

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 a 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. These kinds of sexist ideas regarding “appropriate” or “*proper*” behavior for women and men have changed dramatically (*have undergone an extreme makeover*). But, despite many gains, women still earn less than men and encounter many obstacles as they attempt to achieve the highest positions in organizations (*as they struggle to reach the top of the ladder*).

Gender Development

How Are We Alike? How Do We Differ?

. . . *differences command attention*. Here, Myers is pointing out that, though males and females are alike in most ways, in some areas they do differ. It is these differences (*the gender gap*) that tend to be noticed and thought about more (*the differences command attention*). However, some much discussed differences, such as differences in self-esteem, are minimal (*they are actually quite modest*), while others are more conspicuous or noticeable (*they are more striking*).

. . . *women who appear hungry for political power* experience less success than *their power-hungry male counterparts*. Women who are perceived as very ambitious and highly motivated (*driven*) in their pursuit of high political status (*women who appear hungry for political power*) experience less success than men who are similarly ambitious and motivated (*their power-hungry male counterparts*). For example, as Myers points out, elected political leaders are usually male, and men held 80 percent of the positions (*seats*) in the world’s governing parliaments in 2011.

This difference in *social connectedness surfaces in children’s play*. Males and females differ in their feelings of belonging (*social connectedness*), and this disparity is noticeable (*surfaces*) in children’s play. While males tend to be independent, females tend to be more interdependent. For example, 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 Biological Sex

About seven weeks after conception, a single gene on the Y chromosome *throws a master switch*. 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 a master switch*) that activates or triggers the production of **testosterone** by the testes. Females also have testosterone, but less of it. During the fourth and fifth prenatal months, sex hormones will immerse (*bathe*) the fetal brain, and direct or orient (*tilt*) its neural connections (*wiring*) toward female or male patterns.

The Nurture of Gender: Our Culture and Experiences

Gender roles can change dramatically in a thin slice of history. At the beginning of the twentieth century, New Zealand was the only country in the world that had granted women the right to vote. By contrast, at the present time, Saudi Arabia is the only country that *denies* women the right to

vote. In addition, the number of women in the workplace has increased substantially (*nearly half the U.S. workforce is female*) and more U.S. women than men graduate from college. The modern economy has created jobs that require social intelligence, open communication, and the ability to sit still and focus, rather than those that require size and physical power (*brute strength*). These examples represent a major change in **gender roles** in a relatively short period of time (*gender roles can change dramatically in a thin slice of history*).

For young children, gender *looms large*. Social learning helps children to form *gender schemas* early in life; young children actively look for clues about **gender** in such things 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

The Physiology of Sex

Hormones may fuel our sex drive, but psychological stimuli *turn on the engine, keep it running, and shift it into high gear*. Here, 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*).

The Psychology of Sex

During the 1920s, when Western *women’s rising hemlines* first reached the knee, *many male hearts fluttered* when viewing a woman’s leg. Prior to and early in the twentieth century, *hemlines* were long and skirts and dresses covered women’s legs. But, by the 1920s, *hemlines* had become progressively shorter and were above the knee (*women’s rising hemlines*). Many men were aroused and excited (*many male hearts fluttered*) at the sight of a woman’s legs. However, with repeated exposure to any stimulus, including an erotic stimulus, our responses diminish or *habituate*.

(Photo caption) Keeping abreast of hypersexuality There is a humorous play on words in this sentence. To keep *abreast* (one word) of trends and events means to keep up-to-date and to be aware of their current status. A *breast* (two words, in this case) refers to the female mammary gland. In one analysis, the female characters depicted in top-selling video games were much more likely to have their sexuality emphasized (*they were hypersexualized*) with large breasts, tiny waists, and minimal clothing (*they were partially nude or revealingly clothed*).

Sexual Orientation: Why Do We Differ?

Heterosexuals may wonder what it feels like to be *the “odd man out”* in a *straight culture*. Here, Myers is suggesting that one way for heterosexual people to understand how a homosexual feels in a predominantly heterosexual society (*straight culture*) is to imagine what it would be like if the situation were reversed and homosexuality was the norm. How would it feel, as a heterosexual, to be ignored, rejected, made to feel unusual or abnormal (*the “odd man out”*), or to be confronted by media that showed or indicated homosexuality as the societal norm?

Most psychologists view sexual orientation as neither *willfully chosen* nor *willfully changed*. People don’t deliberately decide (*willfully choose*) their **sexual orientation**, and they can’t intentionally

alter (*willfully change*) it either. Research indicates that, *taken together, the brain, genetic, and prenatal findings offer strong support for a biological explanation of sexual orientation*. And, as Myers notes, *if there are environmental factors that influence sexual orientation, we haven't yet found them*.

An Evolutionary Explanation of Human Sexuality

Natural Selection and Mating Preferences

Evolutionary psychologists use this principle [**natural selection**] to explain how *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. Men and women differ only in areas where they face different adaptive challenges. Thus, men and women are similar in their 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*).

No surprise, then, that women prefer *partners who will stick around* and offer *their joint offspring* support and protection. Women prefer men who are more willing to stay with them (*partners who will stick around*) and who are willing to make a co-parenting commitment to their children's (*their joint offspring's*) protection.

If you put *a man in a mating mindset*, how will he try to show he is a "catch"? In this context, a "catch" refers to a person who has the appropriate and desirable qualities that one would want in a potential partner or spouse. Myers asks how a man who is thinking about entering into a sexual relationship (*a man in a mating mindset*) will try to demonstrate his appeal. According to evolutionary psychologists, that man is likely to purchase ostentatious or extravagant material objects (*showy items*), express aggressive intentions, and take chances (*risks*).

Thus, argue evolutionary psychologists, *men pair widely; women pair wisely*. Evolutionary psychologists note that our inherited desires (*natural yearnings*) help perpetuate our genes. In our evolutionary past (*our ancestral history*), women accomplished this best by being selective in their choice of mate (*pairing wisely*) and men by more promiscuous behavior (*pairing widely*). However, Myers points out that environmental factors, such as cultural expectations, can alter or shape how sexual behavior is expressed by both men and women (*culture bends the genders*).

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 sending 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 (*our natural yearnings*) to behave in certain ways because these behaviors were adaptive for our ancestors.

Critiquing the Evolutionary Perspective

Are heterosexual men truly *hard-wired* to have sex with any woman who approaches them? In this context "*hard-wired*" refers to behaviors that are reflexive or preprogrammed by genes. Critics note that taking this position (*genetic determinism*) may relieve men of moral responsibility to be faithful to their partners and may excuse their sexual aggression; as a result of their evolutionary history, men are merely doing what they are programmed to do ("*boys will be boys*"). Evolutionary psychologists contend that they do not make this claim and that much of who we are is not innately preprogrammed (*much of who we are is not hard-wired*). According to one research team,

“evolution forcefully rejects a genetic determinism” (*that our behavior is hard-wired*). As Myers notes, *how we came to be need not dictate how we ought to be*.

Reflections on Gender, Sexuality, and Nature–Nurture Interaction

Culture bends the genders. We’re the products of nature (*genes*) and nurture (*environment and culture*), but we’re also capable of changing our behavior (*we’re also an open system*). For example, cultural expectations can influence and change male and female sexual behaviors (*culture bends the genders*). But *culture* is not all-powerful (*people may rebel against peer pressure and do the opposite of the expected*) and neither are *genes* (*people may choose not to reproduce*). We are both the products and designers of our worlds (*we are both the creatures and the creators of our worlds*).

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 (*people of science are awestruck*).