Sociocultural Diversity

Gender

- Exploring Gender Views
- Gender Stereotyping
- Gender Role Classification
- Eliminating Gender Bias
- Gender Similarities and Differences
Gender

**Gender**: Sociocultural dimensions of being female or male.

**Gender roles**: Social expectations that prescribe how males and females should think, act, and feel.

**Gender typing**: Process by which children acquire culturally appropriate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
Biological Views on Gender Development

- Androgen is the predominant sex hormone in males.

- If androgen directly influences brain functioning, which in turn increases behaviors such as aggression or activity level, then the bio effect is direct.

- If high androgen level produces strong muscle development, which in causes others to expect that the child will be a good athletic, leading the child to participate in sports, then the bio effect is indirect.
Social Views on Gender Development

- Many parents encourage boys and girls to engage in different types of play and activities.
- Girls more likely to be given dolls, and when older, assigned baby-sitting duties.
- Fathers more likely to engage in aggressive play with their sons. Parents give their adolescent boys more freedom.
- Peers reward and punish gender-related behavior.
Social Views on Gender Development  continued

- In elementary school play settings, boys hang out with boys, girls hang out with girls. It's easier for “tomboy” girls to join boys’ groups.

- Schools and teachers have important gender-socializing influences.

- Media also play a gender-socializing role. Males are still presented as more competent. Girls shown to be concerned about dating, shopping, etc. Attractive girls pictured as “airheads.”
Cognitive Views on Gender Development

*Gender schema theory* states that gender-typing emerges as children gradually develop gender schemas about what is gender appropriate in their culture.

- Children are internally motivated to perceive the world and act in accordance to their gender schemas.
- A *gender schema* organizes the world in terms of female and male.
- Bit by bit, they pick up what is gender appropriate and gender inappropriate.
Gender Stereotypes

Broad categories that reflect impressions and beliefs about what behavior is appropriate for females and males.

Females
✓ play with dolls
✓ concerned about appearance

what else class?

Males
✓ play with action heroes
✓ more likely to hit someone

what else class?
Gender-Role Classification

New View: Individuals can have both feminine and masculine characteristics.

This led to the development of the concept of androgyny, the presence of positive feminine and masculine characteristics in the same person.

An *androgy nous boy* might be assertive (masculine) and nurturant (feminine).

An *androgy nous girl* might be powerful (masculine) and sensitive to others’ feelings (feminine).
Assessing Gender-Role Orientation

(sample items)

1. I’m independent.
2. My emotional life is important to me.
3. I’m competitive.
4. I’m sensitive to others’ feelings.
5. I’m patient.
6. I like to feel powerful.
Gender Similarities and Differences

■ **The Brain**
  - female brain is smaller, but has more folds
  - parts of parietal lobe (*tied to visuospatial skills*) are larger in males
  - areas tied to emotional expression have more metabolic activity in females

■ **Physical Performance** (*greater with adolescence*)
  - boys better at running, throwing, jumping
  - increased muscle mass for boys with age
  - increased body fat for girls with age
  - activity level differences
Gender Similarities and Differences

- **Math and Science Skills**
  - boys still slightly outperform girls in math, boys have better visuospatial skills
  - boys slightly better in science, hands-on lab activities help girls do better in science class

- **Verbal Skills**
  - girls have a slight edge, outperform boys in reading and writing

- **Educational Attainment**
  - girls get better grades
  - girls more likely to finish high school
  - girls have better academic skills (e.g., attentive in class)
Gender Similarities and Differences

- **Relationship Skills**
  - girls enjoy/participate more in *rapport talk*
  - boys hold center stage through *report talk*
  - critics argue differences are slight

- **Prosocial Behavior**
  - girls view themselves as more prosocial and emphatic
  - biggest gender difference occurs for kind and considerate behavior with a smaller difference in sharing
Gender Similarities and Differences

- **Aggression**
  - boys show more physical aggression
  - girls show as much or more verbal aggression
  - relational aggression is greater % of girls’ overall aggression

- **Emotion and its Regulation**
  - boys hide negative emotions, girls more expressive
  - boys show less self-regulation, low self control can result in behavior problems
Gender In Context

Helping Behavior: Depends on the situation. Females more likely to help with personal problems. Males where some danger may be involved.

Emotion: Depends on the emotion. Males more likely to express anger. Females fear and sadness.

Culture: More acceptance of similarities in male and female behavior in U.S. Other cultures remain gender-specific, e.g., workplace versus home.
Is there Gender Bias Against Boys in the Classroom?

- Following rules, being neat and orderly are valued. These behaviors are typically associated with girls.

- Majority of teachers are female, especially in elementary school.

- Boys are more likely to be identified as having learning problems.

- Boys are more likely to be criticized.

- School personal tend to stereotype boys’ behavior as problematic.
Is there Gender Bias Against Girls in the Classroom?

- Boys are more rambunctious, they demand more attention. Girls wait quietly for their turn.

- In many classrooms, teachers spend more time watching and interacting with boys.

- Boys get more instruction than girls and more help when they have trouble with a question.

- Girls & boys start 1st grade with equal levels of self-esteem, by middle school years, girls’ esteem lower.

- By high school there are more boys in gifted programs.
Strategies for Reducing Gender Bias

- If a textbook is gender-biased, discuss this with your students.
- Make sure school activities and exercises are not gender-biased.
- Be a nonsexist role model as a teacher.
- Make sure your class doesn’t have pockets of gender segregation, that work groups are balanced.
- Enlist someone to track your questioning and reinforcement with boys and girls.
- Use non-biased language.
Social Influences on Children’s Thinking: Gender and Attribution Styles

Researchers gave 10 year old children a questionnaire asking about their likely reactions to hypothetical failures.

They identified two attribution styles:

- **Mastery-oriented**: likely to think they should work harder in the face of failure/difficulty
- **Helpless**: likely to respond to difficulty with negative attributions about ability

*** There were no IQ differences between these two groups.

*** Many more girls were categorized as “helpless.”
Social Influences on Children’s Thinking: Gender and Attribution Styles

Next the children were given a series of confusing math problems (difficult to solve), and then a batch of easy math problems (that all children should be able to solve).

What happened?

*Mastery-oriented children:* These children were able to recoup from the negative experience and solved the easy problems with ease.

*Helpless:* These children (mostly females) were thrown by the confusing problems and didn’t try very hard on the easy problems, getting many of them wrong.
Social Influences on Children’s Thinking: Gender and Attribution Styles

Why do more girls adopt a “helpless” attribution style.

What happens in the classroom?

Boys and girls receive the same amount of negative comments. But the nature of these comments differ.

**Boys:** Criticisms sometimes focus on intellectual quality, sometimes on neatness, conduct, or effort. Boys and girls both think teachers like girls better.

**Girls:** Teacher criticisms focus consistently on the intellectual quality of the work.

*End Result:* Boys attribute failure to any number of factors, girls are left with negative attributions concerning their ability.