Sex Role Socialization

Categorizing Males and Females: Sex Role Standards

- All societies expect males & females to behave differently and to assume different roles
- **Sex typing** - process by which children acquire not only a gender identity but also the motives, values, and behaviors considered appropriate in their culture for members of their biological sex.
  - **sex-role standards** - a value, or class of behavior that is considered more appropriate for members of one sex than the other
    - gender-role stereotypes
    - gender-role scripts
- **What is masculinity and femininity?**
  - Expressive and Instrumental roles
  - Opposite ends of a spectrum or two apparently independent dimensions
  - Measurement of Sex-role Orientation
- **Categories of Sex-role Orientation**
  - Masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated
Actual Psychological Differences

- **Jacklin (1974)**
  - Females have greater verbal abilities than males
  - Males outperform females on some tests of visual/spatial abilities
  - Boys show a small but consistent advantage over girls on tests of arithmetic reasoning
  - Males are more physically and verbally aggressive than females

- **New Research**
  - Activity level
  - Fear, timidity, and risk taking
  - Developmental Vulnerability
  - Emotional sensitivity/expressivity
  - Compliance

- **Keep in mind**
  - Group trends
  - May or may not characterize the behavior of any particular individual
  - Percentage of Variance - modest
  - Males and females far more psychologically similar than they are different
Cultural Myths about Men and Women

- Girls are more social than boys
  - **Sexes Equally Interested in social stimuli**
  - **Certain ages - boys spend more time with playmates than girls**
- Girls are more suggestible than boys
  - **No sex differences in conformity.**
  - **Sometimes boys are more likely than girls to accept peer-group values**
- Girls have lower self-esteem than boys
  - **Sexes very similar in overall self-satisfaction and self-confidence**
  - **More boys than girls show gains in self-esteem over the course of adolescence**
- Girls are better at simple repetitive tasks, whereas boys excel at tasks that require higher-level cognitive processing
  - **Neither sex is superior at rote learning, probability learning, or concept formation**
- Boys are more "analytical" than girls
  - **With exceptions of small differences visual/spatial abilities, boys and girls do not differed on tests of analytical or logical reasoning**
- Girls lack achievement motivation
- **No differences exist! Direct their achievement strivings toward different goals**
Cultural Myths about Men and Women

- Cultural Myths
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- Why do inaccuracies persist?
  - Sex-role stereotypes are well-ingrained cognitive schemas
  - Use schemas to classify the behavior of infants

Developmental Trends in Sex-role Orientation

- Focus on three topics
  - **Gender identity** - knowledge that one is either a boy or a girl and that gender is an unchanging attribute
  - **Sex-role stereotypes** - ideas of what males and females are suppose to be like
  - **Sex-typed behavior** - child’s tendency to favor same-sex activities over those normally associated with the other sex
Developmental Trends in Sex-role Orientation

- **Gender Awareness and Identity**
  - Consists of two types of knowledge
  - Can be classified as males and females
  - Knowledge of one’s own sex
  - Awareness develops early
    - 6 months --> detecting similarities among different female voices
    - 50% of 9 month olds and 75% of 12 month olds can reliably discriminate between male and female adults and perceive them as different kinds of people
  - Awareness - sex not critical component of self-concept

- **Gender Identity**
  - Child’s acceptance of his/her own sex as a central part of the self-schema or self-concept
  - Grows out of gender awareness
  - Well on way to achieving by 24 months
  - 2 1/2 years - acquired gender labels and usually know which label applies to them
  - Some time before recognize that gender is a permanent attribute
    - 3-5 year olds - think people can change sex if really want to
    - Can become member of the opposite sex if want to
  - Seen as unchanging attribute between the ages of 5-7 years
    - Conservation
Development of Sex-typed Behavior

- Assess the “sex appropriateness” of children’s behavior - observe with whom and what they play with

**Toys**
- 14-22 months
  - boys - trucks and cars; girls - dolls and soft toys
  - Refuse to play with cross-sex toys - even when there are no other objects available for them to play with.

**Playmates**
- 2 years old - girls prefer to play with other girls
- Age 3 - boys reliably selecting boys rather than girls as companions
- Jacklin & Maccoby (1978) - 33 month olds in gender neutral clothing
  - Incompatibility in play styles
- 4 1/2 yrs - spend 3x as much time with same-sex as with cross-sex partners
- 6 1/2 years - ratio of same-sex to opposite-sex play has increased to 11:1
- Continues through early adolescence

Sex Differences in Sex-typed Behavior

- **Assign greater to status to male sex role**
  - Boys face *stronger pressures* than girls to adhere to sex-appropriate conduct
  - Fathers - offer truck to girls
  - Parents of 2-9 year olds - more concern about cross-sex play if child is male
  - Perceive a wider range of behaviors appropriate for girls than boys
- **Males are quicker than females to adopt sex-typed preferences and patterns of behavior**
Theories of Sex Role Socialization: Biological Theories

- **Early Biological Theories**
  - All sex differences are largely attributable to biological variations between males and females

- **Money & Ehrhardt's Biosocial Theory**
  - Biological and Social influences contribute equally and interact to determine a person's behaviors and role preferences (biological forces channel and constrain the development of boys and girls)

- **Recent Biological Studies**
  - Hutt (1972) - Genetic influences on boys vulnerability
  - Hormonal influences (animal research)

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Kohlberg’s Cognitive-Developmental Theory

- Helps explain why boys and girls might adopt traditional sex roles when parents may not want them to
- **Two major Themes**
  - Depends on cognitive development
  - Children actively socialize themselves
- Establish stable gender identity --> Actively seek out same-sex models and other information to learn how to act like boy/girl
- I am boy/girl --> I’d better do everything I can to find out how to behave like one
- **Three stages**
Kohlberg’s Cognitive-Developmental Theory

- Three stages
  - Basic Gender Identity (3 yrs.) - labeled themselves as boy or girl
  - Gender Stability - Gender is perceived stable over time (e.g., boys become men)
  - Gender Consistency - Complete when child realizes that one’s sex is also stable across situations
    - No longer fooled by appearances / Conservation
  - Self-socialization begins at gender consistency

- Mature Understanding of Gender:
  - Instigates true sex typing
  - Cause rather than consequence of attending to same-sex models

- Research Evidence
  - Slaby and Frey (1975) - Attend to same-sex models in a movie
  - Frey & Ruble (1992) - Boys and unattractive Toys

- Limitations
  - Sex typing well underway before child acquires mature gender identity

Martin and Halverson’s Gender Schema Theory

- Information Processing Theory
- Like Kohlberg - children intrinsically motivated to acquire knowledge consistent with their cognitive judgments of self
- Begins as soon as child acquires basic gender identity
- Basic gender identity --> motivates a child to learn about the sexes to incorporate this information into the gender schema
- Gender schema - organized set of beliefs and expectations about males and females that will influence the kinds of information he/she attends to, elaborates, and remembers.
Martin and Halverson’s Gender Schema Theory

- **Gender schema** - organized set of beliefs and expectations about males and females that will influence the kinds of information he/she attends to, elaborates, and remembers.
  - **In group/out group schema** - one’s general knowledge of the mannerisms, roles, activities, and behaviors that characterize males and females
    - Allows to classify as “for males” and “for females”
    - Kinds of information we tap into when we study stereotypes
  - **Own Sex Schema** - detailed plan of action that one will need to perform various gender-consistent behaviors and enact one’s sex role.
    - take act that is for own gender and gather detailed information about the activity to add to own-sex schema

Martin and Halverson’s Gender Schema Theory

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  - **Schemas** - structure experience by providing an organization for processing social information
    - encode and remember gender consistent information
    - forget or transform gender-inconsistent information
  - **Bradbard et al. (1986)** - Gender neutral items that were said to be either “boy” or “girl” items
    - explored gender consistent items more
    - Recall after a week - more in depth for gender consistent items
Integration of Theories: Eclectic View

- **Biological**
  - describes major biological developments that lead to differences between boys and girls
  - Not clear on social forces

- **Cognitive Theories**
  - importance of cognitive milestones
  - importance of information-processing biases
  - Importance of child’s own desire to behave like a boy or girl

- **Social Learning Theory**
  - accurately describe early sex-typing
  - Very young children display gender-consistent information because other people encourage activities
    - differential reinforcement
  - Early Socialization → **Basic Gender Identity** → actively seeking information about sexes → organizing information into in group/out group schema → learn detailed information about behaviors appropriate for own sex

- Biological and Social Learning Processes still implicated and interacting with processes