The Varieties of Gender Stereotypes

In 1993, a group of artists calling itself the Barbie Liberation Organization purchased several hundred of two of the most popular children’s dolls—“Teen Talk” Barbie and Talking G.I. Joe Electronic Battle Command Duke. After switching the dolls’ voice boxes, the group then sneaked the dolls back onto toy-store shelves, reports writer Ed Liebowitz (2002).

The result: Children brushing the long blonde hair of the altered Barbies would hear them cry out, “Eat lead, Cobra!” Or, “Attack, with heavy fire-power!”

The G.I. Joes would say, in Barbie’s soprano voice, “I love to try on clothes” and “Let’s plan our dream wedding.”

Is there a more dramatic way of showing how our popular culture stereotypes differences between the sexes? Stereotypes are, by definition, exaggerated expectations about a category of people, which can be completely inaccurate when applied to individuals.

Consider some sources of these exaggerated portraits:

- **Film roles:** Although 42% of the women in the United States are 40 years of age or older, 78% of the actresses appearing in Hollywood movies in 2001 were 39 or younger (August et al. 2002). In addition, women play only 34% of the roles and—superstar Julia Roberts aside—earn a third less than males in comparable industry jobs (Rapping 1994). In addition, in G-rated films, according to one study (Smith 2006a), 77% of primary characters were male. That is, for every speaking female character there are three male characters. Moreover, G-rated movies (even animated ones) are dominated by physically...
aggressive white male characters, whereas women and minorities are relegated to the sidelines. G-rated movie men are seldom good models: Only about 35% are parents, versus 66% of female characters, and only about 32% of men are married or in a committed relationship (Smith 2006b).

Television: On TV, women represent just 36% of all prime-time characters (Children Now 2002). Men are often shown to be aggressive problem solvers—pilots, doctors, scientists—who rescue others from dangerous situations. Women on TV traditionally have been housewives, reporters, nurses, and sex objects, although recently they have been featured in more active roles (Vande Berg and Strekfuss 1992). On the influential Sunday morning political talk shows, only 14% of the guests are women and 56% of the episodes include no women at all (The White House Project 2005). In terms of televised sports, less than 10% of sports news was found to cover female athletes, and less than 2% of the time is used to cover women athletes in sports categorized as masculine (Koivula 1999).

On music videos, such as MTV, women are often shown as sex objects or trying to get a man’s attention or even experiencing some sort of violence; men are shown acting aggressively (Carter 1991; Kalof 1993).

Newspapers: Even though women make up more than half the population, in a survey of 20 newspapers, females appeared only 13% of the time in front-page stories (Overholser 1996). In newspaper coverage of political candidates, women were more apt to be described in terms of dress, hair color, and family data than men were (Devitt 1999; Noveck 2006; Fuextes 2007).

Magazines: In women’s magazines, roles such as homemaker and mother predominate, although in recent years, more attention has been paid to career roles (Demarest and Garner 1992).

Comic strips: According to a study of six months of comic strips, women in the strips spend more time in such gender-stereotypical activities as domestic chores, child raising, and helping the spouse compared to men. Males spend more time in leisure activities (Berglund and Inman 2000; LaRossa et al. 2000).

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2006), people were projected to spend nearly half their lives (3,518 hours in 2007) engaged with TV, radio, the Internet, and newspapers and listening to personal music devices. Every day the mass media and the popular culture give us a picture of how men and women are supposed to be and are supposed to behave. But are men really more aggressive, adventurous, and domineering than women? are women generally more dependent, fearful, and affectionate than men? Let us take a look at the backdrop to these questions.
PREVIEW To talk about gender, you need to know the meaning of sex versus gender, of gender roles and sex roles, and of socialization and gender identity. It helps to understand the distinctions among cross-dressers, transvestites, transsexuals, transgenderists, and hermaphrodites. Finally, you should know the vocabulary of sexism—patriarchal and matriarchal, sexism and sexual harassment.

When you think of horse wranglers, race-car drivers, corporate raiders, and Navy SEALs, do you think of men or women? When you imagine baby-sitters, elementary school teachers, cosmetics sellers, and cheerleaders for NFL football teams, which sex comes to mind? Yes, we’re all aware by now that many careers are not so rigidly gender-identified, but still the old habits of thinking die hard. And what of people who, at first glance, seem to be somewhat indefinite in their gender identity, such as men who like to dress up in women’s clothes or women who become surgically altered to have men’s physical characteristics? Are they “masculine” or “feminine”?

How to Talk about Gender: The Vocabulary

When you fill out a form for a driver’s license, you’re asked to specify your sex—male or female. Is “sex” the same as “gender”? The answer is: No, it’s not.

Although social scientists have sometimes been accused of complicating their disciplines by inventing unnecessarily specialized terms (to put themselves on a par with physical scientists, say critics), that is not the case here. To keep our discussion clear, let us consider terms we will use in this book.

Sex

Sex refers to the biological characteristics with which we were born that determine whether we are male or female. Sex, of course, includes anatomi-
ical differences (genitals, breasts, and the like) and whether your biology allows you to bear children. It also includes differences in sex chromosomes, hormones, and physiology. Women, for instance, have the X chromosome (XX); men have the Y chromosome (XY).

Males and females have the same sex hormones, but men usually have more testosterone and women more estrogen and progesterone.

**Gender**

Gender refers to the socially learned attitudes and behaviors associated with being male or female. We derive these from the social and cultural expectations placed on us while we are growing up. Sociologist Talcott Parsons, proponent of a structural-functionalist view of the family (discussed in Chapter 2, “Understanding”), held that the husband or father played the instrumental role of breadwinner and was hard-working, tough, and competitive. The wife or mother played the expressive role of homemaker and was nurturing and supportive (Parsons and Bales 1955). In the popular mind, male and female traits are often thought of as being opposites. (See Panel 3.1.) However, gender differences may be viewed as appearing along a range or continuum of so-called masculine traits and feminine traits.

**Roles, Gender Roles, & Sex Roles**

A role is the behavior expected of someone who holds a particular status. The key word here is expected. A role consists of the expectations that are defined for a particular person in a particular situation in a particular culture. Thus, the role of an emergency medical technician called to a traffic accident is to save lives.

A gender role is the behavior expected of a female or a male in a particular culture, the attitudes and activities that a society expects of each sex. In the United States, for example, females are often expected to be sensitive and caring (except when they are competing in tennis). Males are generally expected to be competitive and ambitious (except when they are holding kittens or puppies). However, among certain New Guinea tribes studied in the 1930s by anthropologist Margaret Mead (1935), women were expected to be dominant, and men were expected to be submissive. Even today, on Orango Island in Guinea-Bissau, women are the ones who make the marriage proposals—and once they are asked, men are powerless to say “no” (Callimachi 2007).
People often use the term sex role to mean gender role, but technically that's incorrect. A sex role is the behavior defined by biological constraints. For example, only women can give birth, and only men can be sperm donors.

Socialization & Gender Identity

How do we know what gender role is expected of us? We do it through learning, or socialization, the process by which people learn the characteristics of their group—the attitudes, values, and actions that are thought appropriate for them. Learning is what creates our sense of who we are as a man or woman—our gender identity.

Gender identity is a person's psychological sense of whether he or she is male or female, which may or may not correspond with their anatomy. Gender variance is an intense psychological discomfort with one's sex. This is also called gender identity disorder (GID), the American Psychiatric Association's diagnosis for people who repeatedly show, or feel, a strong desire to be the other sex. Much like sexual orientation, the biological basis for gender identity is somewhat of a mystery, although some researchers suspect it is linked with hormone exposure in the developing fetus (Brown 2006).

Cross-Dressers & Transvestites

Some people enjoy taking on, or feel compelled occasionally to take on, aspects of the roles of the other gender. You see this in the case of cross-dressers, when a member of one gender dresses up in clothes, wigs, and so on to appear to be a member of the other gender. It needs to be pointed out, however, that women have gained more fashion freedom than men have, so women can wear slacks without raising eyebrows, whereas a man generally cannot wear a dress without causing talk.

A different kind of cross-dresser is the transvestite, usually a male who dresses provocatively in order to appeal to men. Sometimes transvestites are simply entertainers, such as the drag queen character “Bernadette” played by Terence Stamp in the 1994 movie The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. Often, however, they are homosexual men acting as prostitutes who dress to lure male customers to engage in sex.
Billy Tipton was a saxophone and piano player who appeared with popular dance bands in the 1940s and early 1950s, traveling the jazz circuits of the American Southwest and Northwest. He had lots of friends and was married several times. But at the height of his glamorous life, he rejected a career-boosting opportunity to share the stage with famous entertainer Liberace at a Nevada hotel. As jazz began to go out of fashion, Tipton moved to Spokane, Washington, where he became an entertainment agent, married a former stripper named Kitty, and adopted three sons. He spent his last years alone in a trailer park with little money. In 1989, at age 74, he developed a hemorrhaging ulcer, and his youngest son called an ambulance. The son watched in astonishment as the paramedics who tried to revive his dying father discovered that the elder Tipton was a woman, a fact that was later verified by the coroner. It developed that Billy Tipton had been born Dorothy Tipton in Oklahoma in 1914 but at the age of 19, in the year 1933, took the name Billy, and for the next 50 years lived life as a man. All this has been described in Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton, a book by Stanford University English professor Diane Wood Middlebrook (1997). However, there is some dispute about the biographer’s interpretation. Middlebrook thinks that Tipton, dealing with the difficulty of women jazz musicians getting jobs during the Great Depression, at first adopted the male identity for economic reasons, but then her sexual identity became an exquisite act. “I think the Tipton story is about the indeterminacy of gender identity,” Middlebrook says. “You can understand her as someone who chooses her self-presentation in the face of options. You can’t draw a bottom line with her about identity. I believe Billy’s relationship to herself was female. She was the actor; he was the role” (Middlebrook, quoted in Lehrman 1997).

It needs to be pointed out, however, that Tipton took pains to leave few legal documents that revealed a female identity, that he obtained new legal documents listing himself as male, and that he had many opportunities to reject his life as a man, which he never did. The people who know him report that he was a man in almost every psychological sense.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? At a time when hormones and surgery weren’t available, is there a chance that Billy Tipton was a transgendered man?

Transsexuals & Transgenderists

A more complicated question of gender identity arises with the person who says, “I’m a woman trapped in a man’s body” or “I’m a man trapped in a woman’s body.” This is a transsexual, a person with the biological sex of one gender who has the identity or self-concept of the other gender and undergoes medical procedures to change to that sex. A person born female who has the gender identity of a male spends on average $30,000 to $70,000 on “transitioning” medical measures: taking hormones to grow facial hair and having breast and genital surgery, although many do not have both surgeries (Buchanan 2007). Male-to-female transsexuals pay $50,000 to $67,000 for breast augmentation and surgery to create a vagina, along with facial feminization and laser hair removal. Some municipalities and big companies—General Motors, IBM, Eastman Kodak, and Hallmark Cards—now include transition-related coverage as an employee benefit (Buchanan 2007). The most famous transsexual to change surgically was Christine Jorgensen (1967), who underwent a series of operations in Denmark in 1953.

EXEMPLARY OF A Transgenderist?

Jazz Musician Billy Tipton

who chooses her self-presentation in the face of options. You can’t draw a bottom line with her about identity. I believe Billy’s relationship to herself was female. She was the actor; he was the role” (Middlebrook, quoted in Lehrman 1997).

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WHAT DO YOU THINK? At a time when hormones and surgery weren’t available, is there a chance that Billy Tipton was a transgendered man?
CHAPTER 3 GENDER: THE MEANING OF MASCULINITY & FEMININITY

PRACTICAL ACTION

Preventing & Stopping Sexual Harassment

In the workplace, sexual harassment includes suggestive remarks, unwanted touching, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually oriented posters and graffiti, and similar verbal or physical actions of a sexual nature.

Most such behavior is harassment of women by men, but the reverse may also occur, or it may occur between people of the same gender (Abelson 2001). The inappropriate action may be between manager and employee, between co-workers, or between people outside with contacts with employees.

If the harasser is a manager or agent of the organization, the organization itself can be sued, even if it had no knowledge of the situation (Lavelle 1998).

There are two types of sexual harassment, according to the U.S. Supreme Court:

- **Quid pro quo—tangible economic injury:** In this type of harassment, the person receiving unwanted sexual attention is put in the position of jeopardizing being hired for a job or obtaining job benefits or opportunities unless he or she implicitly or explicitly acquiesces.

- **Hostile environment—offensive work environment:** In this type of harassment, the person being sexually harassed doesn’t risk economic harm but experiences an offensive or intimidating work environment, as might be the case when one has to put up with lewd jokes or sexually oriented graffiti.

Some guidelines follow.

**Preventing Sexual Harassment**

- Don’t laugh at sexually offensive comments, jokes, or gestures about other people.

- Don’t make such remarks or gestures toward others.

- Don’t touch others inappropriately—or touch at all, if they don’t like it.

- Don’t make sexual suggestions, requests, or advances.

- Try to identify with the other person’s feelings.

**Stopping Sexual Harassment**

- Tell the offender in clear terms what the offensive behavior is and that you expect it to stop.

- If a face-to-face confrontation is impossible, write a letter. Ask the offender to stop. Give exact details of the offensive behavior. Explain how you feel.

- Don’t be afraid of embarrassing the harasser. It’s your rights that have been violated.

- If the harasser doesn’t stop the offensive behavior, contact an appropriate authority.

A **transgenderist** is a person with the biological sex of one gender who has the identity of the other gender, lives the full-time life of that gender but does not undergo medical procedures to change to that gender.

While on the subject of transsexuals and transgenderists, we should mention the hermaphrodite. A **hermaphrodite, or intersexual,** is a person who has both male and female sexual organs, or organs that are not distinct, as when a female’s sex organ (the clitoris) resembles a male’s sex organ (the penis). In such cases, the organs are not fully developed. It has been suggested that perhaps one in 2,000 babies are born with genitals that aren’t clearly male or female (Torassa 2002).

We discuss homosexuality, which deserves more extensive coverage, in Chapter 9, “Variations.”

**The Vocabulary of Sexism**

The terms we used to describe gender roles and the like lead naturally to a consideration of another, more value-laden vocabulary that arises because people have certain expectations about gender-role behavior. Let’s consider the words patriarchal and matriarchal and the terms sexism and sexual harassment.
Patriarchal & Matriarchal

Most societies are patriarchal, meaning male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered (Johnson 1997). That is, males dominate economic and political institutions, core ideas are identified as being associated with men, and the focus of attention is mainly on men. In extremely patriarchal societies, women have few rights, as was the case in pre-2002 Afghanistan under Taliban rule.

Matriarchal means female-dominated, female-identified, and female-centered. Matriarchal societies don’t seem to be much in evidence. However, there are institutions, such as some families and organizations, that are dominated by females.

Sexism & Sexual Harassment

Sexism is unjust discrimination based on a person’s sex or the belief that one sex is innately superior to the other. It is expressed in attitudes, actions, or institutional arrangements in which people are discriminated against because of their sex. An example is the favoritism shown in China toward boys, which leads prospective parents to use technology (such as ultrasound) to determine the sex of the forthcoming child during pregnancy and then abort the fetus if it is shown to be a girl.

Sexual harassment is the abuse of one’s position of authority to force unwanted sexual attention on another person. It is expressed through unwelcome and repeated comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature (although there is no objective standard for determining what is offensive, which makes sexual harassment difficult to define and prosecute).

NUMBERS THAT MATTER

Gender Differences

- Do beauty and money matter?
  Among 37 different groups of men and women in 37 different societies, heterosexual males were found to be drawn to physically attractive young women, and homosexual women were found to be drawn to men with economic ambitions. In 2004, women earned a median income ($17,629) that was only about 58% that of men ($30,513). Women make up more than 90% of people with eating disorders.

- Why do more males fail?
  Males get 70% of the D and F grades, account for 80% of high school dropouts and attention deficit disorders, in 2006 made up only 42% of college students, and are the suspected perpetrators in four out of five crimes.

- Women’s work?
  Females make up 97.6% of preschool and kindergarten teachers; 97.3% of secretaries and administrative assistants; 94.8% of child-care workers; 92.4% of receptionists and information clerks; 92.3% of registered nurses; 91.3% of bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks; 90.9% of teacher assistants; 89.5% of maids and housekeeping cleaners; 88.7% of nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides; and 82.2% of elementary and middle school teachers.

- Men’s work?
  Males make up 97.5% of construction workers; 89% of engineers; 79% of workers in farming, forestry, and fishing; 71% of lawyers and judges; 70% of medical doctors; 69% of mathematical and computer scientists; 57% of college professors; and 54% of company managers.

3.2 Why Do Gender Roles Differ? Some Theories

MAJOR QUESTION What are some possible explanations for gender differences?

PREVIEW Four theories that have been offered to account for gender differences are sociobiology, social learning theory, cognitive development theory, and gender schema theory.

Beauty in women is much valued in our society—indeed, in many societies—and heterosexual males everywhere seem to be drawn to physically attractive young women (although the standards of beauty may vary). Conversely, heterosexual women have been found in some research to be drawn to men with economic ambitions. In fact, both these characteristics have been found among groups of men and women in 37 different societies (Buss 1989).

Why do men and women show these and other gender differences? Several theories have been advanced as explanations. Let’s consider the theories of (1) sociobiology, (2) social learning, (3) cognitive development, and (4) gender schema. We don’t suggest that one perspective is better than any other; in fact, often they are used together. Indeed, we must point out that the theories have limited value because they often grew out of studies based on inadequate samples, so they can’t be said to apply to all social groups.

1. Sociobiology: Does Biology Determine Our Gender Differences?

Does biology shape gender behavior? Every one of us begins life with a “female brain,” suggests neuropsychiatrist Louann Brizendine (2006), who reviewed hundreds of studies on fundamental differences between the sexes. But about eight weeks after conception, testosterone floods male brains, diminishing connections in the communication centers, while estrogen enhances those connections, as well as those regions responsible for language and for expressing emotion and observing it in others. These differences, Brizendine proposes, “make women better negotiators and conciliators and men better fighters and lone wolves” (Henig 2006).
**Sociobiology** suggests that our social behavior—and gender behavior—results from biological differences. Although males and females have the same sex hormones—chemical substances secreted into the bloodstream by the endocrine glands—men usually have more testosterone (produced by the testes), and women usually have more estrogen and progesterone (produced by the ovaries). These hormones and the different sex chromosomes underlying them are certainly what produce different physical characteristics—for example, facial hair on men and breasts on women.

But sociobiologists suggest that these biological underpinnings may also explain differences in gender behavior—such as the observations mentioned previously about heterosexual men seeking attractive women and heterosexual women seeking economically secure men. In terms of the evolutionary goal of perpetuating the species, these theorists say, men seek mates who are more apt to be fertile and hence more likely to provide them with children; women seek mates who are more apt to guarantee the security of their offspring (Symons 1987; Symons and Ellis 1989; Ellis and Symons 1990).

2. **Social Learning Theory:** Does the Environment Determine Our Gender Differences?

**Social learning theory** suggests that we learn attitudes and behaviors through our interaction with the environment. Social learning theory is based on behavioral psychology, which stresses observable behavior rather than internal feelings, which cannot be observed.

**Two Kinds of Learning**

Learning, according to behaviorists, occurs in two ways: through reinforcement and through modeling.

- **Learning by Reinforcement—Rewards and Punishment:** Are boys encouraged to play with dolls? Are girls urged to defend themselves through fistfights? The answers, for most children, suggest that we learn through reinforcement: desirable behavior is rewarded, and undesirable behavior is punished. That is, as children, we are more apt to repeat acts that are regularly followed by rewards (“You’re taking good care of dolly”) and not to repeat acts that are regularly followed by punishment (“Don’t let those boys push you around”).

- **Learning by Modeling—Imitation:** While growing up, we all imitated the same-sex characteristics of parents, other children, other adults, and even characters we saw in the mass media, such as TV or music stars. In social learning theory, the kind of learning through imitation of others is called modeling. In general, children seem to imitate adults who are nurturing, powerful, or both, such as their parents.

The games in which boys and girls involve themselves early in school, points out Barrie Thorne in *Gender Play* (1993), have specific gender qualities. Boys’ games are competitive, rule-based, open to many players, hierarchical in leadership, and fairly aggressive. Girls’ games are cooperative, verbal, fairly small in nature, high in intimacy, and flexible in their goals and rules. These are ways of playing that we learn through reinforcement and modeling.
3. Cognitive Development Theory: Does Our Age Determine Our Gender Differences?

Social learning theory suggests that children and adults learn in the same way. By contrast, cognitive development theory suggests that the way we learn depends on our age. According to cognitive development theory, how children think, understand, and reason changes as they grow older, the result of biological maturation and increasing social experience. This perspective is based on the findings of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1950, 1954) and was later reinforced by Lawrence Kohlberg (1966, 1969), who showed that children of different developmental stages handle gender identity differently. Consider the following timeline.

- **Two-year-olds:** As a 2-year-old, you might have become aware that two genders exist and decided, correctly, that you are either a boy or a girl. However, at this age, you wouldn't think of gender as being permanent. Rather, you would decide who was who based on changeable attributes such as hair length (short for boys and long for girls) and types of clothing (pants for boys and dresses for girls). Older children and adults identify sex on the basis of genitalia, but a 2-year-old does not yet think in these terms.

- **Five-year-olds:** By age 5, you would have developed a sense of gender identity and you probably identified yourself as wanting to do girl things or boy things simply because that was what was comfortable for you.

- **Six- and seven-year-olds:** By age 6 or 7, you probably began to understand your and others' gender as being permanent, unlike hair and clothing styles, which can be different every day.

4. Gender Schema Theory: Do We Develop Mental Categories for Organizing Our Gender Perceptions?

Some of cognitive development theory has been incorporated into gender schema theory. Gender schema theory suggests that as children, we develop a framework of knowledge—a gender schema—about what we think males and females typically do, and we then use that framework to interpret new information about gender. A schema consists of mental categories for organizing our perceptions of cultural stimuli (Bem 1981).

Thus, when as boys we realized that cultural expectations of being male were that we were supposed to be independent, courageous, and tough, we incorporated those views into our male gender schema. As girls, we did the same with such female gender schema as being affectionate, nurturing, and understanding. Once we developed these schemas, they influenced how we processed information about gender, so that we were apt to associate baking cookies, for instance, with girls and throwing a football with boys.

Clearly, this is a way in which gender stereotypes can become established; indeed, such stereotypes tend to become more rigid during adolescence. A gender stereotype is the belief that men and women each display traditional gender-role characteristics. Later, in adulthood, many people become less rigid in their beliefs about their expectations about gender characteristics.
3.3 Gender Socialization: Who Teaches Us How to Act Male or Female?

**MAJOR QUESTION** Who has influenced how I feel about being a man or a woman?

**PREVIEW** Besides the mass media, principal environmental influences on gender behavior are parents, peers, teachers, and the workplace.

Sociobiology stresses that gender differences are based on biology. However, the other three theories suggest that we learn gender behavior mainly from our environment. The principal environmental influences are (1) parents, (2) other children, (3) teachers, and (4) the workplace. A fifth, discussed at the beginning of the chapter, are the popular culture and mass media. Many would suggest that religion is also a major influence.

1. How Our Parents May Have Influenced Us

Who was your primary caretaker when you were young: a parent or parents, perhaps a grandparent or grandparents? Whoever they were, they probably had the most influence on how you learned your gender role, especially during your infancy and childhood.

If you’re not a parent yourself, you might not realize how much work goes into parenting—feeding babies, changing diapers, giving baths, tending to illness, buying clothes and toys, providing schooling, transporting to doctors and play dates, and so on. Yet while all this was going on, your parents, like most, might not have been aware how much of what they said and did influenced your views of masculinity and femininity (Culp et al. 1983).

Most especially, they probably weren’t aware that they treated girls and boys differently, often in subtle ways (Fagot and Leinbach 1987; Shapiro 1990). Or if they did, they simply thought they were adjusting their behavior to reflect the children’s different personalities or supposedly inherent differences.

Let’s consider some aspects of these.
How Fathers & Mothers Treat Their Children Differently

Parents tend to socialize their children differently according to what their own gender is (Fagot and Leinbach 1987).

- **What Fathers Do:** Fathers tend to spend more time with sons than with daughters, and their attention may take the form of giving gifts or money (Starrels et al. 1994). Yet fathers are also important playmates to their children, particularly when it comes to rough-and-tumble play. Fathers set higher standards of accomplishment for their sons than they do for their daughters and are more aggressive in play and more goal directed. With daughters, fathers tend to stress emotions and feelings in their relationships. Children who are raised fatherless often have the same characteristics as children who are raised in permissive families.

- **What Mothers Do:** Mothers tend to express affection and give verbal praise to daughters and sons equally. However, like fathers, they tend to stress emotions and feelings in their relationships with their daughters. In households headed by a single parent (whether father or mother), it has been found that in mother-headed households, children had less traditional-gender rearing than those in father-headed households (Leve and Fagot 1997; Wright and Young 1998).

**Four Ways Parents Socialize Their Children**

There are four subtle ways in which parents socialize their children from infancy to adulthood (Oakley 1985):

- **Uses Different Physical and Verbal Manipulations:** If you’re male, did your parents handle you somewhat more physically (roughly) than they did your sister, tell you not to cry, admire you for being “such a strong boy”? If you’re female, did your parents also try to push you into gender-stereotyped activity? How do you feel about these activities now?

- **Directs Attention toward Certain Stereotypical Gender-Identified Objects:** Did your parents direct you toward such toys as dolls and baby carriages? Or toward race cars and footballs? Certain toys, clothing, sports equipment, and other objects are often culturally identified more with one gender than the other. Boys’ toys tend to encourage physical activity, whereas girls’ toys tend to stress physical proximity and mother-child talk (Caldera et al. 1989).

- **Applies Different Verbal Descriptions to the Same Behavior:** Even years later, working in professional careers, women might find that they have to deal with different standards for the same behavior; being called “pushy,” for example, for behavior at work that in men is admired for being “aggressive.” The same thing happens in childhood: A boy is encouraged for being “active,” whereas a girl is rebuked for being “too rough.” Or a girl is complimented for being “gentle,” but a boy is criticized for not being “competitive enough.”
Encourages or Discourages Certain Stereotypical Gender-Identified Activities:
As a boy, were you asked to help mother with sewing, cooking, ironing, and
the like? As a girl, were you made to help dad do yard work, shovel snow, take
out the trash, and so on? For most children, it’s often the reverse. Note that
the identification of girls with indoor domestic chores and boys with outdoor
chores becomes training for stereotypical gender roles (McHale et al. 1990;
Blair 1992; Leaper 2002; Shellenbarger 2006).

Differences in Class, Ethnicity, & Religion
How you feel about gender matters may also depend on your social-class, eth-
nic, and religious background.

If you’re white and come from a middle-class background, you might have
had a less traditional gender upbringing than if you come from a white work-
ing-class background, particularly if you’re female.

If you’re a young female from a working-class Latino background, your
parents might worry about your living away from home and perhaps expect
you to come home often to help with chores and child care—an expectation
that’s generally not applied to Latino males (Zinn 1994; Reisberg 1999).

If you’re African American, you probably were raised with fewer traditional
ideas about gender (Taylor 1994). In fact, if you’re a black female, you prob-
ably were raised to be more independent than if you had been brought up in
a white family, perhaps because your mother worked as well as ran the house-
hold (Burns and Homel 1989; Lips 1997). If you’re a black male, you might
have been raised to act cool, wearing a mask intended to project an aura of
control and inner strength (Major and Billson 1992).

Although more women than men attend church, religion can reinforce gen-
der stereotypes since many religions have a patriarchal basis, and some, such
as Catholicism, have no female clergy (Basow 1992). One pair of scholars sug-
gest that people who are regular churchgoers are more likely than irregular
churchgoers to have traditional ideas about gender roles (Willetts-Bloom and
Nock 1994).

2. How Our Peers May Have Influenced Us
Your parents were probably the first ones to influence you as to your gender
role, but once you entered school, other children—your peers, or those of
equal status in age, class, and the like—became important. Although your
parents might have had some misgivings about some of them, your peers
probably had some positive effects, such as perhaps helping you develop inti-
mate relationships in adolescence (Gecas and Seff 1991).

Among children, play is often divided by gender, with peers using their
approval or disapproval to influence our choices of toys, games, food, music,
TV programs, and so on (Carter 1987). Children actively socialize each other
to conform to certain styles of interaction with members of their own sex.
Girls have been found to encourage other girls to behave in a feminine or
“communal” style that is connection oriented and focuses on maintaining per-
sonal relationships, cooperation, and support. As might be expected, boys
sometimes encourage other boys to adopt a masculine or “agentic” style that
is status oriented and focuses on goals of dominance. However, boys have
ROUGH PLAY. Not all boys are raised to emphasize competition, aggressiveness, and roughhousing, but why do you think so many of them are? Why aren’t girls?

also been found to act counter to gender norms and to encourage communal styles and discourage agentic styles among other boys (Hibbard and Buhrmester 1998).

How Girls Are Influenced

Girls usually influence other girls to play with dolls—indeed, the average girl owns eight dolls (Greenwald 1996). Such dolls as Barbie often set unrealistic standards for female attractiveness by being molded with big busts and tiny waists—and recently with thongs, high heels, and bare midriffs, as in the Bratz line (Kluger 2006). An interesting new exception is the small-breasted Muslim doll, Fulla, which wears a long, flowing gown and comes with her own prayer rug (Al-Jadda 2005). By and large, however, a visit to any toy store will show that girl-appropriate toys include dollhouses and clothes, kitchen utensils, cosmetics, and sewing and crafts kits. Girls’ toys tend to emphasize domesticity, nurturing, passivity, imagination, and emotional expression (Morse 1995).

In addition, girls take cues from boys, who regard appearance as the most important indicator of girls’ popularity. Girls often put down other girls they regard as being overweight, underdeveloped or overdeveloped physically, or otherwise unattractive (Eder et al. 1995). Intelligent girls are often teased or put down by boys.

How Boys Are Influenced

Boys expect other boys to play with their own kind of dolls, although they’re called “action figures,” such as the weapon-toting Power Rangers, G.I. Joe, and Star Wars toys. Other supposedly boy-appropriate toys include plastic guns and swords, Batman and Spider-Man costumes, carpentry kits, race cars, Tanko construction equipment, toy footballs and baseball bats, and warlike
“Maybe because men enjoy so much power and prestige in society, there is a tendency to see boys as shoo-ins for success,” says Michael Thompson, a child psychologist who coauthored *Raising Cain* (Kindlon and Thompson 1998). “So people see in boys signs of strength where there are none, and they ignore all the evidence that they are in trouble” (Mulrine 2001).

And in trouble they might well be. Males make up two-thirds of students labeled “learning disabled.” They get 70% of the D and F grades. They account for 80% of high school dropouts and attention deficit disorders. They are less likely to go to college, and in 2006 they made up only 42% of college students. They are the suspected perpetrators in 4 out of 5 crimes. They are arrested for 9 out of 10 alcohol and drug violations (Mulrine 2001; Garofoli 2002; Lewin 2006).

But American girls are also behaving more like boys—and the picture isn’t pretty. Girls might not be as violent as boys, but they are increasingly becoming as apt to smoke, drink, and do drugs as boys their age are and to get in trouble with the law (Phillips 1998).

**WHAT DO YOU THINK? Why the differences?**

---

**EXAMPLE OF Gender Differences**

**Who’s Stronger, Boys or Girls?**

video games. Boys’ toys tend to emphasize logic, following rules, competition, and aggressiveness (Cargan 1991; Morse 1995).

Boys promote gender stereotyping by focusing not only on attractiveness as the most desirable feature of girls but on toughness as the most desirable feature of boys, using words such as *wimp* to put down boys not considered assertive enough (Eder et al. 1995).

**3. How Teachers May Have Influenced Us**

Once you started school—nursery school, kindergarten, elementary school—not only your peers but also teachers began to influence your ideas about appropriate gender behavior. Because most teachers in your early years were probably female, you might have tended to think of adult interactions as mainly being with women.

Teachers also subtly influence how boys and girls are more different than they are similar.

**How Teachers Influence Boys**

At least among white children, boys tend to get more attention from teachers than girls do, at all levels from nursery school to college (Lips 1995). Compared to girls, boys are more likely to be called on in class, to be given more time to talk, and to receive praise but also to be disciplined harshly (Sadker and Sadker 1995; Kindlon and Thompson 1998; Pollack 1998). Boys also tend to be louder and more demanding. Perhaps as a result, they are expected to work harder at finding answers to problems on their own.
How Teachers Influence Girls

Girls do better than boys academically through elementary school. But by middle school, boys have caught up and surpassed girls in such subjects as science, math, and reading. Girls are not only less likely to be called on than boys but also, if their answers are incorrect, not to be helped to discover the error and correct it; instead, teachers are more apt to simply call on another student (Sadker and Sadker 1995). Except in all-girl schools, girls are also more apt to be praised for their appearance and for being neat in their work.

4. How Work May Influence Us

The gender gap in the workplace might be slowly narrowing. But while you were growing up, your sense of gender roles might have been influenced by which occupations you saw dominated by females and which by males. We discuss the effect of work on family and intimate relationships in Chapter 12, “Work,” but here let us suggest how work roles have tended to follow gender stereotypes.

Occupations Dominated by Females

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the ten occupations with the highest concentration of women in 2005 were preschool and kindergarten teachers (97.6%); secretaries and administrative assistants (97.3%); child-care workers (94.8%); receptionists and information clerks (92.4%); registered nurses (92.3%); bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks (91.3%); teacher assistants (90.9%); maids and housekeeping cleaners (89.5%); nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides (88.7%); and elementary and middle school teachers (82.2%) (U.S. Department of Labor Women’s Bureau 2005). In general, about half of working women are found in one of two types of occupations: administrative support and service support.
Occupations Dominated by Males

Again according to the U.S. Department of Labor, men are dominant in construction: 97.5% of construction workers are male. Eighty-nine percent of engineers are male, as are 79% of people in farming/forestry/fishing occupations, 71% of lawyers and judges, 70% of medical doctors, 69% of mathematical and computer scientists, 57% of college professors, and 54% of company managers (U.S. Department of Labor 2002). In politics, most U.S. senators and Congressional representatives are men (though this situation is changing; in 2007, there were 16 women in the Senate and 71 in the House, and Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House). Most religions, including Catholicism, evangelical Protestantism, and fundamentalist Islam, are dominated by male leadership, with women representing about 20% of clergy in mainline Protestant religions (Rodgers 2007). In the military, only about 20% are women.
A man and a woman following traditional gender roles may derive certain benefits from their relationship but also experience certain drawbacks. More and more, however, gender roles are in transition.

Traditional gender roles were once based on biological differences. In preindustrial societies, men’s greater physical size and strength were highly valued for bringing in food and providing for defense—hence the patriarchal role. Women had little choice about reproduction and pregnancy—hence the matrarchal role. In industrial societies today, these biological differences are no longer as important.

The Benefits of Traditional Gender Roles

Traditional gender roles promote stability because they are predictable—both people in a relationship know their rights and responsibilities. Therefore, traditional gender roles have continued to exist because, as long as both partners can tolerate the costs and are comfortable with the rewards, they provide some benefits. Let’s see what these are.

Benefits to Males

The central feature of the traditional male role, as we’ve seen, is instrumental—the focus is on work identity. That is, for traditional males, the most important function is to be good providers and protectors for their families.
Aggression, dominance, and power orientation, then, are harnessed in the service of excelling in the workplace. This has resulted in certain benefits:

**Higher Income and Other Job-Related Advantages:** In 1998, according to a study by the Internal Revenue Service (2002), at annual wages of less than $25,000, women outnumbered men, accounting for 57% in that category. In the $25,000 to $30,000 range, men and women were roughly equal. Above that, however, men were dominant, and the higher the pay, the more men outnumbered women. For example, in the $200,000 to $500,000 range, men outnumbered women 9 to 1; in the $500,000 to $1 million range, it was 10 to 1; and in the over $1 million category, it was 13 to 1.

**Less Domestic Work and Marital Stress:** Not only do males make more money—polls show that both men and women think males have more opportunities and choices in jobs and quicker promotions (Roper Starch Worldwide, Inc. 1996). And, of course, the understood trade-off of traditional gender roles is that men are relieved of the tedium and stresses of typically female domestic chores—housework, food preparation, diaper changing, child care, and so on.

**Benefits to Females**

The central feature of the traditional female role is expressive—the focus is on expressing tender feelings and being concerned with others’ needs. Thus, for traditional females, the most important function is home and hearth—taking care of the house, cooking, raising children, being emotionally supportive of the husband. This has the following benefits:

**Identity Tied to Relationships Rather than Work:** Women seem to gain more satisfaction from relationships, whether with spouses, children, or friends (Jones et al. 1990; Cherry 1998; Roy et al. 2000). They often also spend more time keeping in touch with family members, organizing family gatherings with grandparents and in-laws, and stage-managing special events such as birthdays and anniversaries.

**Closer Attachments with Children:** Traditional women who are mothers not only are able to spend more time with their children but also are able to help shape and enrich their children’s development (Harris 1994). Traditional fathers, by contrast, often in later years regret their lack of closeness with their children. (A cemetery worker told one of the authors that Mother’s Day is a bigger occasion for visits to family graves than is Father’s Day.)

**The Drawbacks of Traditional Gender Roles**

If two people in a relationship have agreed to the division of effort represented by traditional roles—he is the breadwinner, she is the wife and mother—they may find fulfillment. Nevertheless, each is giving up something. Let us see what the negative side of traditional roles is.
TRADITIONAL MALE ROLE. What do men climbing the organizational ladder to the top executive’s office get besides more income and a big office? What do they miss out on? How about women who do the same?

Drawbacks for Males

If, as a male, the central feature of your identity is your job and career, it can deprive you of a whole valuable set of experiences and even have a negative effect on your health. Consider the following:

- Personal Self-Worth Being Tied to Job Position and Income: The stars in their field stand at the summit of a pyramid. But the nature of a pyramid is that the farther you climb, the less space remains. Thus, the majority of pyramid climbers never make it to the top (Falvey 1986). Therefore, men who fall short—or work part time or are unemployed—are more apt to feel unmanly and even to experience depression or mental illness (Goodwin 1990; Gaylin 1992).

- Job-Related Stress: It hardly needs to be pointed out that work for pay can be extremely stressful. This can result from tyrannical supervisors, unpleasant customers or co-workers, physical strains, boredom, constant deadlines, and other difficulties. It can also result because many working Americans are in the wrong job. Only 41% hold jobs that they had planned on, according to one survey (Gallup Organization 1990).

- Less Time for Family Life: If most of the time what you do is work, necessarily there will be less time to spend with your family, including children. Many children have found their fathers to be distant figures because they were often away at work. Men who try to juggle work and family life often experience role overload (Gerson 1993).
Limited Emotional Expression, Resulting in Loneliness and Fear of Intimacy: The strong, competitive, but unemotional male is not just a creature of the movies; it has been a standard of traditional malehood. But the inability to share feelings can result in loneliness as well as anger, depression, and fear of intimacy (Derlega et al. 1993; Thelen et al. 2000).

Limitations on Child Custody When Divorced: Because traditional, career-oriented men often haven’t spent much time with their children, and because of some societal messages that “real men don’t take care of children,” men might find themselves at a disadvantage when pressing for child custody if they become divorced. Indeed, some legal experts believe that if the “treatment fathers receive in the family court occurred in the workplace, an affirmative action plan would likely be implemented” to correct the situation (McNeely 1998).

Drawbacks for Females

Women might seem to have the better half of the bargain in a traditional relationship, because they are able to avoid work stresses and focus on family life. But this gender role too has its problems:

Reduced Income and Career Fulfillment: In part because traditional women value motherhood over career building, they tend not to go as far in school and to earn fewer advanced degrees (Ross and Van Willigen 1997). The result is that women in the United States earn a median income ($17,629 in 2004) that is only about 58% of men’s ($30,513) (Statistical Abstract of the United States 2007, Table 682).

For a while, women at all economic levels steadily gained ground on their male worker counterparts, and in the mid-1990s they were earning more than 75 cents for every dollar in hourly pay that men did, up from 65 cents 15 years earlier. Since then, some groups of women have actually lost ground, with highly educated women faring less well than a decade ago (Leonhardt 2006). This is an especially unfortunate consequence for traditional women who become divorced. Indeed, women of traditional backgrounds who are living alone or are single mothers are more apt to risk poverty, which has given rise to the phrase the “feminization of poverty,” as we discuss in Chapter 12, “Work.” Economic inequality is also the norm in many other countries, including Canada (Baxter and Kane 1995). It is certainly the case in most developing countries, such as those in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Dependence on the Spouse, Resulting in Unhappiness: Being a traditional wife and mother means that a woman is dependent on her husband for financial support. Whereas men seem to be happier married than unmarried, it is the reverse with traditional women, who might find household and child-raising tasks boring, exhausting, and never ending. Wives in traditional marriages report more symptoms of stress, more unhappiness about life, and more frustration, along with marital problems and wish for divorce, than do unmarried women (Rettig and Bubolz 1983; Spence and Sawin 1985). The dependency might make some women reluctant to leave abusive relationships.

The Beauty Problem: The emphasis on attractiveness means that some young women are apt to be drawn into weight-losing eating disorders.
(anorexia and bulimia) and other unhealthy habits in order to remain slim. Indeed, women make up more than 90% of people with eating disorders (National Women's Health Information Center 2002). As attractive women get older, they are apt to be less valued, especially if they have not taken steps to develop a career or other dimension to their lives. (As men age, they may be said to look “distinguished.” Women are said to “lose their looks.”)

Less Personal Self-Worth: Women in general are apt to have fewer feelings of positive self-worth than men are—lower self-esteem, less social self-confidence, and a diminished belief in their own intelligence (Smith 1995; Furham and Gasson 1998).

Changing Gender Roles

Despite some benefits of traditional gender roles, people do abandon them, perhaps out of necessity, as when a wife and mother must go to work to bring in a second family paycheck or when a father loses his job and becomes an inadvertent househusband. More and more, however, people are voluntarily opting to abandon traditional gender roles (Gerson 1985, 1993). In this, they have been offered guidance by the women’s movement and the men’s movement.

The Women’s Movement

Historically feminism, the view that women should have the same economic, social, and political rights as men have, grew out of the 19th-century movement to abolish slavery, which made women sensitive to their own disadvantage, such as prohibitions on owning property or serving on juries. The first women’s rights convention was held in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York. In 1919, women won the right to vote, after which the women’s movement basically dissolved for 40 years (Chafetz and Dworkin 1986; Renzetti and Curran 1995).

Feminism began to reassert itself again in the 1960s and 1970s in the wake of black civil rights and other political activism and following publication of Betty Friedan’s The Feminine Mystique (1963). The National Organization for Women (NOW), a reform-minded group that eventually grew to half a million members, was established in 1966. The women’s movement has generally endorsed such moves as the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, affirmative action for women and minorities, abolition of sex discrimination in the workplace, the right to legal abortion, government-subsidized child care, ending violence against women, and the acceptance of females in nontraditional gender roles.

However, feminism does not speak with one unified voice. Indeed, there are several viewpoints in modern feminism (Renzetti and Curran 1995; Whittier 1995; Lindsey 1997).

Liberal Feminism—Inequality Rooted in Sexism: Liberal feminism, or “equal rights feminism,” is principally concerned with promoting individual rights and achieving equal opportunities for women through legal and social reforms. It assumes that the cause of women’s inequality is learned customs of gender inequality.
Socialist Feminism—Sexual Division of Labor Rooted in Class Conflict: Socialist feminism, which is rooted in classical Marxism, maintains that the sexual division of labor and gender inequality is an expression of class conflict. This view advocates government supports for parental leave and child care to enable women to achieve a better quality of life.

Radical Feminism—Inequality Rooted in Patriarchy: Radical feminism considers male oppression, or patriarchy, to be the cause of female inequality and sometimes advocates separatist roles for women from the existing social system. *Patriarchy describes social arrangements in which positions of power and authority are mostly held by men.* A key emphasis of radical feminism is violence, both physical and psychological, as perpetrated by male-dominated institutions against females.

Lesbian Feminism—Oppression Rooted in Dominance of Heterosexuality: Lesbian feminism focuses on the dominance of heterosexuality, particularly as an expression of patriarchy.

Conservative Feminism: Conservative feminism, at least in its most radical form, promotes a return to traditional gender and family roles. Phyllis Schlafly and the Council of Women for America are examples of leaders of this viewpoint.

This list is not exhaustive. Other views are psychoanalytical (Chodorow 1978), global, women of color, and ecofeminism, to mention a few.

The Men’s Movement

The women’s movement encouraged men to reconsider their own gender roles by embracing a movement of their own. The first meeting of the National Conference on Men and Masculinity took place in 1975 and has met every year since then.

Like feminism, the men’s movement has divisions, which some have identified as follows (Kimmel 1995a, 1995b; Renzetti and Curran 1995):

Profeminists: The liberal branch of the men’s movement, profeminists agree with feminist women that patriarchy benefits white heterosexual males but obliges all men, including minorities and gays, to follow rigid gender roles. This branch is represented by the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS).

Antifeminists: The conservative branch of the men’s movement, antifeminists believe that male dominance is natural and therefore women’s attempts to attain gender equality must be resisted. This branch is represented by the National Organization for Men (NOM), which views feminism as encouraging the downfall of the family and the undermining of men’s self-interest, especially in divorce settlements. The Promise Keepers, a Christian movement of men’s rights advocates, stresses the traditional gender roles of men being responsible to and for their families.

Masculinists: A more recent variant of the men’s movement is the masculinists, who agree that the patriarchal system causes oppression and
isolation but are more concerned with males’ attempts to achieve self-realization and self-expression. This is represented by the ideas discussed in poet Robert Bly’s *Iron John* (1990), which led to men’s campfire gatherings in which men were encouraged to share feelings and release their inner “wild man.”

Not all men in the men’s movement fit neatly into one of these three groups. For instance, there are those who believe that men, like women, are oppressed by social conditioning that limits their experiences and range of expression and skills (Franklin 1988). There are many males who take a gender-neutral approach and advocate equal rights and responsibilities for all men and women, without blaming one gender or the other for current inequalities.

**Role Conflict, Androgyny, & Postgender Relationships**

The awakening of consciousness about traditional gender roles brought about by the women’s and men’s movements has led to a lot of anxiety and confusion. Yet it also suggests hope for transcending these roles.

**Anxiety & Confusion: The Effects of Role Conflict**

Being in a traditional gender role has its discomforts, but so does finding one’s way into new forms of gender behavior—especially when many of the old expectations remain. *Role conflict occurs when the expectations of two or more roles are incompatible.* For example, women who hold full-time jobs might find that they can’t also be good mothers—look after sick children, go to school events, and the like. Men who assume housework or child-care duties might feel inadequate for not doing them as well as their spouses might. Role conflicts can produce stress-related problems, including anxiety attacks, insomnia, headaches, and various tensions (Weber et al. 1997). Is there hope for moving beyond such problems?

**Androgyny: Achieving Flexibility**

Whether you’re a man or a woman, isn’t it possible that you could be, for example, both competitive and achievement oriented and tender and nurturing? That is, you could have both the instrumental characteristics associated with traditional masculinity and the expressive characteristics associated with traditional femininity.

If so, you would be considered *androgynous*. **Androgyny is the quality of having in one person the characteristics, as culturally defined, of both males and females.** (In ancient Greek, *andros* means “man,” and *gyne* means “woman.”) Clearly, the benefit of being androgynous is that you would be a more flexible person, being logical in one kind of situation and emotional in another, for example, or being competitive at certain times and nurturing at other times (Bem 1975; Vonk and Ashmore 1993).
Postgender Transcendence: Beyond Gender

Some male-female couples have abandoned notions that gender is destiny—that, for example, being a breadwinner is the definition of male success and that being good at home and hearth is the definition of female success (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998). In these couples, both partners have careers, both do the nurturing in the relationship, and both reject gender as an ideological justification for inequality. In other words, their relationship can be characterized as postgender—beyond gender. As one sociologist writes, compared to 150 years ago, “women are well on the way to becoming men’s equals. Now, few say that gender equality is impossible or undesirable” (Jackson 1998: 95). Even so, a great barrier to achieving autonomy and equality at both home and work is, as sociologist Kathleen Gerson (2001) points out, effective social, institutional, or political solutions, whether employers or government, that can help people resolve these dilemmas.

What Do You Want?

What kind of role do you see for yourself in a relationship? In an egalitarian relationship, both partners pursue careers but also take care of the house and any children—on an equal basis. Not only do the different kinds of work get shared equally, but each partner is able to empathize with the other’s experience. On the other hand, as a man, you would lose power in the relationship and have less time to devote to your career compared to men in traditional marriages. And as a woman, you would find yourself engaging with children less closely and having to make the necessary compromises that come with pursuing a career.

The accompanying table shows how the topic of gender is viewed from three principal theoretical perspectives: structural-functional, conflict, and symbolic interaction. (See Panel 3.2.)
### PANEL 3.2 Views on Gender: Three Sociological Theoretical Perspectives Compared

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL (MACRO ORIENTATION)</th>
<th>CONFLICT (MACRO ORIENTATION)</th>
<th>SYMBOLIC INTERACTION (MICRO ORIENTATION)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly defined gender roles for men (instrumental/breadwinner) and for women (expressive/child care and homemaker) create stability for society.</td>
<td>Gender roles are no longer clearly defined or fully accepted.</td>
<td>The meanings attached to gender roles are socially constructed through day-to-day social interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is consensus and agreement about the clearly defined roles.</td>
<td>Social forces (such as the need for education beyond high school, the increased cost of living, and the necessity for dual-income families) work to influence gender redefinition through the competition for and redistribution of scarce resources.</td>
<td>Early patterns of socialization with significant others establish expectations that influence adult gender roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender roles are reinforced through social institutions such as religion and media.</td>
<td>Rigidly defined gender roles are viewed as limiting potential for both men and women.</td>
<td>People develop their own definitions of masculinity and femininity, and these social constructions affect one’s perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending of roles or adoption of opposite gender roles are met with strong social sanctions to maintain the status quo.</td>
<td>Women are victimized as a result of rigidly defined roles and this is reflected in lower incomes and fewer women in leadership positions. This victimization results from societal definitions that keep women “in their place” and includes definitions of what constitutes rape and domestic violence. The roles are reinforced through the media, as in popular song lyrics.</td>
<td>Ideas as to what are considered desirable, beautiful, and handsome change over time and affect choice of partners.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Self-Assessment: What’s Your Gender Communications Quotient?

How much do you know about how men and women communicate with one another? The 15 items in this questionnaire are based on research conducted in classrooms, private homes, businesses, offices, hospitals—the places where people commonly work and socialize. The answers are at the end of this quiz.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Men talk more than women do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Men are more likely to interrupt women than they are to interrupt other men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>There are approximately 10 times as many sexual terms for males as for females in the English language.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>During conversations, women spend more time gazing at their partner than men do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Nonverbal messages carry more weight than verbal messages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Female managers communicate with more emotional openness and drama than male managers do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Men not only control the content of conversations, but they also work harder in keeping conversations going.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>When people hear generic words such as “mankind” and “he,” they respond inclusively, indicating that the terms apply to both sexes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Women are more likely to touch others than men are.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>In classroom communications, male students receive more reprimands and criticism than are female students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Women are more likely than are men to disclose information on intimate personal concerns.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Female speakers are more animated in their conversational style than are male speakers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Women use less personal space than men do.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>When a male speaks, he is listened to more carefully than is a female speaker, even when she makes the identical presentation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>In general, women speak in a more tentative style than do men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: Hazel R. Rozema, Ph.D., University of Illinois at Springfield, and John W. Gray, Ph.D., Emeritus, University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Used by permission.

Key Terms Used in This Chapter

androgyny, p. 112  
cognitive development theory, p. 98  
cross-dresser, p. 92  
feminism, p. 110  
gender, p. 91  
gender identity, p. 92  
gender role, p. 91  
gender schema theory, p. 98  
gender stereotype, p. 98  
gender variance, p. 92  
hermaphrodite, p. 94  
hormones, p. 97  
intersexual, p. 94  
matriarchal, p. 95  
modeling, p. 97  
patriarchal, p. 95  
patriarchy, p. 111  
peer, p. 101  
role, p. 91  
role conflict, p. 112  
sex, p. 90  
sex role, p. 92  
sexism, p. 95  
sexual harassment, p. 95  
social learning theory, p. 97  
socialization, p. 92  
sociobiology, p. 97  
transgenderist, p. 94  
transsexual, p. 93  
transvestite, p. 92
Summary

3.1 Understanding Gender & Gender Roles

- To talk about gender, you must first learn the correct vocabulary. Sex refers to the biological characteristics with which we were born that determine whether we are male or female. Gender refers to the socially learned attitudes and behaviors associated with being male or female.
- You should also understand distinctions between a role, which is the behavior expected of someone who holds a particular status; a gender role, which is the behavior expected of a female or male in a particular culture; and a sex role, which is behavior defined by biological constraints. We learn gender roles through socialization, the process by which people learn the characteristics of their group—the attitudes, values, and actions that are thought appropriate for them. This learning creates people’s gender identity, a person’s psychological sense of whether he or she is male or female.
- Some people take on aspects of the roles of the other gender. Examples are cross-dressers, members of one sex or gender who dress in clothes in the appearance of the other gender, and transvestites, who are people, usually male, who dress provocatively in order to appeal to men.
- A more complicated question of gender identity arises with a transsexual, a person with the biological sex of one gender who has the identity of the other gender and undergoes medical procedures to change to that gender. Another example is the transgenderist, a person with the biological sex of one gender who has the identity of the other gender, lives the full-time life of that gender, but does not undergo medical procedures to change to that gender. A hermaphrodite (intersexual) is a person who has both male and female sexual organs or organs that are not distinct.
- The vocabulary of gender leads to the vocabulary of sexism. Most societies are patriarchal, meaning that they are male dominated, male identified, and male centered. Matriarchal means female dominated, female identified, and female centered.
- Sexism is the belief that one sex is innately superior to the other. Sexual harassment is the abuse of one’s position of authority to force unwanted sexual attention on someone.

3.2 Why Do Gender Roles Differ? Some Theories

- Several theories have been advanced to explain gender differences, and we considered four of them.
- Sociobiology suggests that our social behavior—and gender behavior—results from biological differences. For example, hormones—the chemical substances secreted into the bloodstream by the endocrine glands—differ, men usually having more testosterone and women more estrogen and progesterone. These hormones and the sex chromosomes underlying them produce different physical characteristics.
- Social learning theory suggests that we learn attitudes and behaviors through our interaction with the environment. Learning is said to occur in two ways. The first is learning by reinforcement—desirable behavior is rewarded and undesirable behavior is punished. The second is learning through imitation, which is called modeling.
- Blending biological and cognitive perspectives, cognitive development theory suggests that when we are children, our biological readiness in terms of our cognitive development—our thinking, understanding, and reasoning processes—influences how we respond to cues in the environment about gender differences. Two proponents of learning theory are Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg.
- Some of cognitive development theory has been incorporated into gender schema theory, which suggests that as children we develop a framework of knowledge—a gender schema—about what we think males and females typically do, and we then use that framework to interpret new information about gender. Cultural expectations can lead to gender stereotypes, the beliefs that men and women each display traditional gender-role characteristics.

3.2 Gender Socialization: Who Teaches Us How to Act Male or Female?

- Sociobiology stresses that gender differences are based on biology. However, the other three theories suggest that we learn gender behavior mainly from our environment. Besides the popular culture and mass media, four other influences were described.
- We are influenced by our parents, with fathers and mothers socializing their children differently according to what their own gender is. Four ways in which parents socialize their children are (1) by using different physical and verbal manipulations, (2) by directing attention toward certain stereotypical gender-identified objects, (3) by applying different verbal descriptions to the same behavior, and (4) by encouraging or discouraging certain stereotypical gender-
identified activities. How you feel about gender matters also may vary according to your social-class, ethnic, and religious background.

- We are influenced by our peers, or those of equal status in age, class, and the like. Play and entertainment are often divided by gender.
- We are influenced by our teachers, who may subtly influence how boys and girls are more different than they are similar.
- We are influenced by the world of work, observing which occupations are dominated by males and which by females.

3.4 Gender Roles in Transition: Multiple Masculinities & Femininities

- Traditional gender roles have some benefits. The central feature of the traditional male role is instrumental—the focus is on work identity—which leads to higher income and other job-related advantages and less domestic work and marital stress.
- The central feature of the traditional female role is expressive—the focus is on expressing tender feelings and being concerned with others’ needs. The benefits are that women’s identity is tied to relationships rather than work and that they are able to develop closer attachments with their children.
- There are also drawbacks to traditional gender roles. For males, the drawbacks are that their personal self-worth is tied to job position and income; they suffer job-related stress; they have less time for family life; they are permitted only limited emotional expression, which results in loneliness and fear of intimacy; and there are limitations on their having child custody in the event of divorce.
- For females, the drawbacks of the traditional gender roles are that they have reduced income and career fulfillment; they are dependent on their spouses, which can result in unhappiness; they are valued too much by standards of attractiveness; and they feel less personal self-worth.
- Gender roles are changing as a result of the influence of the women’s movement and the men’s movement. The women’s movement reflected feminism, the view that women should have the same economic, social, and political rights as men. However, feminism has several branches. Liberal feminism (“equal rights” feminism) is principally concerned with achieving equal opportunities for women through legal and social reforms; it assumes that the cause of women’s inequality is sexism. Radical feminism considers patriarchy—social arrangements whereby positions of power and authority are mostly held by men—to be the cause of female inequality. Socialist feminism, which is rooted in classical Marxism, maintains that the sexual division of labor is an expression of class conflict. Lesbian feminism focuses on the dominance of heterosexuality as a “compulsory” expression of patriarchy.
- The men’s movement has its own divisions. Profeminists, the liberal branch, believe that a system of patriarchy forces all males into restrictive roles. Antifeminists, the conservative branch, believe that male dominance is natural. Masculinists agree the patriarchal system causes oppression but are concerned about males achieving self-realization.
- Trying to achieve a new gender role can lead to role conflict, the anxiety and confusion that occur when the expectations of two or more roles are incompatible. Some flexibility may be offered by androgyny, the quality of having in one person the cultural defined characteristics, of both males and females. Some male-female couples have abandoned the notion that gender is destiny—they are striving for postgender transcendence.

Take It to the Net

Among the Internet resources on gender are the following:

- **Eagle Forum.** Conservative women’s issues. www.eagleforum.org
- **The Feminist Majority Foundation Online.** A liberal women’s group. www.feminist.org
- **Men’s Issues—Home Page.** http://home.vicnet.net.au/~mensissu
- **National Organization for Women (NOW).** A liberal women’s organization. www.now.org
- **Women’s Resources on the NET.** http://www.wic.org/misc/resource.htm