

A Retrospective Study of Childhood Gender-Atypical Behavior in Samoan *Fa'afafine*

Nancy H. Bartlett · Paul L. Vasey

Received: 14 July 2005 / Revised: 4 April 2006 / Accepted: 4 April 2006 / Published online: 15 August 2006
© Springer Science+Business Media, Inc. 2006

Abstract Retrospective studies, mostly conducted in Western cultures, indicate that childhood cross-gender behaviors are strongly predictive of androphilia in adult men. To test the cross-cultural validity of these findings, we conducted a study of *fa'afafine* in Independent Samoa. *Fa'afafine* are a heterogeneous group of androphilic males, some of whom are unremarkably masculine, but most of whom behave in a feminine manner in adulthood. A total of 53 *fa'afafine*, 27 control men, and 24 control women participated. Participants were asked how often they engaged in female- and male-typical behaviors in childhood. Results demonstrated that *fa'afafine* and women recalled engaging in significantly more female-typical behaviors and significantly fewer male-typical behaviors in childhood compared to the men. *Fa'afafine's* recalled female-typical and male-typical behaviors did not differ significantly from those of women. These results suggest that the relationship in males between gender-atypical behavior in childhood and adult androphilia is not unique to Western societies and may be a cross-culturally universal pattern of psychosexual development shared by most males who are predominantly androphilic.

Keywords Childhood gender non-conformity · Independent Samoa · Androphilia

Introduction

Considerable research has examined the association between gender-atypical behaviors in childhood and androphilia¹ in adult males (e.g., for reviews, see Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Zucker et al., in press). In a comprehensive meta-analytic review, Bailey and Zucker (1995) reported that data from prospective and retrospective studies provided strong evidence that androphilic males display significantly more gender-atypical behavior in childhood than do gynephilic males. Despite the strength of this relationship, these findings remain controversial (e.g., Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 2000; Gottschalk, 2003; Hegarty, 1999; Zucker, 2005; for a review of the controversy, see Zucker et al., in press).

A major criticism of this research is that the vast majority of empirical work on this topic has been conducted in Western, industrialized countries. Only a handful of studies have quantitatively assessed the relationship between childhood gender variance and androphilia in adult males outside of North America. Researchers have examined the relationship between childhood cross-gender behavior and male sexual orientation in two Latin American countries, Guatemala and Brazil, and one south-east Asian country, the Philippines, using a series of dichotomous (yes/no) questions (Whitam, 1980; Whitam & Mathy, 1986; Whitam & Zent, 1984). Compared to self-identified heterosexuals, self-identified male androphiles in all three cultures recalled significantly greater childhood interest in: (1) girls' toys, games, and activities and (2) cross-dressing in women's clothes, accessories, and make-up. Cardoso (2005) reported data on childhood

N. H. Bartlett (✉)
Department of Psychology, Mount Saint Vincent University,
166 Bedford Hwy, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3M 2J6, Canada
e-mail: nancy.bartlett@msvu.ca

P. L. Vasey
Department of Psychology and Neuroscience,
University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

¹ *Androphilia* refers to sexual attraction to males whereas *gynephilia* refers to sexual attraction to females. Because the terms *homosexual* and *heterosexual* do not carry the same meaning in Samoa as they do in the West, these terms are not employed here.

gender-atypical behaviors in self-identified androphilic males (*paneiros*) in a Brazilian fishing village. In an open question, *paneiros* named a female-typical play activity as their favorite significantly more than did other males. Moreover, *paneiros* said that they preferred to play with girls significantly more than did other males.

Western concepts of gender and sexual orientation do not translate easily, if at all, into a Samoan context. In Independent Samoa, biological males who manifest gender-atypical behavior are referred to as *fa'afafine* (pronounced *fa-a-fa-fee-nay*). Translated literally, this means “in the manner of a woman.” However, based on our own field observations, we have found that *fa'afafine* are a heterogeneous group in many ways. Most self-identify as *fa'afafine*, not as men. Some self-identify as women even though they recognize that they differ physically and socially from biological women. In appearance and mannerisms, although most would be considered feminine, they range from remarkably feminine to unremarkably masculine. For example, some *fa'afafine* adopt feminine modes of gender presentation to the point where they could “pass” as women in public; they wear make-up, jewelry, and women’s clothing, adopt feminine hairstyles, speak with a feminine voice, and move in a feminine manner. Some adopt only certain elements of feminine gender role presentation, such as wearing nail polish or talking in a feminine manner. Some engage in feminine modes of gender presentation on a daily basis whereas some do so only intermittently. Although *fa'afafine* means “in the manner of a woman,” a small proportion of *fa'afafine* make no attempt to appear feminine as adults. Nonetheless, members of this latter group self-identify and are identified publicly by others as *fa'afafine*. They socialize preferentially with other *fa'afafine* and they may also prefer to engage in female-typical activities (e.g., jobs and hobbies), while avoiding certain male-typical activities. Despite this heterogeneity, *fa'afafine* are attracted to, and engage in sexual relations with, masculine (“straight”) men, with very few exceptions.

In a Samoan context, “straight” men are those who self-identify as men and are masculine in terms of their gender role presentation. Inclusion in this category is not contingent on exclusive gynephilia. Most “straight” men are gynephilic, but some may be androphilic to some extent, engaging in sexual activity with *fa'afafine* or other “straight” men on a temporary or exclusive basis, particularly if preferred female sexual partners are unavailable. In Independent Samoa, the category “gay” is not one which androphilic males draw upon to construct their identities. In fact, the overwhelming majority of the *fa'afafine* participants in this study were quite adamant in their assertion that Samoan “gays” do not exist.

Qualitative evidence suggests that *fa'afafine* are usually identified in childhood based on their tendency to behave in a gender-atypical manner (Besnier, 1993; Mageo, 1992; Poasa,

1992). As such, Samoans seem to equate a male’s early propensity for female-typical behavior with a *fa'afafine* gender identity, but this supposition awaits empirical confirmation. It is noteworthy that Samoans do not necessarily equate an early propensity for female-typical behavior in males with adult androphilia (Schmidt, 2003). This likely reflects the fact that inclusion in the category *fa'afafine* is typically contingent on feminine gender role expression rather than sexuality (Poasa, 1992; Schmidt, 2003; Shore, 1981). Although the vast majority of *fa'afafine* are androphilic in adulthood, this pattern of attraction is viewed as an optional consequence of being a *fa'afafine*, rather than as a defining criterion for inclusion in this category (Besnier, 1993). As such, Samoans seem to conceptualize the relationship between childhood gender non-conformity and adult androphilia in males differently than Westerners.

In this study, we hypothesized that *fa'afafine* would recall engaging in more female-typical and less male-typical behavior in childhood than would men, and that their recollections of such behaviors would be similar to those of women. In contrast to previous cross-cultural research on this topic, we assessed recalled female-typical and male-typical behaviors using multi-item scales designed to evaluate a variety of such behaviors. Moreover, in contrast to previous research, we compared the childhood recollections of gender-typical behaviors in androphilic males not just to those of men, but also to those of women.

There is disagreement in the literature concerning whether common or distinct underlying causal mechanisms characterize androphilic males in different cultures (Johnson, Jackson, & Herdt, 2000). If childhood cross-gender behavior is an inherent antecedent of male androphilia, then this relationship should operate similarly in different societies. As such, the research outlined here may help establish whether the link between childhood gender variance and adult androphilia is a cross-cultural universal. In doing so, it may help elucidate a common pattern of psychosexual development among androphilic males.

Method

Participants

All participants were recruited through a network sampling procedure. A network sampling procedure involves contacting initial participants who display qualities of interest (i.e., status as *fa'afafine*, men or women), then obtaining referrals from them to additional participants who, in turn, provide further referrals, and so on. The rate of participation for all groups was greater than 90%. Participants were 53 self-identified *fa'afafine* (M age = 31.4 years, $SD = 7.7$), 27 control men (M age = 26.1 years, $SD = 6.8$ years), and 24

control women (M age = 30.1 years, SD = 10.4 years). All participants had some high school education. In total, 33% of participants had obtained university level education (30% of *fa'afafine*, 36% of men, and 40% of women).

Kinsey ratings (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) of sexual feelings over the previous year were obtained for 49 *fa'afafine*, 46 (94%) of whom described their sexual feelings as exclusively androphilic (Kinsey rating = 6). Two reported most sexual feelings toward males but some definite feelings toward females (Kinsey rating = 4), and one reported most sexual feelings toward males but an occasional fantasy about a female (Kinsey rating = 5). Of the 17 men for whom Kinsey ratings were obtained, 15 (88%) described their sexual feelings as exclusively gynephilic (Kinsey rating = 0). One reported most sexual feelings toward females but some definite feelings toward *fa'afafine* (Kinsey rating = 2), and one reported most sexual feelings toward females but an occasional fantasy about a *fa'afafine* (Kinsey rating = 1). All 13 women for whom Kinsey ratings were obtained reported sexual feelings over the previous year as exclusively androphilic (Kinsey rating = 0). Kinsey ratings were not obtained for all participants, because this measure was not employed during our initial field work in 2003. We used this initial field trip, in part, to determine the cultural appropriateness of questioning participants about their sexual feelings. However, all of the men and women in our study, including those who participated in the initial phase, self-identified as “straight.” There were no statistically significant differences between Kinsey-assessed versus Kinsey non-assessed men for mean childhood female-typical or male-typical behaviors. Similarly, there were no statistically significant differences between Kinsey-assessed versus Kinsey non-assessed women for mean childhood female-typical or male-typical behaviors.

Procedure and measures

Data were collected during during two field trips: one in 2003 and the other in 2004. Participants were interviewed regarding their recalled female-typical and male-typical behaviors using a standardized questionnaire. A Samoan-speaking research assistant was present for those interviews for which the participant(s) indicated that they preferred to do the interview in Samoan or for those participants who were deemed by the researchers to be insufficiently fluent in English. Questions were read aloud in English by one of the researchers and in Samoan by a research assistant when he or she was present. The interview questionnaire used in this study was available in written form in English and Samoan, after being translated and back-translated by two fluent Samoan-English speakers.

The Female-Typical Behavior and Male-Typical Behavior Subscales of the Childhood Gender Identity Scale (CGIS)

were used to assess the extent to which participants recalled engaging in female- and male-typical behaviors in childhood. The CGIS is a semi-structured self-report questionnaire/interview that was developed by the authors for use in this research. It was designed to assess retrospectively various indicators of childhood gender-atypicality. This measure was adapted from the parent-report Gender Identity Questionnaire for Children (Johnson et al., 2004), a parent-report measure used to assess symptoms of Gender Identity Disorder in children. An item pertaining to chores was also included in each subscale. Qualitative research indicates that, in Samoan culture, preference for particular sex-typed chores serves as an important indicator used to classify children as boys, girls or *fa'afafine* (Besnier, 1993; Poasa, 1992).

Participants were asked how often they engaged in the following six female-typical behaviors in childhood: (1) playing with girls; (2) playing with girls' toys and girls' games; (3) taking the female role in pretend play such as when playing house or when imitating female characters; (4) putting on make-up, girls' accessories or girls' clothes; (5) talking and acting like a girl; and (6) doing girls' chores. Participants were also asked how often they engaged in the following five male-typical behaviors in childhood: (1) playing with boys; (2) playing with boys' toys and boys' games; (3) taking the male role in pretend play such as when playing house or when imitating male characters; (4) playing rough games and sports; and (5) doing boys' chores. Participants were told that they were to answer the questions based on how they acted in childhood, before puberty. Responses were based on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = never, 2 = less than half the time, 3 = half the time, 4 = more than half the time, 5 = always/every time). Analyses conducted on the Female-Typical Behavior and Male-Typical Behavior subscales of this instrument indicated that they were highly reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .90 and .87, respectively). In all post-hoc analyses, Cohen's d 's were calculated using the formula $d = (M_1 - M_2) / s_{pooled}$ (Cohen, 1988; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996).

Results

Results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that there was a significant age difference among the three groups, $F(2, 97) = 4.14, p < .05$. A Tukey B post-hoc test ($p < .05$) indicated a significant difference in age between *fa'afafine* and men. Next, analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were performed for both the total Female-Typical and Male-Typical Behavior subscale scores with group membership as a factor and age as a covariate. The analyses demonstrated that age was not a significant factor; therefore, it was not included as a covariate in subsequent analyses.

Recalled female-typical behavior in *fa'afafine*, men, and women

To assess differences in recalled childhood female-typical behaviors in *fa'afafine*, men and women, a one-way ANOVA was conducted on the Female-Typical Behavior (FTB) subscale scores for these groups. The FTB subscale score was calculated by taking the mean of the six specific recalled childhood female-typical behaviors. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in mean recalled childhood female-typical behavior between groups, $F(2, 101) = 126.75, p < .001$. A post-hoc Tukey B test ($p < .05$) indicated that the *fa'afafine* and the women recalled significantly more female-typical behavior in childhood than did the men (Cohen's $d = 4.17$ and 4.18 , respectively). Means for the specific recalled childhood female-typical behaviors as well as the FTB subscale scores for *fa'afafine*, men, and women are shown in Fig. 1.

Recalled male-typical behaviors in *fa'afafine*, men, and women

To assess differences in recalled childhood female-typical behaviors in *fa'afafine*, men and women, a one-way ANOVA

was conducted on the Male-Typical Behavior (MTB) subscale scores for these groups. The MTB Subscale score was calculated by taking the mean of the five specific recalled childhood male-typical behaviors. Results indicated that there was a significant difference in mean recalled childhood male-typical behavior between groups, $F(2, 101) = 92.73, p < .001$. A post-hoc Tukey B test ($p < .05$) indicated that the *fa'afafine* and the women recalled significantly less male-typical behavior in childhood than did the men (Cohen's $d = -3.60$ and -3.43 , respectively). Means for the specific recalled childhood male-typical behaviors as well as the MTB subscale scores for *fa'afafine*, men and women are shown in Fig. 2.

Discussion

The findings of this cross-cultural study of recalled childhood gender-atypicality in Samoan *fa'afafine* were consistent with previous empirical research that has examined the relationship between childhood gender variance and adult androphilia in males (Cardoso, 2005; Whitam, 1980; Whitam & Mathy, 1986; Whitam & Zent, 1984; for reviews, see Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Zucker et al., in press). Adult

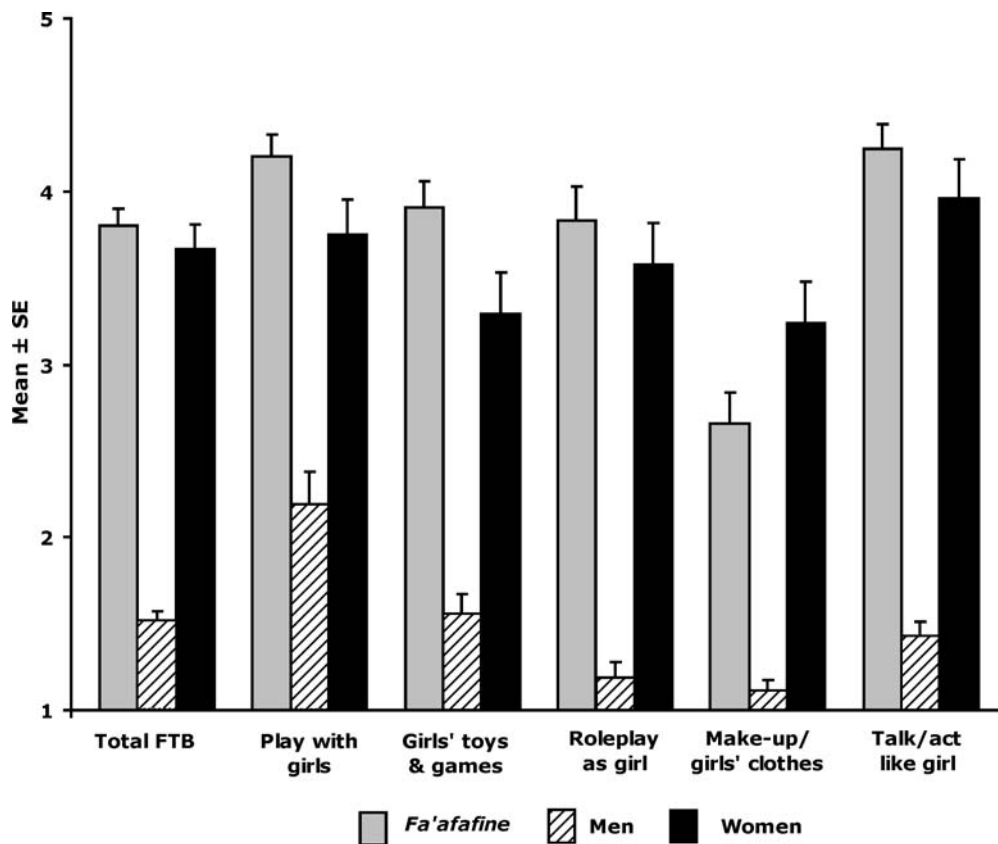


Fig. 1. Mean ± SE for Total Female-Typical Behavior (FTB) Subscale score and specific female-typical behaviors for *fa'afafine* (grey columns), men (striped columns), and women (black columns)

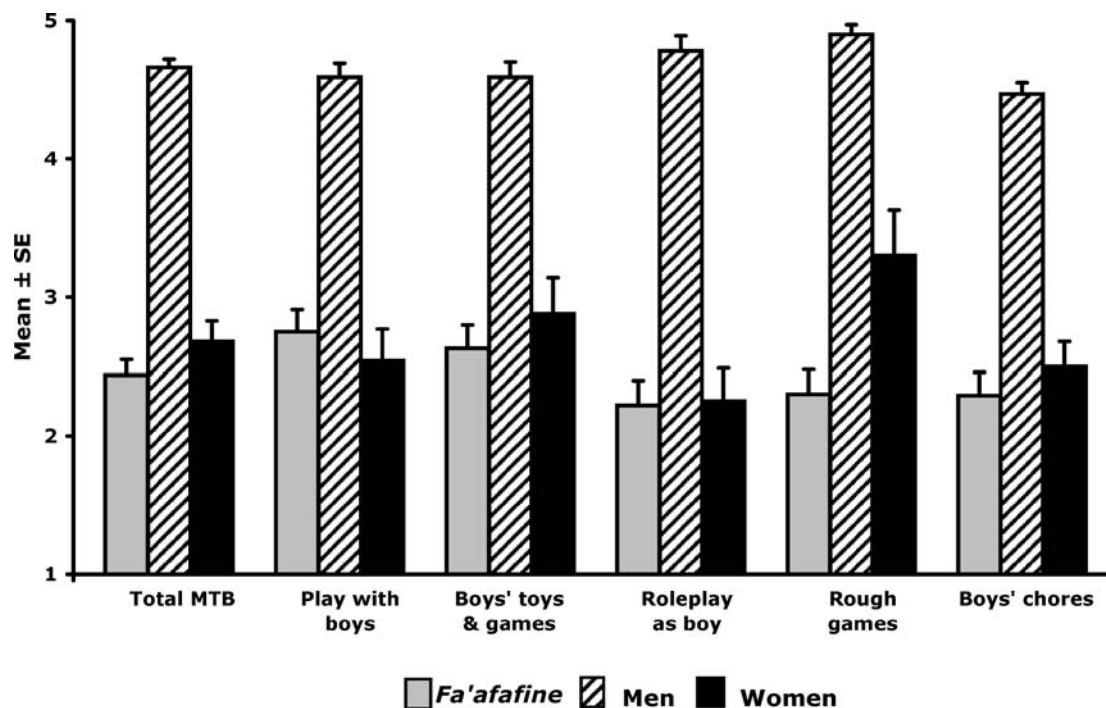


Fig. 2. Mean \pm SE for Total Male-Typical Behavior (MTB) Subscale score and specific male-typical behaviors for *fa'afafine* (grey columns), men (striped columns), and women (black columns)

fa'afafine recalled engaging in significantly more female-typical and less male-typical behavior in childhood compared to men. Their recollections of such childhood behaviors were not statistically different from that of women.

The questions posed in this study focused on the extent to which participants recalled engaging in certain childhood behaviors. These quantitative data were enriched by the comments that were made to us by *fa'afafine* individuals during interviews. Such qualitative data underscore the *fa'afafine*'s indifference, or often, their intense aversion, towards male-typical activities as well as their marked enjoyment of female-typical activities. For example, one *fa'afafine* participant remarked, when asked about playing with boys and engaging in boys' activities in childhood, "I wasn't interested in playing with boys...only if there were no girls around, and then only for a short period of time. It was better to play with girls' toys than to go roaming around the village with the boys." Another commented:

I didn't really like to be with the boys...I wanted to be with the girls, play with the girls' toys...and also some *fa'afafine* friends too, so we wanted to get together and do a play, like for example I'll be the mother, and the girls—the real girls—they were going to be the daughter, and if they asked me to take the father side [the father's role], I didn't like it, it didn't suit me.

With respect to engaging in rough games such as rugby, numerous *fa'afafine* participants recounted memories such

as this one:

Interviewer [following up on participant's comments regarding aversion toward rough games]: Were you afraid of getting hurt, if you were playing the rough boy games? Is that one reason that you didn't like it?

Fa'afafine participant: Yeah, that's another thing, yeah, because if I was gonna play with the boys, especially rugby, then they were going to come right up to me and then they were gonna push me very hard. So that made me very hurt, because I knew that my body is sensitive to something like that, because I knew that inside of me it's, you know, a girl's side, so that's why if a boy tried to push me and then, you know, I just didn't feel like it, and then I walked away from them.

With respect to preferred childhood play activities, another *fa'afafine* remarked: "With cars, it's just zoom...it's no use. I loved playing with dolls. When my sister had a Barbie with long hair, it was like a diamond for me."

It is noteworthy that these preferences persisted despite the fact that many *fa'afafine* recalled that they were expected to adhere to culturally-prescribed gender roles for boys. For example, one *fa'afafine*, when asked about playing rough games in childhood, remarked:

They forced me to be on the rugby team. They want me to act "straight" and be on the team. They were too rough and I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I was

just not interested, and I didn't want any part. I wasn't muscular and strong like the "straight" kids, and I hated bumping into somebody with a big body.

Another recalled being encouraged to carry out "boys" chores: "If they [adult family members] saw me picking up garbage [i.e., removing debris such as palm fronds, coconut shells, and banana leaves from the lawn—a "girls" chore]...they would try to stop me. They scolded me and urged me to do boys' jobs." Given these sorts of gender role expectations imposed on some *fa'afafine* children, it is striking that the differences between the actual recalled behaviors of *fa'afafine* and men, and the similarities between *fa'afafine* and women, were so strong.

We hasten to add, however, that some *fa'afafine* children were encouraged to behave in a manner that many Western observers would characterize as gender-atypical. The following interview exemplifies this point:

Fa'afafine participant: I normally took showers with the girls in the afternoons, after P.E. [physical education] classes or when it was quite hot in the afternoon.

Interviewer: And did the girls get upset if you took showers with them?

Fa'afafine participant: No.

Interviewer: What did the boys do if you went in their shower?

Fa'afafine participant: The boys would just kick me out of their bathroom. "What are you doing here? Get out!"

Interviewer: So, you were more comfortable in the girls' shower?

Fa'afafine participant: I was more comfortable with the girls in the girls' bathroom.

Interviewer: And what did the teachers say when they knew you were taking showers with the girls?

Fa'afafine participant: Nothing said at all about it, nothing at all.

Interviewer: Did they prefer you do that?

Fa'afafine participant: They didn't say it out loud...saying anything to me about it, so I took it for granted that they actually were for the idea of accepting me having a shower in the girls' bathroom.

In a similar vein, another *fa'afafine* participant commented:

Fa'afafine participant: Yeah, I knew when I grew up I was going to be a *fa'afafine*, because I always wore girls' clothes, and girls' shoes.

Interviewer: From the very beginning?

Fa'afafine participant: Yeah.

Interviewer: At what age?

Fa'afafine participant: When I was four years old.

Interviewer: And did you just start doing it on your own or did your mother...?

Fa'afafine participant: Yeah, my mother sewed me some clothes, some girls' clothes and put it on me.

Interviewer: And did you ask your mother to sew them, or did she just sew them for you?

Fa'afafine participant: She just sewed it for me.

Interviewer: Because she knew you were going to be a *fa'afafine*?

Fa'afafine participant: Yeah.

These examples highlight the complex and variable responses of Samoans towards pre-adolescent *fa'afafine* and underscore the experiential heterogeneity that characterizes these children. The fact that such heterogeneity exists in the recollected childhood experiences of our participants is significant in that it may further our understanding of the etiology of gender-atypicality in males.

The reason that male children develop gender variant behavior in childhood remains the object of debate (Bailey & Zucker, 1995). One psychosocial hypothesis holds that parental acceptance of cross-gender activities facilitates the expression of such behavior in children (reviewed in Zucker & Bradley, 1995). In support of this idea, Green (1987) and Roberts, Green, Williams, and Goodman (1987) have reported that the parents of boys with Gender Identity Disorder (GID) in the United States were unusually tolerant toward such behavior when it first emerged. Similarly, Mitchell (1991) showed that mothers of boys with GID in Canada were more encouraging of the boys' feminine behaviors, and less encouraging of their masculine behaviors, than mothers of boys in two control populations.

Although our preliminary data suggest that some Samoan parents were remarkably accepting of gender variant behavior in *fa'afafine* children, many parents were equally condemning, in attempts to curb their son's gender variant behavior (Bartlett & Vasey, 2004). This variability in parental reaction suggests that parental socialization is an unlikely explanation as to why *fa'afafine*, as a group, exhibit gender variant behavior in childhood. On a similar note, there is a widespread notion, in both the scientific and popular literature, that some Samoan parents decide that a male infant will be a *fa'afafine* when there is an insufficient number of girls in the family to carry out the traditionally female chores (e.g., Bennett, Talbot, & Swaney, 2003; Mageo, 1992; see

also Schoeffel, 1979). By contrast, none of the *fa'afafine* we interviewed suggested such an etiology, calling into question the long held notion that *fa'afafine* are socially created based on the need to fulfill particular labor practices within the family.

The research presented here has some advantages over previous cross-cultural work with respect to the methodology employed. Other researchers who have examined the association between childhood gender-atypicality and adult male androphilia cross-culturally have employed scales that assess only two or three cross-sex behaviors (i.e., cross-dressing, cross-gender play/activities, preference for other-sex playmates) and have used either a dichotomous scale or nominations of favorite activities (Cardoso, 2005; Whitam, 1980; Whitam & Mathy, 1986; Whitam & Zent, 1984). Recognizing and respecting the challenges associated with conducting cross-cultural fieldwork, these studies have certain methodological limitations despite the value of their findings. In their meta-analytical review of research examining the association between childhood gender-atypical behavior and adult sexual orientation, Bailey and Zucker (1995) recommend the use of multi-item scales to increase reliability. For this study, we addressed this recommendation by developing and employing reliable continuous rating scales of both male-typical and female-typical childhood behaviors that included at least five items each.

Another methodological advantage of the present study, relative to previous cross-cultural work on this topic, involves how sexual orientation was measured. Previous research has assessed sexual orientation on the basis of an individual's declared sexual orientation identity, that is, the sexual orientation that an individual feels himself or herself to be (Cardoso, 2005; Whitam, 1980; Whitam & Mathy, 1986; Whitam & Zent, 1984). However, sexual orientation identity is not necessarily concordant with an individual's sexual feelings and, as such, it is not necessarily an accurate measure of androphilic or gynephilic attraction in adulthood. For example, Cardoso (2005) described a group of masculine males in a Brazilian fishing village who self-identified as heterosexual, but actually preferred feminine males (*paneleiros*), over women, as sexual partners. Moreover, Western categories of sexual and gender identities are not necessarily relevant or even recognized in non-Western cultures, rendering cross-cultural comparisons of such identities problematic (e.g., Mageo, 1996; Nanda, 2000; Shore, 1981). As mentioned above, the category "gay" is not one which androphilic males in Samoa employ to construct their identities. In contrast, androphilic and gynephilic *feelings* are cross-cultural universals, facilitating their comparisons between cultures. When feasible, the present study assessed sexual orientation on the basis of the participants' sexual feelings, in addition to their sexual orientation identity. We believe sexual feelings represent a more precise and cross-

culturally valid measure of sexual attraction than does sexual orientation identity.

Most studies that have examined the childhood experiences of androphilic males employ a comparison group of gynephilic males. In this study, the participants were biological males whose gender identity was feminine, raising the question of who is an appropriate comparison group—men, who are of the same biological sex or women who share the same gender identity? The results of this research draw attention to the importance of understanding not only how the childhood experiences of androphilic males differ from those of gynephilic males, but also how similar (or different) their experiences are to those of women. The finding that the *fa'afafine*'s recall of childhood female-typical behavior was similar to that of women points to the desirability of including women as a comparison group in studies of feminine males. Future studies should compare feminine males not only with men, but also with women, to further examine the differences and similarities based on gender identity as well as biological sex.

Despite the methodological improvements that characterize this study, retrospective studies of cross-gender behavior in childhood have been criticized as flawed because, the critics argue, participants are prone to memory distortion or selective recall (e.g., Cohler & Galatzer-Levy, 2000; Gottschalk, 2003; Hegarty, 1999; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Risman & Schwartz, 1988; Ross, 1980). Some critics might suggest that the more feminine *fa'afafine* in our study had heightened recall of their cross-gender behaviors in childhood in order to have a consistent personal narrative in which there is a logical progression from a feminine childhood to a feminine adulthood. Although these sorts of concerns seem plausible, it is important to note that no empirical evidence has been advanced in support of the memory distortion or selective recall hypotheses (for review, see Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Zucker et al., in press).

In conclusion, these retrospective data from a Polynesian society lend further support to the conclusion first proposed by Whitam (1980; Whitam & Mathy, 1986; Whitam & Zent, 1984) that the link between childhood gender variance and androphilia in adulthood is indicative of a universal pattern of psychosexual development shared by most males who are predominantly androphilic, regardless of their cultural milieu. Results of this study are remarkably consistent with data collected in North American, Asian, Australian, Central American and South American societies (Cardoso, 2005; for reviews, see Bailey & Zucker, 1995; Zucker et al., in press). As Whitam (1980) has pointed out, gender variant behaviors in childhood should be regarded as normal events in the life cycle of many androphilic males. With respect to future directions for research, despite the strong evidence of a genuine link between childhood gender-atypical behaviors and adult male androphilia reported by Bailey and Zucker

(1995), and supported by the retrospective findings presented here, a longitudinal prospective study which follows young *fa'afafine* into adulthood would be illuminating.

Acknowledgements We thank Isaako Mailei, Alatina Ioelu, Palentina Toelupe, Emily Case, Diane Leblanc, Laura Fraser, and Jeannette Mageo. We also thank the Editor and three anonymous reviewers for their comments that improved the final version of this paper. This research was supported by grants to N.H.B. from Mount Saint Vincent University and to P.L.V. from the University of Lethbridge, and from a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) of Canada Discovery Grant.

References

- Bailey, J. M., & Zucker, K. J. (1995). Childhood sex-typed behavior and sexual orientation: A conceptual analysis and quantitative review. *Developmental Psychology, 31*, 43–55.
- Bartlett, N. H., & Vasey, P. L. (2004, June). *Does your mother know? Parental reactions to childhood cross-gender behaviors in Samoan fa'afafine*. Poster presented at the meeting of the International Academy of Sex Research, Helsinki, Finland.
- Bennett, M., Talbot, D., & Swaney, D. (2003). *Samoan islands*. Melbourne: Lonely Planet Publications.
- Besnier, N. (1993). Polynesian gender liminality. In G. Herdt (Ed.), *Third sex, third gender* (pp. 285–328). New York: Zone Books.
- Cardoso, F. L. (2005). Cultural universals and differences in male homosexuality: The case of a Brazilian fishing village. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 34*, 103–109.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Cohler, B. J., & Galatzer-Levy, R. M. (2000). *The course of gay and lesbian lives: Social and psychoanalytical perspectives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gottschalk, L. (2003). Same-sex sexuality and childhood gender non-conformity: A spurious connection. *Journal of Gender Studies, 11*, 35–50.
- Green, R. (1987). *The "sissy boy syndrome" and the development of homosexuality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hegarty, P. (1999). *Recalling childhood, constructing identity: Norms and stereotypes in theories of sexual orientation*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stanford University.
- Kinsey, A. C., Pomeroy, W. B., & Martin, C. E. (1948). *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders.
- Kite, M. E., & Deaux, K. (1987). Gender belief systems: Homosexuality and the implicit inversion theory. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 11*, 83–96.
- Johnson, L. L., Bradley, S. J., Birkenfeld-Adams, A. S., Radzins Kuksis, M. A., Maing, D. M., Mitchell, J. N., & Zucker, K. J. (2004). A parent-report Gender Identity Questionnaire for Children. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 33*, 105–116.
- Johnson, M., Jackson, P., & Herdt, G. (2000). Critical regionalities and the study of gender and sexual diversity in South East and East Asia. *Culture, Health, and Sexuality, 2*, 361–375.
- Mageo, J. M. (1992). Male transvestism and cultural change in Samoa. *American Ethnologist, 19*, 443–459.
- Mageo, J. M. (1996). Samoa, on the Wilde side: Male transvestism, Oscar Wilde, and liminality in making gender. *Ethos, 24*, 588–627.
- Mitchell, J. N. (1991). *Maternal influences on gender identity disorder in boys: Searching for specificity*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, York University, Downsview, Ontario.
- Nanda, S. (2000). *Gender diversity: Cross-cultural variations*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland.
- Poasa, K. (1992). The Samoan *fa'afafine*: One case study and a discussion of transsexualism. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality, 5*(3), 39–51.
- Risman, B., & Schwartz, P. (1988). Sociological research on male and female homosexuality. *Annual Review of Sociology, 14*, 125–147.
- Roberts, C. W., Green, R., Williams, K., & Goodman, M. (1987). Boyhood gender identity development: A statistical contrast of two family groups. *Developmental Psychology, 23*, 544–557.
- Rosnow, R. L., & Rosenthal, R. (1996). Computing contrasts, effect sizes, and counterfactuals on other people's published data: General procedures for research consumers. *Psychological Methods, 1*, 331–340.
- Ross, M. W. (1980). Retrospective distortion in homosexual research. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 9*, 523–531.
- Schmidt, J. (2003). Paradise lost? Social change and *fa'afafine* in Samoa. *Current Sociology, 51*, 417–432.
- Schoeffel, P. (1979). *Daughters of Sina: A study of gender, status and power in Western Samoa*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Australian National University.
- Shore, B. (1981). Sexuality and gender in Samoa: Conceptions and missed conceptions in sexual meaning. In S. B. Ortner & H. Whitehead (Eds.), *The cultural construction of gender and sexuality* (pp. 192–215). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Whitam, F. L. (1980). The prehomosexual male child in three societies: The United States, Guatemala, Brazil. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 9*, 87–99.
- Whitam, F. L., & Mathy, R. M. (1986). *Male homosexuality in four societies: Brazil, Guatemala, the Philippines, and the United States*. New York: Praeger.
- Whitam, F. L., & Zent, M. (1984). A cross-cultural assessment of early cross-gender behavior and familial factors in male homosexuality. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 13*, 427–439.
- Zucker, K. J. (2005). Commentary on Gottschalk's (2003) 'Same-sex sexuality and childhood gender non-conformity: A spurious connection.' *Journal of Gender Studies, 14*, 55–60.
- Zucker, K. J., & Bradley, S. J. (1995). *Gender identity disorder and psychosexual problems in children and adolescents*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Zucker, K. J., Mitchell, J. N., Bradley, S. J., Tkachuk, J., Cantor, J. M., & Allin, S. M. (in press). The Recalled Childhood Gender Identity/Gender Role questionnaire: Psychometric properties. *Sex Roles*.