 **Aim: How do gender role expectations affect our human sexuality?**

**-Gender Role: the way an individual identifies with the culture’s gender stereotypes: masculinity and femininity**

**-Human Sexuality: is a person’s identity, behavior, and attitude towards being male or female**

**-Socialization: a continuing process whereby an individual acquires a personal identity and learns the norms, values, behavior, and social skills appropriate to his or her social position.**

**-Gender Identity: refers to the sex to which an individual associates him/herself.**

**-Sex: either of the two main categories (male and female) into which humans and many other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions.**

Assignment at the end…. Due \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
 ***Introduction***
*Gender roles, people's perceptions of what it is to be a man or woman, are evolved psychological constructions. Unlike sex, gender is not based on biology but rather on learned norms or roles. These roles affect the course of people's lives, influencing the areas of socialization, communication, family life, household responsibilities, occupations, hobbies, and education.*

Although many people hold certain beliefs about gender (such as men are good at math and women are good at communication), these perceived truths are actually evolved psychological constructions called gender roles. Although the sex of a person is based in biology, gender roles are learned norms. Therefore, they can change and vary from culture to culture.

**Family Life**
In the United States, women have typically been responsible for caring for the children and the home. This gender role has been noted in numerous studies. Researchers Zbigniew Smoreda and Christian Licoppe found that women are more likely than men to use the telephone at home. Telephone use at home, in contrast to at a workplace, tends to involve discussion of personal and familial matters. The researchers also found that maintaining family solidarity and keeping in contact with family members, even those in the husband's family, seemed to be a woman's task. Although the study revealed what women talked about on the phone and where they used the phone, the reasons behind these behaviors were not clear. The study did not show whether the behaviors were innate maternal instincts or learned from the women's elders.

Researchers have found that the gender roles of married couples tend to become more clearly defined on the birth of a child. Often the woman assumes most of the responsibility for child care and the greater part of the housework. Some people see this unequal distribution of familial responsibility as unfair and think that each parent should take equal responsibility. They argue that placing too much stress on one parent is not good for the family. Women who work outside the home also find that often they are doing a majority of the work involved in raising their children and maintaining their homes. Researchers have found that these working women have fragmented leisure time because their off-work hours are consumed by household and childcare chores. Some weekend activities, such as family picnics, might be viewed as leisure pursuits but actually involve a great deal of work on the part of women, making these activities a source of internal conflict for some women.


**Home and the Greater Society**
**Occupation**
Occupation is another area in which gender stereotypes abound. Many people believe that men are better at left-brain skills such as math and women are better at right-brained skills such as landuage. Researcher Alison Kelly found that the parent who helped a child with English homework was the mother 57 percent of the time, and the parent who helped with math homework was the father 56 percent of the time. Over time, she reasoned, these children might get used to linking their mothers with English and their fathers with math and subconsciously develop a belief in the appropriateness of these gender roles. Another area in which gender stereotypes have a great effect, according to Kelly, is the selection of elective courses in school. She found that school officials more frequently encouraged girls to take a course called "Physics and Cookery" and more frequently suggested that boys should take a course called "Understanding Industry." Although Kelly's research was published in 1982, significantly after the feminist movement got its start in the 1960's, traditional homemaker roles were continuing to be imprinted, purposefully or not, on girls.

Kelly found that parents also guided their children toward occupations based on their genders. The jobs of secretary, nurse, social worker, and hairdresser were seen as more fitting for girls, and the jobs of electrician and engineer as more suitable for boys. However, parents did not link all professions with a specific gender: Jobs such as doctor, manager, and computer operator were not viewed as being more suitable for either men or women. Kelly concluded that women business professionals may gain acceptance more easily than women who chose to work in a trade or craft.

The household structure in which a person is raised has been shown to correlate with the degree to which the person as an adult believes in and follows traditional gender roles. It makes sense logically that family members become used to a structure they have lived with for all or most of their lives and interpret it as the norm, especially if they have not experienced any other family situation. Members of such a family may not even be aware of the existence of other functional family structures. Kelly found that a significantly higher number of girls than boys participated in household cleanup, a chore traditionally associated with women: 72 percent of eleven-year-old girls as compared with 29 percent of eleven-year-old boys. Such childhood experiences are likely to produce adults who tend to follow traditional general roles.

Play activity patterns also varied according to gender, Kelly found. A large number of boys and a small number of girls participated in stereotypical male play activities, such as fishing, war games, and football. Additionally, a higher number of girls than boys were reported to engage in stereotypical female activities such as knitting and cooking. In many ways, child's play involves simpler versions of roles that children anticipate adopting as adults, and thus it serves as practice for their adult lives. Perceptions of norms and stereotypes that initially form during this stage of childhood play undoubtedly affect grownup lifestyles.

One of Kelly's major findings is that most of the parents interviewed believed in equality of education and occupational opportunities for both genders but with limitations. The parents' formal commitment to equality coexisted with other attitudes that might make equality impossible, such as a belief that women have the right to work but only if their work does not interfere with their roles as mothers. Many parents were idealistic about equality of education and work, but they saw equality as an ideal rather than as a practical, reachable goal. Therefore, in essence, these parents exhibited a subtle but real sexism.


**Education**
The behavior of boys and girls at school differs, according to researchers Susan Jones and Debra Myhill of Exeter University. Boys are more likely to be associated with underachievement and girls with high achievement. Boys may underachieve because they feel that they are supposed to be "macho" or "tough," and they may view sitting in a classroom, quietly doing written work, as "wimpy" or "compliant" and therefore undesirable behavior. Another possible cause of underachievement in boys is that they have weaker language, communication, and writing skills; therefore, they are somewhat out of place in an environment such as a coeducational classroom and may find it harder to accomplish the assigned tasks.

Similarly, Jones notes that girls were once viewed as struggling in a male-dominated classroom and suffering from low self-esteem and poor self-confidence as a result. People often repeat the notion that girls are inferior at math and science, although this attitude is slowly growing less frequent. Ultimately, these educational gender stereotypes have the potential to become self-fulfilling prophecies when it comes to overall achievement in school or in specific subjects.

The stereotypes that portray girls as compliant and right-brained and boys as underachieving and left-brained also affect the kind of attention that teachers give to each student. Jones claims that the stereotype of girls as more compliant may make it harder for teachers to identify underachieving girls than underachieving boys. If teachers do not see these girls' performances as problematic, they are not likely to intervene and help them do better. This results in teachers paying greater attention to underachieving boys than to underachieving girls, thereby affecting the quality of the education that the children receive.

**Implications**
Gender roles have both positive and negative influences on society. One task for researchers is to find ways, beginning in childhood, to minimize or alter the negative effects that gender roles have on psychological and intellectual development. Society may be difficult to change, but gradual alterations in the definitions of gender roles could help. Another way to minimize negative effects is to eliminate the inferiority associated with various gender traits.

Source: http://salempress.com/store/samples/psychology/psychology\_gender.htm


Assignment: After reading this article, What are your thoughts on gender roles and how they affect society. How do you feel gender role expectations have affected you? List at least 3 examples and explain each. Please answer this question on a separate sheet of paper. (40 point homework)