Gender and Sexuality

Donald's Diary
Gender Roles and Stereotypes

- **Gender role** - set of norms, or culturally defined expectations, that define how people of one gender ought to behave.

- **Stereotype** - a generalization about a group of people that distinguishes them from others.
Gender Roles and Ethnicity

• Gender-role stereotypes vary among various ethnic groups of the United States

• African Americans
  – Cultural influences include African heritage, the experience of slavery, and racial oppression.
  – Mother-child bonds are extremely important.
  – Provider role is difficult for black men, because their unemployment rate (11.3%) is double that of white men (5.9%).
Gender Roles and Ethnicity

• Latinos
  – Hispanic Americans are now the nation’s largest minority constituting 13% of the population.
  – Mexican American culture is based on Mexican heritage, modified through acculturation to incorporate Anglo components.
  – Gender roles are sharply defined, as epitomized in the concepts of *machismo* and *marianismo*.
Gender Roles and Ethnicity

• Asian Americans
  – Asian Americans make up 4% of the U.S. population.
  – Asian American women have a higher level of education than white American women.
  – Family needs take precedence over individual needs.
  – The Asian American woman has been stereotyped as an exotic sex toy, while the man has been stereotyped as asexual.
Gender Schema Theory

• Sandra Bern’s theory about a set of ideas that we associate with males and females. Schemas can:
  – cause us to tend to dichotomize information on the basis of gender.
  – lead us to distort or fail to remember information that is stereotype inconsistent.
Gender Schema Theory

• **Socialization** refers to the ways in which society conveys to the individual its norms or expectations for his or her behavior.
  - Parents, peers and the media are important socializing agents.
  - All societies have gender roles, but the content varies by culture, ethnic group, and social class.
Male-Female Psychological Differences

• Males and females differ in:
  – Aggressiveness
    • Males are generally more aggressive than females.
  – Verbal and nonverbal communication styles
  – Self-disclosure
Male-Female Differences in Sexuality

- Men are more likely to have masturbated than women.
- Men are more aroused by erotic materials.
- Men are more approving of casual sex.
- For undergraduate women, relationship and emotional connectedness are important prerequisites for sex.
Male-Female Differences in Sexuality

• Men more consistently have orgasms during sex.
• Men desire more sexual partners and a greater frequency of intercourse.
• Men think about sex more often and have more frequent and varied fantasies than women do.
Male-Female Differences in Sexuality

• Evidence from a number of sources indicates that men, on average, have a stronger sex drive than women do.

• For a particular heterosexual couple, however, it is quite possible that the woman’s level of desire would exceed the man’s.
Why the Differences?
Research Issues

• Are the differences bogus?
  – Study using bogus pipeline method found that gender differences obtained by self-reports are probably exaggerations.

• Men are expected to want lots of sex. In self-reports, men may exaggerate their desire, or women may minimize theirs.

• Physiological measures are not vulnerable to these reporting biases.
Why the Differences? Biological Factors

• **Anatomy** - the female’s genitals do not have an obvious arousal response like the male’s erection.

• **Hormones** - recent studies found that the effects of testosterone on human sexual interest and behavior are less consistent and more complex than in other species.
Why the Differences?

Cultural Factors

• Double standard
  – Gives men more sexual freedom than women, though this attitude is in decline.

• Gender roles
  – The stereotype of man as initiator and woman as passive object may not encourage a woman to take active steps to bring about her own orgasm
Why the Differences?
Marital and Family Roles

- Children may act as a damper on the parents’ sexual relationship.
- Mother’s worry and anxiety about possible harmful effects on children of witnessing their parents engaging in sex may contribute to her not having a satisfying sexual experience.
Why the Differences?
Other Factors

• Women get pregnant and men do not.
• Ineffective techniques of stimulating the woman
• Fewer women masturbate than men.
• Gender differences in orgasm consistency
Person-Centered vs. Body-Centered Sex

- **Person-centered sex** - sexual expression in which the emphasis is on the relationship and emotions between the two people.

- **Body-centered sex** - sexual expression in which the emphasis is on the body and physical pleasure.
Beyond the Young Adults: Adolescents

• Adolescent male sexuality is body-centered, and the person-centered aspect is not added until later.

• Adolescent female sexuality is person-centered, and body-centered sex comes later.
Gender Dysphoria

• No definite causes of transsexualism are known.

• **Gender Dysphoria** is found in children as young as 2 or 3 years old.
  – Insistence that she or he is the other gender.
  – Preference for cross-dressing.
  – Intense desire to participate in stereotypical play of the other gender.
Transsexualism

- **Transsexual**
  - A person who believes he or she was born with the body of the other gender.

- **Gender Dysphoria**
  - Unhappiness with one’s gender.
Transsexualism

• Male-to-female transsexual
  – A person who is born with a male body but who has a female identity and wishes to become a female biologically in order to match her identity.

• Female-to-male transsexual
  – Those with female bodies who think they are males.
The Gender Reassignment Process

- Gender reassignment is complex and proceeds in several stages:
  - Counseling
  - Hormone therapy
  - Real-life experience
  - Surgery (the majority of individuals stop short of having surgery)

- Approximately two-thirds of those who have sex reassignment surgery show improvements in adjustment, such as reduction in depression.
Testing Genetic Gender

• Technical/legal issues
  Renee Richards
  Renee Richards video
  Renee Richards – part 2

• Buccal smear
  – Test of genetic gender, in which a small scraping of cells is taken from the inside of the mouth, stained, and examined under a microscope.