



# Gender Shock: Exploding the Myths of Male and Female

*Phyllis Burke*

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At a time when men are staying at home to parent and women are leaving to practice law, medicine, and politics, America is confused and anxious about what differences truly exist between the sexes. To question one's gender role is to invite chaos, the flux of identity, yet the question persists: In a world of evolving roles for both sexes, how are "masculine" and "feminine" defined? If women and men are created equal, how then do gender differences emerge?

In *Gender Shock*, Phyllis Burke explodes the many myths surrounding our rigid gender system of male and female by looking through three lenses of gender identity: Behavior, Appearance, and Science. Combining the latest research in psychology, genetics, neurology, and sociology, Burke finds that gender (or behavior) is not the result of one's biological sex (the body itself); that gender and sexuality are separate elements of the self; that there are more variations within each sex than there are between the two; and finally, based on world-class biologist Dr. Fausto-Sterling's theory of the five sexes, perhaps the most surprising myth of all is that there are only two kinds of bodies: the male and the female.

The most shocking practice Burke encounters is the increasingly popular diagnosis of Gender Identity Disorder, in which children, as young as three years old, undergo "therapy" both at home and at school for not adhering to accepted notions of "girl" and "boy" behavior. Rather than punishing children and adults who do not conform to gender expectations, Burke urges the rejection of our rigid male-female system and the embrace of a "gender independent" culture, in which individuals adopt the best traits of both sexes, e.g. strong *and* nurturing, rational *and* emotional.

An artful combination of investigative journalism, personal stories, and cultural criticism, *Gender Shock*, will forever redefine our understanding of gender.

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