Clay Kuznia

113164116

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Dr. Pennie S. Seibert

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Gender & Sexuality (Mod 13-14)

Genders are different in a variety of ways. Some differences are small, and others are more dramatic. It has been known that men are more likely to show aggression, and are also more accepting to war. Males tend to dominate social power, and have high salaries in jobs that were traditionally for men. On the other hand women are more interdependent, caring, and listening. A woman is also 5 times more likely to claim responsibility for their children than a man.

Gender differences are affected genetically, as well as physiologically. Both a boy and a girl are genetically the same until about 7 weeks after conception, then the father determines your chromosome (X or Y), which in turn determines your sex. From there physical changes occur during puberty, and sex hormones start to kick in. These hormones help you develop your physical features, and propel you toward adolescence. As children grow up, they begin to organize ideas/actions into “boy things” and “girl things”. This is called the social learning theory, which states that children observe and imitate others. Gender roles contribute heavily on the way people view men and women. Some societies have differing opinions on who the “dominant” sex is, and therefore have a completely different interpretation on what it means to be a man or a woman.

Physiological and psychological influences affect our sexual feelings and behavior. Unlike food, sex is not a need. One may feel strong sexual urges, but these are due to sex hormones that are found in men and women, these are known as testosterone and estrogen, respectively. These sex hormones affect development, bring us into adolescence during puberty, and activate sexual behavior. Females are more affected by increased levels of estrogen, while a man’s sexual stimulations can cause increase in testosterone. Altogether hormones do affect men and women’s sexual desires. Sexual dysfunctions impair one’s ability to go through, or complete, the sexual response cycle. The brain can dramatically alter sexual desires. Teen pregnancy occurs for a multitude of reasons. Teen pregnancy can be due to minimal communication on birth control, guilt, alcohol, and media. Factors that predict sexual constraint are high intelligence, religious engagement, “father presence”, and participation in service learning programs. As you can see, both genetics and our environment gradually shape who we are, and how we react to specific stimuli.

Language & Intelligence (Mod 25-27)

Languages are built on certain templates, or principles. These principles ae phonemes (smallest distinct sound units), morphemes (smallest units that carry information), and grammar. By about 4 months, babies can differentiate sounds and read lips. After babies can read language, they then learn how to produce it. After about 10 months, the child can identify language, and after 18 months children can learn about a word a day. Childhood has a “critical period” where language learning is easy, this critical period closes around age 7. Due to aphasia, an impairment of language, psychologists have found out that language is not just one action. It is a series of actions broke up into categories like speaking, reading, singing, writing, etc. Communication is not only found in humans, but in other species as well. An experiment with a chimpanzee showed that animals can be taught, and effectively use, sign language.

Intelligence can be defined by “whatever intelligence tests measure”, intelligence is an abstract term, unlike width and height. It is also known as the ability to learn from experience, solve problems, and use knowledge to adapt to new situations. Some psychologists have broken intelligence into multiple parts. Howard Gardener broke intelligence into eight parts, while Robert Sternburg broke it into three. Studies have found that intelligence correlates with income, and that success is combination of not just talent, but grit as well. Many different methods of measuring ones intelligence have been used, but the most current test that is standardized, reliable, and valid is the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale. Longitudinal studies have shown that crystallized intelligence (the sum of all our knowledge) increases with age, while fluid knowledge (solving abstract problems with speed) tend to decrease with age.

Genetics can greatly alter ones level of intelligence. Identical twins have about the same intelligence test scores. But intelligence is based of several different genes, there is no one gene that determines a level of intellect. In fact environmental differences tend to better predict levels of intelligence. There are many differences and similarities between male and female intelligence. A study in 1932 showed that on average male and female intelligence was the same, but they specialized in certain areas. Females do well in spelling, verbal fluency, locating objects, detecting emotions, and sensitivity to touch, taste, and color. While males had did better in spatial ability, and complex math problems. Psychologists have also found that between races, there is little difference besides the apparent skin color.