen had strong doubts about the possibility of changing societal values from self-aggrandisement to humanitarian ideals; nevertheless, he did offer four factors which could overturn the patriarchal order and lead to this goal: instincts, socialization, evolution, and social movements.

1. *Instincts*—Veblen posits the proposition that the original and strongest instincts of human behavior are “idle curiosity,” “the instinct of workmanship,” and the “parental bent.” These instincts introduce an element of optimism to Veblen’s general pessimism. Because these instincts are genetically linked human characteristics they will resurface. Veblen believed the stage of force and aggression would continue to develop an inherently destructive pattern of community life; however, these characteristics would become increasingly non-adaptive to human existence—at some point, it was possible that this pattern would be rejected by reverting back to the basic “good” instincts of peaceful co-existence.<sup>5</sup>

2. *Socialization*—Veblen did not consider that instincts alone prescribed a person’s behavior, but rather that environment was the stronger of the two. He states that adults and peers aid and abet youthful exploits of ferocity in young males and not females, thereby, furthering the formation of these habits. Encouragement is given through pseudo-military organizations like the “boys brigades” and particularly in the college spirit of sports and athletic competition.

If a person so endowed with a proclivity for exploits is in a position to guide the development of habits in the adolescent members of the community, the influence which he exerts in

the direction of conservation and reversion to prowess may be very considerable (Veblen, 1973:170).

For Veblen socialization entails an interactive process between environmental conditions, institutions, and human nature.

Institutions are not only themselves the result of a selective and adaptive process which shapes the prevailing or dominant types of spiritual attitude and attitudes; they are at the same time special methods of life and of human relations, and are therefore in their turn efficient factors of selection . . . these forces may best be stated in terms of an environment, partly human, partly non-human, and a human subject with a more or less definite physical and intellectual constitution (Veblen, 1973:131).

An explanation of sex role behavior based on the reciprocal relationship of gender and culture acknowledges the complexity of the issue and incorporates a feminist perspective on understanding sex differences.

3. *Evolution*—Although the idea of evolution conjures notions like “survival of the fittest” and a deterministic element discordant with humanitarian and feminist ideology, this element in Veblen cannot be used to reject him without understanding what his position on evolution actually was. First, it should be recognized that a belief in evolution rather than religion in the late 1800s and early 1900s was very revolutionary—evolution broke the cycle of the natural order of things according to God’s will. Second, for Veblen evolution did not follow a linear progression to an elevated higher order of life, but rather new directions and adaptations were continuously developing which may or may not be good for society. In his thinking, it was the more female characteristics from the savage stage that created the superior culture necessary for the general well-being of both males and females.

This collective interest is best served by honesty, diligence, peacefulness, good will, and absence of self seeking. . . . These

traits are present in a markedly less degree in the man of the predatory type than is useful for the purposes of the modern collective life (1973:154).

Veblen argues that nothing is pre-determined; evolution is a continual process of change; survival of the fittest is non-adaptive to societies, benefits only a few, and is not applicable in modern times. Because evolution is responsive to environmental conditions, any environmental change brings about a new evolutionary direction.

4. *Social Movements*—Although Veblen was not a social reformer, he did advocate agitating for change. He posits a social structure which changes, develops and adapts itself to a new situation only through different habits of thought. Institutions and habits of thought are part of a past process and are never in full accord with the requirements of the present. This is why there is always a “cultural lag” between norms and behavior which creates a conservative factor in civilization. Veblen felt the leisure class would resist accepting new conditions because this group was shielded from the economic conditions which help foster a desire for change. However, new circumstances will eventually force changes in attitudes and habits of thought.<sup>6</sup> For instance, he argues that science is a mental adaptation which “will no longer tolerate habits of thought formed under and conforming to a different set of circumstances from the past” (1973:133). Resistance to change is natural and continual pressure must be applied.

In the redistribution of the conditions of life that comes of the altered method of dealing with the environment, the outcome is not an equitable change in the facility of life throughout the group. The altered conditions may increase the facility of life for the group as a whole, but the redistribution will usually result in a decrease of facility or fullness of life for some members of the group . . . and will require at least some of the members of the community to change their habits of life (Veblen, 1973:135).

Therefore, he advocates that social movements apply pressure and seek continual visibility because

a readjustment of men's habits of thought to conform with the exigencies of an altered situation is in any case made only tardily and reluctantly, and only under the coercion exercised by a stipulation which has made the accredited views untenable . . . made in response to pressure from without (1973:134).

He praised the women's movement which he saw as pressuring for emancipation. “In a sense the new-woman movement marks a reversion to a more generic type of human character, or to a less differentiated expression of human nature” (1973: 233-234). Veblen recognized that the women's movement was predominately composed of white, educated, middle-class women who were expressing status unrest and resentment because they no longer wanted to lead vicarious lives. He explains that resistance from lower-class women is based on a lack of awareness or opportunity to challenge the status quo.

So long as the woman's place is consistently that of a drudge, she is, in the average of cases, fairly contented with her lot. She not only has something tangible and purposeful to do, but she has also no time or thought to spare for a rebellious assertion of such human propensity to self direction as she has inherited (Veblen, 1973:232).

As to opposition from upper-class women:

After the stage of universal female drudgery is passed and a vicarious leisure without strenuous application becomes the accredited employment of the women of the well-to-do classes, the prescriptive force of the canon of pecuniary decency . . . will long preserve high minded women from any sentimental leaning to self direction (Veblen, 1973:232-233).

Change is met with resistance, too, for no other reason than it requires an effort at readjustment. Any habitual way of thinking becomes seen as the only right and natural way of doing things; dire consequences playing on human fears are prophesized if people go against the "natural" order. Therefore, the general reticence to change is coupled with the upper class or dominant group's resistance and the non-demanding lower class whose energies are entirely absorbed by the struggle for daily existence.

### CONCLUSION

This brief review was designed to examine Veblen's theory of the division between the sexes and its applicability for feminist theory. Essentially, there are three major conclusions to this study:

1. The tenets of sex role division as outlined by Veblen are compatible with current feminist analysis of patriarchal society.
2. Male bias in research has repressed or ignored the feminist principles Veblen presented.
3. The value of Veblen's theory lies in the application of a critique of the male/female relationship beyond individual interpersonal relations.

Veblen's analysis can be fit into contemporary feminism and presents a relatively complete system. There may be specific criticisms of his presentation, but he does raise the important questions and provides an example of an extended, far-reaching analysis for the development of theory. He expanded the concept of feminism to incorporate the study of three related developments having a close connection—individual ownership, the paternal household, and the loss of women's status. In connecting these issues, he revealed a close relationship between socialism, feminism, and humanitarianism. Further,

he instituted a challenge to the conventional meaning of social and cultural values. Diggins defines his contribution very broadly when he states that Veblen reveals that:

The contemporary position of women is the outcome of power relations that originated in primitive acts of coercion, relations that become themselves reified into "natural" customs and thus take on the status of a scientific as well as moral ideology. In tracing the brutish origins of masculine hegemony *Veblen did much to reorient social consciousness* by showing us why acts of power should never be dignified with the aura of authority (1978:168—emphasis mine).

Although feminist writers have defined the power relationship as pivotal to women's lowered position, this feature of sexism is not generally acknowledged outside of the movement. Instead, arguments are still put forth that women's place is defined by her "natural" physical leanings, or through divine ordinance. Pragmatists discuss the value of mothers for the family and society. There has even been a revitalization of the pedestal concept—women's superior nature and possession of a far more valued position (Andelin, 1970; Morgan, 1973).

Given these conditions and the fact that few people have heard of Thorstein Veblen, it would not be accurate to say Veblen "did much to reorient social consciousness" with regard to the position of women. It would be accurate to say that the potential was there, but bias (in defining what is important) in the social sciences prevented recognition of this part of his work. This bias currently continues as Women's Studies is still regarded as narrow and specialized—outside of the general academic framework which covers the fundamental "important" issues of "mankind."

Thus, re-examining Veblen from a feminist perspective exposes malecentric bias in academia and recovers an important lost contribution. Veblen's analysis offers a broad base of comparison as it detracts from a strict economic interpretation of women's oppression and goes deeper than women's legal rights. Veblen presents a feminist perspective beyond the male/female



relationship—as in contemporary radical feminist analysis, he sees a detrimental masculine framework generalized throughout society. Currently there is a growing trend in feminist circles to reconsider the goal of “equal rights” within the present institutionalized setting and instead to use sex equality as the first step in changing the entire socio-economic structure (New York N.O.W., 1979). In working to end their own devaluation, feminists have begun to critically challenge the preconceived and accepted patriarchal standards permeating the whole of society. In this respect, Veblen is a worthy forerunner for emulation.

## FOOTNOTES

1. A comparison with John Stuart Mill provides a striking difference in orientation. At the time each were publishing their works, Mill was more acceptable. He was inspired by his 20 year romance with a woman who could not get a divorce, have custody of her children, or obtain her family inheritance. Mill based his plea for women's rights on logic and rationality.
2. Veblen also uses this invidious comparison of persons to explain the leisure class, with its use of “conspicuous consumption” and “conspicuous leisure” to distinguish itself as being more worthy than the lower class.
3. Veblen was critical of religion for a number of reasons and found the devout observation of religious practice by women a form of escape from the reality of their lives. He describes religion as responsible for establishing the status relationship of a superior “male” God. Veblen felt the leisure class established religious institutions and the capitalist system to work in favor of their predatory exploitive characteristics rather than for the good of the community.
4. Veblen's position contrasts with that of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, author of *Women and Economics* (1898). Although probable that she and Veblen were aware of each other's work, Gilman's analysis of women's condition dealt basically with economic issues. She argued that women's position was defined by economic dependence; the solution was for women to work for pay and to be paid a decent wage. She focused on the economically dependent position of women, particularly middle- and upper-class women. At that time only poor or single women worked outside the home—by the turn of the century only 6 percent of married women worked; nearly all wives were dependent upon their husbands for support. Gilman, like Mill, was not

concerned with historical antecedents, but felt economic independence would give women equal status with men (Gilman, 1935). Veblen, however, never felt that the entry of women into the workforce, by itself, would solve the basic differential status positions between the sexes.

5. The idea of inherent instincts related to social psychological characteristics or temperament is rejected by most modern psychologists as scientifically unfounded. Sociological research and feminist analysis have also rejected the idea of genetically pre-ordained characteristics and instead have demonstrated that people become the way they are through cultural conditioning. This position argues that within the human race there is the dual component of aggression and nurturance in all people, and that the socialization process at the present time emphasizes the former for males and the latter for females. A sex-neutral childrearing and educational system is proposed to equalize these tendencies and develop androgenous personality types. Both sexes would then possess male/female “characteristics” in a more even proportion resulting in rounded healthy personalities.

The arguments between nature/nurture are difficult to resolve; these controversies continue because human beings can not be isolated from their environment in order to see how much of their personality is inherited and how much is socialized. The important point, however, is that Veblen's theory of base instincts is not related to sex; they are human instincts—it is only because of evolutionary survival processes based on sex role division that men have not adopted these characteristics to the same extent that women have. Therefore, a feminist perspective could accept this position that an orientation toward nurturance, empathy, stability, perseverance, contemplation, and cooperation (attributes which are incorporated in his three primary instincts and which are usually defined as feminine dispositions) should be fostered to a high degree by all people in society.

6. Incorporating this way of thinking into today's environment, it can be seen that the changes in women's life styles brought about by effective birth control and the concurrent influx of women into the workforce, precipitates a change in the norms surrounding women's role in the economic and social structures of society.

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