

Chapter 4

Growing Up

Learning to Be Ourselves in a Gender-Polarized World

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Chapter Summary



Jot down a few words to describe each 9-month-old child. How strong, cute, sturdy, cuddly, confident, and fragile is each baby?

You just participated in a “Baby X” study. You know nothing about the babies pictured, but you have a first impression similar to any initial reaction when you first meet someone. Commonly it’s hard to tell the sex of babies, so we look for clues in their dress and surroundings to make these judgments. The girl on the left is clothed in her holiday finery and is sitting in one of her presents, a sled, with her new Cabbage Patch doll. Pretty cute and cuddly. The boy on the right is dressed for some serious play in overalls and Nikes and is about to throw that ball. He looks sturdy and ready for action. Do your descriptions capture these gender-related differences? How did they come about?

As you may have guessed, the two baby pictures are of my daughter, Kate. In a series of 23 “Baby X” studies similar to this one,¹ people repeatedly described the “girl” as more feminine and the “boy” as more masculine (Stern & Karraker, 1989). The central point I want to make here is not that you can be fooled into giving different descriptions, but rather that it’s impossible to tell which came first: Kate’s true essence (“girls will be girls...”) or how she is socially constructed through her interactions with others (“people expect girls to be girls...”).

Two major foci organize this chapter. First, we’ll need to establish that girls as a group and boys as a group differ in key ways. Our focus here is not so much on whether or not differences exist (popular wisdom assumes that they do), but rather on identifying where systematic differences do and do not exist. We need to keep in mind throughout this overview that we are talking about groups, not individuals. Individual girls and boys do all kinds of different things, but we’ll concentrate on consistent **intergroup differences** across girls as one group and boys as another as well as on developmental trends over time as girls and boys grow up.

¹Only two of these 23 studies used photographs; the remainder used either videotapes of or direct interaction with “Baby X.” In addition, in the real studies, people interacted with only one dressed-up version of the same child.

The second, more interesting focus questions why intergroup differences in girls and boys occur. In this chapter, we'll explore the experiences of girls and boys throughout childhood. **Psychoanalysis** (with its roots in Freud's thinking) may help us understand the dynamics of parenting. **Socialization theorists** will expose gendered treatment by socializing agents (parents, schools, peers, and the media) as well as the cognitive development of children themselves. Most important, we'll examine how children's experiences help maintain a system of inequality that privileges and empowers boys over girls.

DIFFERENCE: GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS...

Diane Ruble, Carol Lynn Martin, and Sheri Berenbaum (2006)² pulled together much of the empirical work comparing girls and boys and offered a helpful framework to organize their summary. They clustered findings into four global content areas: (1) general concepts or beliefs about gender, (2) gender identity or self-perception, (3) preferences, and (4) behavioral enactment and adoption. The following overview captures the general developmental trends that run across these four content areas, recognizing that our concentration on differences overlooks many shared similarities between girls and boys (Hyde, 2005).

Beliefs about Gender

Infants as young as 3 to 4 months can distinguish between male and female faces, and by 6 months can do so without hair or clothing cues. By around 2 years, children can match pictured faces to the labels of female and male, and they begin to use these labels—which, in turn, predicts increases in gender-typed play (Zosuls et al., 2009). Beyond simple labeling, a key developmental step in children's understanding of sex and gender is to grasp **gender constancy**; that is, to realize that girls will be female throughout their lives and never will be male, and vice versa for boys

For example, my son, Dan, at age 3 declared that he wanted to be a mom when he grew up. When we challenged him on this declaration, he thought for a moment and conceded that if he couldn't be a mother, he'd settle for being a lion. It was clear that Dan, like most 3-year-olds, hadn't achieved a stable understanding of his sex. A few theorists believe that gender constancy is achieved around age 3 to 4, with most agreeing that Dan will have accomplished this understanding by age 6 to 7. Achieving an understanding of gender constancy lays the groundwork for doing gender-typing (Arthur et al., 2009).

As early as 2-years old, children start to understand some concrete gender stereotypes, such as matching a gender-typed toy with the face of a child (a doll with a girl). Stereotype knowledge of both child and adult activities expands greatly from ages 3 to 5, topping out around kindergarten or first grade. Stereotype knowledge about less concrete social and personal qualities (aggressiveness and politeness) emerge a bit later (around age 5) increase steadily across elementary school, and are more rigidly applied by children to children than to adults. Preschoolers' gender-typing extends to styles (colors and clothing) and symbols (butterflies for girls and grizzlies for boys). For example, I clearly

²Unless otherwise indicated, the findings reported in this major section are based on research reviewed by Ruble, Martin, and Berenbaum (2006; also see Halim & Ruble, 2010). Please see Ruble et al. for specific citations, although updates to their review are cited throughout this section.

remember Kate painstakingly using “girl” and “boy” colors for the thank-you notes she was drawing.

Generally, girls are more knowledgeable about gender stereotypes and also are more flexible in their personal acceptance of them. Through adolescence, increasing cognitive flexibility competes with increasing pressures to conform to adult stereotypes, leading to fluctuations in the flexibility of adolescents’ gender-typing.

As for girls’ and boys’ relationships, young children regard these similarly, but increasingly different perceptions begin from 4 to 6 years-old. By preschool children realize that boys prefer to play in groups and are more competitive (Weinberger & Stein, 2008), and preschoolers will use gender as a reason to exclude others from their play. By ages 9 to 11, children’s conceptions of friendships differ, with girls stressing intimacy and boys, power and control. By age 10, children will acknowledge that girls and women are less valued than boys and men.

Throughout the above review, there are few differences between what girls and boys as *subjects* think. Differences are much more common in perceptions of and expectations for females and males as *objects* of thought (stereotyping). Girls and boys hold consistent beliefs about expected differences between girls and boys, reflecting folk wisdom that girls will be girls....

Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to how we perceive ourselves as female and male. At the most basic level, this is anatomic, but it also includes how we present ourselves as female or male. Thus, our gender identity includes how we label ourselves (woman or man), how we view our activities and interests (being a mother and liking football), how we perceive our own personality characteristics (caring and being assertive), and how we regard our social relationships, including our friendships and sexual orientation (Halim & Ruble, 2010).

Most children can accurately label themselves as a girl or boy by around 18 to 24 months, and by 27 to 30 months they can sort a photo of themselves into a pile of same-sex children. By 8 to 9 years most girls and boys rate themselves consistent with gender-typed patterns of traits. Identifying oneself retrospectively as a “tomboy” is normative for women, especially in younger cohorts (Morgan, 1998), is typically socially acceptable, is unrelated to adult sexual orientation (Peplau et al., 1998), and predicts greater **agency** (feeling in control) in adulthood (Volkom, 2003).

Preferences

Satisfaction with one’s *assigned sex* is almost universal, although around age 13 a gender difference does emerge, such that more girls than boys wish to switch. High school girls in the 1980s were more content than those growing up in the 1950s.

Trends for *toy and activity* preferences parallel patterns for stereotype awareness. More rigid gender-appropriate preferences develop during the preschool years, peaking around kindergarten. Even in relatively egalitarian countries like Sweden, children’s toy boxes reflect stereotyping (Nelson, 2005). Gender-consistent play activities reach over 80% by age 4 and then become almost universal by age 7. Girls show less investment in being congruent than boys, becoming less rigidly gender-typed than boys during the middle grades.

Children's reported and observed preferences for *same-sex peers* are solidly documented, and they appear universal across non-Western and Western cultures. Children are more drawn to their own sex than actively avoidant of the other sex. There are several reasons why girls may prefer girls; and boys, boys. First, girls tend to share a belief that similarity of feelings is important, in contrast to boys, who generally report similarity in activities and interests. Second, the sexes vary in their interactional styles. Play for girls is marked by cooperation, politeness, and interaction with others, in contrast to boys' play, which is more rough-and-tumble, aimed at attaining dominance, and restrictive of interaction. Third, children (especially those who view gender as important; Susskind & Hodges, 2007) show patterns of **in-group** evaluative bias, such that girls assign more positive qualities to girls and boys to boys (Robnett & Susskind, 2010). Fourth, boys value gender equality less than girls, becoming especially negative in 6th to 8th grades, in contrast to girls, for whom valuation of gender equality increases. Finally, children themselves like peers better when they play stereotypically with same-sex friends (Colwell & Lindsey, 2005). All these combine to make being with girls more appealing for girls, and being with boys more attractive to boys.

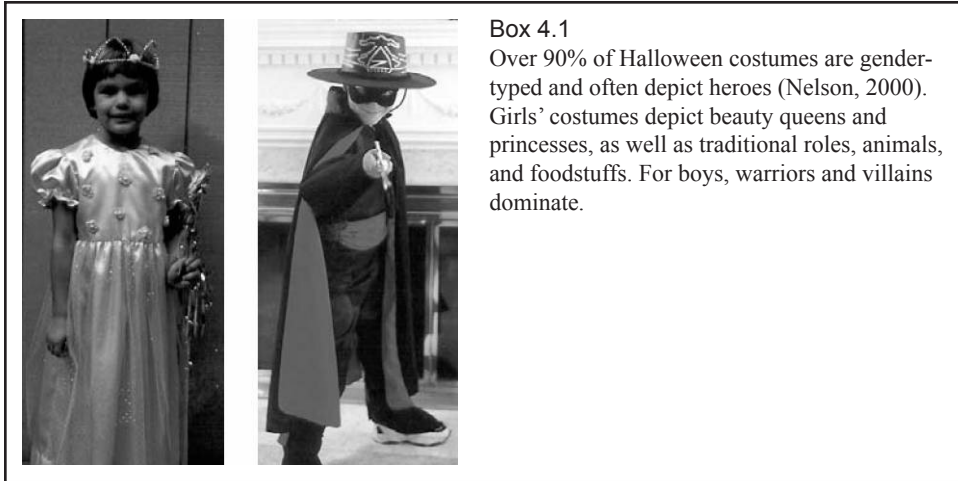
Finally, *appearance* is more sanctioned for boys and *play style* for girls. Children are intolerant of boys who wear feminine hairstyles and clothes as well as girls who play like boys (Blakemore, 2003). Not surprisingly, when my son at age 2 borrowed his big sister's barrettes to "look pretty" for a parade, he was immediately pressured by his peers to remove them.

Behavioral Enactment

This final content category deals with the activities girls and boys do day to day, especially toy and activity choices. Overall, gender-congruent play becomes quite stable as early as 2 to 3 years. Boys more actively avoid gender-incongruent *play* than girls. From ages 5 to 13, how boys generally spend their leisure time becomes more masculine, whereas for girls, their television viewing becomes more feminine while their toy preferences, computer games, and sports become less feminine (Cherney & London, 2006). Girls' leisure time is more often spent shopping and socializing; boys' time is spent in less structured activities and sports. Girls spend more time doing indoor tasks; boys, outdoor chores.³ These differences don't mean that girls always do girl-congruent activities, and boys, boys', but the overall pattern lead Martin and her colleagues (2006, p. 869) to conclude that, at least during preschool, "the two sexes engage in such different activities, they are almost like two separate cultures."

Extensive research on *cognitive skills* turns up some gender differences in children, although there are no gender differences in overall intellectual ability. The largest area of difference involves spatial skills (see Chapter 6 for more on cognitive skills). Turning to *physical performance*, boys are more active (Campbell & Eaton, 1999) and better at physical activities, in contrast to girls, who perform better on fine eye-motor and flexibility tasks.

³How children and adolescents spend their time varies widely globally yet remains gendered. For example, youth in nonindustrial societies spend most of their time doing work, with girls doing unpaid household labor, and boys being paid and drawn away from home (Larson & Verma, 1999).



Box 4.1

Over 90% of Halloween costumes are gender-typed and often depict heroes (Nelson, 2000). Girls' costumes depict beauty queens and princesses, as well as traditional roles, animals, and foodstuffs. For boys, warriors and villains dominate.

In the area of *social skills*, differences in aggressiveness are most pronounced in childhood, with boys being more aggressive. Storytelling by boys has more aggressive content, in contrast to prosocial content by girls (Strough & Diriwaechter, 2000). Self-report measures show girls to be more empathetic than boys, but physiological and unobtrusive measures yield no differences. Early similarities in the expression of emotions diverge in elementary school, when girls begin to express less anger (Cox et al., 2000) and emotions that might hurt others' feelings, and boys start to hide negative emotions like sadness (Oliver & Green, 2001). Girls understand complex emotions better than boys (Bosacki & Moore, 2004).

Regarding *social relationships*, we already have seen that gender segregation among peers is common. In fact, 4-year-old children interact with same-sex peers 3 times more often than with other-sex peers. By age 6, this difference expands to 11 times more often with same- than other-sex playmates. Even though both girls and boys acquire more other-sex friends from grades 6 through 10, young women's and men's friendship networks in Grade 10 remain 75% same-sex (Poulin & Pedersen, 2007). Thus, children's and young adults' worlds outside the home are likely to be gender-segregated as measured by both actual behaviors and preferences, thus reinforcing a self-perpetuating cycle whereby preferences shape choices, and the experiences resulting from these choices affect preferences.

EXPLAINING DIFFERENCES

Although certainly not completely polarized, a strong case can be made for two different patterns for growing up: one for girls and another for boys. Throughout the above descriptions I tried to keep my narrative just that—*descriptive*. We have reviewed evidence that girls and boys share similar concepts of differences between what's female and male; may develop identities that encompass different gender **scripts**; and exhibit different preferences for assigned sex, toys and activities, peers, appearance, and play style. Furthermore, children engage in different behavioral patterns of play; cognitive,

physical, and social behavior; and social interaction. Our next step will be to be to explain these differences. We'll concentrate on two dominant approaches: psychoanalytic and socialization.

CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS: PSYCHOANALYSIS

Classic Freudian psychoanalysis describes women's and girls' development as a deviation from a male model (**androcentrism**) and is rooted in the assumption that anatomy is destiny (**biological essentialism**). Many of Freud's successors in psychoanalysis digressed from the original theory by rejecting both. Instead, they posited a variety of social influences to explain, among other things, how gender identity is learned. The common threads linking these Neo-Freudian theories to psychoanalysis are fundamental beliefs in the primacy of childhood relationships with parents (mostly mothers) for personality development (Jacklin & McBride-Chang, 1991), the stages of psychosexual development (including the critical phallic stage), the power of unconscious motives, and the importance of childhood experiences in affecting stable personality and later relationship formation (Westen, 1998).

One contemporary, feminist, psychoanalytic reformulation of the **phallic stage** of development is offered by Nancy Chodorow in her widely acclaimed book, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978). Chodorow begins her analysis with the Western cultural norm for families composed of an employed father, nonemployed mother, and children. (Chodorow realizes that this does not describe the majority of families today, but it is what we think of as the "ideal" family.) She agrees with Freud that prior to entering the phallic stage, girls and boys are privy to an ideal emotional relationship with their mother (at least from the child's perspective) that is exclusive, intense, and characterized by boundary confusion such that the child does not feel separate from the mother. In other words, the mother is there to meet the child's every need—and selflessly does so.

With the onset of the phallic stage, mothers come to treat their sons as sexual objects (psychologically, not physically) because: (1) the father is distant and less affectionate (he's off at his job a lot), and (2) she, like the rest of society, overvalues males. This sets up the classic Freudian **Oedipal complex**, such that the boy, who also sexually desires his mother, wants to be rid of his father. This stage is successfully resolved when the boy shifts his identification from his mother to his father, thus developing his own heterosexuality and masculinity. An essential part of his masculinity involves his rejection of the mother, symbolically generalizing to all that is feminine. In addition, because his father is away a lot, the masculinity that the boy develops does not come from direct contact with his father, but rather is culled from the culture as a whole. Thus the boy's masculinity is more stereotyped than directly modeled. In addition, as part of masculine stereotyping, the boy adopts a logical, rational orientation so that he thinks as a detached, analytic problem solver. This orientation encourages him to strive for autonomy and to be anxious about forming emotional ties with others.

A girl also enters the phallic stage having been in an ideal pre-Oedipal relationship with her mother. Freud believes that the **Electra complex** is triggered for a girl when she realizes that she has no penis. However, Chodorow points out that Freud never explains why a girl suddenly comes to "miss" her "lost" organ. Chodorow argues that what a girl does come to realize at this stage is not that her mother castrated her, but that boys are preferred by mothers (and society as a whole) and that boys are granted greater independence than

girls. This creates ambivalence for the girl in her relationship with her mother: on the one hand, she wants to retain her warm, fuzzy attachment to her mother; on the other hand, she'd like to be both independent and loved like a son.

All is achieved to some degree by identifying with her mother so that the girl develops her own heterosexuality and femininity. In contrast to the boy's masculinity, the girl's femininity is learned in direct interaction with her mother so that she develops a hands-on gender identity (that is not undermined by the girl's resentment that her mother castrated her, as Freud believed). In fact, there is research evidence finding that daughters at age 4 to 5 show signs of more intense closeness to their mother than sons (Benenson et al., 1998). As part of her femininity and in relations with her mother, the girl develops a strong relational, nurturing orientation (for empirical support, see Finlay & Love, 1998).

Chodorow then plays out the maturation of these children. Both have become heterosexual so they form adult relationships with the other sex. If they pursue the norm of the "ideal" family, the rational man will be employed, the relational woman will turn to her sons to fill the emotional gap left by the distant, logical/rational father, and the whole cycle will reproduce itself.

Chodorow calls for dual-parenting to break this cycle. If fathers, as well as mothers, participate in the raising of their children, then boys will develop a version of masculinity that is hands-on and that includes the care and nurturing of children. (It seems logical to extend this reasoning to dual-employment so that girls internalize the independent, rational aspects of their employed mothers into their directly acquired version of femininity—but this goes beyond Chodorow's speculation.) A potential Catch-22 of this argument is that the work of parenting may not be compatible with men's rational, nonrelational orientation. Despite this limitation, the main point for us is that Chodorow offers a version of psychoanalytic reasoning that is true to the major underpinnings of psychosexual development without relying on biological determinants of personality development, and instead drawing on feminist understandings of male dominance, compulsory heterosexuality, and sexist stereotyping.

Nancy Chodorow's theory lacks the extensive empirical grounding we'll see underlying the socialization theories we consider next, and her model is rooted in a European-American framework, although other authors have expanded its reach (for example, see Segura & Pierce, 1993). However, Chodorow makes at least three important points. First and foremost, change is possible; personality development is not slavishly attached to whether or not an individual possesses a penis. Second, she links intrapsychic development to broad social structures; it is society's framing of families as employed men with dependent wives and children that underlies and maintains the cycle of mothering. And third, Chodorow's analysis strikes a resonant chord with feminist activists who advocate equal sharing of childrearing responsibilities.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING: SOCIALIZATION THEORIES

Socialization theories stress that culture is passed on to children through active learning. Because girls and boys are treated differently, they actively learn different aspects of the culture through a process of **gender differentiation** (or gender-typing). Thus, *socialization takes place within a gendered social context*.

Kay Bussey and Albert Bandura (1999; 2004) proposed **social cognitive theory** as a comprehensive model of socialized learning and then applied this model specifically to

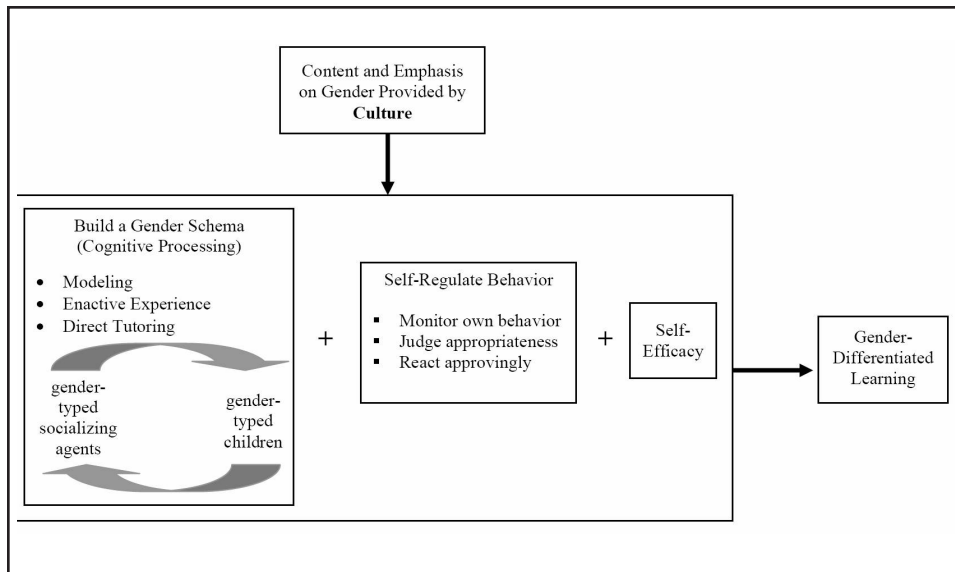


Figure 4.2

Social cognitive theory's model of gender-differentiated learning draws on three principles fundamental to general socialization theories: (1) socializing agents treat girls and boys differently; (2) children dynamically interact with socializing agents to build their own gender schema, which they self-regulate; and (3) these processes are shaped by culture.

gender differentiation. This model, diagrammed in Figure 4.2, brings together three important pieces of former socialization theories: (1) socializing agents, (2) the dynamics of a child's active learning, and (3) culture. We first lay out this model then go on to explore research evidence supporting it.

SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

An important part of learning about gender involves building a **gender schema**; that is, an internal cognitive framework that helps the child organize and understand the meaning of female and male (Bem, 1981; Martin & Halverson, 1983; Markus et al., 1982). This gender schema is developed through two general learning processes whereby new information is **assimilated** into existing schema, and the schema themselves are adjusted to **accommodate** new, discordant information.

Building One's Gender Schema

Constructing one's gender schema depends on the interaction of the child with **socializing agents** including parents, schools, peers, and the media. These socializing agents serve as sources of information for children: they enact behaviors that children can observe so as to uncover the underlying rules and structures of one's culture (**modeling**); they reward and punish the behaviors tried out by children and thus teach them what works to get children



Box 4.3

Sociocognitive theorists emphasize that children actively build their own gender schema so that we'd expect the stereotypes they hold about gender to bias their memories. Joshua Susskind (2003) showed second and fourth graders a series of pictures depicting women and men engaged in stereotypic, neutral, or counterstereotypic (like the one here) activities, repeating different pictures for different children. Children then rated how many times they saw each picture. Children's frequency estimates were greater for stereotyped than other pictures, suggesting that they remembered (assimilated) pictures better if they fit into their gender schema.

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what they value and what doesn't work (**enactive experience**); and they directly tell children what they expect of them and others as girls and boys, women and men (**direct tutoring**). Sometimes there are consistent patterns across these experiences, but oftentimes, there are contradictions, even from a particular socializing agent. For example, it's not uncommon for parents to preach egalitarianism, yet most domestic work and responsibilities are shouldered by a woman.

Socializing agents don't simply impose their gender-typing onto unsuspecting children. Rather, children build their gender schema through active engagement with socializing agents. Socialization theorists have moved toward recognizing that not only do socializing agents treat girls and boys differently, but also girls and boys can become gender-typed themselves so that they encourage gender-typed treatment (Crouter & Booth, 2003).

Self-Regulation and Efficacy

So far, we've explained how a child builds her or his own gender schema. We now need to explain how these cognitive understandings of sex and gender translate into behavior that is different for girls and for boys. A key in this process is to shift regulation of one's behavior from external socializing agents to *self-regulating* ones. To make this shift, children need to monitor their own gender-linked conduct, make judgments about the appropriateness of what they are doing, and react in either self-approving or disapproving ways. In sum, children need to match what they are doing against what they are thinking.

Central to making "good" matches between cognition and behaviors is personal **agency**, or self-efficacy. **Self-efficacy** is the belief that one has the capabilities to produce positive outcomes for one's self. Thus, cognitive understandings of gender identity, gender constancy, and knowledge of gender stereotyping become linked to gender-differentiated behavior by this matching process.

To bring this model to life, consider one of the most central gender differences found by researchers and one that is especially promising for integrating the theories—sex-segregated play and preferences (Ruble et al., 2006). One of the strongest models of children's sex-segregated play is adults' sex-segregated employment: children typically see women working with women and men with men. They also observe adult women interacting more, and more closely, with women friends and men with men friends. In terms of enactive

experience, children who attempt to cross gender boundaries may experience negative outcomes (derision). Girls who seriously and aggressively play sports and boys who head for the doll corner are likely to encounter some negative reactions. Finally, parents may directly instruct girls to play with girls and invite all girls to play; peers may openly redirect cross-gender behavior; schools may have girls line up in one place and boys in another; and the media may openly mock children who attempt to play with the “wrong” group. Thus, girls learn to be with girls and boys with boys because of what they see (modeling), what they try out (enactive experience), and what they are told (direct tutoring).

Consistent with this gender schema, then, an individual girl begins to monitor her own behavior, playing more and more with only girls and avoiding boys and masculine activities. We end up with a girl who lives mostly in a world of girls. In sum, we produce a gender-differentiated behavior that continues on its own accord and is repeated across the child’s life course.

Gendered Culture

Why do children build a gender schema rather than schema based on other features (e.g., eye color)? Sandra Bem (1993) answers that it is because gender is so salient and pervasive in our gender-polarized culture. Just look at our previous review of developmental trends and notice how young children are when they start recognizing and using gender categories. The primacy of gender as a social category encourages children to attend to and process gender-relevant information. Indeed, children’s actions have been shown to vary according to the salience of gender in specific contexts (Messner, 2000).

Thus gender differentiation takes place within a specific cultural context so that **femininity** and **masculinity** are expressed in ways unique to that context (see Leaper, 2000). This approach is also useful for bringing multicultural elements beyond gender (such as the impact of race and ethnicity, class, religion, etc.) into our understanding of socialization processes (Reid et al., 1995). For example, the degree of acculturation of six ethnic groups of women is associated with gender differentiation such that those more in tune with American culture display more Americanized gender stereotyping (Sassler, 2000).

Socialization theorists (as well as others) induce their ideas from a large body of research concluding that growing up female is different from growing up male. I summarize this research in the next section. But before we get caught up in this specific research, I want to point out two patterns that others (Sandra Bem and Hilary Lips) have gleaned from their reviews. Both draw on our understanding that there’s more to difference thinking than simple, value-free difference. Rather, there’s power and oppression in differences that extend beyond individuals to construct a more pervasive, and often self-sustaining, system of inequality.

Sandra Bem (1993) points to the consistent pattern of greater rigidity of gender role socialization for boys than girls. Our sanctions for deviant boys (“sissy,” “gay”) are much stronger than for girls (“tomboy”). This pattern speaks volumes about the overall tendency in our society to prize masculine and devalue feminine activities. When girls seek out masculine activities, they understandably are going for what our society values. When boys participate in the feminine sphere, they are both rejecting their valuable birthright and settling for less (Bem, 1993, pp. 149–151). Given this reasoning, boys’ deviations commit a much bigger mistake than girls’.

Homophobic fears also help to sustain this pattern, with socializing agents anxious that feminine leanings in boys may be early signs of adult homosexuality (Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999). Indeed, the **sexual orientation hypothesis** proposes that men and boys acting in feminine ways are more likely to be perceived as gay than girls and women with masculine leanings (McCreary, 1994). This presumed linkage between “feminine” males and homosexuality is consistent with the combination of findings that more fathers insist that sons do not violate gender-role dictates for play (Turner & Gervai, 1995), that boys are more likely to believe that their father will disapprove of cross-gender behavior (Raag & Rackliff, 1998) and that men hold more negative attitudes about homosexuality (Whitley & Kite, 2010). In general, parental homophobia and traditional gender-role attitudes go hand-in-hand (Holtzen & Agresti, 1990).

Hilary Lips (2002) highlights patterns in research findings whereby girls learn a habit of silence, self-doubt, and acquiescence (powerlessness). In contrast, boys consistently appear to be encouraged to achieve mastery over tasks and influence over people (power). Although both girls and boys arguably start with the same potential to develop wings and take flight, Lips asserts that a fundamental, pervasive **meta-message** that comes through for girls serves to clip their wings and hold them back. She sums up the socialization of girls as conveying a **cultural preparedness for powerlessness**.

As we now turn to research findings, consider who has the most to gain from adhering to these practices. Would I benefit my son as much as my daughter by following rigid gendered dictates in American culture? Given our valuation of those traits and behaviors that accompany the agentic masculine role, clearly my son has more to gain by sticking to them. When we factor in other forms of oppression, it becomes more and more understandable that women and girls, as well as those subordinated based on other statuses (such as race and sexual orientation), would have even less to gain by promoting gender polarization.

DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT BY SOCIALIZING AGENTS

Research by socialization theorists typically clusters socializing agents into four categories: parents and families, schools and teachers, peers, and the media. Our focus here is on how these sources treat girls and boys differently, thereby setting up different contexts in which girls and boys grow up. Please note that I have worked hard to use only up-to-date research to describe contemporary socialization practices, although I will draw on older research to underscore process effects (how certain practices relate to specific outcomes).

Parents and Families

Across many different cultures, parents typically want at least one child of each sex (Hank, 2007). Parents *believe* that they treat girls and boys comparably, and indeed on many dimensions they do (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). Furthermore, the individual characteristics of children affect how parents treat them (Karraker & Coleman, 2005), and parents seem to rely less on gender as their children get older (van Wel et al., 2002). However, patterns that do consistently identify differences are quite telling. For example, from the very start, parents of

**Box 4.4**

What message about the gender-typing of driving does what's happening in the front seat send to those watching, day in and day out, in the back seat?

newborn girls described their daughters as finer featured, less strong, more delicate, and more feminine than the parents of newborn boys rated their sons (Karraker, Vogel, & Lake, 1995).

Not surprisingly, parents prefer gender-appropriate *toys* for their children, more often honoring both girls' and boys' requests for gender-congruent toys (Etaugh & Liss, 1992) and redirecting children's cross-gender toy choices (Leaper et al., 1995). However, when parents choose toys to actually play with, they (like their children) gravitate toward male-typed toys (Idle et al., 1993), allowing greater flexibility with girls than boys (Wood et al., 2002). Nowhere is this clearer than with electronic and computer games where the interests (Cassell & Jenkins, 1998) and efficacy (Whitley, 1997) of boys dominate. This makes life simple for sons: parents prefer and actually play with masculine toys. For daughters, the message is mixed: many "boys" toys are more engaging, but parents don't desire them for their daughters.

There is some evidence that parents *communicate* differently with daughters and sons. For example, parents allowed greater risk-taking by boys (Morrongiello & Hogg, 2004), and they reacted to boys' risk-taking with discipline and to girls' with safety rules (Morrongiello et al., 2010). Parents also generally use more affiliative, friendly speech with boys and more assertive speech with girls (Shinn & O'Brien, 2008). Fathers especially were more likely to tell their son family stories with autonomy themes (Fiese & Skillman, 2000). Daughters' stories more commonly included emotional references (Flannagan & Perese, 1998), and they talked about frustrations in conversations with mothers (Aldrich & Tenenbaum, 2006). Mothers engage in more conversations with their young daughters and give more instructions to their sons (Clearfield & Nelson, 2006).

What parents themselves *do and say* every day sends different messages to girls and boys. Children are astute observers of how parents interact with each other, picking up gendered stereotypes (Meyer et al., 1991). For example, when my son was 4 years old, he declared that he would only do "boy" jobs. I was stunned. Deciding to play this out, I asked him just what "boy" jobs he intended to do. Defiantly he retorted: "Laundry—just like Dad!" I just smiled... Also, family dynamics are different when parents together are involved with their child instead of just one; for example, mothers become less involved and more negative in these triadic interactions (Lindsey & Caldera, 2006).

Obviously, families themselves are *diverse*, varying according to composition, living arrangements, race, ethnicity, class, geography, and parental sexual orientation (Davenport & Yurich, 1991). For example, across families, children with other-sex older siblings were most gender-typed (Golombok et al., 2000). Thus, it is important to remember that there is a lot of **intersectionality** going on here so that what we know about one contributor (such as gender) likely varies across diverse families.

Reviewing patterns across race/ethnicity (Reid et al., 2008), generally African American families are low in gender polarization. In contrast, Asian and Latino families are commonly more traditional and less flexible in their expectancies for gender-typed behaviors. However, these comparisons would surely be better informed if they also took into account factors like social class and mothers' employment status.

Across a wide range of measures of self-esteem and psychological well-being there are few differences between children reared by homosexual versus heterosexual parents (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). Children raised in lesbian families are no more likely than other children to be homosexual, although the former may more readily explore same-sex relationships (Golombok & Tasker, 1996), show more empathy for social diversity, and are less confined by gender stereotypes (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010). A dated but exemplary intersectional study of African American lesbian mothers suggests that they treat their children with even less gender polarization than other mothers (Hill, 1987).

Schools and Teachers

The lessons children learn at school about their gender identities and roles come from how teachers treat them, from how schools are structured, from counselors and other specialists, and from the materials to which they are exposed. All come together to produce an educational climate that two long-time researchers, in their review of research spanning over 20 years, summarized as “shortchanging girls” (Sadker & Sadker, 1994)—and that a more recent review finds largely unchanged (Meece & Scantlebury, 2006).

Myra and David Sadker (1994) describe the *gendered lessons* taught at school: girls learn to speak quietly, to defer to boys, to avoid math and science, to value neatness over innovation, and to stress appearance over intelligence. Girls also experience an erosion of their achievements so that their tendency to outperform boys when they first start school degenerates to a point where they lag behind boys by high school graduation. Other studies add that girls learn to present themselves as modest, self-deprecating, passive, and obedient compared to boys, who learn to be self-assertive and self-promoting (Ellis, 1993). A clever observational study of preschool practices involving children's body movements, comportment, and use of physical space records some subtle ways in which girls and boys are shaped to conform to gender expectations (Martin, 1998).

Although teachers generally espoused nontraditional gender beliefs for both adults and children, they tended to be more accepting of cross-gender behavior from girls than boys (Cahill & Adams, 1997). Researchers observing preschool teachers concluded that they pay less attention to girls, express more emotion toward girls, comment on girls' appearance, and use gender-typed toys and classroom activities (Chick et al., 2003). Teachers continue to expect girls to excel in verbal abilities; boys, in math (Herbert & Stipek, 2005). Some of these teachers' attitudes may be facilitated by the stereotyped textbooks that are used to train them (Yanowitz & Weathers, 2004).

A clever study of gender bias reported by 350 fourth, sixth, and eighth graders in interviews and daily diaries found that fully 76% of these students noted awareness of, witnessing, or being targeted by some forms of gender bias across sports, school, and

home life (C. S. Brown et al., 2011). The most common complaints centered on preferential treatment by teachers and discrimination in sports participation. Can you guess which of these complaints came from boys and which from girls? To be sure, check out the footnote below.⁴

One might expect gender-segregated education to avoid some of these pitfalls, especially for girls; however, the data are, at best, mixed. On the one hand, there is some evidence of less gender stereotyping (Campbell & Evans, 1993; Lawrie & Brown, 1992) and higher career aspirations (Watson et al., 2002) in all-girl schools. On the other hand, few differences between the career pursuits of thousands of alumnae from coed and all-girl high schools were found (Duncan et al., 2002). Home background appears to be a better predictor of girls' achievement in physics than the gender composition of girls' schools (Young & Fraser, 1992). Neither predominately Black nor White colleges seem to offer African American women an ideal setting from which to develop academically, personally, and in relationships with men (Gillem, 1996).

Other educators focus on making changes within existing *school systems*. Simply adding male teachers is not sufficient (Sargent, 2005). The Sadkers (1994) recommend over 250 books with strong female characters. Others recommend teacher-training reform that makes teachers aware of subtle, and often unintended, gender-biased practices (Vandell & Dempsey, 1991), as well as policy development to encourage diversity (Maras & Archer, 1997). Two leading organizations pursuing such reforms are the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the Association of American Colleges and Universities. For example, the AAUW published a report and video exploring such schoolwide reforms as team teaching and cooperative learning and their impact on girls in middle schools (AAUW, 1996) and another focused on Latina girls (Ginorio & Huston, 2000). Another strong resource is "The Girls Report" commissioned by the National Council for Research on Women (Phillips, 1998).

Peers

Relatively little is published about the patrolling of children's gender-role conformity by peers, and their influence seems more subtle than overt. More children in an ethnically diverse group of third-to-sixth graders wanted to be friends with a fictitious child who behaved in gender-traditional ways than with a "deviant" child (Zucker et al., 1995). Even playing gender-inconsistent musical instruments is disliked (Harrison & O'Neill, 2002). Middle class, mostly White girls and boys, ages 7 to 12, positively evaluated the performance of a videotaped fifth-grade girl exhibiting masculine stereotyped behavior, but demeaned her personality (McAninch et al., 1996).

The clearest link between playing with same-sex peers and sex-differentiated behavior has been provided by Carol Martin and Richard Fabes (2001). The more both girls and boys play with same-sex peers, the more their behavior conforms to gender stereotypes. Not too surprisingly, boys who play largely with other boys belittle feminine stereotyped traits (Robnett & Susskind, 2010). This pattern carries over into adolescence where gender segregation and gender-typing are related (Mehta & Strough, 2010). Indeed, Eleanor

⁴Boys are more likely to say things like: "Some teachers automatically think girls are smarter than boys and are more mature," whereas girls will complain about sports: "When girls want to play basketball no one wants to pick them because they are girls" (p. 466).

Maccoby (1998) roots the development of gender-differentiated behavior squarely in the gender-segregated peer groups of children.

The relative paucity of research in this area is inconsistent with a recent debate in developmental psychology on the impact of peers. Group socialization theory, forwarded by Judith Rice Harris (1998), posits that children's interactions with groups of peers are the critical determinants of socialization, outweighing even the influence of parents. A more balanced argument is offered by Deborah Vandell (2000), who regards socialization as resulting from the complex interplay of parenting, the child's preferences and capabilities, multiple social relationships (among which peers are only one), and multiple contexts (including home, schools, and neighborhoods). Given this renewed interest in the field as a whole, the role of peers in gender socialization may attract more research attention in the future.

Media

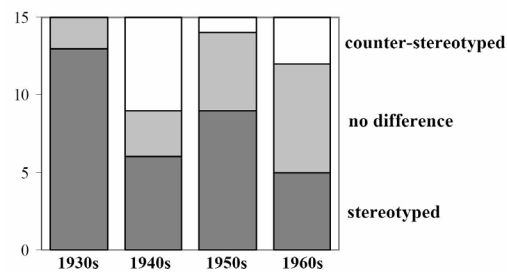
A rich and extensive body of research considers everything from birth announcements to educational materials, storybooks and comics, children's magazines, videogames, television programs, cartoons, and advertisements. Girls/women generally are underrepresented and /or stereotyped; for example, in preschool education software (Sheldon, 2004), in comics (Glascok & Preston-Schreck, 2004), on the television shows (Luecke et al., 1995) and cartoons (Swan, 1995) children watch, in coloring books (Fitzpatrick & McPherson, 2010), and in popular children's picture books (Hamilton et al, 2006). Video games especially have garnered a lot of recent attention. These games, their covers, and their magazines typically highlight male characters (Burgess et al., 2007), sexualize female characters (Jansz & Martis, 2007) and portray them as helpless (Ogletree & Drake, 2007), and link male protagonists with aggressiveness (Dill & Thill, 2007) and power (Miller & Summers, 2007).

Over time, there have been some positive changes. On television, women's occupations shifted from traditional to gender-neutral through the 1990s (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). In picture books, although girls' roles remain largely confined to the home, boys have moved in, although somewhat stereotypically and with few positive models of fatherhood (Anderson & Hamilton, 2005).

Still, there hasn't been the consistent forward progress we might expect. Girls in storybooks remain consistently passive and dependent across 50 years (Kortenhaus & Demar-

Figure 4.5

Roger Clark and his colleagues (2003) rated 15 different personal qualities (e.g., aggressive and submissive) exhibited by characters portrayed in Caldecott award-winning and runner-up children's books across four decades. Comparing these ratings for female and male characters, they classified each portrayal as gender-stereotyped, not different, or counter-stereotyped. Notice that stereotyping does not decline in a neat, progressively more egalitarian pattern, but rather fluctuates according to the sociopolitical climate of each time period.



est, 1993), and the gender-typed marketing of toys hasn't changed in 25 years (and across five continents) (Furnham & Twigg, 1999). Toys targeting girls remain focused on feminine qualities, like attractiveness and nurturance, whereas boys' toys continue to promote masculine-typed characteristics, such as violence and competitiveness (Blakemore & Centers, 2005). Even books touted as "nonsexist" because they portrayed female characters in male-stereotypic roles continue to rely on feminine stereotypes to describe personality, domestic chores, and leisure activities (Diekman & Murnen, 2004).

If we relied on these sources to teach us about the roles and activities of girls and boys, we'd learn that girls and women need to be rescued, are less adventurous, engage in fewer occupations, and play less powerful and more passive roles (Brabant & Mooney, 1997; Tepper & Cassidy, 1999). We'd discover that masculinity is linked to violence (Palmerton & Judas, 1994) and that boys and men are aggressive, argumentative, and competitive (Evans & Davies, 2000). We'd see that one way to make cartoon characters "bad" is to have them deviate from gender stereotypes (Ogletree et al., 2004). We'd find that the fantasy play promoted for girls involves nurturance, grooming, mothering, and theatrics, in contrast to boys engaging in working, building, managing, and battling (Kline, 1993). At the very start of children's lives, we'd see that birth announcements herald pride in the birth of a son and happiness in the birth of a daughter (Gonzalez & Koestner, 2005).

DYNAMIC LEARNING

Does all this differential treatment have an impact on girls and boys? Because we ethically and practically can't randomly assign children to different forms of socialization, the critical experimental test of this linkage cannot be conducted. However, two types of studies can inform our understanding: (1) short-term experiments exposing participants to stereotyped images and measuring their impact and (2) correlational studies exploring the amount of exposure a child has to gender-differentiating socializing agents. The latter approach predicts that the more experience a child has with gender-typing agents, the more she or he will exhibit gender-congruent behavior. Across both types of studies, *exposure* is the key element.

A few short-term experiments do find a link between exposure to sexist displays and responses from adult audiences. Many of these types of exposure experiments have focused on the impact of media on women's body image concerns. For example, Emma Halliwell and her colleagues (2011) randomly assigned British women to view control, sexually passive, or sexually agentic (presumably empowering) print images of women. *Both* types of sexualized images produced heightened weight dissatisfaction in women viewers.

In direct tests of children's responsiveness to external pressure, Donna Fisher-Thompson and Theresa Burke (1998) actively encouraged or discouraged third and fourth graders to engage in cross-gender activities. On a subsequent task, discouraged children avoided gender-incongruent activities, but encouraged children did not differ from a control group that was neither encouraged nor discouraged. Jennifer Pike and Nancy Jennings (2005) exposed first and second graders to non-toy commercials or either traditional or nontraditional toy ads targeting a boys' toy. Children, especially boys, in the traditional condition felt most strongly that the targeted toy was for boys.

Turning to correlational studies, age should be indicative of greater exposure. Arguably, older children have had more chances to be influenced by gender-typed agents than younger ones. The general pattern through the early school years is that gender-typing

increases as children age (Ruble et al., 2006). Similarly, a meta analysis concluded that as exposure to gender stereotyping in media increased, so did gender-typed behavior and endorsement of traditional gender attitudes, especially among children (Oppliger, 2007).

Another indicator of exposure is amount of television viewing as well as book and magazine selections. Surprisingly, television exposure appears less powerful in more recent studies of both stereotyping (Ward et al., 2005) and body image concerns (Tiggemann, 2006), yet fashion magazines continue to be linked with issues regarding thinness (Tiggemann, 2006). Among children, greater exposure to sexist cartoons is associated with more traditional job expectations (Thompson & Zerbinos, 1997), and conversely, reading about strong same-sex characters is linked to higher self-esteem (Ochman, 1996).

Tarja Raag (1999) related 4 to 5 year-olds' perceptions of significant others' proscriptions with children's toy choice. Both girls and boys who thought one or more familiar people disapproved of cross-gender play were more likely to make gender-congruent toy choices, and boys (but not girls) actually played less with gender-inappropriate toys. Similarly, children whose parents held traditional attitudes showed more gender-typed behavior toward babies, such that girls displayed more interest in, nurturance toward, and interaction with babies than boys (Blakemore, 1998).

Finally, researchers have examined parental attitudes arguing that children (especially girls) exposed to nontraditional parents will be less gender-typed. Indeed, although children generally tend to be less traditional than their parents (Cichy et al., 2007), children's gender-role attitudes are linked to those of their parents (Sutfin et al., 2008). A more complex study of family patterns identified three clusters of families (Marks et al., 2009). In two of these clusters, patterns were as we'd expect: egalitarian parents had egalitarian children, and when both parents were traditional and the mother was more so, these children endorsed traditional views. However, in a third cluster when both parents were traditional but the father was more so than the mother, the two siblings studied (the first- and second-born) were both *egalitarian*. In fact, across all 358 families, siblings always shared similar attitudes. Notice, though, that there is no consistent pattern here for one parent with one child: traditional mothers and fathers can have traditional *or* egalitarian children depending on which one is more traditional than the other. In sum, family dynamics appear quite complicated, sometimes showing transmission (similarity) and other times revealing a "rebellion" effect.

What families *do* may be more consistently related to children's gender-role attitudes than parental attitudes. Parents with unequal divisions of household labor and employment had children who held more traditional occupational aspirations (Fulcher et al., 2008) and who grew up to allocate household chores more traditionally (Cunningham, 2001). Children whose mothers modeled nontraditional activities in the home (mow the lawn) were less likely to show gender-typed preferences for themselves (Serbin et al., 1993). Analyzing daily phone interviews with 9- to 11-year-olds, fathers in single-earner families spent more time with their sons, in contrast to fathers in dual-earner couples who spent equal amounts of time with their daughters and sons (Crouter & Crowley, 1990), and college students raised by single mothers were more nontraditional than those reared in two-parent families (Slavkin & Stright, 2000).

The bottom line is that the *causal link between what we know socializing agents do and what children think and do is tenuous*. There is ample evidence that socializing agents do not treat girls and boys similarly, and also evidence that girls and boys are differentiated,

at least in some important ways. It seems logical that the former causes the latter, but other possibilities exist. Maybe children themselves act differently (because of their biologies or how they think), and socializing agents are simply picking up on those differences. Maybe there are outside factors that simultaneously affect both children and these socializing agents. The safest conclusion proposes a circular pattern: socializing agents influence what children think, feel, and do, and these children, in turn, affect how socializing agents respond to them.

AN INTEGRATED UNDERSTANDING

We have seen that biology, evolution, family dynamics (Chodorow, 1978), and socialization practices all contribute a piece to a complex puzzle for understanding how gender differences come about. Each tells part of the story of gender differentiation. Together these theories create a holistic human psychology that helps us understand all three core aspects of who we are: how we think, feel, and act—all within the context of our culture.

At least four common perspectives are shared by each component. First, each combines essentialist elements with constructionist ones. Each says something about who we ARE (via our genes, anatomy, or the cognitive schema we develop) and what we DO (via our interactions with our physical, interpersonal, social, and cultural environments). Second, learning occurs through human interaction. Third, each assumes that how we think, feel, and act occurs within a specific cultural context. Childhood socialization does not take place in a vacuum; rather, it takes place in relation to others. Furthermore, social institutions or contexts shape our relationships with others. Fourth, each emphasizes the importance of childhood as a formative stage in personality development.

BREAKING THE CYCLE

How, then, do we break the cycle of sexist socialization? Both Chodorow and social cognitive theorists describe self-perpetuating cycles that serve to maintain the gender differentiation of generation after generation of children. Chodorow argues that we can break this cycle by engaging in dual-parenting so that children have both female and male models of nurturing (be they parents or other significant people). Social cognitive theorists call for



Box 4.6

When children imagined a man doing something counterstereotypic like sewing, they went on to expect another man to be more stereotyped (Hughes & Seto, 2003). Such compensatory expectancies say a lot about the resistance of stereotypes to change.

changing gender schema and socializing agents. But for those of us who are parents, we know that we control an ever-shrinking portion of our children's socialization. There are powerful forces out there (schools, friends, and the media) that seem to effortlessly derail even our most dedicated efforts.

If socialization is confined to childhood, then activists might question why we should forsake generations of adults, whose socialization is complete, in hopes that the next generation will transcend our culture. Indeed, this is the Catch-22 of turning to socialization for broad social changes toward nonsexism: How do we socialize children to be nonsexist within a sexist context? Isn't socialization the passing on of one's culture to the next generation? How do we do that within a sexist culture? And, even if we are successful with a few children, aren't we condemning them to being regarded as social deviates? How do these children cope with being out of synchrony with the majority in their culture?

Sandra Bem (1983) helps us tackle at least some of these questions by allowing for individual differences in **gender schematicity**; that is, how rigidly gender differentiating the cognitive lenses (**schema**) are through which an individual views the world. Every child is exposed to different degrees of gender-polarized socializing agents and thus will develop individualized degrees of gender schema formation.

My daughter, Kate, encountered a most amazing example of gender-schematic thinking when she was in kindergarten. Every week a different "letter person" visited her classroom. When Mr. T came, they learned that Mr. T liked lots of things starting with the letter "t": tomatoes, turquoise, turtles, etc. Kate excitedly reported on the interests of each character: Mr. T, Mr. B., Mr. M, etc., becoming increasingly agitated that no "girl" characters had shown up. Needless to say, she was ecstatic when "Miss A" appeared, soon followed by "Miss E." Unbelievably, someone had gendered the alphabet: consonants were boys and vowels were girls! (The school told me that this was part of a nationwide program, not the machination of some clueless teacher.) No matter how important we claimed vowels to be ("You can't make a word without one"), Kate was crushed that there were fully 21 boy letters and only 5 girls. (I can't help but wonder if the school would have been as tolerant of this system if racial or class dualities had been used. It's easy and instructive to consider these kinds of absurd statements here, especially regarding the letter Y [intersexed?]).

Taking this thinking about gender schematicity one step farther, Bem (1983) gives us some pointers on how to "raise gender-aschematic children in a gender-schematic society." First, Bem suggests that we teach our children that the only differences between women and men, girls and boys are anatomical and reproductive and that these differences have very little real bearing on our opportunities, our identities, and so on. This second point is critical to avoid regressing to **biological essentialism** and the reassertion that "anatomy is destiny" (Lott, 1997), or that genes dictate group differences like making girls more nurturing than boys (Cole et al., 2007).

Teaching anatomical difference as the defining, *but not constraining*, feature of sex counters the pervasive tendency for most children to learn to distinguish the sexes by relying on external indicators such as clothing, interests, and hairstyles. Bem (1989) illustrated how persistently some children over-rely on exterior signs of gender. She showed children pictures of a nude toddler, followed by pictures of the same toddler outfitted to look like a boy or a girl. Gender-schematic children misidentified the anatomically known boy as a girl when he wore a cheap wig with ponytails.

Teaching children to rely on external cues to determine gender can lead to some humorous, but telling declarations by children. Bem (1993, p. 149) relates the story of her son, who wore barrettes in his hair to nursery school where he was hounded by another boy to a point where her son exposed his genitals to “prove” his maleness. Undeterred by what should have been the definitive proof, the other boy persisted: “Everybody has a penis; only girls wear barrettes.”

Furthermore, relying on external, changeable cues to determine another’s sex conveys a message that “being male or female is something to work at, to accomplish, and to be sure not to lose, rather than something one is biologically” (Bem, 1993, p. 148). Bem argues that such fear of gender bending (confusing one’s gender) contributes to adults’ attempts to prove that they are “real” women and men by limiting their choices to those deemed gender-appropriate, thus reinforcing rather than challenging stereotypes.

In contrast, children who define sex by anatomical differences avoid relying on restrictive stereotyping to define another’s gender (Bem, 1989). Only about half the 3- through early 5-year-olds tested could correctly identify the sex of toddlers who were nude from the waist down. But of the children who made correct identifications, fully 74% showed gender constancy as they accurately named the sex of a child they had seen nude, even when that child was dressed or coifed to look like the other sex.

A second positive strategy caregivers can adopt is to provide children with alternative schemas to a gender schema. One such alternative is an **individual-differences schema**. This schema is constructed around the idea that individuals are unique so that what defines them is their own interests, preferences, and activities, not necessarily those dictated by their gender. Accordingly, Billy likes football because Billy likes football, not because he is a boy. Similarly, Billy likes cooking because Billy likes cooking, not because Billy is a sissy. (My kids have even discovered advantages from adopting this perspective. They tell me that they don’t like zucchini because it doesn’t taste good to them; just because I like it, doesn’t mean they should like it too!)

A **cultural-relativism schema** helps children understand that people in different cultures and different historical times held different beliefs about what was appropriate for women and men, girls and boys. My daughter is stunned by videos like “Anne of Green Gables,” which shows orphaned Anne being shunted from family to family to help with the housework, and “League of Their Own,” where women baseball players are trivialized with makeup and skirted uniforms that offer no protection against severe bruises from sliding into base (Randle, 1992). The lesson such exposure to variety teaches is that no one point of view is sacrosanct.

A third alternative schema helps children deal with their difference from more strongly gender-typed peers, teachers, and others: a **sexism schema**. Having a sexism schema—a way to label unfair treatment as sexist—discourages children from internalizing sexist ideas. For example, a substitute gym teacher told my fourth-grade daughter’s class that boys were good at many sports because they had more experience playing them; in contrast, girls’ expertise was limited to jumping rope. Combine this with the fact that much more attention is afforded male than female athletes, and my daughter eventually could believe this to be true. This stereotype would be reinforced by her not participating in sports, thus becoming incompetent at them.

Instead, Kate’s fine-tuned sexism antenna went up. She discussed the situation with us at home that night, and the next day she complained to her teacher. Having a wonderfully

sensitive teacher, her teacher soon discovered that other girls were disturbed by the comment and invited the gym teacher to talk to the class. This, of course, opened up a whole discussion about women and sports. Similarly, Sandra Bem's son didn't discard his barrettes just because another boy was being sexist about it.

Lindsay Lamb and her colleagues (2009) tested an intervention with elementary school children in which they practiced challenging sexist remarks. Participants did notice and confront more remarks than before the intervention and in comparison to a storytelling-only control group. Participation also produced less gender-typing in girls—but it failed to influence boys. In a different study, college students kept daily diaries recording sexist events, which in itself made women's beliefs less sexist (Becker & Swim, 2011). However, to have a similar impact on men, men needed to both acknowledge sexist daily hassles in their diaries and express empathy for the women more commonly targeted by these events. Looking across both studies, having a well developed sexism schema itself may keep my daughter from assimilating sexism into her self schema, but for my son, he may also need some empathy training.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

We reviewed a lot of compelling evidence in this chapter that writes two different **scripts** for growing up female and male in North American culture. Chodorow's psychoanalytic approach describes two different personality configurations resulting from parent-child socialization practices: a girls' version that stresses nurturance and relational thinking and a boys' version that emphasizes autonomy, detachment, and rational thinking. Social cognitive theorists highlight the roles socialization agents (including parents, schools, peers, and the media) and children themselves actively play to again write different scripts for girls and boys.

Across both approaches, gender becomes a focal point for socialization processes because our society polarizes people along gendered lines. An integrated approach to understanding the role of socialization in shaping gender identity and roles draws on both theories and their data as well as on the biological and evolutionary contributions we reviewed in the previous chapter.

Two general patterns emerged from our review of research that highlighted the greater rigidity of boys' socialization and girls' preparation for powerlessness. Both patterns fit with our understanding that difference is not value-free, but rather leads down a slippery slope involving power, oppression, and systems of inequality. Indeed, it is this understanding that lies at the heart of challenges to feminists interested in changing socialization practices. How does one eliminate sexist socialization when socialization itself is reflective of and surrounded by a sexist culture? The answer lies beyond any individual, although individual parents can find some help by confining difference to anatomical and reproductive distinctions that are not constraining and by encouraging their child to develop alternative schemas, such as a sexism schema.

On a personal note, people often smile at me knowingly and assert: "Now that you have a boy and a girl, you must realize that there's something about girls that makes them different from boys," implying a presumably undeniable and immutable essential difference. Recognizing that my own children are temperamentally quite different and that essentialism must have played some role in this, I always smile back and conclude: "Yes, Kate is

Kate and Dan is Dan.” Gendering children to me is like gendering the alphabet—why do it? Rather, let each child be whatever she or he becomes, neither restricted nor promoted by their sex and gender. We all need to learn to be ourselves in a gender-polarized world.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Chodorow, N. (2002). The cycle completed: Mothers and children. *Feminism & Psychology*, 12, 11–17.

The basic introduction to *The Reproduction of Mothering* in this chapter should make this excerpt from this generally obtuse book understandable and meaningful to readers. From the very outset, this excerpt hits the nail on its head: “Families create children gendered, heterosexual, and ready to marry” (p. 11).

Lips, H. M. (2002). Female powerlessness: Still a case of “cultural preparedness”? In A. E. Hunter & C. Forden (Eds.), *Readings in the psychology of gender* (pp. 19–37). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Hilary Lips does an outstanding job of stepping back from the overwhelming detail of the huge body of socialization research to see the global patterns of power and powerlessness in everyday socialization practices.

Maccoby, E. E. (2003). The gender of child and parent as factors in family dynamics. In A. C. Crouter & A. Booth (Eds.), *Children's influence on family dynamics* (pp. 191–206). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Eleanor Maccoby makes a strong case for the reciprocal relationship between socializing agents (in this case, parents) and active children.

Leaper, C. (2000). The social construction and socialization of gender during development. In P. H. Miller & E. K. Scholnick (Eds.), *Toward a feminist developmental psychology* (pp. 127–152). Florence, KY: Taylor & Francis/Routledge.

Campbell Leaper further develops the concepts of feminism, social construction, and socialization that we have explored in this text to propose the pursuit of a feminist developmental psychology.