

FOCUS ON VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE

. . . *heavy heart* . . . To have a heavy heart means to be sad and unhappy (it does not refer to the weight of the heart). Myers was very sorry (*he had a heavy heart*) when he had to tell the female candidate that she would not be offered a permanent job at his college because the chancellor believed that the mother of a preschooler should not be working full time. Such sexist ideas regarding “appropriate” behavior for women and men have changed dramatically (*have undergone an extreme makeover*) in a relatively brief time period (*a thin slice of history*).

Gender Development

How Are We Alike? How Do We Differ?

Men and women are not from different planets—Mars and Venus—but from the same planet Earth. A number of years ago, a pop psychology book, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, promoted the idea that males and females are very different in the way they think and behave, as well as in what they want out of life. Myers suggests that in most ways men and women are alike but notes that the established differences tend to be noticed and thought more about than the similarities (*differences command attention*).

. . . *more able to walk in others’ shoes*. The expression “to be able to walk in someone else’s shoes” refers to our ability to understand how another person is thinking and feeling, and to have empathy for that person. As men and women mature, the differences in their social power diminish. For example, as they get older, women become more assertive, less dependent, and more dominant. In contrast, men become more understanding and compassionate and are better able to identify with another person’s feelings or difficulties (*more able to walk in others’ shoes*).

. . . These male-female social differences *surface early*. Males and females differ in their feelings of belonging (*connectedness*), a disparity that is noticeable from a young age (*it surfaces early*). When playing, boys tend to engage in competitive group activity without much close, confidential, or affectionate dialogue. Girls typically are more intimate with each other and play in smaller groups, frequently with only one friend, and they are less competitive and more supportive and empathic.

The Nature of Gender: Our Biology

The Y chromosome includes a single gene that, about the seventh week after conception, *throws a master switch triggering* the testes to develop and to produce the principal male hormone, **testosterone**. We all get an **X chromosome** from our mothers and either an X (you’ll be a girl) or a Y (you’ll be a boy) from our fathers. Thus, the **Y chromosome** is crucial to making males and a single gene is responsible for initiating the process (*it throws the switch*) that activates (*triggers*) the production of testosterone by the testes.

The Nurture of Gender: Our Culture

Traditionally, American men were expected to *initiate dates*, drive the car, and *pick up the check*. Women were expected to decorate the home, buy and care for the children’s clothes, and select the *wedding gifts*. **Gender roles** are a culture’s expectations for male and female behaviors. But these behaviors change over time and across cultures, and vary from generation to generation. In the past (*traditionally*), the expectation in American culture was that men asked women to go out (*initiated dates*) and paid for the meal and entertainment (*picked up the check*), and women looked after

domestic concerns, including purchasing and looking after the children's clothes and choosing presents for those who were getting married (*wedding gifts*).

For young children, gender *looms large*. Social learning helps *gender schemas* form early in life; young children actively look for clues about **gender** in things such as language, dress, toys, and songs (*they are "gender detectives"*) and tend to behave accordingly. Thus, for young children, the concept of gender is very important (*it looms large*).

Human Sexuality

In European and U.S. history, the *pendulum of sexual values has swung back and forth*. The early 1800s' eroticism gave way to the *conservative Victorian era* of the late 1800s. The *free-thinking flapper era* of the 1920s was replaced by the stricter family-values period of the 1950s, which gave way to the end-of-century pleasure-seeking "*me generation*" (Twenge, 2006). The *pendulum* of a mechanical clock swings back and forth from one side, or extreme, to the other. Myers is pointing out that during different periods of time (*eras*), our views of sexuality have tended to move from restrictive (*conservative Victorian*) at one extreme to those with fewer restraints (*free-thinking flapper*) at a later time. The open-minded 1920s was replaced by a more traditionalist and conformist period in the 1950s, which in turn was replaced by the more permissive self-oriented ("*me generation*") at the end of the 1900s. Sexual values have fluctuated many times in recent history (*the pendulum of sexual values has swung back and forth*). Today's generation may be moving toward an era in which commitment and restraint are more important than sexual expression. (Note: A *flapper* was an emancipated young woman in the 1920s.)

The Psychology of Sex

But our sexual motivation is fueled by more than hormones. It also requires the psychological stimuli—external and imagined—that *turn on the engine, keep it running, and shift it into high gear*. Myers makes an analogy between sex hormones and the fuel that propels a car. We need the hormones to be sexually motivated just as a car needs fuel to operate. In humans, however, there is a two-way interaction between the chemicals and sexuality. In addition to hormones, psychological factors are needed to initiate sexual desire (*turn on the engine*), maintain the arousal (*keep it running*), and produce the associated behaviors (*shift it into high gear*).

Viewing *X-rated sex films* has similarly tended to diminish people's satisfaction with their own sexual partners (Zillmann, 1989). All films are rated by a censor; those with an *X-rating* because of their sexually explicit content are restricted to adults only. There is much debate over the influence of such films on people, and some research suggests that there may be adverse effects. For example, they may create the false impression that females enjoy rape; they may increase men's willingness to hurt women; they tend to lead both males and females to devalue their partners and their relationships; and they may reduce people's feeling of fulfillment with their lovers.

Sexual Orientation

Most of today's psychologists therefore view sexual orientation as neither *willfully chosen* nor *willfully changed*. Myers compares **sexual orientation** to handedness. You don't deliberately decide (*willfully choose*) to be right-handed or left-handed and you can't intentionally alter (*willfully change*) your inherent inclination to use one hand over the other. Like handedness, sexual orientation is not linked to criminality nor is it associated with personality or psychological disorder.

An Evolutionary Explanation of Human Sexuality

. . . *have eyes for* . . . The phrase to *have eyes for someone* means to be attracted to that person. According to evolutionary psychologists, most males are attracted to (*have eyes for*) females whose youthful appearance suggests that they have greater reproductive potential, a tendency that is a product of **natural selection**.

Natural Selection and Mating Preferences

Evolutionary psychologists use natural selection to explain why *men and women differ more in the bedroom than in the boardroom*. **Evolutionary psychology** offers a comprehensive explanation for most of our species' universal tendencies (it's a *one-stop shop*). Men and women differ only in areas where they face different adaptive challenges. Thus, men and women are similar in executive ability (*they don't differ much in the boardroom*), but they do differ in their approach to reproduction and sexual behavior (*they differ more in the bedroom*).

In our *ancestral history*, men most often sent their genes into the future by *pairing widely*, women by *pairing wisely*. Evolutionary psychologists note that our normal desires (*natural yearnings*) help perpetuate our genes. In our evolutionary past (our *ancestral history*) females accomplished this best by being selective in their choice of mate (*pairing wisely*) and men by more promiscuous behavior (*pairing widely*). A Man's approach to sex is often casual (*recreational*), whereas a woman's is more about forming a committed partnership (*relational*). However, Myers points out that environmental factors, such as cultural expectations, can alter or shape how sexual behavior is expressed by both males and females (*cultural expectations can bend the genders*).

Women also prefer *stick-around dads over walk-away cads*. Women tend to prefer males who are more likely to be supportive of their children (*their offspring*). They also prefer males who are more willing to make a lasting contribution to their protection (*stick-around dads*) to males who indicate little or no willingness to stay around and make such a co-parenting commitment (*walk-away cads*).

As *mobile gene machines*, we are designed to prefer whatever worked for our ancestors in their environments. Evolutionary psychologists believe that behavioral tendencies that increase the probability of getting one's genes into the future have been selected for over the course of evolution. Humans who actively seek out mates and successfully procreate (*mobile gene machines*) are passing on inherited tendencies to behave in certain ways (*our natural yearnings*) because these behaviors were adaptive for our ancestors.

Critiquing the Evolutionary Perspective

. . . *the tight genetic leash* . . . *is looser on humans*. Just as a dog is restrained or held in check by a strap or cord (a *leash*), genes generally determine the fairly rigid or fixed patterns of behaviors of many animals. In humans, however, genes are less influential; thus, the usually strong genetic constraints (the *tight genetic leash*) operate in a less determined way (*they are looser*). Human behavior is therefore not strictly genetically determined (*it is not hard-wired*). Genes and experience together shape and modify our brains (*together they wire the brain*)

Close-Up: For Those Troubled by the Scientific Understanding of Human Origins

. . . *won the day* . . . Galileo's theory that the Earth revolved around the Sun, and not the other way around (*vice versa*), was eventually accepted (it *won the day*). His explanation was a coherent account (it *hung together*) of the way the solar system actually works. In a similar way, Darwin's

theory of evolution offers an organizing principle that can account for many observations about behavior.

It *boggles* the mind—the entire universe *popping out of a point* some 14 billion years ago . . . When something is startling, unexpected, or hard to comprehend, we say that “it *boggles* the mind.” The idea that the entire universe arose from a singularity (*popped out of a point*) approximately 14 billion years ago is one such “mind-*boggling*” idea that leaves even scientists full of reverence and wonder (*they are awestruck*).