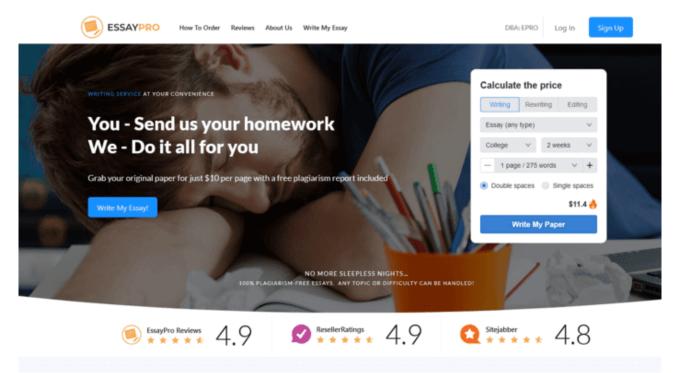
Neural Masculization and Feminization



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Neural Masculization and Feminization

American society separates two sexes and distinguishes two genders. Through innumerable cues, we are taught that men and women are different. Most public places provide separate restrooms for men and women. Most department stores sell men's and women's clothes in separate departments. Even separate clothing size scales exist for men and women. Many health forms and applications for schools or jobs inquire about sex. <u>Clubs</u> and organizations, such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, exist solely for one gender or the other. When considering questions of sex and gender, each term must be defined. Sex refers to the biological distinction between male and female. Gender is the socially constructed understanding of man and woman. Why are so many distinctions drawn between male and female, man and woman? Are the differences between male and female and female imited to genitalia, or do the differences extend to behavior? If males and <u>females</u> do indeed act differently, what is the source of this difference?

Several studies have indicated that males and females do act differently. One study even reported that men and women college students hold their books in different manners (1). Robert Trivers, an influential evolutionary biologist during the 1970's, suggested that males

and females have evolved different patterns of behavior due to various levels of investment in reproduction and child-rearing (2). According to Trivers' theory, female mammals are more invested in the reproductive process than male mammals because females must contribute a relatively large egg, milk, and blood to create offspring. Males, however, donate a relatively small amount of seamen. Since females must sacrifice more to reproduce, they are more likely to favor producing a smaller quantity of high quality offspring. In contrast, males have relatively little invested in each offspring, so producing a large quantity of offspring is favorable to males. Thus, theoretically, females are more selective of mates than males, and males must compete to win mates (2). Because of this competition, males are thought to be more aggressive than females. Observation of human children has confirmed that young males tend to be more aggressive than young females (3). In accordance with this pattern, preschool-aged boys are generally more willing to explore than preschool-aged girls, while girls tend to return to their mothers from exploration more frequently than boys (4). For example, if a room was divided by some sort of barrier, with the mothers on one side and the children on the other, the boy children are more likely to try to find a way around the barrier, and the girl children are more likely to stand in the middle of the barrier and cry(4).

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