

GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS

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[Assignment: Write a short essay which makes a point about gender and/or about the writers we have read. You can write about your own experience in order to support or oppose something we have read, or else you can analyze the ideas of the writers without referring to your own experience.]

Boys will be boys and girls will be girls. We have all heard this sometime in our lives and probably at some point believed it. How many times have we called a boy a "wimp" for playing with a doll or called a girl a "tomboy" for playing football with the neighborhood boys? Children who try to take part in the gender role of the opposite sex are sometimes not fully accepted. The boys will never see the "tomboy" as being one of them and the girls will certainly never invite her to their tea party. So where do we draw the line? When will we learn and teach our children how to express both the feminine and masculine side? And when will we be comfortable with it? These questions have been pondered by many but the answers have yet to be found. Lois Gould and Prudence Mackintosh are two authors who have expressed their views on gender roles in their writings. These two women express the importance of being able to raise a child who can be both feminine and masculine and I totally agree with the concept. I feel it is important to have the best of the two worlds. Unfortunately, many children are deprived of this. I can personally relate to this. I, like many other children, was brought up to play a specific gender role.

"Little girls don't do that," "that's a nice, little girl," "make sure to sit and smile pretty"--the list goes on and on. I cannot begin to count the numerous times I heard those sayings. My all-time favorite is "act like a lady, and you will be treated like one." My bedroom as a child was draped with pink. My dresser was covered with dolls and my closet was filled with ruffled skirts and flowery dresses. I had a huge doll house in the corner of my room which I almost had to guard with my life. I had to keep it looking brand new. This made me envy the boys who could crash their trucks into the wall and bury their G.I. Joe's in the back yard. My dolls had to be clean and neatly kept.

I found Barbie boring while I was fascinated with Transformers. I was a girl so I had to play with "girl" toys and be interested in "girl" things. I did not want to have tea parties, I wanted to make a mud pie. I longed to run across the street to play football with the boys. I could hear them screaming and laughing while I sat on my pink, furry rug, moving from doll to doll, trying to entertain myself. The boys always seemed to be having so much more fun than me and I was dying to join in on their escapades. Of course this would be unheard of for mommy's little girl, but I finally got the nerve to run out in the dirt and play a game of football.

It was a Saturday morning. I was awakened by the screams of excitement coming from across the street. I put on a pair of jeans, which

were always more comfortable than a skirt and tights, and ran across the street to the park. I sat on a swing, rocking back and forth, wishing I could join in on the game of football. The boys were setting up new teams for a new game. They were uneven. They needed one more player and I was more than willing. "Please ask me!" I was repeating over and over in my head. Then a skinny, little, redheaded boy turned to me and said, "Do you want to play?" I was overwhelmed with excitement! Another boy yelled out, "She can't play with us. She is a girl!" And I yelled right back, " You bet I am going to play." I ran full-speed ahead, for no one could stop me from playing the game of my life.

As I rolled on the ground and ran about freely, I felt like a bird who was just let out of her cage. After my first football game, I realized that playing with boys did not hurt my femininity one bit. I could play with my dolls and tea set. I could also run around the field with the boys, and this would make me no less of a girl. This story is probably pointless to a lot of people but to an eight-year old girl who was always stuck with playing with her dolls, it is a story of a life-time.

I cannot help asking myself, "Why are gender roles so important? Why should a girl be feminine and a boy be masculine and who decides what is feminine and what is masculine?"