Chapter 12: Gender and Sexuality

Objective's for Today's Class:
The difference between sex and gender
Influences on gender
Gender roles and stereotypes

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY GENDER?

**Sex:** Designates the biological aspects of being female or male

**Gender:** The psychological and sociocultural characteristics of being male or female

- **Gender Role**
  - A set of expectations that prescribe how females and males should act, think and feel

- **Gender Typing**
  - The process by which children acquire the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are considered appropriate for their gender in their culture
Biological Influences on Gender

- Research suggests that biological factors, especially early hormonal production, play an important role in gender development.

  - **Estrogens** primarily influence the development of female physical sex characteristics.

  - **Androgens** primarily promote the development of male genitals and secondary sex characteristics.

According to social scientists, psychological sex differences are caused by contrasting roles in society.

Social Influences on Gender

- **Social role theory** (Eagly): Gender differences result from the contrasting social roles of men and women.

  - Women have adapted to their roles with less power and less status than men and control fewer resources.
Social Influences

- Psychoanalytic theory of gender (Freud) theorized that children develop a sexual attraction to the parent of the opposite sex.
  - The child renounces this attraction because of anxious feelings and identifies with the same-sex parent.

- Social cognitive theory of gender (Bandura) proposes that children's gender development proceeds through observation and imitation.
  - Also through the rewards and punishments that children receive for gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behavior.
    - Jen, you are a good girl when you help me do the dishes.
    - Bobby, you are a big boy. Big boys don't cry.

Cognitive Influences on Gender

- According to cognitive psychologists, children actively construct their gender world:
  - Cognitive developmental theory of gender (Kohlberg) believes children's gender typing occurs after they have developed a concept of gender.
    - Once they consistently conceive of themselves as female or male children prefer activities, attitudes, etc that are consistent with this label
Cognitive Influences on Gender

• Gender schema theory states that an individual's attention and behaviors are guided by an internal motivation to conform to their developing schemas.
  
  - This theory proposes that gender typing will begin when children are able to encode and organize information according to what is considered to be appropriate for each sex.
  
  - When they have formed gender schemas.

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Group Work!

• What characteristics describe female or male?
  
  - What does it mean to be feminine?
  
  - What does it mean to be masculine?
  
  - Does it depend on the ethnic background of the male or female?

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Gender Roles and Stereotypes

• Gender roles:
  
  - Sets of expectations that prescribe how females and males should act, think and feel.

• Gender stereotypes:
  
  - Broad categories that reflect our impressions and beliefs about females and males.
Gender Traits

- **Instrumental Traits (Roles):**
  - Traits associated with males, they describe individuals who act on the world and influence it. (Aggressive and independent)
  - As a traditional husband and father, a male would face the task of providing for the family and protecting it from harm. Thus, young boys are expected to become dominant, assertive, independent, and competitive

- **Expressive Traits (Roles):**
  - Traits associated with females, they describe emotional functioning and individuals who value interpersonal relationships. (Warm and sensitive)

Gender Roles in Childhood

- In childhood, children learn quickly about gender roles, and boys receive earlier and more intense gender socialization than girls.

- The social cost of deviating from the social norm is **HIGHER** for males than females:
  - Effeminate behavior in boys \(\rightarrow\) more negative reaction than masculine behavior in girls
  - Peer rejection and parental disapproval

Gender Stereotyping in Childhood

- By kindergarten, children understand gender stereotypes and use this information to guide behavior

- Their understanding grows throughout the elementary school years

- They begin to understand that gender stereotypes do not always apply
Gender Roles in Adolescence

- Psychological and behavioral differences between boys and girls become greater during early adolescence because of increased socialization pressures to conform to traditional masculine and feminine gender roles

  - *Gender-intensification hypothesis*

Gender Stereotypes in Adolescence

- In early adolescence, gender stereotyping might increase again

- By late adolescence, gender attitudes become more flexible

Gender Roles in Adulthood

- Gender roles change during the adult years

  - *Parental imperative:*
    - Mothers and fathers adopt different gender roles so they can raise children more effectively
Is There Any Truth to Gender Stereotypes?

Cognitive Differences

• Some research suggests that males are better at math and visuospatial skills while females are better at verbal skills

• National study by the US Department of Education (2000) found:
  - Boys slightly better at math and science
  - Girls better at reading and writing

Socioemotional Differences

• Aggression:
  - Males are more physically aggressive in all cultures
  - Females are more verbally aggressive
    - Females are more likely to engage in relational aggression
Socioemotional Differences

- **Emotional Regulation**
  - Girls are better able at expressing their emotions and interpreting others’ emotions
  - Boys show less self-regulation than girls
  - Girls are more willing to admit to feelings, but boys and girls are equally able to feel what others are feeling

Communication Differences

- **Rapport Talk**
  - The language of conversation and a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships
  - More characteristic of females than of males

- **Report Talk**
  - Talk that conveys information such as public speaking
  - More characteristic of males than of females

Are These Gender Differences Real?

- Meta-analysis done by Janet Shibley Hyde found that gender differences were nonexistent or small
  - Largest differences ➔ motor skills, sexuality, and physical aggression
Next Class

• Exploring Sexuality...
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Developing a Sexual Identity