Gender

Instructor Manual

Editors: Dr. Regan A. R. Gurung and Dr. Aaron Richmond
Contributing Authors: Dawn Albertson, Bethany Fleck, Travis Heath, Phil Kreniske, Linda Lockwood, Kristy Lyons, Aliza Panjwani, Janet Peters, Kasey Powers, Amanda Richmond, Anna Ropp, Jeremy Sawyer, Raechel Soicher, Sunda Friedman TeBockhorst, Courtney Rocheleau

The Gender module provides much-needed distinctions for various terms that are often used interchangeably by adults and students alike, for instance: gender, sex, gender identity, and sexual identities. The module describes some known gender differences and also devotes attention to important issues like gender sexism.

Learning Objectives

- **Relevant APA Learning Objectives (Version 2.0)**

  - Describe key concepts, principles, and overarching themes in psychology (1.1)

  - Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains(1.2)

  - Describe applications of psychology(1.3)

  - Use scientific reasoning to interpret psychological phenomena (2.1)

  - Demonstrate psychology information literacy (2.2)

  - Build and enhance interpersonal relationships (3.2)

  - Adopt values that build community at local, national, and global levels (3.3)

- **Content Specific Learning Objectives: Gender**

  - Distinguish gender and sex, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation.

  - Discuss gender differences that exist as well as those that do not exist.

  - Understand and explain different theories of how gender roles are formed.

  - Discuss sexism and its impact on gender.

Abstract

This module discusses gender and its related concepts, including sex, gender roles, gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexism. In addition, this module includes a discussion of differences that exist between males and females and how these real gender differences compare to the stereotypes society holds about gender differences. In fact, there are significantly fewer real gender differences than one would expect relative to the large number of stereotypes about gender differences. This module then discusses theories of how gender roles develop and how they contribute to strong expectations for gender differences. Finally, the module concludes with a discussion of some of the consequences of relying on and expecting gender differences, such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and ambivalent sexism.

Class Design Recommendations

Given that you can compound the lecture on gender with a few classroom activities and demonstrations, we recommend breaking it up into two class periods!

Please also refer to the Noba PowerPoint slides that compliment this outline.

First class period (50-75 min)

- Introduce important concepts

  - The difference between gender and sex

  - Gender roles, stereotypes, identities and sexual orientation

- Describe gender differences

- Special topic: Are women from Venus and men from Mars?

- Activity or demonstration: Assessing assumptions about gender/Toy story - illustrating

gender differences on a motor skills task

Second class period (50-75 min)

- Describe gender roles

  - Gender schema theory
  - Social learning theory

- Activity: Magazines and gender roles
- Discuss concepts related to gender sexism and socialism

  - Are societal attitudes slowly shifting?

Module Outline

Introduction

The Difference between Gender and Sex.

- Though used interchangeably, **sex** and **gender** do not refer to the same concept. **Sex** indicates an individual biological category (e.g., male, female) as defined by their genetic makeup. Conversely, **gender** refers to the cultural, social and psychological meanings related to masculinity or femininity.

Gender Roles, Stereotypes, Identities and Sexual Orientation.

- **Gender roles** refer to attitudes, behaviors, and/or personality traits that are labeled as either masculine or feminine in a given culture. **Gender stereotypes** signify society's general expectations about the typical characteristics and behaviors of men and women. An individual's **gender identity**references their psychological sense of being male or female. On the other hand, a **sexual orientation** indicates the sexual attraction one feels

towards the opposite and/or same sex. The important thing to remember is that a person can be biologically male, have a female gender identity and be attracted to other individuals with a combination of identities and orientations.

Defining Gender

Traditionally, gender has been defined as a dichotomous (binary) variable with masculinity opposed to femininity. Despite this treatment of the concept, there has also been long-standing acknowledgment that gender is better described as a continuous variable anchored by masculinity on one end and femininity on the other. *Masculinity* refers to quintessential attributes associated with genetic maleness such as muscular, assertive, and rational. *Femininity* refers to those quintessential attributes associated with genetic femaleness such as helpful, empathic, and emotional. In many cultures, there has been a prejudice against people who identify with or exhibit qualities of the side of the spectrum opposite their genetic sex at birth. For example, a man who likes arts and poetry instead of sports may be viewed as effeminate with the understanding that this view is derogatory. In modern times, there has been a social shift in some cultures toward accepting a more *fluid* and nuanced understanding of gender. Students can be confused by gender definitions because they include so many overlapping concepts: *genetic sex*, *sexual orientation*, *gender identity*, and so forth.

Gender Differences

- Girls develop language skills earlier and have a wider vocabulary, however this difference may not hold over time. Additionally, girls are more likely to offer compliments and agree with others. Boys, on the other hand, assert their opinion and offer criticism more frequently. In terms of aggression, boys also display higher rates unprovoked aggression. Young boys often engage in more rough-and-tumble types of play, while girls are less likely to engage in physical activities. In terms of psychological and emotional states, girls are more likely to be depressed and concerned with their physical appearance after puberty.

- An important caveat to note is that the size of these gender differences is often quite small. Knowing an individual's gender doesn't necessarily mean that their behavior is predictable. Additionally, these differences are not set in stone and some are a result of society's endorsement of stereotypes. Consider the common belief that boys have better spatial abilities than girls. Researchers have shown that if girls are given opportunities to practice spatial skills, this gender difference completely disappears (Tzuriel & Egozi, 2010). In fact, results aggregated across numerous studies (Hyde, 2005) have demonstrated that the following assumptions about gender differences are not true:

- Girls are more timid and scared of new experiences

- Boys are angrier than girls. Girls are more emotional than boys.

- Boys are better at math

- Girls are more talkative than boys

Gender Roles

- Gender stereotypes are often so strong because gender is emphasized culturally. **Developmental intergroup theory** posits that adults' emphasis on gender results in children assuming that they can learn about themselves and others based on gender. Additionally, when there are gender differences, children are more likely to see them as more salient and form rigid stereotypes. These stereotypes are often resistant to change.

- **Gender schema theory** states that children are active participants in their own socialization; they actively categorize, or schematize, other people's (and their own) behavior according to gender. The schemas subsequently affect what children recall about others. Individuals across all ages are more likely to remember schema-consistent behaviors. This recall is not infallible. People often mis-remember schema-inconsistent behavior. For instance, if participants were shown images of someone standing over a stove, they are more likely to remember that individual as a woman. Thus, children's gender schemas strengthen over time because they are more likely to recall patterns of behavior that are consistent with their beliefs about a gender.

- Another psychological theory that discusses gender formation is **social learning theory**, which postulates that gender roles are learned through reinforcement, punishment, and modeling. As children, we are rewarded for behaving in ways consistent with our gender. Children also often model behavior after their parents, siblings and/or friends, causing them to develop notions about what kind of behavior is considered suitable for which gender.

Gender Sexism and Socialization

- **Gender discrimination** refers to situations in which people are treated differently because of their gender. When this discrimination results in unwarranted treatment related to one's sexual behavior and appearance, it is known as **sexual harassment.** By the time teens are finished high school, many have experienced some type of sexual harassment (e.g., unwanted touching or comments, being the target of jokes, having their body parts rated,

etc.).

- Differential treatment may also start with parents. A meta-analysis (review of many, many studies) conducted in North America demonstrated that parents not only encouraged gender-stereotypical activities, but also spoke to their children differently. For instance, parents were more likely to speak to sons about science than daughters. Conversely, parents were also more likely to talk about emotions with their daughters than their sons.

- As mentioned earlier, children are also involved in their own socialization. For instance, children play in gender-segregated playgroups by age three. Those who display atypical gender-related behavior experience increased bullying and rejection by their peers.

- **Ambivalent sexism** refers to the complexity of gender attitudes, where women are often associated with positive and negative attributes (Glick & Fiske, 2001). It constitutes two concepts: **hostile sexism** and **benevolent sexism.** The former references beliefs, such as women are inferior and incapable as compared to men. The latter points to the assumption that women require adoration, support and protection by men.

Has Anything Changed in Recent Years?

- In recent years, Western society has seen a dramatic shift in attitudes towards traditional gender roles, media portrayals and legal trends. For instance, across North America, there has been a widespread increase in acceptance of homosexuality. Laws such as "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) have been accused of unconstitutionality less than 20 years after their enactment and continue to meet opposition due to their discriminatory nature with respect to sexual minorities.

Difficult Terms

Agender
Ambivalent sexism
Benevolent sexism
Bigender
Cisgender
Developmental intergroup theory
Gender
Gender binary

Gender constancy
Gender discrimination
Gender identity
Gender roles
Gender schema theory
Gender stereotypes
Genderfluid
Genderqueer/Gender-nonbinary
Hostile sexism
Schemas
Sex
Sexual harassment
Sexual orientation
Social learning theory
Transgender

Lecture Frameworks

Overview

This class has the potential to be quite memorable and can generate insightful class discussion. Start the lecture by making distinctions between terms that are often incorrectly used interchangeably. Provide students with clear definitions of the terms "sex", "gender", "sexual orientation" and "gender identity". From there, move on to a discussion about gender differences, gender stereotypes and theories of how they develop, gender and sexual discrimination, and the recent shift in societal attitudes towards gender and sexual identity minorities.

First Class Period:

- Discussion/warm-up:

  - This humorous video provides a great icebreaker to get students talking about gender differences. It nicely illustrates coping differences. Video link (approximately 2 min): **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg.**

- Lecture: Refer to the slides for the following:

- Define concepts, such as gender and sex. Also describe gender roles, stereotypes, identities and sexual orientation.

- Discuss some gender differences.

- Special Topic: Are Women from Venus and Men from Mars?

  - We often hear that men are more aggressive and dominant, independent, and unemotional compared to women. Women are more anxious, emotional and sensitive than men. We also hear that men are more interested and drawn to 'thing-oriented' activities (e.g., carpentry, engineering). In contrast, women are more attracted to 'people-oriented' activities (e.g., dancing, counseling). The real question is, are any of these stereotypes true? If yes, how large are the differences?

  - Lippa (2010; see evidence based teaching section) found that across cultures men and women do indeed endorse some traits to a higher degree than their gender counterpart. For instance, women tend to be *moderately* higher on the Big-Five traits of agreeableness and neuroticism. Emphasize to students that the finding does not mean men are never higher than women on these two areas (or even other traits), rather that this is the case on average!

  - *Discussion*: The interesting thing about Lippa's research was that there were much larger personality differences on the following: women tended to be more people-oriented and less-thing oriented, whereas men tend to be less people-oriented and more thing-oriented. A great discussion question would be to ask the students why and how they think these differences came about? Ask them to answer keeping the evolutionary perspective, gender schema, and/or social learning theories in mind.

- Activity/Demonstration: Assessing Assumptions about Gender/Toy Story - Illustrating Gender Differences on a Motor Skills Task: In-Class Demonstration

  - End the class with either the activity or in-class demonstration. Both will take about 25-30 minutes; however, both are likely to make lasting impressions upon your students and incite class discussion. See Activities/Demonstrations section below for more details.

Second Class Period:

- Discussion/warm-up:

- Begin your class with a review of last class's activity/or demonstration. If you did not have enough time to have the end-of-class discussion in the last class, ask students to volunteer their thoughts at the beginning of the second class. The warm-up will lead right into a more detailed review of information on gender roles.

- Lecture: Refer to slides for the following:

  - Description of specific gender roles in more detail and also review of gender schema and social learning theories, which illustrate how stereotypes are engendered.
  - Discussion of gender sexism and topics, including gender discrimination and ambivalent sexism.

- Discussion/warm-up:

  - Once you are done explaining the theories, prompt the students to generate examples of the theory that they have observed.
  - We think this would be a great time to play the video titled, "If women's roles in ads were played by men": **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SrpARP_M0o.**
  - A follow-up question you could ask the students is: "Is it odd to see men and women swap roles in portrayals by the video?" If yes, then ask them why they think that is – this is sure to incite discussion.

- Activity: Magazines and Gender Roles:

  - There are two magazines and gender roles activities (see Activities/Demonstrations section). The first will take approximately 20-25 minutes; the second can be as short as 10-15 minutes. Depending on how much time you have available, ending the class with either of these activities will be a powerful way to complete the gender module.

Activities & Demonstrations

Assessing Assumptions about Gender: In-Class Activity

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Copies of excerpts from *Men Without Women*, which can be found on this website: **http://www.socialpsychology.org/action/2009honor5....**

Directions:

- Amy Taylor from Duquesne University won a 2009 teaching award for this engaging activity. She recommends that the instructor divide the students into small groups. Each group should be given one of two versions of excerpts from *Men Without Women*, written by Ernest Hemingway, which involves a conversation between a man and woman. One dialogue will be as originally published; the other swaps the gender of the speakers.

- **Note**: Though Amy Taylor used the dialogue from Hemingway's short narrative "Hills Like White Elephants" (from his 1927 book Men Without Women), the instructor can use any dialogue and even create one. The excerpts used by Amy Taylor can be found on this website: **http://www.socialpsychology.org/action/2009honor5....**

- Once each group receives a version of the dialogue, they have approximately 10 minutes to read it and engage in discourse about their perceptions of the two characters. Once the groups have had the opportunity to discuss, they are to note their impressions of the characters. This task is purposely assigned as it stops students from altering their initial responses after hearing comments made by their peers during the subsequent class discussions.

- Each group is then asked to offer some comments about their impression of the characters to the class. According to Taylor, students have different impressions of the characters depending on which version of the dialogues students read.

- After a few students volunteer the thoughts of their group, the instructor should then reveal that half the students received the original dialogue, while the other half received the same dialogue except the gender of the speakers was switched. The students can then take another 10 minutes with their group to talk about if their evaluations of the characters would change if the genders were reversed from what they read initially.

- In the final part of the activity, the instructor can initiate a guided class discussion in which students can talk about gender biases they displayed or confronted, where these biases originated, how they might be harmful, and strategies to reduce potentially harmful biases.

Toy Story – Illustrating Gender Differences on a Motor Skills Task: In-Class Demonstration

This thought-provoking activity by Knight and colleagues is sure to generate a wonderful class

discussion on gender differences.

Time: 25-30 minutes.

Materials: For the activity, you will need two Barbie dolls with clothes and six Transformer toys and you will need 6 female and 6 male volunteers, but do not tell them what they are volunteering for in advance.

Directions:

- Transformer Toy: Ask three of the male volunteers and three of the female volunteers to leave and wait outside of the classroom. Then, ask the three remaining female and male volunteers to form two lines of same-sex teams. Provide a Transformer Toy to each student and give him or her a picture of what the toy is supposed to look like. Each member of each team has to complete the task before the next member of the team can start. The first team to have all three members complete the task will win the game. Make sure to time the teams and encourage the onlookers to cheer for their favorite team! After the first group of male and female teams finish the task, call the second group back into the room for the Barbie task.

- Barbie: Repeat the same general instructions (i.e., two same-sex teams form a line). This time, however, each team receives a Barbie doll. Each person on a team is responsible for dressing the Barbie doll with an item, such as a dress, shoes or jacket. The first time to finish dressing the Barbie doll with all the items wins. Once again, encourage the rest of the class to cheer for the team they are rooting for.

- When they did this demonstration, the authors found that the male volunteers were quicker to finish the task with the transformer, whereas the female volunteers were quicker to finish the task with the Barbie doll!

- *Discussion*: One way to encourage discussion is to mention that research often finds that performance on a motor task can depend on how gender-typical the task is. Ask your students to come up with reasons why we might see gender differences on this motor task. The students are likely to come with various reasons, however, if you want to take a look at some of the answers generated by the students in the article, please refer to the article at the end of this activity.

- The authors of the study also found that students tended to cheer for their gender team on the task. If the same thing happens in your class, you might ask the students why they cheered for their own gender. Could this type of bias engender even more stereotyping of male and female behavior?

Knight, J. L., Hebl, M. R., & Mendoza, M. (2004). Toy Story: Illustrating Gender Differences in a Motor Skills Task. *Teaching of Psychology*, *31*(2), 101–103.

Magazines and Gender Roles: In-Class Activity

Time: 20-25 minutes

Materials: Images from popular magazines illustrating Goffman's gender stereotypes.

Directions:

- In order to conduct the activity (Jones, 1991), you will need to gather 20 or so images that illustrate Goffman's (1976) five "genderisms" described below. Popular magazines (i.e., cosmopolitan, vogue) are a great place to find these images. Once you have collected enough images, you can display them on slides. You might also consider including advertisements that do not fit into Goffman's categories to ensure that students are also noting the absence of gender stereotypes.
- First, introduce the students to Goffman's (1976) work on five types of stereotypes that occur frequently in advertisements
- Function ranking - refers to the tendency to depict men in executive roles
- Relative size - refers to the tendency to depict men as taller and larger than women (unless the women are being depicted as superior in social status)
- Ritualization of subordination - refers to images of women lying on floors/beds or as objects of men's mock assaults
- Feminine touch - refers to the tendency to show women caressing objects.
- Family - refers to fathers depicted as distant from their children or seemingly closer to their sons, while mothers are portrayed as generally relating to daughters.
- Give the students a sheet, numbered 1-20 with each of the five genderisms next to the number. One-by-one, present the students with each image for 15 seconds and ask them to circle the theme that applies. More than one theme can apply and it is possible that the image doesn't fit into any of the five categories.
- Afterwards, review the advertisements and ask students to volunteer their impressions. Jones also encourages students to imagine and discuss if it feels natural to change the sex of the models in the image. If the students say it feels unnatural, ask them why they think that is. This is likely to generate some more discussion!

Jones, M. (1991). Gender Stereotyping in Advertisements. *Teaching of Psychology*, *18*(4), 231–233.

Another [Shorter] Activity on Gender Stereotypes and Magazines: In-Class Activity

April Seifert from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln offers another class activity that is sure to generate interest and discussion.

Time: 10-15 minutes

Materials: Magazine pages of men and women in various situations and roles.

Directions:

The instructor is to collect pages from popular magazines and hand them out to students in the class. The students should be told to pretend that they are newcomers to Earth and only have these magazines as references for gaining more information about men/women and their roles in society. The students are asked to note their thoughts down and then the class has a discussion about the media's portrayal of men and women. This can lead into various segue about gender roles, body image, stereotypes, etc.

Additional Activities

The Gender Continuum

This is an opportunity for students to understand that traditional binary notions of gender are inadequate to describe the full continuum.

Time: 5-10 minutes for activity and debrief

Materials: Paper and writing instrument

- Directions:

- Part One - Instruct students to review the lists of stereotypically feminine and masculine features you provide (a sample list appears below but feel free to add to it or modify it).

- Part Two - Next, have students revisit their list and circle items in each category that describe themselves. For example, student X might circle "assertive" and "confident" from their stereotypes of maleness and "good listener" and "compassionate" from their stereotypes of female. Students will differ in the sheer number of endorsed qualities but a large number will circle qualities from both the masculine and feminine lists. This is an opportunity to raise questions about: gender being a continuum, heterogeneity of masculinity and femininity, the ways that each person has elements of both.

- Suggested debrief questions:

- Although each person exists on a different point (or points) on the gender continuum, everyone likely identified with qualities that are stereotycically masculine and those that are stereotypically feminine. This is true of people of all sexual orientations, sexes, and gender identities. What does this suggest to you?

- Although we can acknowledge that gender is a nuanced and fluid concept, we all share a collective schema about typical masculine and feminine qualities. Where did we receive this information?

- You can see that some qualities on each list appear praiseworthy while others appear less desirable. What do you make of this? Are there ways that the worst qualities associated with the binary gender categories affect people identifying with those categories?

Sample List:

Feminine

- Compassionate
- Empathic
- Helpful
- Caring
- Good listener
- Passive
- Quiet
- Collaborative

- Careful

- Supportive

- Warm

- Expressive

- Kind

Masculine

- Confident

- Brash

- Assertive

- Driven

- Opinionated

- Stoic

- Logical

- Protective

- Directive

- Aggressive

- Carefree

- Competitive

- Independent

Administer Debriefing Questions

Outside Resources

Video: Human Sexuality is Complicated
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXAoG8vAyzI

Web: Big Think with Professor of Neuroscience Lise Eliot

http://bigthink.com/users/liseeliot

Web: Understanding Prejudice: Sexism
http://www.understandingprejudice.org/links/sexism.htm

Evidence-Based Teaching

Knight, J. L., Hebl, M. R., & Mendoza, M. (2004). Toy Story: Illustrating Gender Differences in a Motor Skills Task. *Teaching of Psychology*, *31*(2), 101–103.

Jones, M. (1991). Gender Stereotyping in Advertisements. *Teaching of Psychology*, *18*(4), 231–233.

See activities and demonstrations for more information on the two articles/activities above.

Lippa, R. A. (2010). Gender Differences in Personality and Interests: When, Where, and Why? *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *4*(11), 1098–1110.

See lecture framework for more information on the findings of this article.

Halpern, D. F. (2014). It Gets Crowded With an Elephant and an Ape in the Room Teaching About Female and Male Cognitive Differences and Similarities. *Teaching of Psychology*, *41*(1), 88–93.

Halpern calls for teachers of psychology to pride themselves on providing a safe environment in which students can understand and think about how men and women are similar, but also different in their cognitive abilities. People often interpret the differences between men and women as deficiencies. Though the two genders may perform better than the other on certain tasks, there is no data that establishes one sex is superior or smarter than the other. Thus, in guiding a lecture on gender differences, Halpern suggests asking the following questions: What is the meaning of differences between men and women and why are we so afraid of them? The answers to these questions are far from simple, but that is what we need to emphasize to our students. Whether or not we completely agree with views in this article, it proves to be a thought-provoking article and we highly recommend giving it a read before teaching a class on gender.

Lips, H. M. (1990). Using Science Fiction to Teach the Psychology of Sex and Gender. *Teaching*

of Psychology, *17*(3), 197–198.

Lips uses two science fiction novels to illustrate how gender affects and frames our social structures and relationships. The Left Hand of Darkness is a novel by Ursula Le Guin, in which people are simply individuals. Every month, without knowing in advance, people develop male or female sex organs and attempt to connect sexually with another person. This has numerous implications for gender roles and norms (e.g., each individual can be both a mother and father). Another book mentioned in the article is the Woman at the Edge of Time, by Marge Piercy. In this novel, society is structured to minimize gender roles, for instance, both men and women breastfeed children. Lips offers more details on both of these novels as well as ideas to promote class discussion to help students realize and appreciate the impact of gender and gender-related norms on family, close relationships and language systems.

PowerPoint Presentation

This module has an associated PowerPoint presentation. Download it at https://nobaproject.com//images/shared/supplement_editions/000/000/317/Gender.pptx?1576429821.

About Noba

The Diener Education Fund (DEF) is a non-profit organization founded with the mission of re-inventing higher education to serve the changing needs of students and professors. The initial focus of the DEF is on making information, especially of the type found in textbooks, widely available to people of all backgrounds. This mission is embodied in the Noba project.

Noba is an open and free online platform that provides high-quality, flexibly structured textbooks and educational materials. The goals of Noba are three-fold:

- To reduce financial burden on students by providing access to free educational content
- To provide instructors with a platform to customize educational content to better suit their curriculum
- To present material written by a collection of experts and authorities in the field

The Diener Education Fund is co-founded by Drs. Ed and Carol Diener. Ed is the Joseph Smiley Distinguished Professor of Psychology (Emeritus) at the University of Illinois. Carol Diener is the former director of the Mental Health Worker and the Juvenile Justice Programs at the University of Illinois. Both Ed and Carol are award- winning university teachers.

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Contact Information:

Noba Project
www.nobaproject.com
info@nobaproject.com