GENDER REVERSAL GAME

The following instruction sheet is passed out at the start of our class meeting. After students have had time to read it for themselves, the instructor goes over the exercise and deals with any questions the students might have. The game begins once this has been done.

The Gender Reversal Game
1. On cue, all males in the class become females, all females become males.
2. You are expected to act, talk, interact like a person of the gender you have assumed. This is to include body language, speech manner-isms, interaction patterns, walk--EVERYTHING.
3. For about five minutes there will be a trial period during which you are to practice acting like the opposite sex. For these five minutes you are to help one another get into your new gender roles by coaching, modeling, etc.
4. Everybody is expected to participate. Wall-flowers will be harassed by the instructor.
5. When the five minutes is over, you are to act like a typical member of the opposite sex at a Friday night party. This includes flirting, dancing, doing all the things men and women do at parties around here the way they actually do them.
6. The primary goal of this exercise is to try behaving like a member of the opposite sex as realistically and as completely as possible, to not only act but think and feel like one.
7. Therefore you are to monitor one another's performance. If you spot any student who is not doing a realistic job of acting your own "natural" gender, you are to confront him/her with what is being done incorrectly (e.g., stance, talk, interaction) and she/he gives you 10 credits.
8. A secondary goal of this exercise is to amass credits, so try to catch people blowing their role (or even see if you can trip them up)
9. Assignment: You are to turn in at our next meeting a write-up including a) what it was like for you, b) how you played your role, c) how it felt, how you found yourself reacting, d) any problems you had in taking the opposite gender role, e) what you learned from the experience, and f) anything else worth mentioning.
FACILITATING THE EXERCISE
The objective of this simulation is sensitizing students to what it is like to be the opposite gender. It is particularly valuable when done at the start of learning units on socialization, family or sex differences. Specific learning objectives for this exercise are to facilitate awareness of:
1. The degree to which we internalize gender roles and stereotypes in our socialization experience;
2. The lack of information about the other gender and stereotypical quality of our "knowledge" about the role of the other;
3. The invidious nature of these stereotypes, particularly as manifested in male/female interactions among college students.

Experimentation and student feedback suggest that this learning process can be greatly enhanced by the use of a few simple ploys designed to "set the scene" for the sociodrama. These include playing "party music" on a portable stereo, dimming lights, marking off areas for the men's and ladies's rooms, even defining one's desk as the bar and making available disposable cups or glasses to simulate drinks. It is especially helpful for instructors to facilitate this and other simulations by taking the role of prompter and stage director.

The design was varied the next semester by running the experiment for about 20 minutes and then breaking the class into mixed-sex groups of 5-7 students who read and discussed previously-written anonymous responses (i.e., names removed, papers shuffled before distribution with each page marked as to the gender of the writer) to a review question from our textbook (Cohen 1985, p. 59).

Use your imagination. Take the role of the other, and use Verstehen analysis to write several pages stating as best you can how it feels to be the opposite sex in any three of the following activities:
   a) Discovering one's own body at puberty
   b) Taking a walk on the street in shorts and a light shirt (blouse) on a hot summer day
   c) At the pool in a bathing suit
   d) Nude, on a nude beach
   e) Asking for a date.
   f) Refusing a date