Gender and Sex

- **Gender** — social dimension of being female or male
  - **Gender role**: set of expectations prescribing how females and males should act, feel, and think
  - **Gender typing**: process by which children acquire thoughts, behaviors, and feelings culturally appropriate for their gender
- **Sex** — designates the biological aspects of being female or male

Views of Gender

- **Evolutionary**
- **Social**
- **Cognitive**
Gender Stereotyping

• Broad categories that reflect our impressions and beliefs about females and males
  – Traditional masculinity and femininity
    • Males instrumental
    • Females expressive
  – Stereotyping varies with culture
  – Stereotyping of occupations

Young Children’s Judgments about Competency in Stereotyped Occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Boy</th>
<th>Girl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Maleive Occupations&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage who judged men more competent</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage who judged women more competent</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Femive Occupations&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage who judged men more competent</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage who judged women more competent</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender Similarities and Differences

• Physical differences
  – Females have longer life expectancy
  – Females less likely to develop mental or physical disorders
  – Males have higher levels of stress hormones causing faster clotting and higher blood pressure
Gender Similarities and Differences

- Physical differences
  - Female brains are smaller, have more folds
  - Part of hypothalamus involved in sexual behavior is larger in men
  - Area of parietal lobe functioning in visuospatial skills is larger in males
  - Areas of brain involved in emotional expression show more activity in females

Cognitive Similarities and Differences

- Some claim males better at math and visuospatial skills and females better at verbal skills
- Others claim differences exaggerated
- National standardized tests
  - Boys slightly better at math and science
  - Girls better at reading and writing
  - Overall, girls superior students to boys

Visuospatial Skills of Males and Females

Fig. 12.4
Socioemotional Similarities and Differences

- **Aggression**
  - Males more physically aggressive in all cultures
  - Females more verbally aggressive; use relational aggression more than men

- **Self-Regulation**
  - Males show less self-regulation, can lead to behavioral problems

- Controversies over psychological differences

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Socioemotional Similarities and Differences

- **Gender in context**
  - Gender varies across contexts
  - Males more likely to help in perceived danger
  - Females more likely to volunteer to help with child
  - Girls show more care-giving behaviors than boys
  - Males more likely to show anger towards strangers and turn anger into aggression
  - Cultural backgrounds influence socialization

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Masculinity, Femininity, and Androgyny

- **Androgyny** — presence of masculine and feminine characteristics in same individual
  - Bem Sex-Role Inventory:
    - Instrumental, expressive traits
  - Context influencing gender role is adaptive
  - **Gender-role transcendence** — people should be evaluated as persons, not in terms of femininity, masculinity, or androgyny
Gender Development in Childhood

- Children form many ideas about what the sexes are like from about 1½ to 3 years of age
- Boys receive earlier and more intense gender socialization
- Children show clear preference for same-sex peers
- Gender roles becoming more flexible

Gender Development in Adolescence

- Transition point; changes in puberty
- Gender-intensification hypothesis
  - Psychological and behavioral differences between boys and girls become greater during early adolescence
  - Increased socialization pressures to conform to traditional gender roles
  - Mixed messages and special problems
Gender and Aging

- **Parental imperative**
  - Mothers and fathers adopt different gender roles so they can raise children more effectively
  - Older women face double jeopardy of ageism and sexism
  - Older men become more feminine, less active, and more sensitive in relationships

Biological and Cultural Factors

- **Biological**
  - Sexual behavior is influenced by sex hormones
  - Sexual behavior is so individualized in humans that it is difficult to specify hormonal effects

- **Sexual motivation also influenced by cultural factors**

Biological and Cultural Factors

- **Cultural factors**
  - Range of sexual values across cultures is substantial
  - **Sexual scripts** — stereotyped expectancy patterns for how people should behave sexually
    - **Traditional religious script** — sex is accepted only within marriage; sex is for reproduction and sometimes affection
    - **Romantic script** — sex synonymous with love
The 1994 Sex in America Survey

Cohabiting (married) vs. Noncohabiting Men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a year</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few times a month</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 times a week</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more times a week</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sexual Orientation

- Heterosexual attitudes and behavior
  - Different categories for frequency of sex
  - Married couples have sex more often
  - Most couples enjoy traditional sex
  - Adultery is exception, not the rule
  - Men think about sex more than women
  - Most lead conservative sexual lives

- Attitudes and behaviors of lesbians and gay males
  - **Bisexual**: sexually attracted to both sexes
  - Research on biological and hormonal differences on sexual preferences unclear
  - Area of hypothalamus governing sexual behavior 2x larger in heterosexual males
The Continuum of Sexual Orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Exclusively heterosexual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Largely heterosexual but incidental homosexual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Largely heterosexual but more than incidental homosexual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Equal amounts of heterosexual and homosexual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Largely homosexual but more than incidental heterosexual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Largely homosexual but incidental heterosexual behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Exclusively homosexual behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sexual Orientation

- Attitudes and behaviors of lesbians and gay males
  - Gender differences appearing in heterosexual relationships also occurs in homosexual relationships
  - Gay and lesbians experience life as minorities in dominant culture, with bicultural identity

Child Sexuality

- Majority of children engage in some sex play
  - Usually with friends or siblings
  - Exhibiting or inspecting the genitals
  - Most motivated by curiosity
  - Sex play declines, but sexual interest remains high in elementary school years
Adolescent Sexuality

• Adolescence
  – Time of sexual exploration, experimentation, fantasies, and incorporating sexuality into one’s identity
  – Most have insatiable curiosity about sex
  – Majority develop mature sexual identity; most have times of vulnerability and confusion
  – Societies vary in response to adolescent sexuality

Developing a Sexual Identity

• Multifaceted challenge to manage new feelings, develop identity and self-regulation
• Great variety in orientations, interest levels, anxiety levels, activity, and reasons for choices in activity
• Gay or lesbian identity: coming-out
• Homosexual behavior in adolescence may not continue into adulthood

Adolescent Sexual Behaviors

• Typical progression of sexual behavior
  – Kissing, followed by petting
  – Intercourse, or oral sex (increased substantially)
  – Males report being active before females
  – Most have sexual intercourse by mid-teens
  – Timing of sexual initiation varies widely by country and gender
Sexuality and Aging

• Middle adulthood
  – Climacteric — midlife transition in which fertility ends or declines
  – Women — Menopause late forties or early fifties
  – Men — less testosterone, less desire, possible erectile dysfunction (Viagra)
  – Ability to function slows little, frequency drops

Sexuality and Aging

• Late adulthood
  – Men experience more changes than women
    • Orgasm less frequent
    • More direct stimulation needed
    • Erection problems more likely after 65
  – Sexuality can be lifelong
  – Two-thirds of older adults satisfied