
UNIT 4 GENDER SOCIALIZATION AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN THE CONSTRUCT OF GENDER*

Structure

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After having read this Unit, you will be able to:

- Acquire comprehensive understanding of the construct of gender and how it is different from sex
- Explain socialization of gender
- Elucidate the influence of family, school and peers
- Explain the sexual script theory in the contemporary world
- Explore gender differences in heterosexual aggression, and
- Discuss the importance of culture and religion in shaping gender identity.

4.0 INTRODUCTION

By now it must be clear that sex and gender which are used as synonyms, have distinct meanings. Sex refers to the biological aspects of a person arising out of one's anatomy. This includes the interaction of hormones, chromosomes and body parts (sexual organs). On the other hand, gender is socially constructed and includes the labels like masculinity, femininity and other related behaviour. Thus, people who call themselves as a man or woman, that may fall on the continuum somewhere between man or woman or maybe without any gender. Thus, gender is a complex interaction between the dimensions like, body, identity and social. In this Unit, an attempt has been made to answer questions like when do we begin to label oneself as a girl or a boy? What is the role of environmental, social or

cultural factors in the process of gender socialization? Is it same across countries or cultures? Let us explore and find out the answers to such questions.

4.1 GENDER SOCIALIZATION

Defining gender has been a debatable issue in the realms of social scientific research due to the theoretical positions of the researchers in the field. Connell (2002) defines gender as the structure of social relations centered on the reproductive arena and practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes. Ridgeway and Corell (2004) have taken a broader definition and define it as a multilevel system of difference and inequality which involves cultural beliefs, distribution of resources, patterns of behaviour, organizational practices, and selves and identities. They also define gender beliefs as universal stereotypes about gender that serve to exacerbate the difference between men and women. An associated concept that we shall keep using is gender identity, that refers to one's sense of oneself as a male, female or transgender (American Psychological Association, 2011). Sex is the biological aspect of human existence and gender is the social and cultural aspect of that existence. Gender identity is the psychological aspect of this embodied experience. Another related concept that all of us have lived and practiced ever since we were born is gender socialization.

Sex or Gender OR Sex and Gender?

When filling up your Adhaar card application, your admission form, your driving license form, your bank account form, you must have been asked to furnish details about your name, age, sex/ gender. Have you ever been asked to fill in the details about your sex and gender? Have you ever considered that these are two distinct components of your identity that may or may not be in congruence?

As evident, gender socialization is a lifelong developmental process by which individual learn the customs and social behaviours within their societal and cultural fabric. Gender socialization is a “process by which individuals develop, refine and learn to ‘do’ gender through internalizing gender norms and roles as they interact with key agents of socialization, such as their family, social networks and other social institutions” (John et al. 2017, p.6).

Gender socialization pertains to acquiring social learning around gender. It's a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted process through which individual learns about gender norms and rules of their culture and eventually learn about the appropriate or inappropriateness of a behaviour and internalize the ways in which they are expected to behave in the society (Ryle,2011). These gender norms lead to the development of an internalized sense of gender identity. It is important to understand that gender identity is an experience that may not be consistent with the assigned sex at birth but gender socialization always promotes the idea of cisgender. Cisgender is the conventional idea of being male and female that is embedded in the assigned sex at birth.

There has been a consistent growth in the scholarship in the area from contributions by feminists, queer affirmative activists, intersectional movements, sociologists, psychologists, and accumulated theoretical advancements in the field that has challenged the conventional notions around gender and its development. Thus, within the contemporary world, the questions pertaining to gender, experiences of sexuality, inequality and gaps around the gender spectrum are being raised by psychologists, activists, feminists, sociologists (not necessarily in the same order)

and these questions are shifting the quantum of debate to issues that define these inequalities across the gender spectrum. These gaps may be deeply embedded in the process of socialization to start with.

Some scholars maintain that gender can be best understood in terms of looking at the actors assuming and playing roles in the society. This is a social constructionist lens of understanding gender. Tasks and roles are gender segregated and actors fulfilling these scripts are “doing gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Thus, gender is not static but rather fluid and identities are shaped in social interactions at several levels (Fenstermaker & West, 2002; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender identity defines our felt or experienced sense of female-ness, male-ness or other gendered-ness (within the gender diversity spectrum) and is situated within a historically, socially and culturally specified context that is more often than not mediated by socially, obligatory norms defined by the society (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 2013; Butler, 2004). While children are actively participative in shaping their gender identities, their own understanding about gender identity is consolidated by various social agencies like family, peers and schools.

4.1.1 Family

From the moment that an infant arrives in the world it is besieged with codes and symbols that forms its ideations of gender roles and gender stereotypes. Family is the smallest and first and foremost unit of socialization and children primarily learn about gender roles from the other members, especially primary care givers (Blakemore & Hill 2008; Bandura & Bussey 2004). Some scholars have defined the categories of socializing agents that play a vital part for the internalization of gender specific norms.

Personal Reflection: The Colour Pink!

When the author was expecting her little one, she was visiting a private hospital in a metropolitan city. When they were looking at the birth options and room set-ups, they realized that it's a whole new commercial market. If one has a baby girl, the hospital will decorate the room pink and if it will be a boy then it would be of course blue! A lot many parents felt very pampered by these 'acts' of care, whereas to be as a gender gap warrior, it may seem as adding to unnecessary stereotyping and increasing the divide! congruence?

Some scholars profess that girls and boys mostly take on different identities as feminine and masculine because their parents treat them differently at home (Emolu 2014; Leaper & Farkas 2014; Blakemore and Hill 2008). Gender scripts and norms are fortified culturally, socially, and institutionally at several levels. These are primary groups (family), secondary groups (school and peer groups) and reference groups (media, political parties). Based on diverse experiences from these agencies the child understands the gender socialization process and organization. The role of

these agencies is as important as the process of gender socialization itself (Chattopadhyay, 2018).

Gender identities are also shaped through homophily. Homophily is the inclination to connect with same-sex rather than cross-sex and it starts as soon as the children start choosing their playmates (Ridgeway & Lynn, 1999; Block, 1979; Lever, 1978; Donna, & Hallinan 1978). Literature on homophily provides converging and informative insights as to how boys and girls self-segregate into homogenous groups and these are sustained and promoted by family environment (Carter, 2014).

Patriarchy is a social way of life where men dominate women in all sectors of power and decision making and always end up having an upper hand. In cultures like ours where hegemonic patriarchal social order dominates the developmental discourse, young boys learn to exercise authority over girls, whereas girls learn to submit (Ram et al., 2014). Walby (1997), an avid scholar of patriarchy defines patriarchy as 'a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women'. She talks about six different levels at which patriarchy operates: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. Many a times parents intentionally or maybe even unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes when they differentiate between the toys that they deem fit for their girls and boys or in their head run a "gender script" that describes a general pattern about gender stereotypical behaviors. For instance, girls should play with dollhouses and boys with cars and footballs.

A closer look, gives us many examples of how these structures elaborated by Walby (1997), interplay at home. The first structure, talks about how women's household labour is confiscated by their husbands or other people the women grow up with. The second structure contends that women are methodically excluded from opportunities and access to paid and skilled work. In the third structure, according to Walby (1997) 'the state has a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in its policies and actions' and the fourth structure 'male violence against women is systematically condoned and legitimated ... through the practices of rape, wife-beating, sexual harassment, etc.' The fifth structure talks about how heterosexuality is compulsorily imposed and women's sexuality is dictated by the men in a patriarchal society. The last structure talks about how women are objectified and represented in derogatory forms through cultural representations of religion, education and media. By the interplaying of all these structures, patriarchy denigrates the agency and position of women in societies. As evident gender socialization is the manifestation of the patriarchal modes of behaviours, thought processes and action that end up empowering the gender stereotypes that strengthen the notions and existence of such hierarchy. Given that background, gender-based socialization essentially includes acquiring behaviours that are consistent with one's gender. Individuals are held accountable for these behaviours and deviance warrants some form of social sanction (West & Zimmerman, 2009).

India has always struggled with gender gaps due to multifaceted reasons. Households are the primary sites where children learn hegemonic practices that widen the gender gaps. Selective sex-based abortions have been banned since 1994, yet selective abortions are common and female mortality among children under age 5 years is higher than male mortality in all parts of the country (Ram, et al., 2013). Families control all aspects of a daughter's life. From an early age, she is trained into domestic chores and has a subservient role as compared to her male counterparts (Ram, et al., 2014). Many scholars have explored the role of early family experiences in gender development. Mc.Hale et al., (2003) reviewed the pivotal role of family in gender development during childhood and adolescence and concluded that early family life experiences including the relationship with parents and gendered marital dynamics between them have a very a very pertinent role in gender development. In India, gender discrimination is deeply embedded in the societal structure in and remains a threat to the well-being of families (Chowdhury, 2007) and gender inequalities are very commonly witnessed in families and gender discrimination is a challenging obstacle to the well-being of Indian families (Chowdhury, 2007). Unfortunately, the personhood

is evaluated by the position in the hierarchy and is rooted in the upbringing in the early years of life (Kakar&Kakar, 2009). In a study of youths in Goa, the authors reported that frequent verbal or physical abuse by parents, low parental support from home and gender discrimination are significant predictors of mental health problems. Gender discriminatory practices were evaluated by asking whether the youth were treated differently by virtue of their gender and whether they were restrained from certain activities (Fernandes et.al., 2013). Ram et al (2014) studies gender socialization in India by using the data from the Youth in India: Situation and Needs Study(International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Population Council, 2010) that utilized data from 44, 769 youths from India. One of the largest studies done in India, it provides evidence of discriminatory practices and the extent to which female youths are at a disadvantage due to their gender. They are given less freedom and independence to exercise their choices and are poorly prepared to enter adult roles and skills to manage their life better.

4.1.2 School

Gender is endlessly constructed and imposed upon each of us from the time we are born. The fixation around gender has also resulted in categorization of colors, clothes, toys, games as being more female than male or vice versa. The heteronormative cultural script is wrapped around new born children from the very start and their experiences in their social world mostly validate these norms. Schools are institutions that build an environment that provide the initial institutional glimpse to their social world after their homes. Education systems and institutions are intended to transfer the values, behaviour patterns and normative standards to children through interaction with teachers, peers, and curriculum (Wentzel 2014; Witt 2000). Teachers help they form and challenge identities when they use different toys and activities for girls and boys (Leaper & Farkas, 2004). It is interesting to note that teachers have very different behaviours and attitudes towards their students, based on their gender. These may be explained by their stereotyped expectations about the abilities and needs of boys and girls (Leaper & Farkas, 2014). Additionally, textbooks include gendered texts, symbols and characters that may strengthen the gender stereotypes elaborated in the books (Taylor 2003).

Schools facilitate the conventional gendering process and strengthen the binary (female/male) to a very large extent. Institutionalization of gender roles starts here in a formal setting, and challenging the boundaries may not be easy, given our cultural taboos and biases. Schools become a hub for heterosexualized grooming practices. For instance, in an all-girls school, to discipline the students, the teacher's comment that girls should only be seen, not heard! These practices contaminate the intellectual space and create a burden on the child to keep living the script she/he/they have been assigned to. Even in co-educational spaces, gender segregation especially in middle and high school are fairly common, emerging from concerns related to adolescents manifesting the otherwise age-appropriate behaviors (such as the ones emerging from physical attraction) with the other 'gender'!

Gender stereotypes give rise to sexism. Sexism refers to prejudiced beliefs that look at one sex over the other more favourably. Sexism varies in degree and visibility across cultures. In many cultures and parts of the world where women are strongly undervalued, young girls may receive the same opportunities or access to nutrition, health care and education as boys. They grow up believing that they deserve to be treated inferiorly than boys (Thorne, 1993; UNICEF, 2007).

Gender egalitarian practices need to be strengthened and encouraged at the level of schools to help in creating an intellectual space that is conducive to the growth and optimal development of children's potential irrespective of their gender or orientation.

4.1.3 Peers

Once the school starts, peers play an extremely influential role in socialization and helping the child understand the gender schema. Peers are very influential in forming gender identity and stereotypes through interactions, friendships and group norms (Leaper & Friedman 2007; Witt 2000). Gender segregation, the tendency for boys and girls to largely form friendships and associate with the same gender is more or less predominant in friendship formation in childhood and strengthened by societal norms. This gender-based segregation strengthens gender roles and stereotypes (Leaper & Farkas, 2014; Witt, 2000). Most of their play, games and activities are rooted in a gendered environment.

“When children are playing together, it may seem as if they are engaged in aimless, unstructured behavior, but there is something much deeper than that going on, as indicated by these functions. The first function suggests that behaviors are “tried out” on friends, and if they are rewarded, they will continue; if not, they will cease. Thus, the little boy who enjoys having tea parties with his teddy bears and is jeered at or otherwise discouraged from this activity by friends who call it “sissy” behavior, will probably stop engaging in this type of play” (Witt, 2000, p. 3)

Researchers have investigated and explored the relationship between gender segregation and gender identity in childhood (Martin et al., 2013). Gender appropriate behaviours are invigorated through norms that are strengthened from the household and carried forward when interacting with the social world. Playing ‘gender congruent’ games is encouraged and this leads to further widening the gender-gap. Girls who have been taught to be subservient and boys who are taught to be controlling in the hegemonic domestic framework, carry the ideas and design their interactions and play in accordance with the normative gender rules. Childhood researchers have proposed that gender segregation is so universal that boys’ and girls’ participation in same gender groups is alike across cultures (Mehta, 2016; Baines & Blatchford 2009; Maccoby 1998; Underwood & Rosen 2009). Interestingly, within these separate groups, children learn attitudes, values, and social interaction styles that are different (Maccoby 1990, 1998; Underwood 2007) and also learn to maintain

Maya's plight!

Maya, an 8-year-old grew up in conventional, heteronormative, conservative family. As part of growing up she always enjoyed playing with cars, blocks and toy guns. She liked to play out in the field with her brothers but her father would scold her every time he would see her playing out! He would also yell at her mother for not having taught her the right values. Maya did not enjoy playing the conventional ‘domestic’ games that her family would encourage her to play. She would sneak out in the afternoon to the field and enjoy playing with the boys. She even liked dressing up in pants and tees and avoided wearing dresses and skirts as it restricted her movement. Maya's best friend was Ali and they would play for hours together. Maya was heartbroken when her father put her in an all-girls school! She found herself out of place and could not adjust with her peers. Her peers made fun of her choices and she felt suffocated at school.

same gender friendships (Werkings, 1997b). This comfort in same gender friendships perpetuates the process of homophily.

It is also pertinent to recognize the pressures that gender non-conforming children and adolescents experience. The minority stress model (Levitt & Ippolito, 2014) proposes that the cumulative effects of stigma, discrimination, stress has adverse effects on the overall wellbeing of the stigmatized minority group. This discrimination has differential impact of power and oppression on the identities of gender diverse young people. There is supportive research evidence that demonstrates that gender diverse young people experience higher levels of bullying, social ostracism and societal intolerance than their gender confirming peers (de Vries, et al, 2016; Di Ceglie, 2017; Steensma et al., 2014). With more accessible data from transgender youth, more evidence has started emerging for the role of peer relationships and social ostracism(de Graaf et al., 2018; de Vries et al., 2016). Converging research evidence shows that individuals with subordinate identities are more vulnerable to discrimination and racism and this holds particularly true for individuals with multiple subordinated identities (Balsam et al., 2011; Grollman, 2014; Khan et al., 2017; Seaton et al., 2010). Studies also demonstrate higher levels of prejudice and depression among both gay and straight individuals of marginalized racial/ethnic groups (Balsam et al., 2011; Casey et al., 2019; Shangani et al., 2020).

Check Your Progress 1

1) What are the differences between sex and gender?

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2) Explain gender socialization with an appropriate example.

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3) What is the influence of family in gender socialization? Explain with a relevant example.

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4) Elucidating with an example from your own life, expand on the role of school and peers in gender socialization.

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4.2 CULTURE AND RELIGION

The definition of culture as per APA (2007) is “the distinctive customs, values, beliefs, knowledge, art, and language of a society or a community. These values

and concepts are passed on from generation to generation, and they are the basis for everyday behaviors and practices". Culture is a socially constructed dynamic interaction of intersectionality based on gender, religion, race, ethnicity, caste, class. It results in a structural framework, primarily a system of knowledge, behaviour and beliefs that are shared by a relatively large group of people. Since its dynamic in nature, it is fluid and gets impacted by people, historical events and social agencies, politics and economic vibes of the land.

Gender is also socially constructed and is immensely shaped by the societal expectations and cultural norms. Roles and expectations socially constructed and are culturally demarcated for all members. It also is defined by the power dynamics between women and men and the prevailing norms regarding 'feminine' and 'masculine' roles. The collective expectations and beliefs about the 'typical male' and 'typical female' may many a times contribute to creation and strengthening of stereotypes that may end up limiting opportunities for women and men within the cultural framework (UNESCO,2014). Different levels of sexism in the cultural framework creates profound gaps and inequality between men and women at several stages (Hesmondhalgh& Baker,2015) as people's lives are intrinsically embedded in the cultural fabric that is designed around the asymmetrical gender roles. People can navigate these roles, though it can be a challenging process. As a scholar puts it, 'culture and tradition can enable or obstruct, and be oppressive or liberating for different people at different times. There is nothing sacred about culture, and value judgements need to be made about which aspects of culture to hold on to, and which to let go of'(Jolly,2014). It is interesting to note that the perception of gender is likely to be conceptualized in different ways cross-culturally (Isajiw, 1993; Nanda, 2014). Cross cultural researches throw light on the fact that children are aware of normative gender roles by age two or three. At four or five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles

(Kane, 1996). The notions around gender identity may differ across Western and Eastern cultures. For instance, Western cultures tend to emphasize on self-esteem (Fernando, 2012; Wekker, 1999), thereby placing the individual in the center of the narrative plot. Alternatively, Eastern cultural perspectives tend to be more emphasizing on the 'other' and focus on balance, harmony and stability of the outer social world of relationships (Fernando, 2012).

Our gender identity and ethnicity significantly contribute to our selfhood, personhood and shape our sensibilities around our experiences in the social world. Religion adds another layer or nuance to this embodied experience. Gender is pivotal to most religious orders. As well as religions have a substantial impact on gendered relations. All religions perpetuate the existing gender schemas and strengthen the ideas related with the expected gender roles as per the religious cultural scripts. Be it Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism- all the religious texts are embedded in tall ideals set by perfect examples of a 'model man' or a 'woman'. How decent and chivalrous men should behave, how girls should behave in order to find a perfect match, and such other notions are deeply embedded. The theological texts are full of exemplary behaviours by Gods and Goddesses that set a benchmark for its followers to adhere to. Rigid adherence to such role models and notions may create a lot of pressure and perfectionistic traits that may get difficult to follow through in the longer run. Patriarchal gendered relations are followed in most religious spaces. The heads of almost all temples, mosques, imambadas, gurudwaras, churches are traditionally men. Although patriarchal relations are fundamental across global religions, this may not be universally true. Some religious orders lay emphasis on respecting women over

and above the heteronormative structural framework. This defines their agency and empowers them to practice their own agency in the given space.

4.3 SEXUAL SCRIPTS

In continuation to the idea of gender development, sexual scripts also play a very important role. Ever since its introduction in the early 1970s, the sexual script theory has gained popularity as a conceptual framework in social science research to examine sexuality and its manifestation in the society. Scripts are indispensable for us to make sense of the experience around the world. To borrow from the originators, scripts are a

metaphor for conceptualizing behavior within social life. In the social life, most of the time is under the guidance of an operating syntax, much as language is a precondition for speech. For behavior to occur, something resembling to scripting must occur on three distinct levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts, and intrapsychic scripts (Simon and Gagnon 1984, p. 53).

Further, sexual scripts are commonly shared gender and culture specific guides for normative sexual behaviour (Frith & Kitzinger, 2001). The proponents of sexual script theory, proposed that sexual behaviour is influenced at three different levels: cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts and intrapsychic scripts (Simon & Gagnon, 1984). The cultural scenarios reflect culturally shared social norms and values that influence the other scripts and are communicated through mass media, gender norms, etc. An example might be gender norms educating boys to initiate sexual activities or seeing women being objectified in popular Bollywood songs and indulging in similar behaviours. Sexual cultural scripts are very pertinent to manifesting of sexual behaviours, yet they are not synonymous with sexual behaviour (Wiederman, 2015). To quote Simon & Gagnon, 1984, p53): the enactment of virtually all roles must either directly or indirectly reflect the contents of appropriate cultural scenarios. These cultural scenarios are rarely entirely predictive of actual behavior, and they are generally too abstract to be applied in all circumstances. In this framework individuals are not passive receptors of cultural scenarios. The originators of Sexual Script theory, Simon and Gagnon (1984) categorized people as “partial scriptwriters” who created and adapted cultural scenarios into scripts for sexual behaviour across a diverse context. Cultural scenarios create the basic structure for the enactment of the roles and the relationship among them, however, they do not provide specific direction to propel the actual behaviours in specific situation. To help here, interpersonal scripts begin to interplay between the characters (Weiderman, 2015).

Interpersonal scripts inform sexual interactions with regard to how two people interpret cultural scenarios, for instance using alcohol or drugs before initiating sexual acts. Interpersonal scripts provide “the organization of mutually shared

Challenging your script!

Moni an MBA student, feels hugely attracted to her classmate Surya. However, she feels immensely hesitant in starting a conversation with him. Their common friends keep teasing her when they spot her looking at Surya during class lectures. Moni wants to date Surya but keeps waiting for him to initiate the process. Surya on the other hand feels that Moni is out of league for him! He deliberately tries to stay away. Why is it that Moni finds it so difficult to approach Surya? What is stopping Moni in giving this relationship a chance? What would you have done if you were in Moni’s shoes?

conventions that allows two or more actors to participate in a complex act involving mutual dependence” (Gagnon and Simon 1973, p. 18). When actors share similar script, the interactions in the social interpersonal world are harmonious. Intrapyschic scripts echo the individuals’ sexual motives, such as sexual pleasure, sexual conquest, passion, and/or emotional intimacy, for instance having sexual relationship with many partners to feel powerful(Seal et.al, 2008). Intrapyschic scripts are representative of each individual’s unique sexuality, fantasies and other aspects that may be difficult to articulate but are nevertheless underlying the sexual interactions.

Some other researchers have focused on traditional interpersonal sexual scripts for heterosexual interactions (Seal et al., 2008). Traditional cultural scenarios and interpersonal heterosexual scripts encourage heterosexual gender roles like men being forever ready to initiate sex, be always willing and ready to have sex and to control all aspects of sexuality (Bowleg, 2004; Campbell, 1995; Dworkin & O’Sullivan, 2005; Ku et al, 1993; Masters et al, 2012; Seal et al., 2008). Traditional intrapsychic heterosexual scripts for cis men suggest that men are mostly motivated for sex for the intrinsic pleasure, sexual conquest and emotional intimacy (Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003).

In accordance with the traditional sexual script, men are encouraged and socialized to initiate and arrange sexual interactions, where as women are encouraged and socialized to be coy, restrictors or responders, matching their partners needs (Gagnon, 1990; O’Sullivan & Byers, 1992; Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). Interestingly, research also demonstrates the universal dual presence of norms that give men greater sexual freedom than women (Blanc, 2001; Gupta, 2001; Gupta & Weiss, 1993; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003). Such restrictive paradigms around masculinity lead to phallocentrism, self- objectification during sex, and feeling pressure to be in the performance mode all the time for sex (Brod, 1995; Fracher& Kimmel, 1995; Seal et al., 2000). Such straight-jacketed definitions of conventional heterosexual masculinity and femineity constrains heterosexual interactions and restricts the expression of freedom. However, contemporary researchers suggest that heterosexual scripts are becoming more egalitarian in nature with women being as participative as men (Dworkin & O’Sullivan, 2005; Masters et al., 2012; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003).

Check Your Progress 2

1) What is a sexual script?

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2) With an appropriate example explain the cultural script.

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3) What is an interpersonal script? Explain with a relevant example.

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4) With is an intrapsychic script?

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4.4 HETEROSEXUAL AGGRESSION

Of all the areas that are open to debate, the area of heterosexual aggression is difficult to conceptualize, define and report as these research findings impact the social, legal and institutional context within which individuals set their boundaries of intimacy and sexual interaction (Anderson & Savage, 2015).

Aggression is the type of behavioural action that is intended to harm the other person or target (Baron & Richardson 1994). In the context of intimate relationships, people can harm each other in several ways; psychologically and physically. The insights into the destructiveness of psychological and physical aggression in intimate relationships are moderated by gender of perpetrator and victim likewise. Aggressive acts are perceived more serious when directed to female than to male targets (Harris 1991; Harris & Knight-Bohnhoff 1996; Herzberger & Tennen 1985). Male perpetrators are judged more harshly than female perpetrators (Arias & Johnson 1989; Straus et al., 1997).

There are by and large two conflicting views when it comes to defining heterosexual aggression and violence. One viewpoint is embedded in the research of family conflict (Straus, 1990) and other is rooted in the feminist lens of violence emanating from patriarchy and largely involves male perpetrators (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Pagelow, 1984; Walker, 1990). A study in Bangladesh, close home, reported that 19 to 38 percent of women respondents had been beaten up by their partners during the previous year (Schuler et al., 1996). In patriarchal society like ours, severe violence and homicide by male partners towards their female partners is associated with the prevalence of dowry system (Shamim, 1992). These research reports have implications for the moderating effect of culture, suggesting that men's physical aggression toward their partners may be of greater intensity, and women's agency may be compromised as traditions inhibiting men from hitting women may be non-existent and patriarchy may thus define the gender roles and permissiveness for the existence of such violence. As reported by researchers, aggression by men towards women (both physical and sexual) is more common where female alliances are weak and women do not have the support of their natal kin (Glazer, 1992; Kuschel, 1992; Schuster, 1983, 1985). Furthermore, it is accentuated by stronger male alliances where women are primarily dependent on men for resources (Glazer, 1992; Mines & Fry, 1994; Schuler et al., 1996)

However, researchers in developed countries like in North America, have studied women's role in being an actor of such violence as well. The relative rates of aggression reported in research studies vary depending on whether men or women are surveyed about women's sexual aggression, the source of the sample, the ethnicity of the respondent, the outcome of aggression, the tactics used, with physical force universally being endorsed as the least used tactic (Anderson, 1998; Anderson et al., 2002; Anderson & Sorensen, 1999; Feibert & Tucci, 1998). Like women, men who received sexual coercion do not always take it seriously or see themselves as being victimized (O'Sullivan et al., 1998; Zweig et al., 1997).

Many feel embarrassed to share it publicly even when they are suffering from coercive sexual experiences (Johnson & Shrier, 1987; Sarrel & Masters, 1982; C. J. Struckman-Johnson, 1991). Sometimes, men who have received aggression, analogous to their female counterparts, report psychological and physical symptoms that range from mild low moods to long term depression (Larimer et al., 1999; O'Sullivan et al., 1998; C. J. Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1998; Zweig et al., 1997).

4.5 CULTURAL DIFFERENCE IN THE CONSTRUCT OF GENDER

Culture is defined as a set of characteristics that includes the “beliefs, practices, values, norms, and behaviors that are shared by members of a group” (Sullivan & Rumptz, 1994, p. 567). Cultural diversity has been a much talked about area in social and political psychology and other social sciences. Culture is indistinguishably related with individuals in a group, and its varied dimensionality reveals itself in the ways and manners in which people perceive and interpret their world (Taylor et al., 2001; Tuck, 1997). This development of world view is not random but is passed among generations and might include traditions and learnings about a shared heritage, language, dressing style, or food choices (Yoshihama, 2000). Culture may be looked at as a dynamic phenomenon; an interactive process between the individuals and environment where the collective narrative is challenged and redefined. Culture researcher Hofstede (2012) makes a distinction between the masculinity and femininity dimension of a culture, thus, “a society is considered a masculine one if the gender emotional roles differ clearly: men should be authoritarian, harsh and focused on material success, while women should be modest, gentle and concerned with quality of life. A society is considered a feminine one if the gender emotional roles overlap: both men and women must prove modesty, gentleness and concern for quality of life” (Hofstede et al., 2012, p. 141). The normative assignment of social roles based on gender is a result of cultural-religious interpretations and the historical and environmental factors (Hofstede et al., 2012).

Many researchers have also focused on gender-role beliefs and found that women in some cultures report less traditional and more egalitarian gender role beliefs than men (Berkel 2004; Locke and Richman 1999; Tang and Dion 1999). Research in Western and non-Western societies have revealed that education is major mechanism by which women favor gender equality. Similar results have been obtained from countries like Egypt (Yount, 2005) and in USA, researchers have reported that educated and employed women have the most egalitarian beliefs (Mason et al., 1976). Some gender researchers also draw a link between gender and heterosexual aggression and abuse and claim that battering is a result of “cultural values, rules, and practices that afford men more status and power than women” (Torres, 1991, p. 115).

Check Your Progress 3

1) What is a heterosexual aggression?

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2) With an appropriate example explain the role of cultural script in increasing heterosexual aggression.

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3) What is the role of religion in shaping gender identity, explain with a relevant example?

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4) How do gender roles differ across culture?

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When we look at human behaviour and how we define gender in its context, it becomes evident that culture plays a major role. The gender differences that we see are visible in our communication, practices and behaviours. The gender binary thought process is encouraged by most cultures and we keep focusing on the differences to the disadvantage of women as gender gap keeps widening and equality is far from achieved. Gender socialization can be better understood if we use the framework of intersectionality as proposed by Crenshaw (1991) and many other researchers in the postmodern era. The theory of intersectionality elaborates on how an individual can navigate between privileges and discrimination. It proposes that the convergence of multiple identities can result in embodied experiences of oppression, privilege or power. Our consolidated identity such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, race, religion is overlapping and link our experiences of privilege, power and discrimination and influence our experiences of being a woman or a man and also determine our attitude towards other gendered people.

4.6 SUMMARY

- To sum up what we have learnt in this unit, here is a quick recap:
- Sex and gender are two different and distinct attributes and may and may not overlap for an individual.
 - Gendered roles are mostly learned through the process of socialization that involves various agencies like family, school and peers that shape the sensibilities of an individual around gender roles.
 - Children learn gender segregation and homophily as an outcome of socialization. The norms and identity help them making these choices.
 - Religion and cultural factors also shape and influence the gender norms and expectations around gender roles.
 - Culture also defines the sexual scripts for individual that are helpful in interacting with other people in the context of cultural scenarios, interpersonal scripts and intrapsychic scripts.

- Heterosexual aggression is also influenced by the cultural values and impacts all genders.

4.7 KEYWORDS

Cultural Scenarios Create the basic structure for the enactment of the roles and the relationship among them

Gender The social and cultural aspect of ‘sex’, that may not necessarily be the same as the biological sex

Gender Socialization The process of learning gender roles and expectations from societal and cultural influences and models

Heterosexual Aggression Aggressive acts in a heterosexual relationship

Homophily The tendency of people to seek out and be close to those who are similar to themselves

Homophobia Fear of or dislike for LGBTQIA+ identifying people

Interpersonal Script Interpersonal scripts provide the context for interaction for two or more actors and involves mutual dependence

Intersectionality The theoretical orientation that recognizes that everyone has unique experiences based on the privileges, power and oppression dynamics they go through, thereby explaining the relative experiences of marginalization

Intrapsychic Script Capture the person’s uniqueness in terms of their fantasies, sexual desires and goals

LGBTQIA+ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual- All alternate identities within the gender spectrum

Sex Binary categorization into male and female based on the biological attributes related with one’s reproductive ability

Sexism Prejudiced and discriminatory practices around members of one sex mostly women

Sexual script Human sexual behaviour follows a social script that is embedded in the societal expectations and norms. Culture influences the adherence to the sexual script.

4.8 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is gender-based socialization? Explain with relevant examples.
2. Explain the role of family in gender socialization with examples from your own life.
3. Discuss the role of school and peers in gender socialization in a country like ours.
4. What are sexual scripts? How do they define our interaction with prospective partners?
5. Discuss the role of gender in heterosexual aggression.

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4.9 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- To know more about gender socialization:
https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/IDP_2017_01.pdf
- To know more about LGBTQIA+ issues:
<https://lgbtqindiaresource.in/lgbtq-ngos-and-collectives/>
<https://indiaculturelab.org/lgbtq>
https://www.ted.com/talks/karissa_sanbonmatsu_the_biology_of_gender_

from_dna_to_the_brain?language=en

- To know more about gender gaps:

https://www.ted.com/talks/safeena_husain_a_bold_plan_to_empower_1_6_million_out_of_school_girls_in_india

<https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-and-gender-equality/resources>

- To read more about intersectionality research:

<https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>



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