

Continuing with the Cultural Perspective: Self, Identity and Gender



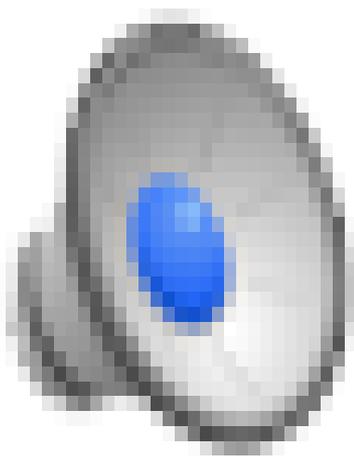
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The self and identity



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What is “a self”?



Evolution of self – overview

Old view

- Self as singular entity
- Timeless self
- Self as “essence of who you are”
- “I need to stay true to myself”

Contemporary view

- Self as multiple
- Self as contextual (across space and time) and expressed through multiple identities
- Self as shaped by the gaze by “general others”

THE SELF:

“the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having references to himself as an object.”

In other words, how I see myself, and how I think others see me.



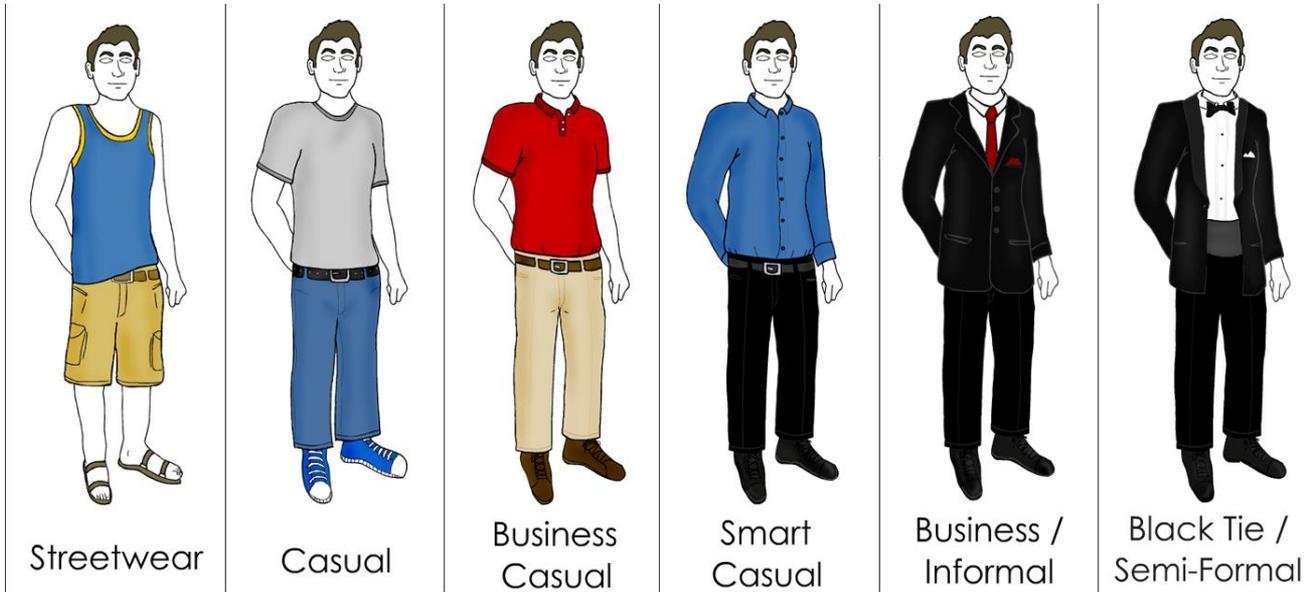
What is identity?

Identity vs. the self

Note: there is disagreement on the boundaries of identity and self...

But more often than not, identity is seen **as the representation of the self**

Identity: presentation of the self



Constructing an identity is quite reflexive, creating a presentation of the self to others

Identity – different views and approaches

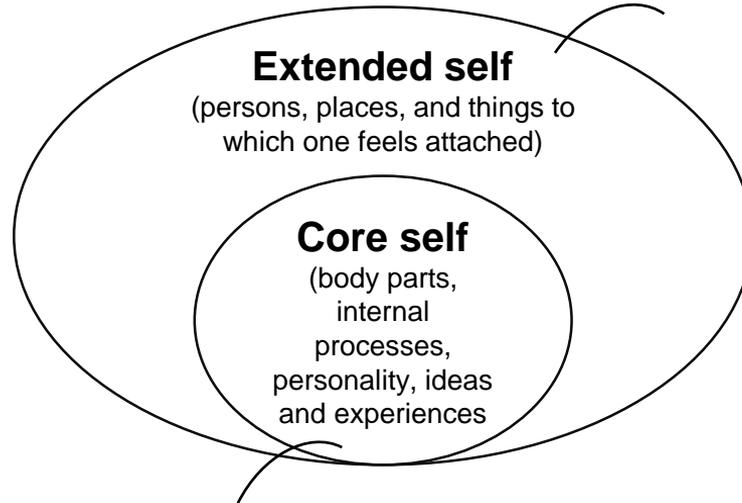


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The traditional view of possessions as part of the self (Belk 1988)

“I am what I own”

“Incorporating
objects to the self”
More fluctuating



“Something given to us”
Fairly stable, fixed

From owning to possessing

We invest “psychic energy” into objects that we have spent time, effort, and attention on (Belk 1988)

They become more dear to us, and more indicative of the self.

Different categories of possessions:

- Heirlooms
- Disposable goods
- Shared possessions (e.g., a family table)
- Intangible goods
- Art or other collectibles



Possessions can be extended to the self literally or symbolically

Literal extensions:

- *“These shoes help me perform as an athlete”*
 - *“This tool allows me to do things I would otherwise not be able to do”*
- Possessions entail physical, instrumental value

Symbolic extensions:

- *“This dress communicates my values”*
 - *“This Rolex makes me feel confident”*
- Possessions entail symbolic, identity linking value



“Post Belk era”: identities have become more liquid

Today, society lacks identity determining structures (such as class) and is marked by increasing **fragmentation, speed** and **liquidity**:

- fast product cycles
- changing values
- consumer movements
- sub-cultures
- ...

Identities have become fluid, on-going projects that are pursued in the presence of rapidly changing circumstances.

Identity is an activity rather than something stable – a process.

Bauman 2007:

“Far from slowing the flow, let alone stopping it, identities are more like the spots of crust hardening time and again on the top of volcanic lava which melt and dissolve again before they have time to cool and set.”



Identity as a narrative

Identities are predominantly seen as a **narrative**: people integrate key attributes of their being, memories of past experiences and their desires **to a story of who they are** (current self), **who they were** (past self) **and where they are going** (potential future self).

Individuals as meaning generators – attempting to make sense of themselves and their lives, and **form it into a meaningful story**.

The identity narrative consists of multiple, not necessarily unitary selves.

Identity conflicts

Endless resources for identity construction through objects and consumption activities

- The overwhelming task of navigating through all the options and represent oneself in a coherent way
- Who do I want to be? How do I want to live?

Multiple, conflicting desired identities

- How to pursue all of them? Is it even possible?



Think about some of the theories of identity. Do you agree / disagree with them? How do you see yourself as a consumer?

What identity conflicts do you identify in your life or in general?

Building on Belk's theory: loved objects (Ahuvia 2005)

Possessions vs. loved objects:

- Possessions are limited to privately owned physical objects (clothes, grooming products, accessories etc.).
- Loved objects can be anything that consumers love: objects, public spaces like nature, consumption activities,...

Object involvement:

- Consumers can also love objects that are far away or which they are not currently using (books, clothes,...)

Building on Belk's theory: loved objects (Ahuvia 2005)

The notion of a “core” self romanticizes identity.

The division between a “core” and an “extended” self cannot be drawn that clearly. Rather, objects **form a grey area** around our identities.

Solving identity conflicts with loved objects (Ahuvia 2005)



Solving identity conflicts with loved objects (Ahuvia 2005)

Solutions to solve conflicts:

(1) Demarcating (choose A and reject B)

(2) Compromising (create a partway identity between A and B)

(3) Synthesizing (take advantages of A and B and form identity C)

- Loved objects or consumption activity combine conflicting aspects of identities and give the consumer the best of both worlds (example of Ahuvia 2005)
- Self transformation

Building on Belk's theory: Extended Self in a Digital World (Belk 2013)

- Takes into account the impact of digitalization and technological changes that have taken place since Belk first introduced his concept of the “extended self”

SUMMARY OF DIGITAL MODIFICATIONS OF THE EXTENDED SELF

Digital dimension	Self	Possessions
Dematerialization		Attachment to and singularization of virtual possessions; almost, but not quite the same
Reembodiment	Avatars affect offline self; multiplicity of selves	Attachment to avatars
Sharing	Self revelation; loss of control	Aggregate possessions; sense of shared place online
Co-construction of self	Affirmation of self; building aggregate extended self; “Attachment to Virtual Possessions in Videogames”	
Distributed memory	Narratives of self	Digital clutter; digital cues to sense of past

Building on Belk's theory: Extended Self in a Digital World (Belk 2013)

All in all, the self is much more **actively managed, jointly constructed, interactive, openly disinhibited, confessional, multiply manifest, and influenced by what we and our avatars do online**. All of this is dramatically new and suggests that only studying extended self offline is missing a large part of the influences on our contemporary self concepts and our and others' activities in creating them.



Identity: case fashion and clothing

Clothes are very fruitful for identity construction, as they are:

- simultaneously functional and highly symbolic objects
- used every day and are visible to others
- close to our body

Through clothes consumers communicate the self, build desired self images, initiate identity changes and distinct oneself from others.

For many, clothes are a long-term material commitment, even though they would be worn for a shorter period of time.



The many dimensions of clothes

“Clothes as who I am”

Consumers' everyday relation to clothing
General appearance one wants to communicate
in everyday life (e.g. at work)
Clothes as practical and symbolic

“Clothes as who I am not”

Miss purchases
Outfit failures and embarrassment

“Clothes as who I want to be”

Searching and reaching out for desired identities
Trying out different styles
Inventing and transforming the self



Gender

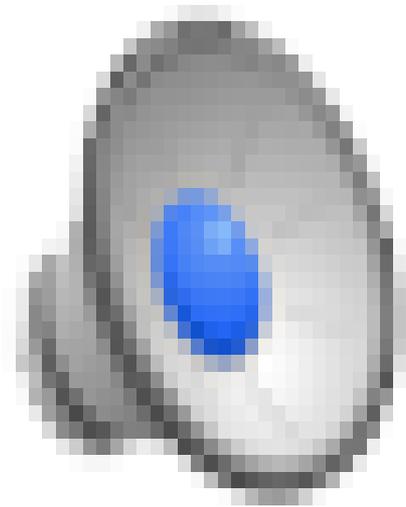


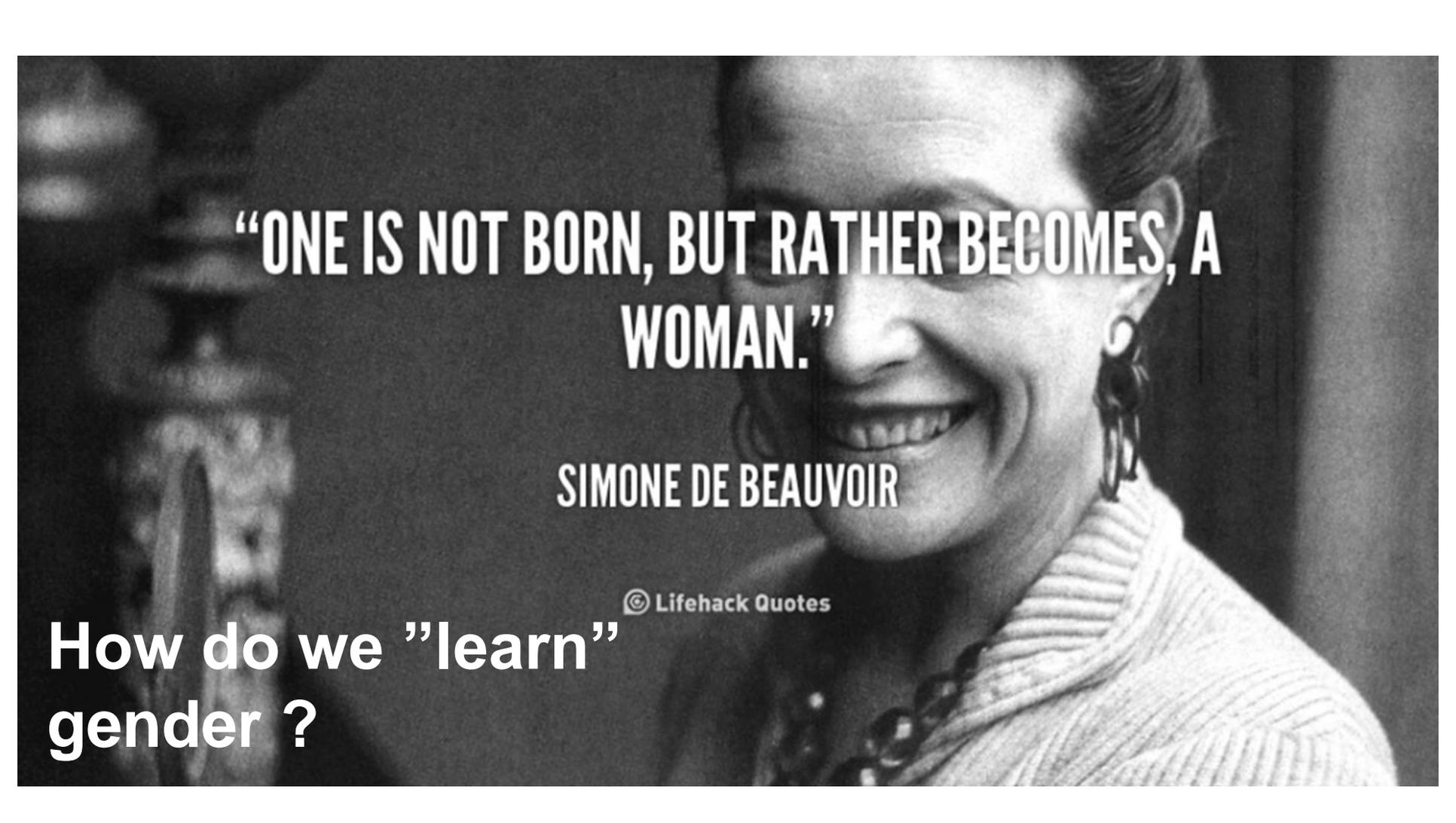
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What is the difference between sex and gender?

SEX: biological features that demarcate men and women

GENDER: behavioral characteristics and how they are perceived within a cultural sphere, usually through a binary of masculine versus feminine



A black and white close-up photograph of Simone de Beauvoir. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. Her hair is pulled back. She is wearing large, dark, circular earrings and a light-colored, ribbed turtleneck sweater. The background is dark and out of focus.

**“ONE IS NOT BORN, BUT RATHER BECOMES, A
WOMAN.”**

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

© Lifehack Quotes

**How do we “learn”
gender ?**

According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet

- Learning starts in early childhood
 - “**early linguistic acts** set up a baby for life”. The following set up the learning process:
 - How others **talk about us and name us**
 - How we are **dressed, what kind of presents** are we given
 - How we are **treated** as children, how we are **talked to**, how we are **played with**
 - What kind of **activities we are directed to**, how we are **measured, what traits are praised** in us
- Adults “do the child’s gender work” for them in the beginning, after which kids learn **to do gender for themselves, to produce sex-differentiated behavior**”



According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet

- Learning continues in adolescence
 - “The heterosexual market” dominates the models of pairing up, and men and women are given “rules” of how to behave in relation to one another



Gender role portrayals in media

“Everywhere we look, we see images of the perfect couple. They are **heterosexual**. He is **taller, bigger, darker** than her. They appear in poses in which **he looks straight ahead, confident and direct**; she looks down or off into the distance, often dreamily. Standing or sitting, **she is lower than him, maybe leaning on him, maybe tucked under his arm, maybe looking up to him.**”



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10 ways to avoid falling victim to online ...
independent.co.uk



Breadcrumbing, orbiting and more:...
economicstimes.indiatimes.com



Five Tips for Safe Online Dating | Psychology ...
psychologytoday.com



What is the difference between a relations...
quora.com



The Dating Advice You Need to Hear (From ...
greatest.com



15 Dating Rules for Men that'll Transform Your...



Best Dating Sites For Over 40 - Rom...



Dating app fatigue comes from a lack of ...



Relationship Abroad: 10 Things NOT T...



5 important things to know about dating-bot...

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A Romantic Winter Wedding... brides.com



This Bride Wore a Chanel Haute Coutu... vogue.com



Bridezilla mocked for strict list of wedding rules | ... gladstoneobserver.com.au



A Malibu Wedding With a ... marthastewartweddings.com



Wedding Vendors & Services - The Knot theknot.com



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Australian households and families | Austr...
aifs.gov.au



The modern Australian family | Australian Insti...
aifs.gov.au



Ballinger Family - YouTube
youtube.com



Do value your family, it is the god's best gift f...
naukrinama.com



A central component of the Vanier Institute's ...
vanierinstitute.ca



THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTH IN THE F...



Family Portraits | JCPenney ...



Chinese Family Values



Yearly Subscription- Family



Family Private Health Insurance - Compare...

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5 Ways to Bring Back the Romantic Come...
screenkraft.org



A Date with Miss Fortune –...
silverpetic.oatreview.com



50 Best Romantic Comedi...
editorial.rottentomatoes.com



Me Before You – not just anothe...
theilliteratejor.wordpress.com



Romantic Comedy Movies: Amazo...
amazon.com



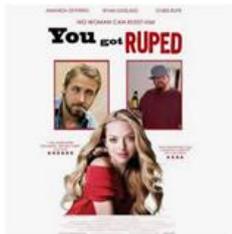
Romantic Comedy images The Pro...
fanpop.com



Best Romantic Comedies of 2013 | POPSUGAR ...
popsugar.com



Loren's Fabulous Foundati...
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Romantic Comedy by MAG...
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Romantic Comedy Movie ...
fandangonow.com



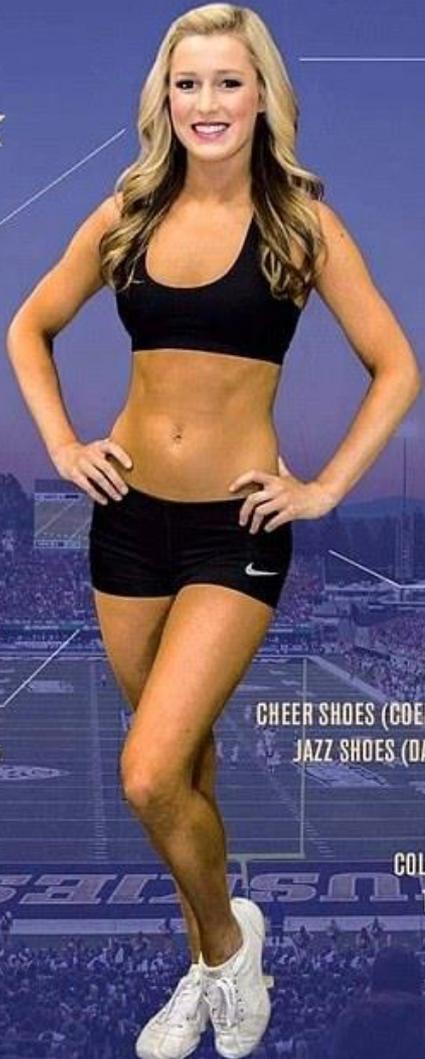
Romantic Comedies | SBS ...
sbs.com.au



Best Romantic Comedies of 2010 | POP...
popsugar.com

Gender role portrayals in media

“Even the athletic young woman, however, is instructed to work on making her body desirable to men, as is attested by advertising and features in such publications as *Sports Illustrated for Women*.”



W
CHEER AND DANCE
TRYOUT LOOK

MAKEUP DO'S
BRONZE, BEACHY GLOW
FALSE LASHES
GIRL ABOUT TOWN LIPSTICK
FLATTERING EYE SHADOW

MAKEUP DON'TS
DARK, SMOKEY EYES
NUDE LIPS
TOO MUCH MAKEUP
HARSH LINES/CONTOURS/COLORS

BODY DO'S
PHYSICALLY FIT, ATHLETIC PHYSIQUE
NUDE OR NO FINGERNAIL POLISH
NATURAL TAN/SPRAY TAN

BODY DON'TS
JEWELRY OF ANY KIND
VISIBLE TATTOOS
DISTRACTING FINGERNAIL POLISH

HAIR DO'S
HAIR DOWN
CURLED OR STRAIGHT
VOLUME
PARTIALLY OFF FACE

HAIR DON'TS
PONYTAILS
SLICKED BACK
TRENDY COLORS

ATTIRE DO'S
SOLID BLACK SPORTS BRA
MID-RISE BLACK SHORTS
CHEER SHOES (GOED FULL TRYOUT/DANCE FRIDAY)
JAZZ SHOES (DANCE FRIDAY NIGHT/SATURDAY)

ATTIRE DON'TS
COLORS OTHER THAN SOLID BLACK
TOPS THAT COVER THE MIDRIFF
HIGH-WAISTED SHORTS
RUNNING SHOES

© Facebook

Gender development does not end with childhood or adolescence. **Gender continues to be transformed as we move into the marketplace** – as we learn to act like secretaries, lawyers, managers, janitors. And it continues to be transformed as our family status changes – as we learn to be wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, grandmothers and grandfathers. **As we age, we continue to learn new ways of being men and women: what's expected from the teenage girl is rather different from expectations for a woman in her mid-forties and those expectations differ from those for a woman approaching eighty.**



Performing malehood – what is malehood?



Breaking gender roles?

Male makeup signals a move away from rigid gender roles - but there's a catch

Arwa Mahdawi



Male body image issues are on the rise and studies suggest men are as likely to be insecure about their appearance as women



Breaking gender roles?



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Thank you!



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