1.

From a very young age I have been educated to accept an erroneous image of gender differences. My mother and father used to possess very traditional ideas of gender and sex, and have raised me based on the mistaken beliefs which they held. One of the main differences they perceived in the two sexes was that men were more rational and women more emotional. This distinction was made clear to my siblings and I from a very young age, both directly and indirectly via expectations and encouraged behavior. I, as a man, was always encouraged to read nonfiction books such as what is called 図鑑 in Japanese and books covering the sciences, whereas my sisters were expected to read fairytales and fictional novellas, predominantly on the topic of love and relationships. In school as well, I was expected to excel in mathematics and the sciences while my sisters experienced a bigger emphasis on language arts and the humanities. Many times, I’ve heard my parents explain my sisters’ poor performance on subjects traditionally categorized as being more “scientific” and “rational” as a result of their sex and certain behavioral predispositions pertaining to sex.   
 Another example of sex-role socialization within my family can be seen in the oral patterns that me and my sisters were expected and encouraged to use. As a boy, my parents were generally more lenient about the language that I used and permitted me to use certain “filthy” and informal, impolite words. However, they were far stricter about my sisters’ use of words and punished my sisters severely for using the kinds of words that I would use on a regular basis. These words include words like “crap,” “ass,” in English and “くそ ,” “死ね” in Japanese. The reasons for this difference in expected lingo was explained by our parents as having to do with social gender norms and societal expectations for the different genders, ofttimes linked to the explanation that women who speak in a vulgar manner find it harder to find a partner.

2.

In my elementary school, children were treated differently based on gender norms that they were expected to follow. An obvious example of this was how male students were encouraged to play outside during recess and engage in rigorous physical activity such as sports, while female students weren’t necessarily expected to spend their recess outdoors, finding an ample supply of toys catering to female audiences to occupy them indoors. The teachers expected boys to play outside and engage in more “rough” and uncivil activities to release their energy. Girls were seen as mature and reserved, capable of finding entertainment without wantonly going about discharging energy through exercise and physical competition. On a more aggregate level, kids who joined the opposite sex in any of these activities were regarded as queer and abnormal, often being teased for their choices. This peer pressure drove students to comply with the ossified social standards. I have no knowledge of how this influenced individuals’ educational choices, but I would say that this sex-role socialization encouraged males to act more “machismo” and females to act more “reserved,” restricting freedom in one’s behavior.

In high school, men were generally expected to pursue higher academic achievement more seriously than women. As a male student of my high school, I was also expected to pursue higher academic achievement, and teachers placed high levels of expectations on me. That’s not to say that women were not encouraged to pursue higher educational attainment, but their pursuits were never taken as seriously as their male counterparts. On an individual level, teachers would tell some female students that they had no need to worry about getting into a high ranking university because they were cute and could easily land a good husband. In one particular case, a female student was advised against aspiring to get into a high ranking university because the teacher thought that would serve as a disadvantage in society. In the case of men, teachers would always stress the need for high educational attainment, mentioning the importance of educational history in landing a stable job to secure a source of income and sustain a family. On an aggregate level, women were not very competitive and hopeful of their chances to get into a good university, nor were they particularly ambitious. Not much value was placed on educational attainment. For male students, however, their educational attainment was a matter of pride and many students aspired for high level universities driven by competition. I, too, decided to pursue high educational attainment partly due to this early sex-role socialization within school.

3.

If I was a woman, I would’ve been raised to believe that I was inherently incapable of logical thought, and would most likely never have ended up pursuing studies in the field of science. I would’ve been discouraged from studying math or familiarizing myself with famous nonfictional texts and studies from the field of social sciences, which would have indubitably affected my educational choices, namely the choice to learn economics in university. In fact, it is highly likely that I wouldn’t have moved on to college at all, given the low expectations for female students to move on to university at my high school and my parents’ opinion that females do not need higher education. In this case, I believe an equality/equity-oriented approach would not have helped given the subliminal factors shaping the way I think and defining my own self-image to reflect ideas of sex-roles widely held by society. Instead, an instructional approach valuing freedom and excellence would’ve enabled me to gather knowledge on various subjects first and overcome any predispositions imposed by society, and would give me a fair opportunity to pursue something I am really good at as opposed to something that society wants me to be good at.

A reverse of the above would be true for if any of my sisters were male.