Assignment

3. How does sociology conceptualize gender inequality? Discuss in relation to families and intimate relationships and (2) popular culture (TV, magazines, films, video games, etc.)

Generally, people think different genders inherently have different behaviors, ambitions, and characteristics. Men are usually stereotyped as strong, independent, and rational, but women are considered as weak, dependent, and emotional. These stereotypes are negative, and these cause gender inequality to some extent.

According to Kendall et al, gender is explained as " Gender refers to the culturally and socially constructed differences between females and males found in the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with and " femininity" and " masculinity" (P. 254). Additionally, different from sex, which refer to biological dimension, gender is acquired through socialization. In fact, gender inequality consists in everywhere in the society.

From birth, baby boys and baby girls are treated in different ways by their parents. According to MacDonald, parents always take care of their baby girls more carefully and gently. Besides, parents give different toys to different genders often unknowingly reinforcing gender stereotypes. For example, parents prefer to give computer games, vehicles and war toys to boys and dolls, dishes and jewelry boxes to girls. In addition, boys and girls are assigned different tasks when they are old enough to do some housework. Boys are usually asked to do maintenance chores, such as replacing bulbs and fixing roofs. Girls always end up doing domestic chores, such as cleaning rooms, cooking and shopping. Moreover, sociologists consider that the chores assigned to children can go on to effect children's personal characteristics and future occupation choices. For instance, girls

experienced in looking after their siblings may become nurses in future. Boys may learn computer science and in work IT areas and they may become engineers when they grow up.

Some critics believe that the media should report the reality, while some others think the media can persuade the public into certain ideas. Among all kinds of TV programs, there are more male roles occurs than female ones. Indeed, the characters are significant different between male and female roles. According to Basow, male are always depicted typically aggressive, and heroic. Contrarily, female roles are various. In some video games, online games and electronic media women are objectified and are depicted in a poor light reinforcing negative stereotypes of women. Men are typically portrayed as " macho", gun totting and as super heroes. These games encourage children to resort to violence as it desensitizes them against violence, especially against women.

Recent trends, represented female roles overoptimistically, for example, statistics show that many women are engaged in professional careers. However, these are in opposition to the real society, and in fact, a large number of women still work in low-paying and low-class jobs. Even in professional and corporate jobs women employees are paid less than their male counterparts in many companies. Statistics shows that from 2000— 2008 women earned 77. 1% of wages in comparison to males for same type of jobs. Often women are deprived of things like appreciation and rewards as well. The gender bias exists in the way people perceive women's competence. There is a bias favoring men in people's attitudes of perceiving negative stereotypes of women's proficiency and skills. Systemic bias towards evaluating men's work positively over that of women is present in all

societies.

Advertising is another avenue for representing gender inequality in society. In today's society we are bombarded with gender specific and stereotypical advertisements. Advertisements not only reinforce gender inequality they also use people as objects to endorse brands and products. Jean Kilbourne in her essay " Two Ways A Woman Can Get Hurt" states women can get hurt by the way they are portrayed in advertisements. Their image is undermined by some of the ads and crimes against women are encouraged as ads tend to dehumanize women in ads.

Therefore, we see that gender inequality, though deplorable, is still prevalent in society. We encourage reinforcing gender stereotypes wittingly or unwittingly. Family, neighborhood and society in the larger context both shape our attitudes and are a product of our proclivities. It is important to set scores right and establish a sense of equality and balance in people right from childhood. This task begins from the home and school and all responsible adults have a duty in shaping a non-biased and healthy outlook in the coming generations.