Chapter 9: Sex and Gender

Chapter Summary

We began Chapter 9 with the bare necessities in order to explain the basic terms of the chapter.

Sex was defined as the anatomical variance between males and females and gender defined as the socially learned expectations associates with being male and female and related to masculinity and femininity. In regard to gender, traditional norms for girls are to play with dolls and for boys to play sports. What happens when individuals don’t conform to traditional gender roles? It may cause gender identity issues and even some strange looks from other.

The sociological perspective allows us to view the processes of how individuals and groups interact in regard to gender and how the concept of gender is socially constructed.

On a structural basis we discussed how media impacts our ideas about gender. For example, media sets the standards and reinforces many aspects of American life, including gender roles.
Media often portrays male characters as active, powerful, and sexually aggressive and females as young, thin, beautiful, and passive. Schools, peers, religion, and the workplace are also structural components within society that influence may aspects of gender.

One component of the workplace that affect gender is the glass ceiling, which is when females climb the corporate ladder and hit an invisible ceiling and don’t receive promotions to the highest levels in corporations as compared to their male colleagues with the same qualifications and experience.

The family is another structural component of gender and the second shift occurs when the wife works 40 hours or more and then is responsible for all of the childcare and household responsibilities.

In regard to the differences between the sexes, women are underrepresented in the military, politics, corporate boards and are paid less in the workplace than men.

There are social problems associated with issues of sexuality such as violence against homosexuals and the controversial legal battles for same-sex marriages. The first same-sex marriage occurred in 2004 and over two-thirds of states have legalized these unions.
The sociological imagination was applied to the experiences of individuals who are transgender, transsexuals, and intersex to explore how gender identity can be a private trouble and public issue.

The last module discusses social change and how we can strike a balance so that females are treated fairly in areas such as the workplace. The gender wage gap is one important issue to address in regard to gender inequality.

Overall, gender norms and roles are slowing changing in the U.S. and women are gaining more rights and equality within areas such as the workplace and the military.