

## Chapter 9

### Gender, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sexism

#### **A. Define gender, gender identity, gender expression, and gender roles.**

Gender refers to the social and psychological characteristic associated with being female or male (McCammon & Knox, 2007, p. 112).

Gender identity is a person's internal psychological self-concept of being either a male or a female, or possibly some combination of both.

Gender expression concerns how we express ourselves to others in ways related to gender that include behavior and personality.

Gender roles are the "attitudes, behaviors, rights, and responsibilities that society associates with" being male or being female (Yarber et al., 2010, p. 127).

Gender-role socialization is the process of conveying what is considered appropriate behavior and perspectives for males and females in a particular culture.

#### **B. Discuss the theoretical approach of social constructionism and its application to the social construction of gender.**

Social constructionism is the theoretical approach that social reality is constructed by how people think about situations as they interact with others.

The social construction of gender "looks at the structure of the gendered social order as a whole and at the processes that construct and maintain it" (Lorber, 2010, p. 244).

#### **C. Identify some of the variations in gender, including intersex and transgender people.**

Eight variables contribute to gender, of which six are physical and two psychological.

An intersex or pseudohermaphrodite is a person who has some mixture of male and female predisposition and configuration of reproductive structures.

Transgenderism includes people "whose appearance and/or behaviors do not conform to traditional gender roles" (Crooks & Baur, 2011, p. 129). Transgender groups include transsexuals, transvestites, drag queens, drag kings, and female impersonators.

#### **D. Recognize and discuss traditional gender-role expectations and stereotypes as they affect people over the life span, and assess the impacts of sexism on both men and women.**

Parents treat boys and girls differently from the moment they're born. Early gender-related differences include emotional expression and aggression.

Adolescence is a time of gender intensification, a period of "increased pressures for gender-role conformity" (Hyde, 2007, p. 202). Masculinity and femininity "refer to the ideal cluster of traits that society attributes to each gender" (Carroll, 2010, p. 74).

There are disadvantages for both women and men who adhere strictly to gender-role stereotypes. Women enter fields of work where they earn less, continue to do most of the work at home, and experience the stress of demands to be beautiful. Men experience performance demands, pressure not to express emotions, and shorter life spans.

Practitioners working with men should understand their special issues and pressures. Social workers should strive to identify the gender-role stereotypes that men maintain, understand the diversity of “masculinities,” and emphasize men’s strengths.

Gender-role socialization varies depending on one’s cultural background.

**E. Examine some of the differences between men and women, including abilities and communication styles.**

Debate continues concerning differences in male and female ability levels, especially in the areas of verbal, mathematical, and spatial skills.

Women and men demonstrate different patterns of interruption when communicating. Women are better at understanding nonverbal cues.

It is important to remember that men and women are more similar than dissimilar and to appreciate individual differences.

**F. Discuss the issues of economic inequality, sexual harassment, sexist language, rape and sexual assault, battered women, and the empowerment of women.**

Women generally earn less than men in virtually every job category. Hispanic and African American women commonly earn less than white women.

Women tend to be clustered in lower-paying, female-dominated occupations.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal and physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual’s employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual’s work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment is common and results in a number of negative effects.

Suggestions for confronting sexual harassment include confronting your harasser, being assertive, documenting occurrences, talking to others about the problem, getting witnesses, and following the established complaint process.

Sexist language generally differentiates women from men in a negative or unfair manner. Sexist language should be avoided.

A sexual assault involves any unwanted sexual contact where physical force is used.

Theoretical views of sexual assault include the victim-precipitated, rapist psychopathology, and the feminist perspectives.

Certain characteristics tend to characterize rapists, although they come from virtually all walks of life. Rapist types include anger, power, and sadistic.

Date rape is very common.

Rape survivors tend to experience a rape trauma syndrome, a dimension of posttraumatic stress disorder that involves both an acute phase and a long-term reorganization phase.

Empowering rape survivors involves addressing emotional issues, reporting to the police, and exploring medical status.

The battering of women by significant others is very common in the United States and Canada.

Battering is a catchall term reflecting various types of physical and emotional abuse. Battering involves power and control, and can be linked to poverty-related stress.

The battering cycle involves stress escalation, the abusive explosion, and making up.

Women tend to stay in battering relationships because of economic dependence, lack of self-confidence, lack of power, fear of the abuser, guilt, feeling isolated with nowhere to go, fear for her children, and love.

Battering also occurs in gay and lesbian relationships.

Domestic violence shelters and programs can provide a wide range of services to help battered women.

Empowering a battered woman involves making her feel safe, offering support, encouraging expression of feelings, focusing on strengths, furnishing information, reviewing alternatives, establishing a plan, and advocating for rights and services.

#### **G. Present strategies for combating sexism and achieving sexual equality.**

You can combat sexism and achieve sexual equality by identifying gender-role stereotypes, placing less emphasis on the need to conform to stereotypes, enhancing assertiveness, encouraging freedom in adult domestic relationships, and confronting discriminatory laws and regulations.