Gender & Adolescent Development

ADOLESCENCE

Heads-Up on Unit #2 Exam
- April 8th
- Will cover material from lecture and the book (Chapters on Families, Peers, Gender and Sexuality)
- Emphasis on topics discussed in BOTH
- Multiple choice and short answer

Last Time
- Cliqués, Crowds and Romantic Relationships
  - Group Functioning
  - Definitions (Cliqués, Crowds, Roles, Norms)
  - Types of Crowds & Their Correlates
  - Dating, Adjustment, Break-ups and Types of Love

Today
- Gender
  - Definition
  - Influences on Gender
  - Similarities and Differences by Gender
  - Negative impact of gender roles during adolescence
  - Transgender Youth
What is Gender?

- “The sociocultural and psychological dimensions of being male or female.”
- Gender Role
  - Set of expectations that prescribe how females/males should think, act and feel
- Gender Typing
  - Processes by which individuals acquire the thoughts, feelings and behaviors that are considered appropriate for their gender

Gender is Multi-Determined

- Puberty and Sexuality
  - Influence of hormones
  - Behaving in ways that are sexually attractive
- Evolutionary Theory
  - All about adaptive fitness
  - Roles of men and women in sexual reproduction
  - Roles in raising offspring
  - Criticisms of such theory

Social Influences on Gender

- Social Role Theory (Alice Eagly)
  - Gender differences arise mainly from different roles of men & women
  - Men have more power and status
  - Gender roles maintain male dominance
- Family Influences
  - Parents: Expectations and Socialization
  - Mothers vs. Fathers
  - Siblings
- Social Cognitive Theory of Gender

More Social Influences

- Peers & “Gender School”
- Schools
  - Schools favor stereotypical feminine behaviors
  - Boys tend to have more problems in schools
  - Influence of teachers’ expectations
  - Also evidence of bias against girls
  - More attention to boys
  - Girls’ expectations
  - Decreased self-esteem and assertiveness over adolescence
  - Same Sex Education?
The Media
- A major influence
- Think about
  - Television Characters
  - Music Videos
  - Heterosexual relationship portrayals
  - Idealistic Images
  - Gender Roles

Cognitive Influences on Gender
- Cognitive Developmental Theory of Gender
  - Children categorize based on gender once they grasp gender constancy
- Gender Schema Theory
  - Children develop schemas about what constitutes appropriate male and female behavior
- Cognitive skills, Identity Development

Gender Stereotypes and Sexism
- Many different stereotypes
- Have consequences for self-perceptions and others’ reactions
- Sexism
  - Discrimination based on sex
  - Can be subtle (e.g., “Girls”)
  - Old fashioned vs. Modern Sexism

Cognitive Developmental Theory of Gender
- Children categorize based on gender once they grasp gender constancy

Gender Schema Theory
- Children develop schemas about what constitutes appropriate male and female behavior
- Cognitive skills, Identity Development

Gender Stereotyping
- Types of items developed to measure Old-Fashioned and Modern Sexism

Fig. 6.1
Gender Differences

- Are based on averages
- Say nothing about individuals
- Often more overlap than one might think
- Can be due to biological and social factors

Physical Differences

- Men are taller
- Women have more body fat
- Women live longer
- Men have more stress hormones
- Brain differences
  - Part of hypothalamus that has to do with sex [M > F]
  - Part of the corpus callosum [F > M]
  - Area associated with visuospatial skills [M > F]
  - Area associated with emotional expression [F > M]
  MUST BE INTERPRETED CAUTIOUSLY

Cognitive Differences

- Conform with gender stereotypes
- Are really small
- Are often evident in some areas but not others (test scores vs. grades)
- Could reflect biases, motivation, test construction
- Males are more often on the bottom end
  - Greater rates of high school dropout
  - Lower rates of college completion

Socioemotional Differences

- Aggression
  - Physical vs. relational aggression
- Communication
  - Report vs. Rapport talk
  - Differences in group size and type of play
  - Often exaggerated
  - Variation in gender differences
- Prosocial Behavior
- Emotion Regulation
Gender Role Classification

- **Masculinity**
  - Dominant, aggressive, forceful, risk-taking, independent
- **Femininity**
  - Affectionate, dependent, maternal, understanding, gentle, passive
- Feminine traits are often associated with psychological dysfunction and devalued by society
- Gender was once seen as a continuum

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Beyond the Dichotomy: Bem

- **Sandra Bem**: individuals can be BOTH masculine and feminine


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Androgynous</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Undifferentiated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Gender Intensification Hypothesis

- Gender differences become greatest in early adolescence
- Due to pressure to conform
- Can have a negative influence for both adolescent boys and girls

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The Boy Code

- Negative impact of having to be **tough and dominant**, and unable to **express emotions**
- Potential of leading to undiagnosed depression, aggression, substance use
- Transmitted socially (through teams, schools, parents, peers, etc.)
- Disney
- **Tough Guise**
Adolescent Girls: Queen Bees and Ophelias

- Queen Bees & Wannabees
  - Undermining progression of women
- Ophelias
  - Conflict between achievement and wanting to please others
  - Leads to “silencing of the self”
  - Proposed explanation for increase in depression and decrease in self-esteem among adolescent females

Gender Roles and Heterosexuality

Not all Queen Bees & Ophelias (& not all Tough Guys!)

- Importance of developing the whole person
- Gender transcendence

A Neglected Issue

- Transgendered Youth *(One Example)*
  - Identify with the gender that does not correspond to their sex
  - Not much research on this population
  - Anecdotal evidence of stressful adolescent experiences
Gender is complex and multi-determined. Gender differences exist, but are often exaggerated. Gender has major implications for adolescent development. Stereotypes about masculinity and femininity can be detrimental for everyone.

Monday: Sexual Risk-Taking, Sex Education
- Small group activity on major topics within sexuality
- Will email your groups by tomorrow night

Wednesday: Guest Lecture on LGBT youth
- Jeff Perrotti
- Founding Director of Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students at the Mass Dept of Education
- Author of When the Drama Club is Not Enough