



4-1-1990

# The Best of Both Worlds

Clyde A. Parker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp>

---

### Recommended Citation

Parker, Clyde A. (1990) "The Best of Both Worlds," *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy*: Vol. 15 : No. 2 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/irp/vol15/iss2/5>

This Article or Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Issues in Religion and Psychotherapy* by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact [scholarsarchive@byu.edu](mailto:scholarsarchive@byu.edu), [ellen\\_amatangelo@byu.edu](mailto:ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu).

---

---

## The Best of Both Worlds

---

---

Clyde A. Parker, PhD  
AMCAP Past President

**T**oday we are to talk about being male and female and about counseling and psychotherapy. After much pondering, I've come to the conclusion that I know four things about the topic. The first is that real men do not eat quiche. The second is that real women do not start wars. I also know that I love quiche. This confuses me because I have always thought that I was a real man. And, the last thing that I know is that Golda Meier, Indira Ghandi, and Margaret Thatcher have in this century all started wars in defense of their own country (Frazier, 1989). Now, not having lived with Golda Meier, or Indira Ghandi, or Margaret Thatcher, I have no way of knowing if they *are* real women. Having spent time in India while Indira Ghandi was the ruling Prime Minister, and being aware that she had two sons, certainly left me with the impression that she was a *real* woman. My reading of the lives of Golda Meier and Margaret Thatcher, leaves me with a similar impression. Thus, I'm confused. Perhaps I don't know what a *real* man or a *real* woman is!

But surely we know what *real* counselors and psychotherapists are! A good beginning is in the first volume of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, published just 35 years ago, where William Farson (1954) declared, "The counselor is a woman."

By and large, in our American Society, the male is expected to be clever, tough, strong, courageous, independent, more concerned with things

than with people, whereas the female should be tender, gentle, loving, dependent, receptive, passive, more concerned with family and interpersonal relationships than with things. If we were to say which of these roles best matches the kind of behavior it is most important to embody as a counselor, we would, no doubt, agree that the female role comes closer. In this sense, the counselor is a woman (p. 222).

Farson (1954) was writing at a time in which our counseling profession was dominated by Rogerian principles. In fact, counseling as a profession was emerging from vocational guidance on the one hand and analytic therapy on the other. In establishing itself, the appeal of Rogerian nondirective counseling was seductive. Counselors were to "follow the client." They were not to lead, but to provide a sense of "being with" the client. The great debates with Frederick Thorne, E. G. Williamson, and later B. F. Skinner, carried a tone of Rogerian ethical and moral superiority. Counselors and therapists who could be empathic, congruent, understanding, were not only highly valued, but purported to provide the "necessary and sufficient conditions" for therapeutic change. As Farson (1954) put it:

As the experienced counselor becomes more competent in dealing with hostility and negative attitudes, he discovers that these are far less threatening and far less important abilities than the ability to accept and express love and deeply positive feelings. As he becomes more able to accept perversity and aberrant behavior, he realizes that some of the most intensely threatening experiences are ones in which the behavior exhibited is very normal and natural. The threat exists because our ability to accept such behavior is so severely limited by our cultural roles (p. 222).

The identity of the counselor as a woman was intensified further through the '60's and '70's as the political push for equality among races, ethnic groups, religious groups, and men and women received national and international support. As part of that, I along with most of you, received very careful tutelage regarding what I did not understand about women. Part of my instruction came from my normal daily living and interchange with my wife, part from my students, part from my colleagues, and much from clients. Though I hardly believe that I know all there

is to know about what I didn't know, I like to think I've learned a great deal about the special needs of women.

When the time came to consider this presentation, I realized that my education was far from complete on the other side. That is, I could hardly speak to what a female therapist needed to know about men! As I do in such situations, I turned to my staff for help. They were as perplexed as I with the question. Their response was nearly unanimous in taking the position that the proper counselor's role is to provide a role model for either male or female clients. But, a good role model of what? If, as Farson says, the counselor is a woman, what modeling is provided for a male?

My next foray into the problem came on the following Sunday when I was asked to teach a Priesthood lesson concerning the proper roles for mothers and fathers in the family. The writer of the manual challenged the readers (all Priesthood bearers) to adopt the characteristics of "Christ-like masculinity." I will have to admit that the phrase itself had a jarring quality about it to me. Think about it—Christ-like masculinity. What does it do to you to hear those words together? When I posed the question, what is Christ-like masculinity, to a good female psychologist friend, the response was immediate, "Why, that's an oxymoron!"

Now, I must admit that she had overstretched my vocabulary, and I had to ask for a definition of an oxymoron. "Those are contradictory terms used to describe the same thing," she said. Then with some emotion she went on to say, "How can you talk about being Christ-like and masculine in the same sentence?" Her point was that Christ's life was a model for both men and women. Not for men alone. The principles which he espoused, lived, and taught, were not principles that applied to men differently than they did to women. They were principles of human behavior that apply to all of us. Thus, to be Christ-like is to be both male and female. Could it be, then, that the role of the counselor or therapist is to be the best of being male and the best of being female?

Twenty years ago, Carkhuff and Berenson (1969) provided a corrective to Farson's article written some 15 years earlier. Integrat-

ing the more active therapies of the 15 years succeeding Farson's paper, they noted:

The evidence suggests that the effective counselor is a man and woman, feminine and masculine, and often in that order. He is mother when that is appropriate, usually for those many counselees who have not experienced sufficient quantities of nurturant responsiveness. He is father when that is appropriate, and that is for those many counselees who have not had adequate models for well-directed, action-oriented life. He is both mother and father for those counselees who have experienced neither—and they, too, are numerous (p. 25).

It is when the counselor is too one-sided (e.g., mostly nurturant or mostly confrontational), that problems of extreme transference are most likely to occur. What counselor has not been in difficulty because his or her nurturant and acceptant listening has been misinterpreted by a needy client who has always wanted such nurturance from his or her significant family member? I believe that such transference is aroused because parents have not incorporated a healthy balance of the male and female.

The male and female metaphors combine to give us a picture of the complete therapist. These metaphors are universal and historical. Together they have great power in understanding the role of the counselor and therapist in today's world.

Now that we have established that the complete counselor is both male and female, we can return to the confusion over what is a real man or a real woman. Margaret Mead (1975) reminds us that there have always been two models of what life may be: "One of them is the model of a world filled with living things that grow without interference as they have grown for a million years" (p. 200). The other is a model of a man-made and man-controlled world. These become epitomized in our characterizations of a woman's role and a man's role with the woman conceiving, nurturing, and bearing children in a natural way, while men learn to domesticate animals, save and plant seeds, and demonstrate their mastery over nature. The passivity of women is captured in Mead's phrase: "When women belonged to a herding people that traveled swiftly, they prayed that their babies would be born at night when there would be time to rest" (p. 200), while the picture of mascu-

linity in America developed around the cowboy with his rugged outdoorsman-like conquering of the west. These two models apply in the arts, religion, our approach to the wilderness, and our characterizations of childbearing. “A poem could be seen as something that grew naturally and effortlessly as a child, or as something that was made, according to rules, as precisely as a man-made tool” (Mead, p. 201).

To some extent, our past required the roles be separated and differentiated. Modern societies resulting from continued understanding and control of the natural processes by both men and women has made it possible to change and alter those traditional roles. These changes have freed both men and women from the traditional burdens of parenthood and made it possible for us to reconstruct those traditional sex roles so that they are no longer as narrow and stifling as they may have been in the past. Male children can be offered a great variety of life,

. . . choices which are not primarily ways of supporting women and children. For females, motherhood, which is usually an existence that is less specialized, more confining, but also more preservative of the whole mystery of life than the male role, need not become the complete preoccupation of a whole lifetime in the creation and care of individual human beings (Mead, p. 202).

Yes, I do enjoy good quiche. Many women currently enjoy roles as leaders in business, industry, and politics. Being male and female in today's world includes making choices that allow each of us to be “clever, tough, strong, courageous, independent, tender, gentle, loving, dependent, receptive, passive,” concerned with both family and things, both ideas and interpersonal relationships, and still enjoy our unique masculinity and femininity.

*Clyde A. Parker, Past President of AMCAP, is with the Center for Counseling, Institute of Behavioral Medicine, Ogden, Utah*

## References

- Carkhuff, Robert R., and Berenson, Bernard G. (1969). The Counselor is a Man and a Woman, *Personnel and guidance journal*, pp. 24–27.
- Farson, William. (1954). The counselor is a woman, *Journal of counseling psychology*, 1 (1954): 221–23.
- Frazier, Antonia. (1988). *The warrior queens*. New York: Knopf, as quoted in *The pan am clipper*, (September 1989).
- Mead, Margaret, and Heyman, Ken. (1975). *World enough: rethinking the future*. Boston: Little, Brown and Co.