

Sociology 265H1F

## **Gender and Society**

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Office Hour:

Tues., 3:00-4:00, 725 Spadina, rm. 382

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Correction on Grading: 2<sup>nd</sup> Essay – 25%

### **Week 3: The Social Construction of the Sexed & Gendered Body and Gendered Behaviour**

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#### **I. Social Processes that Create Sexed (male & female) & Gendered (masculine & feminine) Bodies**

##### **A. What Social Processes?**

###### **1) Ideas about sex and gender**

Judith Lorber, “Believing is Seeing”: social factors that push us to see two discrete sexes, two different genders – with men and men’s bodies as the standard

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- (a) sports: developed to highlight trained male bodies' strengths, and covered by commercial media programs that highlight gender differences & stereotypes
- (b) the association of men and technology, math, etc., promoting men's domination in occupations like computer programming
- (c) the public 'washroom' problem: separate and equal facilities because the male body is the standard (or what's assumed); a problematic result for women (i.e., long lines).

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## 2) How bodies become gendered, masculine or feminine

Karin Martin ("Becoming a Gendered Body"): Teachers' different treatment of preschool boys' & girls' behaviour, shaping how they use their bodies: It "genders" their **bodies** as well as their behaviour.

## **B. Transsexuals: the Costs of Nonconformity with the Sex/Gender Binary**

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1. Gagne, Tewksbury and McGaughey's findings (in "Coming Out and Crossing Over") on the hardships of living outside the norm in a culture organized around a sex/gender binary.
2. In contrast, see E. Blackwood on the "case of cross-gender females": some foraging (hunting & gathering) societies in which females could live as men (and males as women, in others). These are egalitarian societies.

## **II. Social Processes that Create Gender**

- A. Socialization: learning "gender competence"
- B. The evidence on ideas in popular culture, different treatment by parents & teachers, and peer pressure (i.e., bullying).
- C. Evidence by a biologist: Lise Eliot, *Pink Brain, Blue Brain*-- Are male/female brains different?
  - a) Findings: girls' and boys' brains are similar. But brains are plastic: some differences in adults' brains, reflecting their different life experiences.

- b) Her argument: very small differences in behaviour are magnified as children age, by parents & teachers' treatment and other social influences. What children miss out on.
  
- D. Emily Kane (“No Way My Boys Are Going to Be Like That!”) on how mothers and fathers react to their preschool children's gender nonconformity: Fathers' concern about sons

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### **III. Resulting Differences in Individuals?**

Are there the kinds of differences between girls & boys, women & men, of the kind that would partly explain the gender differences between women & men in work roles, power and privilege, etc.?

- A. Evidence on behaviour: E. Maccoby and C. Jacklin, *The Psychology of Sex Differences* -- A review of findings: mostly gender similarity
  
- B. More evidence: Janet S. Hyde: the “Gender Similarities Hypothesis”

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- a) Method and findings: a meta-analysis of the many findings showing significant gender differences:  
78% of these differences are small or close to zero (ie, not socially significant).  
Differences that are larger: Aggression, motor performance, and sexuality
  
- b) Argument: the importance of social context: social expectations about gender can cause behaviour in conformity with gender norms & changes in social context can reduce or reverse the behaviour (so the behaviour is not about people's personality or abilities).

**C. Carol Tavris, *The Mismeasure of Woman* – Gender differences are sociological, not psychological**

We need to examine ideas in the culture, and expectations about gender, but also how society and social institutions are organized – and resulting barriers and handicaps faced by women.