

SOC 341: SEX AND GENDER



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Sex and Gender

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: An Introduction to Sociology

Sociology is the study of social behavior or society, including its origins, development, organization, networks, and institutions. It is a social science that uses various methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about social order, disorder, and change. Many sociologists aim to conduct research that may be applied directly to social policy and welfare, while others focus primarily on refining the theoretical understanding of social processes. Subject matter ranges from the micro-sociology level of individual agency and interaction to the macro level of systems and the social structure.

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Thumbnail: Inside view of Ruca Che arena in Neuquén, Argentina, during a rock concert. (Public domain; Diegoluciano)

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1.1: Introduction



Figure 1.1: Every day, 7.5 million people use the railways around Mumbai, India. The vast majority of them don't know each other, but they share much in common as they move together. (Credit: Rajarshi MITRA/flickr)

Chapter Outline

1.1 What Is Sociology?

1.2 The History of Sociology

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

A busy commuter train station might seem like a very individualized place. Tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of strangers flow through with a singular purpose: to get where they need to go. Whether walking through main doors at a pace of a dozen people each second, or arriving by train hundreds at a time, the station can feel a bit like a balloon being pumped too full. Throngs of people cluster in tight bottlenecks until they burst through corridors and stairways and tunnels to reach the next stage of their journey. In some stations, walking against the crowd can be a tedious, nearly impossible process. And cutting across a river of determined commuters can be almost dangerous. Things are fast, relentless, and necessary.

But are those hundred thousand or half a million or, in the case of Tokyo's Shinjuku station, 3.5 million people really acting individually? It may seem surprising, but even with those numbers, strangers from across cities can synch up on the same schedules, use the same doors, take one leg of the trip together every day before separating into different directions. After just a few months, faces can become familiar, and senses can be tuned. An experienced commuter can tell where another person is going according to their pace and whatever announcement just went out; they may slow up a bit to let the other person pass, or hold a door open just a bit longer than usual, certain that someone will grab the handle behind them. Many regulars don't need to check the schedule board; they sense whether a train is running late or whether a track has changed simply by the movement of the crowd.

And then the customs develop: Which side to walk on, how fast to go, where to stand, how much space to leave between people on the escalator. When you board early, which seat should you take? When you see someone running for the train, do you jam the closing door with your foot? How does the crowd treat people who ask for food or money? What's the risk level in telling someone to be quiet?

Very few of these behaviors are taught. None are written down. But the transit hub, that pocket of constant flow, is an echo of its society. It takes on some aspects of the city and country around it, but its people also form an informal group of their own. Sociologists, as you will learn, may study these people. Sociologists may seek to understand how they feel about their trip, be it proud or annoyed or just plain exhausted. Sociologists might study how length of commute relates to job satisfaction or family relationships. They may study the ways that conditions of a train station affect attitudes about government, or how the difficulty of commuting may lead people to relocate. This understanding isn't just a collection of interesting facts; it can influence government policy and spending decisions, employer interventions, and healthcare practices. The work sociologists do to understand our society, and the work you will do in learning about it, is meaningful to our lives and our futures.

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1.2: What Is Sociology?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain concepts central to sociology.
- Describe how different sociological perspectives have developed.

What Are Society and Culture?



Figure 1.2: Sociologists learn about society while studying one-to-one and group interactions. (Credit: GlacierNPS/Flickr)

Sociology is the scientific and systematic study of groups and group interactions, societies and social interactions, from small and personal groups to very large groups. A group of people who live in a defined geographic area, who interact with one another, and who share a common culture is what sociologists call a society.

Sociologists study all aspects and levels of society. Sociologists working from the micro-level study small groups and individual interactions, while those using macro-level analysis look at trends among and between large groups and societies. For example, a micro-level study might look at the accepted rules of conversation in various groups such as among teenagers or business professionals. In contrast, a macro-level analysis might research the ways that language use has changed over time or in social media outlets.

The term culture refers to the group's shared practices, values, and beliefs. Culture encompasses a group's way of life, from routine, everyday interactions to the most important parts of group members' lives. It includes everything produced by a society, including all the social rules.

Sociologists often study culture using the sociological imagination, which pioneer sociologist C. Wright Mills described as an awareness of the relationship between a person's behavior and experience and the wider culture that shaped the person's choices and perceptions. It's a way of seeing our own and other people's behavior in relationship to history and social structure (1959). One illustration of this is a person's decision to marry. In the United States, this choice is heavily influenced by individual feelings. However, the social acceptability of marriage relative to the person's circumstances also plays a part.

Remember, though, that culture is a product of the people in a society. Sociologists take care not to treat the concept of "culture" as though it were alive and real. The error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence is known as reification (Sahn, 2013).

Studying Patterns: How Sociologists View Society

All sociologists are interested in the experiences of individuals and how those experiences are shaped by interactions with social groups and society. To a sociologist, the personal decisions an individual makes do not exist in a vacuum. Cultural patterns, social forces and influences put pressure on people to select one choice over another. Sociologists try to identify these general patterns by examining the behavior of large groups of people living in the same society and experiencing the same societal pressures.

Consider the changes in U.S. families. The “typical” family in past decades consisted of married parents living in a home with their unmarried children. Today, the percent of unmarried couples, same-sex couples, single-parent and single-adult households is increasing, as well as is the number of expanded households, in which extended family members such as grandparents, cousins, or adult children live together in the family home. While 15 million mothers still make up the majority of single parents, 3.5 million fathers are also raising their children alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Increasingly, single people and cohabitating couples are choosing to raise children outside of marriage through surrogates or adoption.

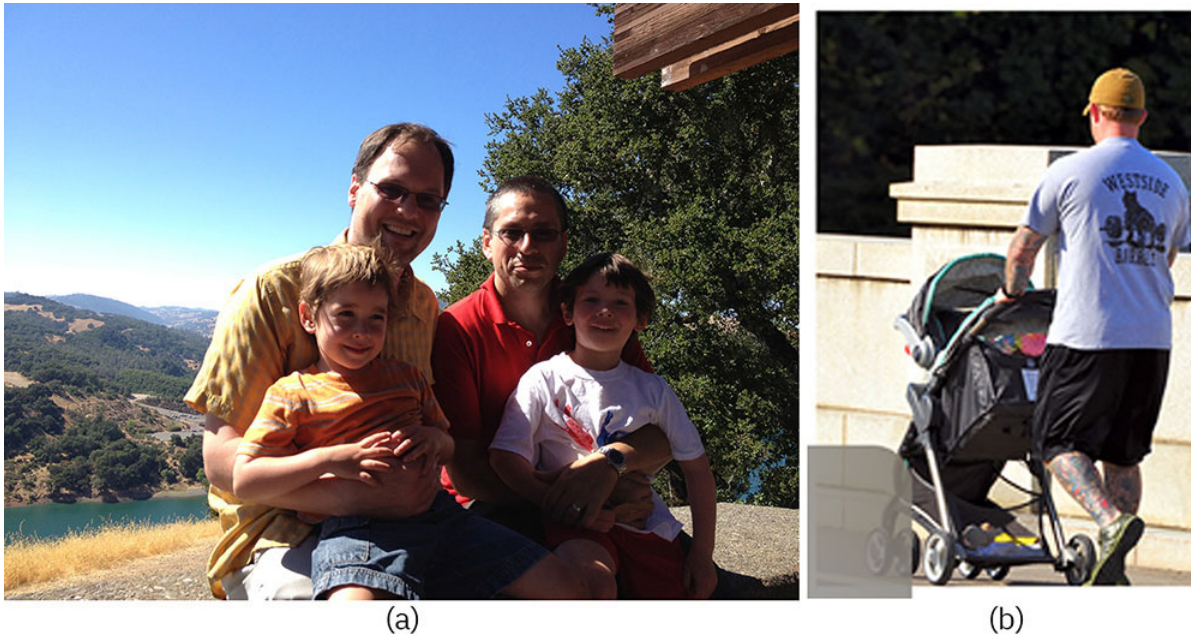


Figure 1.3: Modern U.S. families may be very different in makeup from what was historically typical. (Credit A: Paul Brody/flickr; B: Tony Alter/Wikimedia Commons)

Some sociologists study social facts—the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and cultural rules that govern social life—that may contribute to these changes in the family. Do people in the United States view marriage and family differently over the years? Do they view them differently than Peruvians? Do employment and economic conditions play a role in families? Other sociologists are studying the consequences of these new patterns, such as the ways children influence and are influenced by them and/or the changing needs for education, housing, and healthcare.

Sociologists identify and study patterns related to all kinds of contemporary social issues. The “Stop and Frisk” policy, the emergence of new political factions, how Twitter influences everyday communication—these are all examples of topics that sociologists might explore.

Studying Part and Whole: How Sociologists View Social Structures

A key component of the sociological perspective is the idea that the individual and society are inseparable. It is impossible to study one without the other. German sociologist Norbert Elias called the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of individuals and the society that shapes that behavior *figuration*.

Consider religion. While people experience religion in a distinctly individual manner, religion exists in a larger social context as a social institution. For instance, an individual’s religious practice may be influenced by what government dictates, holidays, teachers, places of worship, rituals, and so on. These influences underscore the important relationship between individual practices of religion and social pressures that influence that religious experience (Elias, 1978). In simpler terms, *figuration* means that as one analyzes the social institutions in a society, the individuals using that institution in any fashion need to be ‘figured’ in to the analysis.

Sociology in the Real World: Individual-Society Connections

When sociologist Nathan Kierns spoke to his friend Ashley (a pseudonym) about the move she and her partner had made from an urban center to a small Midwestern town, he was curious about how the social pressures placed on a lesbian couple differed from one community to the other. Ashley said that in the city they had been accustomed to getting looks and hearing comments when she and her partner walked hand in hand. Otherwise, she felt that they were at least being tolerated. There had been little to no outright discrimination.

Things changed when they moved to the small town for her partner's job. For the first time, Ashley found herself experiencing direct discrimination because of her sexual orientation. Some of it was particularly hurtful. Landlords would not rent to them. Ashley, who is a highly trained professional, had a great deal of difficulty finding a new job.

When Nathan asked Ashley if she and her partner became discouraged or bitter about this new situation, Ashley said that rather than letting it get to them, they decided to do something about it. Ashley approached groups at a local college and several churches in the area. Together they decided to form the town's first Gay-Straight Alliance.

The alliance has worked successfully to educate their community about same-sex couples. It also worked to raise awareness about the kinds of discrimination that Ashley and her partner experienced in the town and how those could be eliminated. The alliance has become a strong advocacy group, and it is working to attain equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBTQ individuals.

Kierns observed that this is an excellent example of how negative social forces can result in a positive response from individuals to bring about social change (Kierns, 2011).

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1.3: The History of Sociology

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why sociology emerged when it did
- Describe how sociology became a separate academic discipline



Figure 1.4: People have been thinking like sociologists long before sociology became a distinct academic discipline: Plato and Aristotle, Confucius, Khaldun, Voltaire, and Mary Wollenscraft set the stage for modern sociology. (Credit: A, B, C, and E Wikimedia Commons; D: publicdomainfiles.com.)

For millennia, people have been fascinated by the relationships between individuals and societies. Many topics studied by ancient philosophers in their desire to describe an ideal society are still studied in modern sociology, including theories of social conflict, economics, social cohesion, and power in a continued attempt to describe an ideal society (Hannoum, 2003). Although we are more familiar with western philosophers like Plato and his student, Aristotle, eastern philosophers also thought about social issues.

Until recently, we have very few texts that are non-religious in nature that theorize about social life. From 4th century through the 19th century, the Catholic Church was the seat of power from today's Turkey in the east to western and northern Europe, including the British Isles. Only monks who were charged with rewriting holy texts by hand and the aristocracy were literate. Moreover, the Church consolidated power. In the year 800, Pope Leo III named Charlemagne, the king of Francia (today's France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany) emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, giving one individual control over most of Europe. Doing so gave the Catholic Church the power to maintain its own traditions safeguard them from the influence of people practicing other religions. If any social patterns challenged any belief of the Church, those practitioners were massacred, burned at the stake, or labeled heretics. As a result, the records that we have are extremely subjective and do not offer an unbiased view of social practice.

In the 13th century, Ma Tuan-Lin, a Chinese historian, was the first to record, in his seminal encyclopedia titled *General Study of Literary Remains*, the social dynamics underlying and generating historical development.

In the 14th century, the Tunisian historian Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) set the foundation for both modern sociology and economics. Khaldun proposed a theory of social conflict and provided a comparison of nomadic and sedentary life, an analysis of political economy, and a study connecting a tribe's social cohesion to its capacity for power (Hannoum, 2003). Khaldun often challenged authorities. As sociologists continue to study and report on social issues and problems, they often find themselves in the center of controversy.

From 1347 to 1522, the bubonic plague ravaged Europe, killing up to 35% of population (Armstrong, 2019). The plague dealt a major blow to the credibility of the Catholic Church. Out of this chaos emerged the the work of Copernicus, Galileo, Leonardo, Newton, Linnaeus, and other philosophers whose work sometimes contradicted church teachings. Events once held to be the product of the divine hand could be analyzed by human reason and observation and could be explained by scientific, testable, and retestable hypotheses. As literacy spread through conquests and colonization, more records and literature became available for sociologists and historians to put social puzzles together.

In the 18th century, Enlightenment philosophers developed general principles that could be used to explain social life. Thinkers such as John Locke, François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire), Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Hobbes responded to what they saw as social ills by writing on topics that they hoped would lead to social reform. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) wrote about women's

conditions in society. Like Harriet Martineau and Jane Addams, her works were long ignored by the male academic structure, but since the 1970s, Wollstonecraft has been widely considered the first feminist thinker of consequence. Ideas about economic systems, the family, health and hygiene, national offense and defense, were among the many concerns of social life.

The early 19th century saw great changes with the Industrial Revolution, increased mobility, and new kinds of employment. It was also a period of increased trade, travel, and globalization that exposed many people — for the first time—to societies and cultures other than their own. Millions of people moved into cities and many people turned away from their traditional religious beliefs. Ideas spread rapidly, groups were created, political decisions became public decisions. Among a new generation of philosophers, there were some who believed they could make sense of it all.

Creating a Discipline: European Theorists



Figure 1.5: Early major European theorists. Top row, left to right: Auguste Comte, Harriet Martineau, and Herbert Spencer. Bottom row, left to right: Georg Simmel, Émile Durkheim, and Max Weber. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons; Julius Cornelius Schaarwächter/Public domain.)

Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857)

The term sociology was first coined in 1780 by the French essayist Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836) in an unpublished manuscript (Fauré et al. 1999). In 1838, the term was reintroduced by Auguste Comte (1798–1857). Comte originally studied to be an engineer, but later became a pupil of social philosopher Claude Henri de Rouvroy Comte de Saint-Simon (1760–1825). They both thought that social scientists could study society using the same scientific methods utilized in natural sciences. Comte also

believed in the potential of social scientists to work toward the betterment of society. He held that once scholars identified the laws that governed society, sociologists could address problems such as poor education and poverty (Abercrombie et al. 2000).

Comte named the scientific study of social patterns positivism. He described his philosophy in a series of books called *The Course in Positive Philosophy* (1830–1842) and *A General View of Positivism* (1848). He believed that revealing the laws by which societies and individuals interact would usher in a new “positivist” age of history. While the field and its terminology have grown, sociologists still believe in the positive impact of their work.

Harriet Martineau (1802 – 1876)

Harriet Martineau introduced sociology to English speaking scholars through her translation of Comte’s writing from French to English. She was an early analyst of social practices, including economics, social class, religion, suicide, government, and women’s rights. Her career began with *Illustrations of Political Economy*, a work educating ordinary people about the principles of economics (Johnson, 2003). She later developed the first systematic methodological international comparisons of social institutions in two of her most famous sociological works: *Society in America* (1837) and *Retrospect of Western Travel* (1838).

Martineau found the workings of capitalism at odds with the professed moral principles of people in the United States. She pointed out the faults with the free enterprise system in which workers were exploited and impoverished while business owners became wealthy. She further noted that the belief that all are created equal was inconsistent with the lack of women’s rights. Much like Mary Wollstonecraft, Martineau was often discounted in her own time because academic sociology was a male-dominated profession.

Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Karl Marx was a German philosopher and economist. In 1848, he and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) coauthored the *Communist Manifesto*. This book is one of the most influential political manuscripts in history. It also presents Marx’s theory of society, which differed from what Comte proposed.

Marx rejected Comte’s positivism. He believed that societies grew and changed as a result of the struggles of different social classes over the means of production. At the time he was developing his theories, the Industrial Revolution and the rise of capitalism led to great disparities in wealth between the owners of the factories and workers. Capitalism, an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of goods and the means to produce them, had developed in many nations.

Marx predicted that inequalities of capitalism would become so extreme that workers would eventually revolt. This would lead to the collapse of capitalism, which would be replaced by communism. Communism is an economic system under which there is no private or corporate ownership: everything is owned communally and distributed as needed. Marx believed that communism was a more equitable system than capitalism.

While his economic predictions did not materialize in the time frame he predicted, Marx’s idea that social conflict leads to change in society is still one of the major theories used in modern sociology.

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903)

In 1873, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer published *The Study of Sociology*, the first book with the term “sociology” in the title. Spencer rejected much of Comte’s philosophy as well as Marx’s theory of class struggle and his support of communism. Instead, he favored a form of government that allowed market forces to control capitalism. His work influenced many early sociologists including Émile Durkheim (1858–1917). Spencer, using Charles Darwin’s work as a comparison said, “This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called ‘natural selection,’ or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life.” (Spencer, 1864) The statement is often misinterpreted and adopted by those who believe in the superiority of one race over another.

Georg Simmel (1858–1918)

Georg Simmel was a German art critic who wrote widely on social and political issues as well. Simmel took an anti-positivism stance and addressed topics such as social conflict, the function of money, individual identity in city life, and the European fear of outsiders (Stapley 2010). Much of his work focused on micro-level theories and analyzed the dynamics of two-person and three-person groups. His work also emphasized individual culture as the creative capacities of individuals (Ritzer and Goodman 2004).

Émile Durkheim (1858–1917)

Émile Durkheim helped establish sociology as a formal academic discipline by establishing the first European department of sociology at the University of Bordeaux in 1895 and by publishing his *Rules of the Sociological Method* in 1895. In *Division of Labour in Society* (1893), Durkheim further laid out his theory on how societies transformed from a primitive state into a capitalist, industrial society. According to Durkheim, people rise to their proper levels in society based on merit.

Durkheim believed that sociologists could study objective social facts (Poggi, 2000). He also believed that through such studies it would be possible to determine if a society was “healthy” or “pathological.” Healthy societies were stable while pathological societies experienced a breakdown in social norms.

In 1897, Durkheim attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of his rules of social research when he published a work titled *Suicide*. Durkheim examined suicide statistics in different police districts to research differences between Catholic and Protestant communities. He attributed the differences to socio-religious forces rather than to individual or psychological causes.

Max Weber (1864–1920)

Prominent sociologist Max Weber established a sociology department in Germany at the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich in 1919. Weber wrote on many topics related to sociology including political change in Russia and social forces that affect factory workers. He is known best for his 1904 book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The theory that Weber sets forth in this book is still controversial. Some believe that Weber argued that the beliefs of many Protestants, especially Calvinists, led to the rise of capitalism. Others interpret it as simply claiming that the ideologies of capitalism and Protestantism are complementary.

Weber believed that it was difficult, if not impossible, to use standard scientific methods to accurately predict the behavior of groups as some sociologists hoped to do. Weber argued that the influence of culture on human behavior had to be taken into account. This even applied to the researchers themselves, who should be aware of how their own cultural biases could influence their research. To deal with this problem, Weber and Wilhelm Dilthey introduced the concept of *verstehen*, a German word that means to understand in a deep way. In seeking *verstehen*, outside observers of a social world—an entire culture or a small setting—attempt to understand it from an insider’s point of view.

In *The Nature of Social Action*, Weber described sociology as striving to “... interpret the meaning of social action and thereby give a causal explanation of the way in which action proceeds and the effects it produces.” He and other like-minded sociologists proposed a philosophy of anti-positivism whereby social researchers would strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values. This approach led to some research methods whose aim was not to generalize or predict (traditional in science), but to systematically gain an in-depth understanding of social worlds.

The different approaches to research based on positivism or anti-positivism are often considered the foundation for the differences found today between quantitative sociology and qualitative sociology. Quantitative sociology uses statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants. Researchers analyze data using statistical techniques to see if they can uncover patterns of human behavior. Qualitative sociology seeks to understand human behavior by learning about it through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of content sources (like books, magazines, journals, and popular media).

Social Policy and Debate: Should We Raise the Minimum Wage?

During his hard-fought 2020 campaign, President Joe Biden promised Americans that he would raise the federal minimum wage. Opponents of raising the minimum wage argue that some workers would get larger paychecks while others would lose their jobs, and companies would be less likely to hire new workers because of the increased cost of paying them. Biden and other proponents of raising the minimum wage contend that some job loss would be greatly offset by the positive effects on the standard of living of low-wage workers and reducing the income gap between the rich and poor.

Sociologists may consider the minimum wage issue from differing perspectives as well. How much of an impact would a minimum wage raise have for a single mother? Some might study the economic effects, such as her ability to pay bills and keep food on the table. Others might look at how reduced economic stress could improve family relationships. Some sociologists might research the impact on the status of small business owners. These could all be examples of public sociology, a branch of sociology that strives to bring sociological dialogue to public forums. The goals of public sociology are to increase understanding of the social factors that underlie social problems and assist in finding solutions. According to Michael Burawoy (2005), the challenge of public sociology is to engage multiple publics in multiple ways.

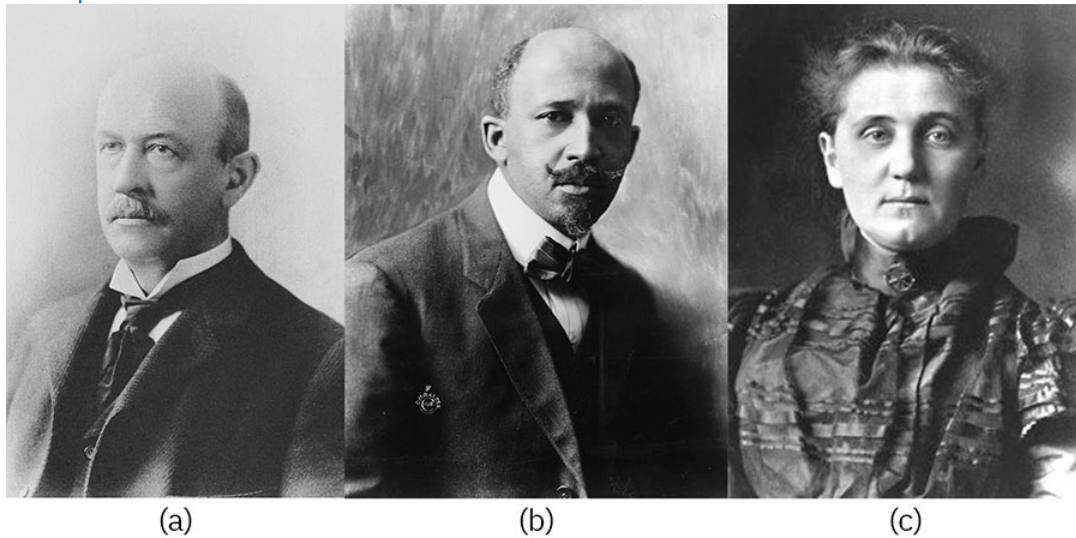


Figure 1.6: From left to right, William Sumner, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Jane Addams. (Credit A, B, and C: Wikimedia Commons.)

In the early 1900s, sociology reached universities in the United States. William Sumner held the first professorship in sociology (Yale University), Franklin Giddings was the first full professor of Sociology (Columbia University), and Albion Small wrote the first sociology textbook. Early American sociologists tested and applied the theories of the Europeans and became leaders in social research. Lester Ward (1841 – 1913) developed social research methods and argued for the use of the scientific method and quantitative data (Chapter 2) to show the effectiveness of policies. In order for sociology to gain respectability in American academia, social researchers understood that they must adopt empirical approaches.

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)

William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois, a Harvard-trained historian, pioneered the use of rigorous empirical methodology into sociology. His groundbreaking 1896-1897 study of the African American community in Philadelphia incorporated hundreds of interviews Du Bois conducted in order to document the familial and employment structures and assess the chief challenges of the community. These new, comprehensive research methods stood in stark contrast to the less scientific practices of the time, which Du Bois critiqued as being similar to doing research as if through the window of a moving car. His scientific approach became highly influential to entire schools of sociological study, and is considered a forerunner to contemporary practices. Additionally, Du Bois' 1899 publication provided empirical evidence to challenge pseudoscientific ideas of biological racism (Morris, 2015; Green & Wortham, 2018), which had been used as justification to oppress people of different races.

Du Bois also played a prominent role in the effort to increase rights for Black people. Concerned at the slow pace of progress and advice from some Black leaders to be more accommodating of racism, Du Bois became a leader in what would later be known as the Niagara Movement. In 1905, he and others drafted a declaration that called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans. A few years later, he helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served as its director of publications.

Thorstein Veblen (1857 – 1929)

After a brief stint as an unemployed college graduate, Thorstein Veblen began to study the economy through a social lens, writing about the leisure class, the business class, and other areas that touched on the idea of 'working' itself. He researched the chronically unemployed, the currently unemployed, the working classes, and the impact of technology and business within society. Veblen is known as a co-founder of the branch (or school) of institutional economics.

Jane Addams (1860-1935)

Jane Addams founded *Hull House*, a center that served needy immigrants through social and educational programs while providing extensive opportunities for sociological research. Founded in Chicago, Addams worked closely with University of Chicago's Chicago School of Sociology. This school of thought places much importance on environment in which relationships and behaviors develop. Research conducted at Hull House informed child labor, immigration, health care, and other areas of public policy.

Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929)

Charles Horton Cooley posited that individuals compare themselves to others in order to check themselves against social standards and remain part of the group. Calling this idea ‘the looking-glass self,’ Cooley argued that we ‘see’ ourselves by the reactions of others with whom we interact. If someone reacts positively to our behavior, theoretically we will continue that behavior. He wrote substantially on what he saw as the order of life in *Human Nature and the Social Order* (1902) followed by *Social Organization* in 1909. He was very concerned with the increasing individualism and competitiveness of US society, fearing it would disrupt families as primary groups lost their importance.

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)

George Herbert Mead was a philosopher and sociologist whose work focused on the ways in which the mind and the self were developed as a result of social processes (Cronk, n.d.). He argued that how an individual comes to view himself or herself is based to a very large extent on interactions with others. Though Mead adopted Cooley’s concept of ‘looking-glasses,’ Mead felt that an individual’s reaction to a positive or negative reflection depended on who the ‘other’ was. Individuals that had the greatest impact on a person’s life were significant others while generalized others were the organized and generalized attitude of a social group. Mead often shares the title of father of symbolic interactionism with Cooley and Erving Goffman.

Robert E. Park (1864-1944)

Robert E. Park is best known as the founder of social ecology. Attached to the Chicago School, Park focused on how individuals lived within their environment. One of the first sociologists to focus on ethnic minorities, he wrote on the Belgian oppression of the Congolese. When he returned to the US, he and Ernest Burgess researched the inner city to show that no matter who lived there, social chaos was prevalent. As such, it was not the residents who caused the chaos but the environment.

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1.4: Theoretical Perspectives

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section you should be able to:

- Describe the ways that sociological theories are used to explain social institutions.
- Differentiate between functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.



Figure 1.7: Sociologists develop theories to explain social occurrences such as protest rallies. (Credit: David Shankbone/flickr)

Sociologists study social events, interactions, and patterns, and they develop theories to explain why things work as they do. In sociology, a theory is a way to explain different aspects of social interactions and to create a testable proposition, called a hypothesis, about society (Allan 2006).

For example, although suicide is generally considered an individual phenomenon, Émile Durkheim was interested in studying the social factors that affect it. He studied social solidarity, social ties within a group, and hypothesized that differences in suicide rates might be explained by religious differences. Durkheim gathered a large amount of data about Europeans and found that Protestants were more likely to commit suicide than Catholics. His work supports the utility of theory in sociological research.

Theories vary in scope depending on the scale of the issues that they are meant to explain. Macro-level theories relate to large-scale issues and large groups of people, while micro-level theories look at very specific relationships between individuals or small groups. Grand theories attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change. Sociological theory is constantly evolving and should never be considered complete. Classic sociological theories are still considered important and current, but new sociological theories build upon the work of their predecessors and add to them (Calhoun, 2002).

In sociology, a few theories provide broad perspectives that help explain many different aspects of social life, and these are called paradigms. Paradigms are philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them. Three paradigms have come to dominate sociological thinking because they provide useful explanations: structural functionalism, conflict theory, and symbolic interactionism.

Table 1.1 Sociological Theories or Perspectives: Different sociological perspectives enable sociologists to view social issues through a variety of useful lenses.

Sociological Theories/Paradigms	Level of Analysis	Focus	Analogies	Questions that might be asked
Structural Functionalism	Macro or Mid	The way each part of society functions together to contribute to the functioning of the whole.	How each organ works to keep your body healthy (or not.)	How does education work to transmit culture?
Conflict Theory	Macro	The way inequities and inequalities contribute to social, political, and power differences and how they perpetuate power.	The ones with the most toys wins and they will change the rules to the games to keep winning.	Does education transmit only the values of the most dominant groups?
Symbolic Interactionism	Micro	The way one-on-one interactions and communications behave.	What's it mean to be an X?	How do students react to cultural messages in school?

Functionalism

Functionalism, also called structural-functional theory, sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of the individuals in that society. Functionalism grew out of the writings of English philosopher and biologist, Herbert Spencer, who saw similarities between society and the human body. He argued that just as the various organs of the body work together to keep the body functioning, the various parts of society work together to keep society functioning (Spencer, 1898). The parts of society that Spencer referred to were the social institutions, or patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs, such as government, education, family, healthcare, religion, and the economy.

Émile Durkheim applied Spencer's theory to explain how societies change and survive over time. Durkheim believed that society is a complex system of interrelated and interdependent parts that work together to maintain stability (Durkheim, 1893), and that society is held together by shared values, languages, and symbols. He believed that to study society, a sociologist must look beyond individuals to social facts such as laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashion, and rituals, which all serve to govern social life (Durkheim, 1895). Alfred Radcliff-Brown (1881–1955) defined the function of any recurrent activity as the part it played in social life as a whole, and therefore the contribution it makes to social stability and continuity (Radcliff-Brown 1952). In a healthy society, all parts work together to maintain stability, a state called dynamic equilibrium by later sociologists such as Parsons (1961).

Durkheim believed that individuals may make up society, but in order to study society, sociologists have to look beyond individuals to social facts. Each of these social facts serves one or more functions within a society. For example, one function of a society's laws may be to protect society from violence, while another is to punish criminal behavior, while another is to preserve public health.

Another noted structural functionalist, Robert Merton (1910–2003), pointed out that social processes often have many functions. Manifest functions are the consequences of a social process that are sought or anticipated, while latent functions are the unsought consequences of a social process. A manifest function of a college education, for example, includes gaining knowledge, preparing for a career, and finding a good job that utilizes that education. Latent functions of your college years include meeting new people, participating in extracurricular activities, or even finding a spouse or partner. Another latent function of education is creating a hierarchy of employment based on the level of education attained. Latent functions can be beneficial, neutral, or harmful. Social processes that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society are called dysfunctions. In education, examples of dysfunction include getting bad grades, truancy, dropping out, not graduating, and not finding suitable employment.

Criticism

One criticism of the structural-functional theory is that it can't adequately explain social change even though the functions are processes. Also problematic is the somewhat circular nature of this theory: repetitive behavior patterns are assumed to have a function, yet we profess to know that they have a function only because they are repeated. Furthermore, dysfunctions may

continue, even though they don't serve a function, which seemingly contradicts the basic premise of the theory. Many sociologists now believe that functionalism is no longer useful as a macro-level theory, but that it does serve a useful purpose in some mid-level analyses.

Big Picture: A Global Culture?



Figure 1.8: Some sociologists see the online world contributing to the creation of an emerging global culture. Are you a part of any global communities? This Indiana rabbi is participating in what was recognized as the longest Zoom meeting, which started in Australia after the Sabbath and proceeded through each of the world's time zones, effectively lasting much longer than a day. (Credit: Chabad Lubavitch/flickr)

Sociologists around the world look closely for signs of what would be an unprecedented event: the emergence of a global culture. In the past, empires such as those that existed in China, Europe, Africa, and Central and South America linked people from many different countries, but those people rarely became part of a common culture. They lived too far from each other, spoke different languages, practiced different religions, and traded few goods. Today, increases in communication, travel, and trade have made the world a much smaller place. More and more people are able to communicate with each other instantly—wherever they are located—by telephone, video, and text. They share movies, television shows, music, games, and information over the Internet. Students can study with teachers and pupils from the other side of the globe. Governments find it harder to hide conditions inside their countries from the rest of the world.

Sociologists research many different aspects of this potential global culture. Some explore the dynamics involved in the social interactions of global online communities, such as when members feel a closer kinship to other group members than to people residing in their own countries. Other sociologists study the impact this growing international culture has on smaller, less-powerful local cultures. Yet other researchers explore how international markets and the outsourcing of labor impact social inequalities. Sociology can play a key role in people's abilities to understand the nature of this emerging global culture and how to respond to it.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theory looks at society as a competition for limited resources. This perspective is a macro-level approach most identified with the writings of German philosopher and economist Karl Marx, who saw society as being made up of individuals in different social classes who must compete for social, material, and political resources such as food and housing, employment, education, and

leisure time. Social institutions like government, education, and religion reflect this competition in their inherent inequalities and help maintain the unequal social structure. Some individuals and organizations are able to obtain and keep more resources than others, and these “winners” use their power and influence to maintain social institutions. The perpetuation of power results in the perpetuation of oppression.

Several theorists suggested variations on this basic theme like Polish-Austrian sociologist Ludwig Gumprowicz (1838–1909) who expanded on Marx’s ideas by arguing that war and conquest are the bases of civilizations. He believed that cultural and ethnic conflicts led to states being identified and defined by a dominant group that had power over other groups (Irving, 2007).

German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) agreed with Marx but also believed that, in addition to economic inequalities, inequalities of political power and social structure cause conflict. Weber noted that different groups were affected differently based on education, race, and gender, and that people’s reactions to inequality were moderated by class differences and rates of social mobility, as well as by perceptions about the legitimacy of those in power. A reader of Marx, Georg Simmel believed that conflict can help integrate and stabilize a society. He said that the intensity of the conflict varies depending on the emotional involvement of the parties, the degree of solidarity within the opposing groups, and the clarity and limited nature of the goals. Simmel also showed that groups work to create internal solidarity, centralize power, and reduce dissent. The stronger the bond, the weaker the discord. Resolving conflicts can reduce tension and hostility and can pave the way for future agreements.

In the 1930s and 1940s, German philosophers, known as the Frankfurt School, developed critical theory as an elaboration on Marxist principles. Critical theory is an expansion of conflict theory and is broader than just sociology, incorporating other social sciences and philosophy. A critical theory is a holistic theory and attempts to address structural issues causing inequality. It must explain what’s wrong in current social reality, identify the people who can make changes, and provide practical goals for social transformation (Horkheimer, 1982).

More recently, inequality based on gender or race has been explained in a similar manner and has identified institutionalized power structures that help to maintain inequality between groups. Janet Saltzman Chafetz (1941–2006) presented a model of feminist theory that attempts to explain the forces that maintain gender inequality as well as a theory of how such a system can be changed (Turner, 2003). Similarly, critical race theory grew out of a critical analysis of race and racism from a legal point of view. Critical race theory looks at structural inequality based on white privilege and associated wealth, power, and prestige.

Sociology in the Real World: Farming and Locavores: How Sociological Perspectives Might View Food Consumption

The consumption of food is a commonplace, daily occurrence. Yet, it can also be associated with important moments in our lives. Eating can be an individual or a group action, and eating habits and customs are influenced by our cultures. In the context of society, our nation’s food system is at the core of numerous social movements, political issues, and economic debates. Any of these factors might become a topic of sociological study.

A structural-functional approach to the topic of food consumption might analyze the role of the agriculture industry within the nation’s economy and how this has changed from the early days of manual-labor farming to modern mechanized production. Another might study the different functions of processes in food production, from farming and harvesting to flashy packaging and mass consumerism.

A conflict theorist might be interested in the power differentials present in the regulation of food, by exploring where people’s right to information intersects with corporations’ drive for profit and how the government mediates those interests. Or a conflict theorist might examine the power and powerlessness experienced by local farmers versus large farming conglomerates, such as the documentary *Food Inc.*, which depicts as resulting from Monsanto’s patenting of seed technology. Another topic of study might be how nutrition varies between different social classes.

A sociologist viewing food consumption through a symbolic interactionist lens would be more interested in microlevel topics, such as the symbolic use of food in religious rituals, or the role it plays in the social interaction of a family dinner. This perspective might also explore the interactions among group members who identify themselves based on their sharing a particular diet, such as vegetarians (people who don’t eat meat) or locavores (people who strive to eat locally produced food).

Criticism

Just as structural functionalism was criticized for focusing too much on the stability of societies, conflict theory has been criticized because it tends to focus on conflict to the exclusion of recognizing stability. Many social structures are extremely stable or have

gradually progressed over time rather than changing abruptly as conflict theory would suggest.

Symbolic Interactionist Theory

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society. Communication—the exchange of meaning through language and symbols—is believed to be the way in which people make sense of their social worlds. Theorists Herman and Reynolds (1994) note that this perspective sees people as being active in shaping the social world rather than simply being acted upon.

George Herbert Mead is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism though he never published his work on it (LaRossa and Reitzes, 1993). Mead's student, Herbert Blumer (1900-1987), coined the term “symbolic interactionism” and outlined these basic premises: humans interact with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; the ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society; the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances (Blumer 1969). If you love books, for example, a symbolic interactionist might propose that you learned that books are good or important in the interactions you had with family, friends, school, or church. Maybe your family had a special reading time each week, getting your library card was treated as a special event, or bedtime stories were associated with warmth and comfort.

Social scientists who apply symbolic-interactionist thinking look for patterns of interaction between individuals. Their studies often involve observation of one-on-one interactions. For example, while a conflict theorist studying a political protest might focus on class difference, a symbolic interactionist would be more interested in how individuals in the protesting group interact, as well as the signs and symbols protesters use to communicate their message.

The focus on the importance of symbols in building a society led sociologists like Erving Goffman (1922-1982) to develop a technique called dramaturgical analysis. Goffman used theater as an analogy for social interaction and recognized that people's interactions showed patterns of cultural “scripts.” He argued that individuals were actors in a play. We switched roles, sometimes minute to minute—for example, from student or daughter to dog walker. Because it can be unclear what part a person may play in a given situation, he or she has to improvise his or her role as the situation unfolds (Goffman, 1958).

Studies that use the symbolic interactionist perspective are more likely to use qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews or participant observation, because they seek to understand the symbolic worlds in which research subjects live.

Constructivism is an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be. We develop social constructs based on interactions with others, and those constructs that last over time are those that have meanings which are widely agreed-upon or generally accepted by most within the society. This approach is often used to examine what's defined as deviant within a society. There is no absolute definition of deviance, and different societies have constructed different meanings for deviance, as well as associating different behaviors with deviance.

One situation that illustrates this is what you believe you're to do if you find a wallet in the street. In the United States, turning the wallet in to local authorities would be considered the appropriate action, and to keep the wallet would be seen as deviant. In contrast, many Eastern societies would consider it much more appropriate to keep the wallet and search for the owner yourself. Turning it over to someone else, even the authorities, would be considered deviant behavior.

Criticism

Research done from this perspective is often scrutinized because of the difficulty of remaining objective. Others criticize the extremely narrow focus on symbolic interaction. Proponents, of course, consider this one of its greatest strengths.

Sociological Theory Today

These three approaches still provide the main foundation of modern sociological theory though they have evolved. Structural-functionalism was a dominant force after World War II and until the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, sociologists began to feel that structural-functionalism did not sufficiently explain the rapid social changes happening in the United States at that time. The women's movement and the Civil Rights movement forced academics to develop approaches to study these emerging social practices.

Conflict theory then gained prominence, with its emphasis on institutionalized social inequality. Critical theory, and the particular aspects of feminist theory and critical race theory, focused on creating social change through the application of sociological principles. The field saw a renewed emphasis on helping ordinary people understand sociology principles, in the form of public sociology.

Gaining prominence in the wake of Mead's work in the 1920s and 1930s, symbolic interactionism declined in influence during the 1960s and 1970s only to be revitalized at the turn of the twenty-first century (Stryker, 1987). Postmodern social theory developed in the 1980s to look at society through an entirely new lens by rejecting previous macro-level attempts to explain social phenomena. Its growth in popularity coincides with the rise of constructivist views of symbolic interactionism.

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1.4.1: Sociological Imagination

Social Structure and the Sociological Imagination

One way sociology achieves a more complete understanding of social reality is through its focus on the importance of the social forces affecting our behavior, attitudes, and life chances. This focus involves an emphasis on social structure, the social patterns through which a society is organized. Social structure can be both horizontal or vertical. Horizontal social structure refers to the social relationships and the social and physical characteristics of communities to which individuals belong. Some people belong to many networks of social relationships, including groups like the PTA and the Boy or Girl Scouts, while other people have fewer such networks. Some people grew up on streets where the houses were crowded together, while other people grew up in areas where the homes were much farther apart. These are examples of the sorts of factors constituting the horizontal social structure that forms such an important part of our social environment and backgrounds.

The other dimension of social structure is vertical. Vertical social structure, more commonly called social inequality, refers to ways in which a society or group ranks people in a hierarchy, with some more “equal” than others. In the United States and most other industrial societies, such things as wealth, power, race and ethnicity, and gender help determine one’s social ranking, or position, in the vertical social structure. Some people are at the top of society, while many more are in the middle or at the bottom. People’s positions in society’s hierarchy in turn often have profound consequences for their attitudes, behaviors, and life chances, both for themselves and for their children.

In recognizing the importance of social structure, sociology stresses that individual problems are often rooted in problems stemming from the horizontal and vertical social structures of society. This key insight informed C. Wright Mills’s (1959) Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. London, England: Oxford University Press. classic distinction between personal troubles and public issues. *Personal troubles* refer to a problem affecting individuals that the affected person, as well as other members of society, typically blame on the individual’s own failings. Examples include such different problems as eating disorders, divorce, and unemployment. *Public issues*, whose source lies in the social structure and culture of a society, refer to a social problem affecting many individuals. Thus problems in society help account for problems that individuals experience. Mills, feeling that many problems ordinarily considered private troubles are best understood as public issues, coined the term sociological imagination to refer to the ability to appreciate the structural basis for individual problems.

To illustrate Mills’s viewpoint, let’s use our sociological imaginations to understand some important contemporary social problems. We will start with unemployment, which Mills himself discussed. If only a few people were unemployed, Mills wrote, we could reasonably explain their unemployment by saying they were lazy, lacked good work habits, and so forth. If so, their unemployment would be their own personal trouble. But when millions of people are out of work, unemployment is best understood as a public issue because, as Mills (1959, p. 9) Mills, C. W. (1959). *The sociological imagination*. London, England: Oxford University Press. put it, “the very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals.” The growing unemployment rate stemming from the severe economic downturn that began in 2008 provides a telling example of the point Mills was making. Millions of people lost their jobs through no fault of their own. While some individuals are undoubtedly unemployed because they are lazy or lack good work habits, a more structural explanation focusing on lack of opportunity is needed to explain why so many people were out of work as this book went to press. If so, unemployment is best understood as a public issue rather than a personal trouble. The same can be said for the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2020. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate rose to 13.9 during April, May and June of 2020 (<https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2021/ar...-pandemic.html>). Why were so many Americans out of work? Were they just lazy? No, there was a global pandemic which caused many businesses to close during those months of 2020.

Another contemporary problem is crime, which we explore further in Chapter 5. If crime were only a personal trouble, then we could blame crime on the moral failings of individuals, and many explanations of crime do precisely this. But such an approach ignores the fact that crime is a public issue, as structural factors such as inequality and the physical characteristics of communities contribute to high crime rates among certain groups in American society. As an illustration, consider identical twins separated at birth. One twin grows up in a wealthy suburb or rural area, while the other twin grows up in a blighted neighborhood in a poor, urban area. Twenty years later, which twin will be more likely to have a criminal record? You probably answered the twin growing up in the poor, run-down urban neighborhood. If so, you recognize that there is something about growing up in that type of neighborhood that increases the chances of a person becoming prone to crime. That “something” is the structural factors just mentioned. Criminal behavior is a public issue, not just a personal trouble.



Figure 1.8: Although eating disorders often stem from personal problems, they also may reflect a cultural emphasis for women to have slender bodies. © Thinkstock

A final problem we will consider for now is eating disorders. We usually consider a person's eating disorder to be a personal trouble that stems from a lack of control, low self-esteem, or other personal problem. This explanation may be OK as far as it goes, but it does not help us understand why so many people have the personal problems that lead to eating disorders. Perhaps more important, this belief also neglects the larger social and cultural forces that help explain such disorders. For example, most Americans with eating disorders are women, not men. This gender difference forces us to ask what it is about being a woman in American society that makes eating disorders so much more common. To begin to answer this question, we need to look to the standard of beauty for women that emphasizes a slender body (Whitehead & Kurz, 2008). Whitehead, K., & Kurz, T. (2008). Saints, sinners and standards of femininity: Discursive constructions of anorexia nervosa and obesity in women's magazines. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 17, 345–358. If this cultural standard did not exist, far fewer American women would suffer from eating disorders than do now. Even if every girl and woman with an eating disorder were cured, others would take their places unless we could somehow change the cultural standard of female slenderness. To the extent this explanation makes sense, eating disorders are best understood as a public issue, not just as a personal trouble.

Picking up on Mills's argument, William Ryan (1976) Ryan, W. (1976). *Blaming the victim*. New York, NY: Vintage Books. pointed out that Americans typically blame the victim when they think about the reasons for social problems such as poverty, unemployment, and crime. They feel that these problems stem from personal failings of the people suffering them, not from structural problems in the larger society. Using Mills's terms, Americans tend to think of social problems as personal troubles rather than public issues. They thus subscribe to a blaming the victim ideology rather than to a blaming the system belief.

To help us understand a blaming-the-victim ideology, let's consider why poor children in urban areas often learn very little in their schools. A blaming-the-victim approach, according to Ryan, would say that the children's parents do not care about their learning, fail to teach them good study habits, and do not encourage them to take school seriously. This type of explanation may apply to some parents, in Ryan's opinion, but it ignores a much more important reason: the sad shape of America's urban schools, which are decrepit structures housing old textbooks and out-of-date equipment. To improve the schooling of children in urban areas, he wrote, we must improve the schools themselves, and not just try to "improve" the parents.

As this example suggests, a blaming-the-victim approach points to solutions to social problems such as poverty and illiteracy that are very different from those suggested by a more structural approach that "blames the system." If we blame the victim, we would spend our limited dollars to address the personal failings of individuals who suffer from poverty, illiteracy, poor health, eating disorders, and other difficulties. If instead we blame the system, we would focus our attention on the various social conditions (decrepit schools, cultural standards of female beauty, and the like) that account for these difficulties. A sociological perspective suggests that the latter approach is ultimately needed to help us deal successfully with the social problems facing us today.

Sociological Imagination

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1.5: Why Study Sociology?

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain why it is worthwhile to study sociology.
- Identify ways sociology is applied in the real world.



Figure 1.9: The research of Kenneth and Mamie Clark helped the Supreme Court decide to end “separate but equal” racial segregation in schools in the United States. (Credit: University of Texas)

When Elizabeth Eckford tried to enter Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, in September 1957, she was met by an angry crowd and was turned away by authorities. But she knew she had the law on her side. Three years earlier in the landmark *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision, the U.S. Supreme Court had overturned twenty-one state laws that allowed Black and White people to be taught in separate school systems as long as the school systems were “equal.” The decision was nothing short of momentous, not only for education, but for a number of other segregation and discrimination issues that have lasted into this decade. And in that momentous decision, the Supreme Court cited the research of the husband-and-wife team of social scientists, Kenneth and Mamie Clark, as evidence that segregation generates in minority students a feeling of inferiority. In the ‘doll test,’ for example, the Clarks showed children four dolls, two with white skin and yellow hair and two with brown skin and black hair. When asked which doll they preferred, the majority of Black children chose the doll with the light skin doll, and they assigned positive characteristics to it. Most of the Black children discarded the doll with the brown skin—the one that had a closer resemblance to themselves.

When asked to choose the doll that looked like them, many children left the room, started to cry, and/or became depressed. The Clarks’ research contributed to the Supreme Court’s conclusion that separate but equal was damaging to students, and that separate facilities are unequal.

Sociology and a Better Society

Since it was first founded, many people interested in sociology have been driven by the scholarly desire to contribute knowledge to this field, while others have seen it as way not only to study society but also to improve it. Besides desegregation, sociology has played a crucial role in many important social reforms, such as equal opportunity for women in the workplace, improved treatment for individuals with mental illnesses or learning disabilities, increased accessibility and accommodation for people with physical disabilities, the right of native populations to preserve their land and culture, and prison system reforms.

The predominant American sociologist, the late Peter L. Berger (1929–2017), in his 1963 book, *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective*, describes a sociologist as “someone concerned with understanding society in a disciplined way.” He

asserts that sociologists have a natural interest in the monumental moments of people's lives, as well as a fascination with banal, everyday occurrences. Berger also describes the “aha” moment when a sociological theory becomes applicable and understood:

[T]here is a deceptive simplicity and obviousness about some sociological investigations. One reads them, nods at the familiar scene, remarks that one has heard all this before and don't people have better things to do than to waste their time on truisms—until one is suddenly brought up against an insight that radically questions everything one had previously assumed about this familiar scene. This is the point at which one begins to sense the excitement of sociology. (Berger, 1963)

Sociology can be exciting because it teaches people ways to recognize how they fit into the world and how others perceive them. Looking at themselves and society from a sociological perspective helps people see where they connect to different groups based on the many different ways they classify themselves and how society classifies them in turn. It raises awareness of how those classifications—such as economic and status levels, education, ethnicity, or sexual orientation—affect perceptions.

Sociology teaches people not to accept easy explanations. It teaches them a way to organize their thinking so that they can ask better questions and formulate better answers. It makes people more aware that there are many different kinds of people in the world who do not necessarily think the way they do. It increases their willingness and ability to try to see the world from other people's perspectives. This prepares them to live and work in an increasingly diverse and integrated world.

Sociology in the Workplace

Employers continue to seek people with what are called “transferable skills.” This means that they want to hire people whose knowledge and education can be applied in a variety of settings and whose skills will contribute to various tasks.

Studying sociology can provide people with this wide knowledge and a skill set that can contribute to many workplaces, including

- an understanding of social systems and large bureaucracies;
- the ability to devise and carry out research projects to assess whether a program or policy is working;
- the ability to collect, read, and analyze statistical information from polls or surveys;
- the ability to recognize important differences in people's social, cultural, and economic backgrounds;
- skills in preparing reports and communicating complex ideas; and
- the capacity for critical thinking about social issues and problems that confront modern society. (Department of Sociology, University of Alabama-Huntsville)

Sociology prepares people for a wide variety of careers. Besides actually conducting social research or training others in the field, people who graduate from college with a degree in sociology are hired by government agencies and corporations in fields such as social services, counseling (e.g., family planning, career, substance abuse), community planning, health services, marketing, market research, and human resources. Even a small amount of training in sociology can be an asset in careers like sales, public relations, journalism, teaching, law, and criminal justice.

Sociology in the Real World: Social Networking Consequences

You've probably heard a cautionary story that goes something like this: A high school student spent years working hard, engaging in their community, helping others, and generally growing into a positive and promising young adult. During senior year, they start the college application process, and after a couple of interviews and other interactions, things are looking bright at several of their top choices. But when the time arrives for those fateful notifications about acceptance or rejection, the student and their family are shocked to get rejected from all schools but one. Inquiries from family members and guidance counselors had no results. The only news came in the form of a letter three weeks later from the one school that had accepted the student.

“...After an initial investigation, the University has determined that several posts attributed to you violate our policies, and are offensive and troubling...”

The letter's remaining two pages detailed the ongoing investigation and outlined the potential outcomes. But that one statement said it all: The student had posted something offensive on social media, and their prospective colleges had found it.

Two years earlier, at the beginning of sophomore year, the student had posted two comments and a meme that mocked a classmate who had been assaulted at a party. Even though the student had removed them within a few days, the posts lived on in other forums and on a few friends' pages; there was also the possibility that someone had screen-grabbed them. While social media posts are protected forms of speech in relation to the government, colleges can review them as they evaluate applicants. Employers can do the same, as can romantic partners or even volunteer organizations.

You may believe that a 15-year-old's social media comments should not impact them years later. Or you may feel that someone who jokes about assault may be a risk to commit a similar act or fail to stop or report one. Sociologists may consider all of those assumptions, and may seek answers or information through research to uncover the impacts, risks, tendencies, and outcomes on the different groups involved. For example, a sociologist might work to discover answers to the following questions:

- Is abusive speech or assault less likely to occur at colleges that screen applicants' social media posts?
- Do sensitivity trainings or cultural competency programs have an effect on online speech?
- Do colleges treat all community members equally when they discover someone has posted offensive comments or other content?
- Are algorithms and artificial intelligence used to detect problematic comments biased against certain people or communities?

None of these questions could be answered by a single study or even a group of them. But like the Supreme Court's use of Mamie and Kenneth Clarke's research, college administrators, high school counselors, and technology companies can use the outcomes of research and analysis to make decisions or implement programs.

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1.6: Key Terms

antipositivism | the view that social researchers should strive for subjectivity as they worked to represent social processes, cultural norms, and societal values

conflict theory | a theory that looks at society as a competition for limited resources

constructivism | an extension of symbolic interaction theory which proposes that reality is what humans cognitively construct it to be

culture | a group's shared practices, values, and beliefs

dramaturgical analysis | a technique sociologists use in which they view society through the metaphor of theatrical performance

dynamic equilibrium | a stable state in which all parts of a healthy society work together properly

dysfunctions | social patterns that have undesirable consequences for the operation of society

figuration | the process of simultaneously analyzing the behavior of an individual and the society that shapes that behavior

function | the part a recurrent activity plays in the social life as a whole and the contribution it makes to structural continuity

functionalism | a theoretical approach that sees society as a structure with interrelated parts designed to meet the biological and social needs of individuals that make up that society

generalized others | the organized and generalized attitude of a social group

grand theories | an attempt to explain large-scale relationships and answer fundamental questions such as why societies form and why they change

hypothesis | a testable proposition

latent functions | the unrecognized or unintended consequences of a social process

macro-level | a wide-scale view of the role of social structures within a society

manifest functions | sought consequences of a social process

micro-level theories | the study of specific relationships between individuals or small groups

paradigms | philosophical and theoretical frameworks used within a discipline to formulate theories, generalizations, and the experiments performed in support of them

positivism | the scientific study of social patterns

qualitative sociology | in-depth interviews, focus groups, and/or analysis of content sources as the source of its data

quantitative sociology | statistical methods such as surveys with large numbers of participants

reification | an error of treating an abstract concept as though it has a real, material existence

significant others | specific individuals that impact a person's life

social facts | the laws, morals, values, religious beliefs, customs, fashions, rituals, and all of the cultural rules that govern social life

social institutions | patterns of beliefs and behaviors focused on meeting social needs

social solidarity | the social ties that bind a group of people together such as kinship, shared location, and religion

society | a group of people who live in a defined geographical area who interact with one another and who share a common culture

sociological imagination | the ability to understand how your own past relates to that of other people, as well as to history in general and societal structures in particular

sociology | the systematic study of society and social interaction

symbolic interactionism | a theoretical perspective through which scholars examine the relationship of individuals within their society by studying their communication (language and symbols)

theory | a proposed explanation about social interactions or society

verstehen | a German word that means to understand in a deep way

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1.7: Section Summary

1.1 What Is Sociology?

Sociology is the systematic and scientific study of society and social interaction. In order to carry out their studies, sociologists identify cultural patterns and social forces and determine how they affect individuals and groups. They also develop ways to apply their findings to the real world.

1.2 The History of Sociology

Sociology was developed as an academic and scientific way to study and theorize about the changes to society brought on by the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the earliest sociologists thought that societies and individuals' roles in society could be studied using the same scientific methodologies that were used in the natural sciences, while others believed that it was impossible to predict human behavior scientifically, and still others debated the value of such predictions. Those perspectives continue to be represented within sociology today.

1.3 Theoretical Perspectives in Sociology

Sociologists develop theories to explain social events, interactions, and patterns. A theory is a proposed explanation of those social interactions. Theories have different scales. Macro-level theories, such as structural functionalism and conflict theory, attempt to explain how societies operate as a whole. Micro-level theories, such as symbolic interactionism, focus on interactions between individuals.

1.4 Why Study Sociology?

Studying sociology is beneficial both for the individual and for society. By studying sociology people learn how to think critically about social issues and problems that confront our society. The study of sociology enriches students' lives and prepares them for careers in an increasingly diverse world. Society benefits because people with sociological training are better prepared to make informed decisions about social issues and take effective action to deal with them.

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1.9: Crash Course Video- Sociological Theories

📌 Major Sociological Paradigms: Crash Course Sociology #2



The thumbnail for the video 'Major Sociological Paradigms: Crash Course Sociology #2' features a green background with a large white number '2' on the right. In the center, there are colorful geometric shapes: a red triangle, a blue circle, and a yellow triangle. The text 'MAJOR SOCIOLOGICAL PARADIGMS' is written in large, bold, white capital letters. Above it, in smaller white capital letters, is 'Crash Course SOCIOLOGY'. A QR code is in the top left corner. At the bottom, there is a white play button icon followed by the text 'Watch on YouTube'.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Introduction to Gender

- [2.1: Sex and Gender](#)
- [2.2: Defining Gender](#)
- [2.3: Gender Expanded](#)
- [2.4: Gender Differences](#)
- [2.5: Gender Roles](#)
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- [2.7: Crash Course Video - Sex and Sexuality](#)

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2.1: Sex and Gender

This module discusses gender and its related concepts, including sex, gender roles, gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexism. In addition, this module includes a discussion of differences that exist between males and females and how these real gender differences compare to the stereotypes society holds about gender differences. In fact, there are significantly fewer real gender differences than one would expect relative to the large number of stereotypes about gender differences. This module then discusses theories of how gender roles develop and how they contribute to strong expectations for gender differences. Finally, the module concludes with a discussion of some of the consequences of relying on and expecting gender differences, such as gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and ambivalent sexism.

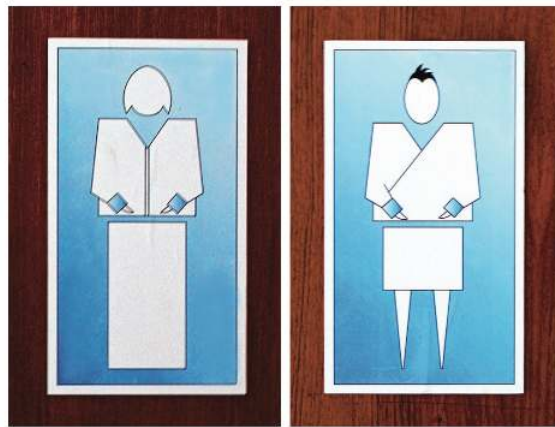


Figure 2.1.1: Gender refers to the cultural, social, and psychological meanings that are associated with masculinity and femininity. [“Uniquely Bhutanese” by Michael Foley/Flickr is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.]

Before we discuss gender in detail, it is important to understand what gender actually is. The terms *sex* and *gender* are frequently used interchangeably, though they have different meanings. In this context, **sex** refers to the biological category of male or female, as defined by physical differences in genetic composition and in reproductive anatomy and function. On the other hand, **gender** refers to the cultural, social, and psychological meanings that are associated with masculinity and femininity (Wood & Eagly, 2002). You can think of “male” and “female” as distinct categories of sex (a person is typically born a male or a female), but “masculine” and “feminine” as continuums associated with gender (every- one has a certain degree of masculine and feminine traits and qualities).

Beyond sex and gender, there are a number of related terms that are also often misunderstood. **Gender roles** are the behaviors, attitudes, and personality traits that are designated as either masculine or feminine in a given culture. It is common to think of gender roles in terms of **gender stereotypes**, or the beliefs and expectations people hold about the typical characteristics, preferences, and behaviors of men and women. A person’s **gender identity** refers to their psychological sense of being male or female. In contrast, a person’s **sexual orientation** is the direction of their emotional and erotic attraction toward members of the opposite sex, the same sex, or both sexes. These are important distinctions, and although we will not discuss each of these terms in detail, it is important to recognize that sex, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation do not always correspond with one another. A person can be biologically male but have a female gender identity while being attracted to women, or any other combination of identities and orientations.

THE (TRANS)GENDER-BATHROOM DEBATE

In recent years, there has been much cultural and political debate over the right of transgender individuals to use the public bathroom of their choosing. This debate made major headlines in 2016 when North Carolina passed the Public Facilities Privacy & Security Act (commonly called House Bill 2 or HB2). This law required individuals to use the restroom that corresponded with their birth sex, meaning that transgender individuals could not use the bathroom that matched their gender identity. This law and the similar “bathroom bills” proposed by other states were met with widespread controversy, with opponents arguing that they were discriminatory and perpetuated inequality (Barnett et al., 2018). HB2 has since been repealed, but many states still do not protect the rights of transgender individuals to use their restrooms of choice. ■

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2.2: Defining Gender

Historically, the terms *gender* and *sex* have been used interchangeably. Because of this, gender is often viewed as a **binary**—a person is either male or female—and it is assumed that a person's gender matches their biological sex. This is not always the case, however, and more recent research has separated these two terms. While the majority of people do identify with the gender that matches their biological sex (**cisgender**), an estimated 0.6% of the population identify with a gender that does not match their biological sex (**trans- gender**) (Flores et al., 2016). For example, an individual who is biologically male may identify as female, or vice versa.

In addition to separating gender and sex, recent research has also begun to conceptualize gender in ways beyond the gender binary. **Genderqueer** and **gender nonbinary** are umbrella terms used to describe a wide range of individuals who do not identify with and/or conform to the gender binary. These terms encompass a variety of more specific labels individuals may use to describe themselves. Some common labels are **genderfluid**, **agender**, and **bigender**. An individual who is genderfluid may identify as male, female, both, or neither at different times and in different circumstances. An individual who is agender may have no gender or describe themselves as having a neutral gender, while bigender individuals identify as two genders.

It is important to remember that sex and gender do not always match and that gender is not always binary; however, a large majority of prior research examining gender has not made these distinctions. Thus, the following sections will discuss gender as a binary.

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2.3: Gender Expanded

Did that subtitle catch your attention? Good! But in this section we won't be discussing intercourse, or sexual activity; rather, we'll be talking about sex (as a biological category) and gender. People often use the terms "sex" and "gender" interchangeably; however, these terms are two separate entities. Sex is one's biological classification and characteristics as male or female.⁷ A person's sex is determined as soon as the sperm reaches the egg. Every egg is an X chromosome, and sperm can be either X or Y chromosome. Therefore, if an X sperm reaches the egg, the individual will have XX chromosomes (female), and if a Y sperm reaches the egg, the individual will have XY chromosomes (male). The term "sex" refers to biology and should be used when biological distinctions are emphasized. For example, "There are sex differences in hormone production".

The main differences between sexes are reproductive body parts, which develop in reaction to hormone levels introduced when the embryo is only about nine weeks. At this point in the pregnancy, the embryo will develop the gonads, or reproductive glands. They are the tiny beginnings of either testes or ovaries. However, hormonal anomalies can (and do) occur during those early stages of development. These anomalies can result in external genitalia not being easily discernable as either male or female. In these cases, the individual will likely be identified as **intersexed**.

Males and females have far more in common than they have differences. For example, think about our organs, hair, skin, limbs, nervous systems, endocrine systems, etc. The similarities in these things far outweigh the differences in males and females. However, we pay a lot of social attention to the differences between sexes, often even looking to those physiological differences to explain behavioral differences.

Gender, on the other hand, serves as a cultural indicator of a person's personal and social identity.⁸ Gender, for the individual, starts with sex assignment, and sex is assigned on the basis of the observable genitalia at birth. In other words, sex is nature, and gender is nurture. Sex is predetermined, and gender is learned through socialization. Gender is something we *do*.⁹ Therefore, gender is a psychologically ingrained social construct that actively surfaces in everyday human interaction and behaviors. We *learn* masculinity; we *learn* femininity. Then we *do* masculinity, and we *do* femininity. And how about all those behaviors we don't describe as either strictly masculine or feminine? Enter **androgyny**! Androgynous behaviors are all behaviors that do not fit neatly into our constructions of masculine or feminine. Therefore, our behaviors can be described as masculine, feminine, or androgynous. And just like walking or talking are *learned* behaviors, so are our interpretations of labeling our behaviors as masculine, feminine, or androgynous.

Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as **gender-normative**; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute **gender non-conformity**.¹⁰ **Gender expression** is the presentation of an individual, including physical appearance, clothing choice and accessories, and behaviors that express aspects of gender identity or role. Gender expression may or may not conform to a person's gender identity. **Gender identity** refers to one's sense of oneself as masculine, feminine, androgynous, or transgender.¹¹ **Gender dysphoria** refers to discomfort or distress that is associated with a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and that person's sex assigned at birth.¹² **Transgenderis** an umbrella term used to describe the full range of people whose gender identity and/or gender role do not conform to what is typically associated with their sex assigned at birth.¹³

Gender is shaped through our learning process, and is influenced by all kinds of things outside of the individual, such as family, friends, television, social media, teachers, politicians, legislation, institutions, and culture. Western gender conceptualization reflects a bipolar construction, recognizing two major gender categories (masculinity and femininity) as being dominant. Western construction of gender also reinforces the idea that males are masculine while females are feminine, and often this idea is taken further with the western interpretation of gender suggesting people are *born* a specific gender. Constricting? Yes. Over-simplified? Absolutely. Completely inaccurate? You betcha! This interpretation of gender is narrowly fashioned by a traditional European perspective. Take, for instance, many of the Plains Indians' interpretation of gender wherein people can be *two-spirited*, known as *berdache*.¹⁴ *Berdache* was not recognized as a third category; instead, the term was used to describe the continuum of human behavior that didn't fit neatly into European notions of what it meant to be male or female. In fact, the term *berdache* has a history deflecting its Eurocentric origins and ethnocentrism of most 17th, 18th, and 19th century European and European American observers of Native American cultures.

Identical male twins, Bruce and Brian Reimer, were born in 1963 to parents Janet and Ron Reimer. During a routine circumcision, Bruce had his penis nearly burned off. Dr. John Money was a psychologist, sexologist, and author, specializing in research into sexual identity and biology of gender. Janet Reimer wrote to Dr. John Money seeking help for her son who she feared would not have a sex or gender identity because his genitalia had been mutilated. At the strong encouragement of Dr. Money, the boy's

parents opted for sex reassignment surgery for their 17-month-old baby. The boy was sexually reassigned to a female with lifelong hormone therapy. Dr. Money declared the surgery and reassignment a total success in 1973. From a young age, Bruce (who had been renamed Brenda) demonstrated behaviors indicating she did not want to wear dresses, play with dolls, or help with traditionally feminine household chores. At age 12 (many years earlier) Brenda began experiencing severe emotional problems because, even though she was receiving estrogen regularly, she appeared very masculine and was the brunt of a lot of joking and bullying in school and from her peers. At 14 years old, the child refused any more hormone therapy or genital surgeries, and her father finally told her the truth about her medical history. She was reportedly relieved and started male hormone therapy, underwent genital reconstruction surgery to create a penis, and had a mastectomy, and changed *his* name to David. Researchers concluded a person could be “successfully” socialized as a female because essentially his brain “knew otherwise.”

In addition to his difficult lifelong relationship with his parents and peers and his own identity, Reimer had to deal with unemployment and the death of his brother Brian from an overdose of antidepressants in 2002. In 2004, his wife Jane told him she wanted to separate. On the morning of May 4, 2004, Reimer drove to a grocery store's parking lot and took his own life by shooting himself in the head with a sawed-off shotgun. He was 38 years old.

David Reimer taught us a lot about sex category and gender attainment. While gender is learned through a socialization process, we cannot socialize or train someone into their sex identity. In other words, a boy can be socialized to “act like a girl” or a girl can be socialized to “act like a boy,” but you cannot socialize someone into believing they are the opposite sex. He also taught us our brains develop as being either male or female. And most often time, our genital development with align with our brain’s development, but sometimes not. David Reimer reported that from a young age he “just knew” he wasn’t a girl, even though he never knew he had been born a male.

Testosterone and Gender

Males and females produce the same hormones, but in different amounts. Females secrete more estrogen and males secrete more testosterone. Studies conducted have, in fact, concluded more testosterone does lead to more aggressive behavior. However most of these studies have been done in animals, wherein the animal will be injected with high levels of testosterone and aggressive behavior will ensue. Many people feel these findings are indicative of male behaviors, sometimes been excusing overly aggressive behavior with excuses like, “Boys will be boys.” But maybe a more appropriate response would be “boys will be a\$\$h*les” when we see overly aggressive behavior. Because people need to be cautious when interpreting results from the previously mentioned studies, as there is tremendous variation in behavior among animal species.

In research in human, higher levels of testosterone have been linked to higher levels of edginess, competitiveness, and anger—in females and males. Also, hormone levels fluctuate throughout the day and are influenced by environment. Think about it: What do you think your hormone levels look like when you’re about to jump out of a plane versus sitting on the couch watching TV? Therefore, biology itself is influenced and affected by environment. The myth that testosterone alone affects men’s behavior has been debunked.

In addition, hormones do not dictate behavior. Hormones may affect mood, but they do not dictate behavior. Consider a time when you felt like you were unable to demonstrate your desired behaviors because of the social context in which you were engaged. Maybe you were in a classroom or a workplace or whatever, and when you were feeling aggressive, upset, or angry you were able to control your emotions and behaviors because of the social context. So while hormones were affecting mood, they did not dictate your behavior. You were able to control your behavior because of the setting you were in. Therefore, behavior is highly governed, not by hormone, but by the situation or context in which it occurs.

Further, research indicates women can be just as aggressive as men when they’re either rewarded for their behaviors (athletes) or when they think it is safe to do so while avoiding social sanctions. Think about people like Ronda Rousey, Serena Williams, Hillary Clinton, Pink, or Chyna. All of these women have in common being rewarded for what have traditionally been described as masculine behaviors. Is there something wrong with them? No. Are they biologically less female than other females? No.

Women, Hormones, and Behaviors

Jokes about women’s hormone levels are old ones. Seriously, very old. Like, we need some new material. How are people even still laughing at PMS jokes? I don’t know, but women’s hormone levels (especially testosterone) do not fluctuate as much as men’s throughout the day. I’m going to say that again to make sure you really read that last sentence. Women’s hormone levels (especially testosterone) do not fluctuate as much as men’s throughout the day. Rather female hormone production is influenced by the monthly reproductive cycles as well as the cessation of the reproductive capacity (menopause) during the life course. So, really,

instead of accusing women of getting crazy once a month, women could accuse men of getting crazy every day! No, no, I'm kidding, and that is not the kind of equality sociologists are fighting for.

Both girls and boys learn negative attitudes toward menstruation at early ages. These negative beliefs influence women's experiences with PMS symptoms. Meaning, if women are taught PMS is horrible, women may expect the horridness, and then produce behaviors reflective of that horridness. While many women report mood swings, research shows that negative change in mood as well as physical changes may have more to do with stressful external events than with the phase of PMS. So, women might be reacting to PMS and excusing our sometimes horrid behavior by blaming it on this occurring phase. Kind of like that whole "boys will be boys" thing, huh?

In studies where both men and women participated, men were equally likely to express mood swings, problems at work, and physical discomfort. Men are actually subject to a daily hormone cycle in which testosterone levels peak at about 4am and are lowest at 8pm. "When people say women can't be trusted because they cycle every month, my response is that men cycle every day, so they should only be allowed to negotiate peace treaties in the evening." -- June Reinisch.

⁷ Young, R. (20090401). Sex/Gender. *AMA Manual of Style*. Retrieved 17 Oct. 2016, from <http://www.amamanualofstyle.com/view/10.1093/jama/9780195176339.001.0001/med-9780195176339-div2-350>.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ *Doing Gender*. Candace West; Don H. Zimmerman. Gender and Society, Vol. 1, No. 2. (Jun., 1987), pp. 125-151.

¹⁰ American Psychological Association. (2012). Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients. *American Psychologist*, 67(1), 10–42. doi: 10.1037/a0024659

¹¹ Ibid

¹² American Psychological Association & National Association of School Psychologists. (2015). Resolution on gender and sexual orientation diversity in children and adolescents in schools. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/about/policy/orientation-diversity.aspx>

¹³ American Psychological Association. (2015). Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People. *American Psychologist*, 70(9), 832-864.

¹⁴ Estrada, Gabriel S. 2011. "Two Spirits, Nádleeh, and LGBTQ2 Navajo Gaze." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35(4):167-190.

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2.4: Gender Differences

Differences between males and females can be based on (a) actual gender differences (i.e., men and women are actually different in some abilities), (b) gender roles (i.e., differences in how men and women are supposed to act), or (c) gender stereotypes (i.e., differences in how we *think* men and women are). Sometimes gender stereotypes and gender roles reflect actual gender differences, but sometimes they do not.

What are actual gender differences? In terms of language and language skills, girls develop language skills earlier and know more words than boys; this does not, however, translate into long-term differences. Girls are also more likely than boys to offer praise, to agree with the person they're talking to, and to elaborate on the other person's comments; boys, in contrast, are more likely than girls to assert their opinion and offer criticisms (Leaper & Smith, 2004). In terms of temperament, boys are slightly less able to suppress inappropriate responses and slightly more likely to blurt things out than girls (Else-Quest et al., 2006).



Figure 2.4.1: Boys exhibit higher rates of unprovoked physical aggression than girls and are more likely to play organized rough-and-tumble games. ["gender stereotyping" by Aislinn Ritchie/Flickr is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.]

With respect to aggression, boys exhibit higher rates of unprovoked physical aggression than girls, but no difference in provoked aggression (Hyde, 2005). Some of the biggest differences involve the play styles of children. Boys frequently play organized rough-and-tumble games in large groups, while girls often play less physical activities in much smaller groups (Maccoby, 1998). There are also differences in the rates of depression, with girls much more likely than boys to be depressed after puberty. After puberty, girls are also more likely to be unhappy with their bodies than boys.

However, there is considerable variability between individual males and individual females. Also, even when there are mean level differences, the actual size of most of these differences is quite small. This means knowing someone's gender does not help much in predicting his or her actual traits. For example, in terms of activity level, boys are considered more active than girls. However, 42% of girls are more active than the average boy (but so are 50% of boys; see Figure 2.4.2 for a depiction of this phenomenon in a comparison of male and female self-esteem). Furthermore, many gender differences do not reflect innate differences, but instead reflect differences in specific experiences and socialization. For example, one presumed gender difference is that boys show better spatial abilities than girls. However, Tzuriel and Egozi (2010) gave girls the chance to practice their spatial skills (by imagining a line drawing was different shapes) and discovered that, with practice, this gender difference completely disappeared.

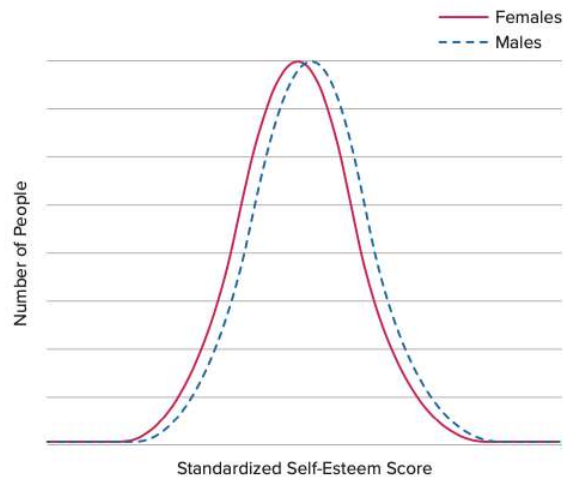


Figure 2.4.2: Although our gender stereotypes paint males and females as drastically different from each other, even when a difference exists there is considerable overlap in the presence of that trait between genders. This graph shows the average difference in self-esteem between boys and girls. Boys have a higher average self-esteem than girls, but the average scores are much more similar than different. [“Gender and Self-Esteem” by Judy Schmitt is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Adapted from Hyde (2005).]

Many domains we assume differ across genders are really based on gender stereotypes and not actual differences. Based on large metaanalyses, the analyses of thousands of studies across more than one million people, research has shown: Girls are not more fearful, shy, or scared of new things than boys; boys are not more angry than girls; girls are not more emotional than boys; boys do not perform better at math than girls; and girls are not more talkative than boys (Hyde, 2005).

In the following sections, we’ll investigate gender roles, the part they play in creating these stereotypes, and how they can affect the development of real gender differences.

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2.5: Gender Roles

As mentioned earlier, gender roles are well-established social constructions that may change from culture to culture and over time. In American culture, we commonly think of gender roles in terms of gender stereotypes, or the beliefs and expectations people hold about the typical characteristics, preferences, and behaviors of men and women.

By the time we are adults, our gender roles are a stable part of our personalities, and we usually hold many gender stereotypes. When do children start to learn about gender? Very early (see Figure 2.5.1). By their first birthday, children can distinguish faces by gender. By their second birthday, they can label others' gender and even sort objects into gendertyped categories. By the third birthday, children can consistently identify their own gender (see Martin et al., 2002, for a review). At this age, children believe sex is determined by external attributes, not biological attributes. Between 3 and 6 years of age, children learn that gender is constant and can't change simply by changing external attributes, having developed **gender constancy**. During this period, children also develop strong and rigid gender stereotypes. Stereotypes can refer to play (e.g., boys play with trucks, and girls play with dolls), traits (e.g., boys are strong, and girls like to cry), and occupations (e.g., men are doctors and women are nurses). These stereotypes stay rigid until children reach about age 8 or 9. Then they develop cognitive abilities that allow them to be more flexible in their thinking about others.

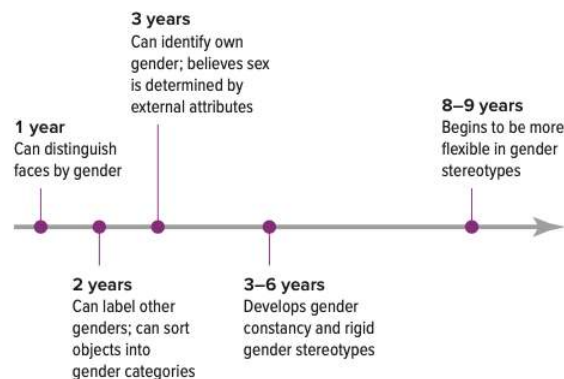


Figure 2.5.1: Children develop the ability to classify gender very early in life. [This work, “Gender Classification Timeline,” is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 by Judy Schmitt. It is a derivative of “Figure 2” by Christia Spears Brown, Jennifer A. Jewell, and Michelle J. Tam/Noba, which is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.]

How do our gender roles and gender stereotypes develop and become so strong? Many of our gender stereotypes are so strong because we emphasize gender so much in culture (Bigler & Liben, 2007). For example, males and females are treated differently before they are even born. When someone learns of a new pregnancy, the first question asked is “Is it a boy or a girl?” Immediately upon hearing the answer, judgments are made about the child: Boys will be rough and like blue, while girls will be delicate and like pink. **Developmental intergroup theory** postulates that adults' heavy focus on gender leads children to pay attention to gender as a key source of information about themselves and others, to seek out any possible gender differences, and to form rigid stereotypes based on gender that are subsequently difficult to change.

There are also psychological theories that partially explain how children form their own gender roles after they learn to differentiate based on gender. The first of these theories is **gender schema theory**. Gender schema theory argues that children are active learners who essentially socialize themselves. In this case, children actively organize others' behavior, activities, and attributes into gender categories, which are known as **schemas**. These schemas then affect what children notice and remember later. People of all ages are more likely to remember schema-consistent behaviors and attributes than schema-inconsistent behaviors and attributes. So, people are more likely to remember men, and forget women, who are firefighters. They also misremember schema-inconsistent information. If research participants are shown pictures of someone standing at the stove, they are more likely to remember the person to be cooking if depicted as a woman, and the person to be repairing the stove if depicted as a man. By only remembering schema-consistent information, gender schemas strengthen more and more over time.



Figure 2.5.2: People are more likely to remember schema-consistent behaviors and attributes than schema-inconsistent behaviors and attributes. For example, people are more likely to remember men, and forget women, who are firefighters. [“The girls” by Billy V/Flickr is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.]

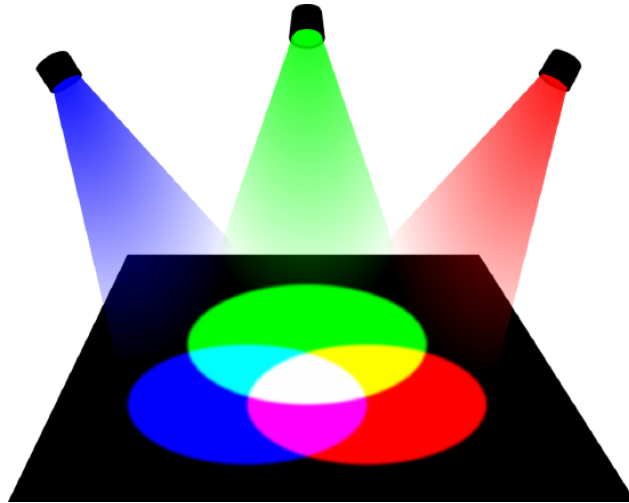
A second theory that attempts to explain the formation of gender roles in children is **social learning theory**. Social learning theory argues that gender roles are learned through reinforcement, punishment, and modeling. Children are rewarded and reinforced for behaving in concordance with gender roles and punished for breaking gender roles. In addition, social learning theory argues that children learn many of their gender roles by modeling the behavior of adults and older children and, in doing so, develop ideas about what behaviors are appropriate for each gender. Social learning theory has less support than gender schema theory—research shows that parents do reinforce gender-appropriate play but for the most part treat their male and female children similarly (Lytton & Romney, 1991).

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2.6: Intersectionality

Articulated by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), the concept of **intersectionality** identifies a mode of analysis integral to women, gender, sexuality studies. Within intersectional frameworks, race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and other aspects of identity are considered mutually constitutive; that is, people experience these multiple aspects of identity simultaneously and the meanings of different aspects of identity are shaped by one another. In other words, notions of gender and the way a person's gender is interpreted by others are always impacted by notions of race and the way that person's race is interpreted. For example, a person is never received as just a woman, but how that person is racialized impacts how the person is received as a woman. So, notions of blackness, brownness, and whiteness always influence gendered experience, and there is no experience of gender that is outside of an experience of race. In addition to race, gendered experience is also shaped by age, sexuality, class, and ability; likewise, the experience of race is impacted by gender, age, class, sexuality, and ability.



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Understanding intersectionality requires a particular way of thinking. It is different than how many people imagine identities operate. An intersectional analysis of identity is distinct from single-determinant identity models and additive models of identity. A **single determinant model of identity** presumes that one aspect of identity, say, gender, dictates one's access to or disenfranchisement from power. An example of this idea is the concept of "global sisterhood," or the idea that all women across the globe share some basic common political interests, concerns, and needs (Morgan 1996). If women in different locations did share common interests, it would make sense for them to unite on the basis of gender to fight for social changes on a global scale. Unfortunately, if the analysis of social problems stops at gender, what is missed is an attention to how various cultural contexts shaped by race, religion, and access to resources may actually place some women's needs at cross-purposes to other women's needs. Therefore, this approach obscures the fact that women in different social and geographic locations face different problems. Although many white, middle-class women activists of the mid-20th century US fought for freedom to work and legal parity with men, this was not the major problem for women of color or working-class white women who had already been actively participating in the US labor market as domestic workers, factory workers, and slave laborers since early US colonial settlement. Campaigns for women's equal legal rights and access to the labor market at the international level are shaped by the experience and concerns of white American women, while women of the global south, in particular, may have more pressing concerns: access to clean water, access to adequate health care, and safety from the physical and psychological harms of living in tyrannical, war-torn, or economically impoverished nations.



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In contrast to the single-determinant identity model, the **additive model of identity** simply adds together privileged and disadvantaged identities for a slightly more complex picture. For instance, a Black man may experience some advantages based on his gender, but has limited access to power based on his race. This kind of analysis is exemplified in how race and gender wage gaps are portrayed in statistical studies and popular news reports. Below, you can see a median wage gap table from the Institute for Women's Policy Research compiled in 2009. In reading the table, it can be seen that the gender wage gap is such that in 2009, overall, women earned 77% of what men did in the US. The table breaks down the information further to show that earnings varied not only by gender but by race as well. Thus, Hispanic or Latino women earned only 52.9% of what white men did while white women made 75%. This is certainly more descriptive than a single gender wage gap figure or a single race wage gap figure. The table is useful at pointing to potential structural explanations that may make earnings differ between groups. For instance, looking at the chart, you may immediately wonder why these gaps exist; is it a general difference of education levels, occupations, regions of residence or skill levels between groups, or is it something else, such as discrimination in hiring and promotion? What it is not useful for is predicting people's incomes by plugging in their gender plus their race, even though it may be our instinct to do so. Individual experiences differ vastly and for a variety of reasons; there are outliers in every group. Most importantly, even if this chart helps in understanding structural reasons why incomes differ, it doesn't provide all the answers.

Table 1: Average Annual Earnings for Year-Round Full-Time Workers age 15 Years and Older by Race and Ethnicity, 2015

Racial/Ethnic Background*	Men (\$)	Women (\$)	Women's Earnings as % of White Male Earnings
All Racial/Ethnic Groups	51,212	40,742	—
White	57,204	43,063	75.3%
Black	41,094	36,212	63.3%
Asian American	61,672	48,313	84.5%
Hispanic or Latino	35,673	31,109	54.4%

*White alone, not Hispanic; Black alone or in combination (may include Hispanic); Asian American alone or in combination (may include Hispanic); and Hispanic/Latina/o (may be of any race).

Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research. Compilation of U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey. 2016. "Historical Income Tables: Table P-38. Full-Time, Year Round Workers by Median Earnings and Sex: 1987 to 2015. <www.census.gov/data/tables/t...me-people.html>

The additive model does not take into account how our shared cultural ideas of gender are racialized and our ideas of race are gendered and that these ideas structure access to resources and power—material, political, interpersonal. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (2005) has developed a strong intersectional framework through her discussion of race, gender, and sexuality in her historical analysis of representations of Black sexuality in the US. Hill Collins shows how contemporary white American culture exoticizes Black men and women and she points to a history of enslavement and treatment as chattel as the origin and motivator for the use of these images. In order to justify slavery, African-Americans were thought of and treated as less than human. Sexual reproduction was often forced among slaves for the financial benefit of plantation owners, but owners reframed this coercion and rape as evidence of the “natural” and uncontrollable sexuality of people from the African continent. Images of Black men and

women were not completely the same, as Black men were constructed as hypersexual “bucks” with little interest in continued relationships whereas Black women were framed as hypersexual “Jezebels” that became the “matriarchs” of their families. Again, it is important to note how the context, where enslaved families were often forcefully dismantled, is often left unacknowledged and contemporary racialized constructions are assumed and framed as individual choices or traits. It is shockingly easy to see how these images are still present in contemporary media, culture, and politics, for instance, in discussions of American welfare programs. This analysis reveals how race, gender, and sexuality intersect. We cannot simply pull these identities apart because they are interconnected and mutually enforcing.

Although the framework of intersectional has contributed important insights to feminist analyses, there are problems. Intersectionality refers to the mutually co-constitutive nature of multiple aspects of identity, yet in practice this term is typically used to signify the specific difference of “women of color,” which effectively produces women of color (and in particular, Black women) as Other and again centers white women (Puar 2012). In addition, the framework of intersectionality was created in the context of the United States; therefore, the use of the framework reproduces the United States as the dominant site of feminist inquiry and women’s studies’ Euro-American bias (Puar 2012). Another failing of intersectionality is its premise of fixed categories of identity, where descriptors like race, gender, class, and sexuality are assumed to be stable. In contrast, the notion of **assemblage** considers categories events, actions, and encounters between bodies, rather than simply attributes (Puar 2012). Assemblage refers to a collage or collection of things, or the act of assembling. An assemblage perspective emphasizes how relations, patterns, and connections between concepts give concepts meaning (Puar 2012). Although assemblage has been framed against intersectionality, identity categories’ mutual co-constitution is accounted for in both intersectionality and assemblage.

“Gender” is too often used simply and erroneously to mean “white women,” while “race” too often connotes “Black men.” An intersectional perspective examines how identities are related to each other in our own experiences and how the social structures of race, class, gender, sexuality, age, and ability intersect for everyone. As opposed to single-determinant and additive models of identity, an intersectional approach develops a more sophisticated understanding of the world and how individuals in differently situated social groups experience differential access to both material and symbolic resources.

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2.7: Crash Course Video - Sex and Sexuality

📌 Sex & Sexuality: Crash Course Sociology #31



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Gender Development and Socialization

[3.1: Gender Development](#)

[3.2: Gender Socialization](#)

[3.3: Cultural Diversity and Gender Norms](#)

[3.4: Parental Behavior towards Girls and Boys](#)

[3.5: Crash Course Video - Theories of Gender](#)

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3.1: Gender Development

Piaget and Kohlberg studies the mental process children use to understand their observations and experiences. Children develop organizing categories called schemas. Sex is a very important schema for young children. Their interpretations of the world, of interactions, and of others are limited by their mental maturity. Early on children's thinking tends to rely on simple (often visual) cues. Females and males look differently in Western culture. Think of how women and men often dress or are often represented in popular culture. What are some of the common characteristics of female/maleness on TV or in movies or children's books? So children often rely on those "obvious" physical cues to differentiate between men and women.

Cognitive factors in children's understanding of gender and gender stereotypes may contribute to their acquisition of gender roles. Kohlberg's three-stage **cognitive developmental theory of gender typing** suggests that children begin by categorizing themselves as male or females with reinforcement from outsiders such parents, and then feel rewarded by behaving in gender-consistent ways from external means.³⁰ According to Kohlberg, children acquire gender roles after she/he has gained an understanding and awareness that her/his sex is permanent, constant, and will never change. Children who are highly gender schematic often have parents or caregivers, especially fathers, who give them a lot of positive and negative reinforcement when it comes to gender-related activities. This teaches children gender-type behaviors as encourages them to pay more attention to gender as a social organizing category. Gender constancy emerges somewhere between 3-7 years of age.³¹

³⁰ Martin, C. L., Ruble, D. N., & Szkrykabo, J. (2002). Cognitive theories of early gender development. *American psychological association*. 4(23), 544–557

³¹ Ruble DN, Martin C. Gender development. In: Damon W, Eisenberg N, editors. *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3, Social, emotional, and personality development*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley; 1998. pp. 933–1016.

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- [3.3: Piaget's and Kohlberg's Cognitive Developmental Theory \(Psychology\)](#) by [Katie Coleman](#) is licensed [CC BY 4.0](#). Original source: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1zYTvN5GhtzgRmCE9BIWBdBOMYTV495bs>.

3.2: Gender Socialization

In Chapter 1, we learned that gender is achieved, rather than ascribed. We discussed gender is something we *do* rather than something we *are*. So, if gender is something we learn, how do we learn it? This can be achieved through **gender socialization**, or *the shaping of individual behavior and perceptions in such a way that the individual conforms to socially prescribed expectations for males and females*.²³ In other words, our gender roles are socially proscribed expectations and attitudes assigned to and associated with one's biological sex. A **gender role** is a set of societal norms dictating the types of behaviors that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex.

Gender is so taken for granted, that we don't often recognize our gendered behaviors. Since we do gender every day, it's not something we challenge or question very often. Until, that is, someone or something challenges our assumptions and taken for granted positions on the topic. In fact, it's so taken for granted, most people believe (and reinforce) the idea that gender is something we are born with, rather than something we create and recreate. Therefore, gender is a human production that exists only when people do it.²⁴

Think about this for a moment: How many people do you know who want to know the sex of a fetus? Why? Does the parents knowing their baby's sex affect the health of the baby? No. Does knowing the baby's sex have any correlation with the happiness of the baby? No. Does knowing the baby's sex before birth help improve its development? No. Then why? So we know what color to paint the nursery, of course! I mean, how could we possibly put a female baby in a blue nursery? That would be insanity!

According to a study conducted in 2001 by a team of doctors at Harvard Medical School in Boston with over 1,300 participants, about 58% of parents-to-be wanted to know the sex of the fetus before the birth.²⁵ So sex is a pretty important variable for most parents-to-be. But why? So they can start planning, of course! Boy or girl, pink or blue? How should they decorate the nursery? What toys should they play with? What books should they read? Historically, and even today, a lot of the answers to these questions will be mostly shaped by the sex of the baby. Does the baby know its sex? Or that it's in pink or blue? Of course not! So who cares? Many parents form gendered expectations for their child before it is even born, after determining the child's sex. The child thus arrives to gender-specific clothes, games, and even ambitions. And, enter gender socialization: Our primary caregivers will be the most influential in our gender socialization in our primary years (we'll discuss other influences later on). While various **socializing agents**—parents, teachers, peers, movies, television, music, books, and religion—teach and reinforce gender roles throughout the lifespan, parents probably exert the greatest influence, especially on their very young offspring.

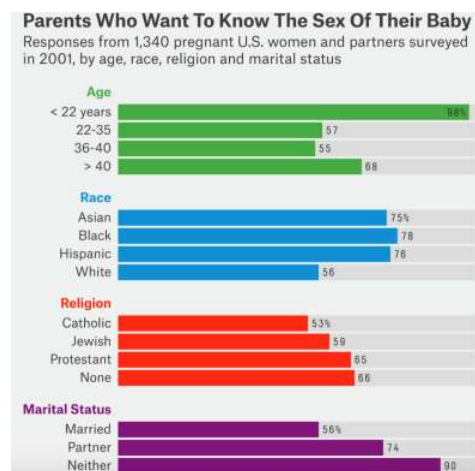


Figure 3.1.1. Bar Graph of “Parents Who Want to Know the Sex of Their Baby”

Adults perceive and treat female and male infants differently. Parents and guardians probably do this in response to their having been recipients of gender expectations as young children. Sociologists have found that in the U.S., traditionally, fathers teach boys how to fix and build things; mothers teach girls how to cook, sew, and keep house.²⁶ Sound old-fashioned and out of date? I hope so! And certainly sociologists accept and acknowledge exceptions, but the truth is, today children still receive parental approval more often for conforming to gender expectations and adopting culturally accepted and conventional roles. Despite social revelations that girls are not too fragile to play sports and boys can benefit from learning to manage household responsibilities, we still find ourselves surrounded by limited gender expectations and persistent gender inequalities. Additional socializing agents, such as media, peers, siblings, etc, reinforce all of this. In other words, learning gender roles occurs within a social context, the

values of the parents and society being passed along to the children. This results in children adopting a **gender identity** early in life, resulting in them also developing **gender-role preferences**.²⁷ Gender identity is *one's concept of self as female, male, or neither*. Gender-role preference is *one's preference for the culturally prescribed roles associated with gender identity*.

Gender roles adopted during childhood normally continue into adulthood. People have certain presumptions about decision-making, child-rearing practices, financial responsibilities, and so forth. At work, people also have presumptions about power, the division of labor, and organizational structures. None of this is meant to imply that gender roles are good or bad; rather, this is an acknowledgement that they exist and shape our perceptions of reality. Gender roles are realities in almost everyone's life, but since they are not biologically determined, our "realities" surrounding gender can differ from generation to generation, from group to group, even from individual to individual.

Gendered social arrangements also dictate or create external means of control of how females and males should act, and they are often justified by religion and cultural morés. In Western culture, alternatives to our constructed gendered norms has largely been virtually unthinkable.²⁸ While there is no "essential" gender for human beings, society and culture holds the individual responsible for reproducing the expected gendered norms assigned to them. The individual is expected to recreate the already prescribed gendered behaviors laid out for them, and, in turn, they themselves become the re-creators of what it means to be a woman or a man in their society. "If we fail to do gender appropriately, we as individuals may be called to account (for our character, motives, and predispositions)."²⁹

²³ Hammond, Ron, Cheney, Paul. *Introduction to Sociology*.

²⁴ *Doing Gender*. Candace West; Don H. Zimmerman. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2. (Jun., 1987), pp. 125-151.

²⁵ Shipp, T. D., Shipp, D. Z., Bromley, B., Sheahan, R., Cohen, A., Lieberman, E. and Benacerraf, B. (2004), What Factors Are Associated with Parents' Desire To Know the Sex of Their Unborn Child?. *Birth*, 31: 272–279. doi:10.1111/j.0730-7659.2004.00319.x

²⁶ The Social Construction of Gender, Margaret L. Andersen and Dana Hysock, *Thinking about Women*, Allyn & Bacon, 2009

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Foucault, Michael. 1972. *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. NY, New York. Pantheon.

²⁹ *Doing Gender*. Candace West; Don H. Zimmerman. *Gender and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2. (Jun., 1987), pp. 146.

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3.3: Cultural Diversity and Gender Norms



Figure 2.3.1: Mojave group. Photo Source: Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository

There is some variation in cultural gender-role standards both within the United States and across cultures; however, within the United States, for example, standards vary depending on ethnicity, age, education, and occupation. These variables will be discussed more fully in coming chapters. But now that we’ve explored the definitions and constructions of sex and gender, let’s more closely examine some traditional gendered norms from cultures that don’t totally reflect Eurocentric, Westernized ways of doing gender.

Mojave Native Americans

First we’ll talk about the Mojave in North America. This culture taught and reinforced parallel institutional structures for males and females.¹⁵ For example, the Mojave husbands and wives worked together to farm their fields. Men planted and watered the crops, and women harvested them. Both sexes took part in storytelling, music and artwork, and traditional medicine.¹⁶

In Mohave society, pregnant women believed they had dreams predicting the anatomic sex of their children. These dreams also sometimes included hints of their child’s future gender variant status. A boy who “acted strangely” before he participated in the boy’s puberty ceremonies in the Mohave tribe would be considered for the transvestite ceremony. The ceremony itself was meant to surprise the boy. Other nearby settlements would receive word to come and watch. A circle of onlookers would sing special songs. If the boy danced like a woman, it confirmed his status as an alyha. He was then taken to a river to bathe, and was given a skirt to wear. The ceremony would permanently change his gender status within the tribe. He then took up a female name. The alyha would imitate many aspects of female life, including menstruation, puberty observations, pregnancy, and birth. The alyha were considered great healers, especially in curing sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis.

Oaxaca, Mexico



Figure 2.3.2 Muxe: Mexican men who take on the traditional dress and gender roles of Mexican women within their communities.

The Juchitán in Oaxaca, Mexico, practice gender norms that do not comply with traditional Western practices. For example, the women traditionally run businesses, wear colorfully bold traditional clothing, and hold their heads firmly high. The women are regarded as being empowered and the tolerance of homosexuality and transgender individuals has been part of their cultural tradition. men who take on the traditional roles of women, referred to as “Muxes,” are not only accepted, but cherished as symbols of good luck. This community exemplifies an alternative gender system unlike the binary gender categories that have been established throughout many parts of the world.



Figure 2.3.4 Hijra

In Indian Hindu culture, when compared to the native North Americans, the gender system is essentially binary, but the ideas themselves are quite different from Western thoughts. These ideas often come from religious contexts. Some Hindu origin myths feature androgynous or hermaphroditic ancestors. Ancient poets often showed this idea by presenting images with mixed physical attributes between the two sexes. These themes still exist in the culture, and are even still institutionalized. The most prominent group are the hijras.¹⁷ Hijras, today, are not seen either male or female, but rather are typically identified as “hijra.” “Being a hijra means making a commitment that gives social support and some economic security, as well as a cultural meaning, linking them to the larger world.”¹⁸

Brazil

As in Indian culture, Brazilian culture does follow a gender binary, just not the traditional western one. Rather than men and women, certain areas of Brazil have men and not-men. Men are masculine, and anyone who displays feminine qualities falls under the category of “not-man.” This concept is a result of sexual penetration as the deciding factor of gender. Any one who is penetrated is not-male. Everyone else, regardless of sexual preference, remains a male in Brazilian society.¹⁹

The most commonly discussed group of people when discussing gender in Brazil are the travestí, or transgender prostitutes. Unlike in native North America and India, the existence of the travestí is not from a religious context. It is an individual’s choice to become a travestí. Born as males, they go to extensive measures to try to appear female. The travestí recognize they are not female, and that they cannot ever become female. Instead, their culture is based on this man/not-man premise.²⁰

Thailand



Figure 2.3.5 A Kathoey. Photo Source: <https://maytermthailand.org/2015/04/27/the-third-gender-in-thailand-kathoey/>

In Thailand the term kathoey is used by both males and females and allows and refers to cross-dressing and adopting masculine and feminine identities opposite their assigned birth gender. Up until the 1970s cross-dressing men and women could all come under the term kathoey, however the term has been dropped for the cross-dressing masculine females who are now referred to as *tom*.²¹

As a result of the shifts, kathoey today is most commonly understood as a male transgender category, and these people are now sometimes referred to as “lady-boys.” Kathoey is derived from the Buddhist myth that describes three original human sex/genders, male, female, and a biological hermaphrodite or kathoey.²² Kathoey is not defined as merely being a variant between male or female but as an independently existing third sex.

Nigeria

The Nigerian Yoruba social life and gender roles do not duplicate those found in the West. Instead of focusing on gender distinctions, this culture typically focuses on age distinctions. In addition, men who choose to wear women’s clothing, jewelry, and cosmetics will be labeled as “wife of the god,” as only women can be wives of mortal men.

Waria, Indonesia

Waria is a term used for the third gender in Indonesia outside of the masculine and feminine ideals in this Islamic nation. The waria are born male but live along a continuum of gender identity not constrained to the traditional Western interpretation of the masculinity. The term “waria” includes individuals who continue to identify as male but who imitate certain feminine mannerisms, and can occasionally wear makeup, jewelry, and women’s clothing. Others identify so closely as female that they are able to pass as female in their daily interactions in society.

Sistergirls and Brotherboys, Australia

In Australia, indigenous transgendered people are known as “sistergirls” and “brotherboys”. As in some other native cultures, there is evidence that transgender and intersex people were much more accepted in their society before colonization. Therefore, the Eurocentric tendencies that shaped Western gender ideals have also played a huge part in the contemporary view of the sistergirls and brotherboys in Australia today. For example, today there are more stigmas attached to these individuals. But through an increasing number of support groups specifically aimed at sistergirls and brotherboys, perhaps times will change again. If there’s anything we’ve learned from gender so far, it’s that it is constantly being constructed and *re-constructed*.

Mahu, Hawaii

In traditional Hawaiian culture, creative expression of gender and sexuality was celebrated as an authentic part of the human experience. Throughout Hawaiian history, “mahu” appear as individuals who identify their gender between male and female. A multiple gender tradition existed among the Kanaka Maoli indigenous people. The mahu could be biological males or females inhabiting a gender role somewhere between or encompassing both the masculine and feminine. Their social role is sacred as educators and conservators of ancient traditions and rituals. The arrival of Europeans and the colonization of Hawaii nearly eliminated the native culture, and today mahu face discrimination in a culture dominated by white Eurocentric ideology.

Suggested Articles for Further Reading:

Candace West; Don H. Zimmerman. (1987). *Doing Gender*. Gender and Society, Vol. 1, No. 2. (Jun., 1987), pp. 125-151.

Patricia A. Adler, Steven J. Kless and Peter Adler. (1992). Socialization to Gender Roles: Popularity among Elementary School Boys and Girls. *Sociology of Education*. Vol. 65, No. 3 (Jul., 1992), pp. 169-187.

Suggested Films:

Middle Sexes: Refining He and She (2005)

Examines the diversity of human sexual and gender variance around the globe, with commentary by scientific experts and first-hand accounts of people who do not conform to a simple male/female binary.

Two Spirits (2009)

Filmmaker Lydia Nibley explores the cultural context behind a tragic and senseless murder. Fred Martinez was a Navajo youth slain at the age of 16 by a man who bragged to his friends that he ‘bug-smashed a fag’. But Fred was part of an honored Navajo tradition -the ‘nadleeh’, or ‘two-spirit’, who possesses a balance of masculine and feminine traits. Through telling Fred’s story, Nibley reminds us of the values that America’s indigenous peoples have long embraced. - Written by Outfest

Half the Sky (2012)

This documentary—filmed in 10 countries with narrations from celebrities such as Olivia Wilde, Eva Mendes and Meg Ryan—tells uplifting stories of women around the world who are fighting back against systemic oppression. The film presents gender

equality as the unfinished business of the our time and highlights women who are working to improve everything from healthcare to education.

¹⁵ Hill, W. W. (1935). The status of the hermaphrodite and transvestite in Navaho culture. *American Anthropologist*, 37, 273-279.

¹⁶ Nanda, Serena. *Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations*. Waveland Press, 1999. Print. Pages 21-23

¹⁷ Nanda, Serena. *Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations*. Waveland Press, 1999. Print.pg. 27,28

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Kulick, D. "The Gender of Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes." *American Anthropologist* 99.3 (1997): 574-85. Page 578

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Nanda, Serena. *Gender Diversity: Crosscultural Variations*. Waveland Press, 1999. Print. Page 73

²² Ibid

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3.4: Parental Behavior towards Girls and Boys

The strongest influence on a child's gender development often occurs in the family, with parents or guardians passing on, both overtly and covertly, to their children, their own beliefs about gender. One study indicates that parents have differential expectations of sons and daughters as early as 24 hours after birth.³² In addition, girls and boys are viewed and treated differently by their parents, particularly their fathers. Boys are thought to be stronger and are treated more roughly and played with more actively than girls as early as birth. As children get older, girls are typically protected more (physically and emotionally) and allowed less autonomy than boys, and girls are not expected to achieve as much in the areas of mathematics and careers as are boys.³³

Further, research has indicated that many parents attempt to define gender for their sons in a manner that distances the sons from femininity. Emily Kane, professor of Sociology and author of *The Gender Trap*, found “the parental boundary maintenance work evident for sons represents a crucial obstacle limiting boys’ options, separating boys from girls, devaluing activities marked as feminine for both boys and girls, and thus bolstering gender inequality and hetero-normativity.”³⁴ Parents provide messages regarding gender and what is acceptable for children's gendered selves based on their sex category-- messages that are internalized by the developing child and translate into adolescence and adulthood. However, their sex role stereotypes will be well established early in their childhood.³⁵

Books

Many influences outside of the family affect gender-role socialization. Male and female roles are portrayed in ways that might be described as being “gender-stereotypic” in television and many children's books. For example, males are more likely than females to be portrayed as aggressive, competent, rational, and powerful in the workforce. Females are more likely than males to be portrayed as involved primarily in housework or caring for children.

Typical themes for books aimed at boys include robots, dinosaurs, astronauts, vehicles, football and pirates; while girls are more often allowed princesses, fairies, make-up, flowers, butterflies, fashion, and cute animals. There's nothing wrong with these things, but it is wrong when they are repeatedly presented as only for one gender (really, only for one sex since we promote constructed gender normativity for specific sex categories). Girls can like pirates and adventure, and boys can like cute animals and dressing up. Why tell them otherwise? What do we have to gain from telling kids what their personal interests should be based on their sex category and subsequent prescribed gender? These points will also be discussed further in the chapter “Language and Media.”

Television

Former Federal Communications Commissioner Nicholas Johnson once said “All television is educational; the only question is: what is it teaching?”³⁶ Children start watching television from a very early age, about 18 months.³⁷ And television is perhaps the most influential form of media.³⁸ Since very young children often have difficulty telling fantasy from reality, they are particularly susceptible to the portrayals of gender types on television, especially cartoons, which make up the majority of children's television viewing between the ages of two and eleven.³⁹ Therefore, it can be assumed that children might use the portrayals of males and females in cartoon format as a model for performance of their own genders, in order to assimilate into the norms of their culture. Researchers coded and analyzed 175 episodes of 41 different cartoons, showing large discrepancies between prominence and portrayal of male and female characters.⁴⁰ They noted that, compared to female characters, males were given much more prominence, appeared more frequently, and talked significantly more.

“Traditional gender roles, wherein men are encouraged to be decisive and to show leadership qualities while women are encouraged to be deferential and dependent, do not benefit anyone, particularly women. Traditional gender roles discourage the full range of expression and accomplishment. Children should be allowed to develop a sense of self in a gender-fair environment that encourages everyone to fully feel a part of society.”

– Susan D. Witt is Assistant Professor, School of Family and Consumer Sciences, The University of Akron, Akron, Ohio.

Toys

Parents and guardians are who most often provide children with toys. Meaning, rarely do very small children have any autonomy in what's purchased and brought into the home. How could they, right? However this also results in parents choosing gender-specific (and gender-differentiated) toys and rewarding play behavior that is gender stereotyped.⁴¹ “A study of children's rooms has shown

that girls' rooms have more pink, dolls, and manipulative toys; boys' rooms have more blue, sports equipment, tools, and vehicles.”⁴²

Females are less likely to be leading characters on television, and male characters are over-represented in children's books. We have seen some shifts to more equal gender role representation between the sexes in shows in recent years.

Peers, Gender Roles, and Self-Esteem

Peers also serve as a significant influence on a child's gender-role socialization. For example, children are likely to react when other children violate expected gender-role behaviors. In addition, boys are more likely to receive negative sanctions from peers for acting out “gender-bending” behaviors than are females. Think for a moment: What do we often call a little girl who likes to wear boys' clothes? That's right, a “tomboy.” But what are some of the names given to little boys who feel more comfortable wearing feminine-looking clothes? In *Dude: You're A Fag* C. J. Pascoe argues the “specter of the fag” has become a disciplinary mechanism for regulating boys and how the “fag discourse” is even more focused on gender than to sexuality.⁴³ Reactions from peers, especially negative reactions, typically result in changes in behavior, particularly if the feedback is from a child of the same sex. This pattern of responsiveness reinforces traditional gender roles in children who might otherwise exercise more freedom in their gender expression.

Schools and Teachers

Teachers also treat girls and boys differently. Let's make clear teachers are not bad people or people who should be blamed for reinforcing gender norms during the socialization process. Rather, they are just another piece to a huge puzzle! Due to the emphasis in school on typically feminine characteristics such as quietness, obedience, and passivity, girls tend to like school better and perform better than boys in the early grades. Even in preschool, boys receive more criticism from teachers, who often react to children in gender-stereotypic ways. The lack of public awareness of research findings, such as that in most areas of math, girls do as well as boys, may prevent parents and others from encouraging girls to excel in these areas. We will also be looking further into these points in the chapter “Gender and Schools.”

Western Tradition and Gender Roles

More often times than not, the “masculine” is treated as the default human experience by social norms. Masculine behaviors are typically rewarded over and above feminine ones. Because we often devalue qualities we construct and label as “feminine,” we see social reproductions such as men (in general) being paid better than women, enjoying more sexual and social freedom, and having other benefits that women do not by virtue of their socially prescribed gender. While there are variations across race, class, education, sexuality, religion, and other socio-economic measures, the human capabilities labeled as “masculine” still remain more valued than the human capabilities labeled as “feminine.”

In Western societies, gender power is held by White, highly educated, middle-class, able-bodied heterosexual men whose gender represents **hegemonic masculinity** – the ideal to which other masculinities must interact with, conform to, and challenge. It is not enforced through direct violence; instead, it exists as a cultural “script” that we're taught throughout our socialization processes.

In his book *Dude You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*, sociologist C.J. Pascoe argues young working-class American boys enforce the masculine ideal by using jokes exemplified by the phrase, “Dude, you're a fag.” Boys are called “fags” (a derogative and homophobic slur, at it's best) not because they are homosexual, but when they engage in behavior considered to be “un-masculine”. This might include dancing, taking “too much” care with their appearance, being too expressive with their emotions, or being perceived as incompetent. So in this case, boys who are exhibiting behaviors labeled as “feminine” by Western culture become vulnerable to being harassed. This not only reinforces the ultra-constricting masculine ideal in boys, but it also reinforces the devaluing of anything labeled as “feminine” in the culture.

This leads us to another point: Because Western culture is largely indoctrinated with patriarchal ideals and traditions, femininity in Western culture is constructed to be inferior to masculinity. As a result, women often lack the same level of cultural, political, and economic power as men. However women are typically afforded more agency to resist their prescribed gender ideals than are men. Meaning, femininity and feminine roles have developed to include more variation in expression than has masculinity in recent decades. Men, then, typically endure harsher social punishments more often for exercising behaviors thought to be “feminine” by the culture than are women who exercise behaviors thought to be “masculine.” Women are also more socially permitted to actively challenge gender norms by refusing to let patriarchy define how they portray and reconstruct their femininity. However, this

becomes a double-edged sword, because more often than not, some *social problems* will then be labeled as *women's problems*. For example:

- Rejecting the double standard assigned to sexual behaviors for males and females
- Fighting rape culture
- Fighting sexual harassment
- Fighting for equal pay and permission to enter male-dominated fields
- Representation of women as sexual object in advertising and other forms of popular culture
- Bringing attention to the issue and combatting domestic violence

Gender Over the Life Span

Gender experiences will evolve over a person's lifetime. Gender is therefore always in flux; it's fluid. It changes as our likes/dislikes, morals, values, interpretations, and constructions change. We see this through generational and intergenerational changes within families, as social, legal, and technological changes influence social values on gender.

Suggested articles:

The Social Construction of Gender, Margaret L. Andersen and Dana Hysock, *Thinking about Women*, 2009

Suggested books:

Pascoe, C. J. (2012). *Dude, you're a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press

Vincent, Norah. 2009. *Self Made Man: My Year Disguised as a Man*. Penguin Publishing.

³² Rubin, J., Provenzano, F., & Luria, Z. (1974). The eye of the beholder: Parents' views on sex of newborns. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 44, 512-519.

³³ Eccles, J. S., Jacobs, J. E., & Harold, R. D. (1990). Gender role stereotypes, expectancy effects, and parents' socialization of gender differences. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46, 186-201.

³⁴ Spade, Joan. *The Kaleidoscope of Gender*. London: SAGE. pp. 177–184.

³⁵ Arliss, L. P. (1991). *Gender communication*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

³⁶ Thompson, Teresa L. and Zebrinos, Eugenia. (1995). Gender Roles in Animated Cartoons: Has the Picture Changed In 20 Years? *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*. 32: 651 - 674.

³⁷ Thompson, Teresa L. and Zebrinos, Eugenia. (1997). *Television Cartoons: Do Children*

³⁸ Lauer, R. H., & Lauer, J. C. (1994). *Marriage and family: The quest for intimacy*. Madison, WI: Brown & Benchmark.

³⁹ Witt, Susan D. (1997) *Parental Influence on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles*.

⁴⁰ Thompson, Teresa L. and Zebrinos, Eugenia. (1997). *Television Cartoons: Do Children*

⁴¹ Etaugh, C. & Liss, M. B. (1992). Home, school, and playroom: Training grounds for adult gender roles. *Sex Roles*, 26, 129-147.

⁴² Witt, Susan D. 1997. *Parental Influence on Children's Socialization to Gender Roles*. Adolescence.

⁴³ Pascoe, C. J. (2012). *Dude, you're a fag: Masculinity and sexuality in high school*. Berkeley, Calif: University of California Press.

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3.5: Crash Course Video - Theories of Gender

 Theories of Gender: Crash Course Sociology #33



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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4.1: Introduction- Institutions, Cultures, and Structures

4.2: What the English Language is Made Of

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4.4: Media

4.5: Video - Language and Gender Inequality

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4.1: Introduction- Institutions, Cultures, and Structures

Thus far, we have been concerned with feminist theories and perspectives that seek to understand how difference is constructed through structures of power, how inequalities are produced and reproduced through socially constructed binaries, and how the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect. At this juncture, we can ask: where do these processes occur? How do they not only get produced, but how are they *re-produced* through daily activities in institutions? In the following section, we identify, historicize, and analyze several of the key institutions that structure our lives, including the family, media, medicine, law and the prison system. We use the struggle to end violence against women as a case to show how multiple institutions intersect and overlap in ways that both limit and enable action. First, we provide a theoretical overview of institutions, culture, and structures.

To answer these questions we need to look at the institutions within which we spend a large part of our lives interacting with others. An **institution** is a “social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property...and [owes] [its] survival to relatively self-activating social processes” (Jepperson 1991: 145). In other words, institutions are enduring, historical facets of social life that shape our behavior. Examples of institutions include the family, marriage, media, medicine, law, education, the state, and work. These institutions can be said to structure thought and behavior, in that they prescribe rules for interaction and inclusion/exclusion and norms for behavior, parcel out resources between groups, and often times rely on formal regulations (including laws, policies, and contracts). In almost every facet of our day-to-day experience we operate within institutions—often within multiple institutions at once—without noticing their influence on our lives. As a result, we can conceive of institutions—primarily the family, schools, religious institutions, media, and peer groups—as primary agents of socialization (Kimmel 2007). These are primary agents of socialization in that we are born into them, shaped by their expectations, norms, and rules, and as we grow older we often operate in the same institutions and teach these expectations, norms, and rules to younger generations.



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Institutions are primary sites for the reproduction of gendered, classed, racialized, ableized, and sexualized inequalities. Everyone does not have access to the same institutions—the same schools, the same hospitals, marriage, etc.,—because often times these institutions differentiate between and differentially reward people based on categories of gender, class, race, ability, and sexuality. For example, think of the city or town you grew up in. There may have been different schools located in different areas of the city, in neighborhoods that differed in the class and race composition of the people living in those neighborhoods. Perhaps there was a school located in a predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood and another school located in a neighborhood of predominantly working-class people of color. Perhaps there were also private schools that required high tuition rates. Due to the fact that schools in most states are funded based on the tax base of the school district they are in, schools located in different neighborhoods will have different amounts of resources—books, computers, the ability to pay teachers and staff, etc. Those students who live in the middle-class school district will benefit from a well-funded public school, while students who live in the working-class school district will be disadvantaged from the lower amount of funding of their school district. Meanwhile, students who attend the prestigious private school will most likely already be economically privileged and will further benefit from a well-funded school that surrounds them with students with similar class backgrounds and expectations. These students will most likely benefit from a curriculum of college preparatory classes, while students in public schools are less likely to be enrolled in college prep classes—limiting their ability to get into college. Therefore, the same race and class inequalities that limited access to the middle-class, predominantly white neighborhood school will give those privileged students greater chances to enter college and maintain their privileged status. In this way, race and class privileges (and disadvantages) get reproduced through institutions.



“Ontonagon School in Ontonagon, Michigan.” by Bobak Ha’Eri is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](#)

Institutions shape, and are shaped by, culture. **Culture** is a system of symbols, values, practices, and interests of a group of people.^[1] Culture is shot through with **ideology**, which can be understood to be the ideas, attitudes, and values of the **dominant culture**. It is important to note that “dominant culture” does not describe the most numerous group within society. “Dominant culture” typically describes a relatively small social group that has a disproportionate amount of power. An example of a dominant culture would be the numerically small white minority in South Africa during apartheid. More recently, the Occupy Movement has critiqued the ways in which the “1%” exerts a disproportionate amount of control and power as the dominant culture in the United States.



"Day 3 Occupy Wall Street 2011 Shankbone 5" by David Shankbone is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Mainstream institutions often privilege and reward the dominant culture. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) argues that institutions value certain types of culture and reward people who have those types of culture. As we discussed in the previous chapter, different social classes have different types of cultural capital—assets that are not necessarily economic, but promote social mobility. For example, students who attend public schools in middle-class districts or private schools often have access to more language courses, arts courses, and extracurricular activities—skills, knowledge, and experiences that colleges value greatly in their admission decisions. Schools in less economically privileged districts often have fewer of these options.

In this way, culture is not an even playing field, and not everyone has equal access to defining what types of symbols, meanings, values, and practices are valued by institutions. Those groups of people with greater access to mainstream institutions—those who have been born into wealth, white, men, able-bodied, heterosexual—have a greater ability to define what types of culture will be valued by institutions, and often have access to the cultural capital that mainstream institutions value.

The interaction between culture and institutions creates social structures. **Social structures** are composed of 1) socially constructed ideas, principles, and categories and 2) institutions that distribute material resources to stratified groups based on socially constructed ideas, principles, and categories. Additionally, 3) they shape—or structure—experience, identity, and practice. Social structures are relational, in that they function to stratify groups based on the categories that underlie those groups—allocating both symbolic and material benefits and resources unequally among those groups. "Symbolic resources" are the nonmaterial rewards that accrue to privileged groups. An example would be the way in which employers often assume that employees who are fathers are more responsible, mature, and hardworking, and deserve more pay as opposed to their childless peers or to working mothers (Hodges and Budig 2010). In this example, the sex/gender/sexuality system is a structure through which employers—as gatekeepers of advancement through institutions of work—privilege heterosexual fatherhood. The effect of this is the reproduction of the symbolic privileging of heterosexual masculinity, and the unequal allocation of material resources (salary and wage raises, advancement opportunities) to married men with children. Unmarried men without children do not receive the same symbolic and material rewards nor do married women with children. In this sense, structures limit access to opportunities: educational opportunities, employment opportunities, and opportunities to move up in social class standing.

While there may be a tendency to think of "structures" as unchangeable and monolithic entities, our definition of structure does not make such an assumption. In our definition, social structures are made possible by their reliance on socially constructed categories—that is, categories that change through time and place. Furthermore, while social structures can be said to structure experience and identity, people are not passive observers or dupes—as the history of labor struggles, struggles for self-determination in former colonies, the civil rights movement, and feminist movements have shown, people fight back against the institutions and dominant cultural ideas and categories that have been used to oppress them. Even though socially constructed categories have typically been used to stratify groups of people, those same groups of people may base an activist struggle out of that identity, transforming the very meanings of that identity in the process. For instance, the phrases "Black power" and "gay power" were created by Black and gay liberationists in the late 1960s to claim and re-frame identities that had been disparaged by the dominant culture and various mainstream institutions. This history of resistance within the crux of overarching structures of power shows that people have agency to make choices and take action. In other words, while structures limit opportunities and reproduce inequalities, groups of people who have been systemically denied access to mainstream institutions can and have exerted their will to change those institutions. Therefore, structure and agency should not be viewed as two diametrically opposed forces, but as two constantly interacting forces that shape each other.



"Civil rights march on Washington, D.C." by Warren K. Leffler, Library of Congress is in the Public Domain, CC0

1. In this definition we are combining Kirk and Okazawa-Rey's (2004) definition of culture with Sewell's (1992) definition of culture. ↵

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4.2: What the English Language is Made Of

Many people run into trouble when trying to choose “appropriate” words in their everyday discourses. For example, imagine you’re getting pulled over for speeding. The policeman walks up to the side of your vehicle to request your license and registration. The policeman is female. Now her status has changed from *policeman* to *police officer*. While *police officer* is more inclusive to both sexes, *policeman* remains the standard in our culture, and we have yet to culturally adopt the term *policewoman*. Either way, you’re getting a ticket for speeding, but how will your interpretation of the citation change based on the sex of the officer? How will you describe the officer in your recounts to your friends or family?

Now you’re getting ready for a meeting, and the chairman of the board walks in. Until you see she’s a female--and now the chairperson has arrived. The English language is full of **linguistic sexism**, language that intentionally (or unintentionally) excludes or privileges one sex over the other. More often than not, linguistic sexism is excluding or trivializing women and what they do, while maintaining the sex status quo from which men are currently benefitting. Creating inclusive language for underrepresented bodies--specifically, the feminine and other “unmarked” gender categories--creates a reality more inclusive of all sexes and genders.⁶⁸ Anne Pauwels, Professor of Sociolinguistics at the University of London, identifies one of the major motivations for language change as “a desire to amend the present language system to achieve a symmetrical and equitable representation of women and men.”⁶⁹ Using inclusive language can shape our social realities and dialect. While this is not an exhaustive list, here are a few examples of using more inclusive language:

Table 5.2.1 Pronouns. Source: University of Wisconsin <https://www.uwec.edu/usenate/.../130...veExamples.pdf>.

	Example of Sexist/Gendered Usage	Explanation	Alternatives
The generic 'he'	Every student must have a pencil, and he should always bring it to class.	Defines student as exclusively male.	Every student must have a pencil and they should always bring it to class.
Man as a verb	I have four students to man the internship table.	Implies that persons referred to are exclusively male.	I have four students attend the internship table.
Man used to mean humankind	Is man inherently capitalistic?	The human race is interpreted then as male-centric, linguistically placing non-males on the outside of the species.	Is humankind inherently capitalistic? Other alternatives: human race, human beings.
Gendered words in titles and work positions	Chairman Freshman Fireman Policeman Postman	Assumes male dominance in these fields.	Chair or Chairperson First Year Firefighter Police officer Postal worker
Stereotyping	Using gender/sex qualifiers for certain occupations, such as: lady doctor or male nurse.	This assumes that a particular sex/gender is fit for only a particular set of jobs	Refrain from using gender markers, and refer to a female doctor simply as a doctor or a male nurse simply as a nurse. To avoid stereotyping occupations, vary pronoun usage or use the singular they.
Referring to a married woman through her husband's name.	Mrs. John Smith	Defines a woman in terms of a man.	Jane Smith or with the appropriate honorific (such as doctor or captian)

⁶⁸ Frank, Francine Wattman and Paula A. Treichler. 1989. *Language, Gender, and Professional Writing: Theoretical Approaches and Guidelines for Nonsexist Language Usage*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America

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4.3: Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

There has been extensive research on what is known for linguists as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Linguists and other social scientists use this hypothesis to analyze the complex relations between language and culture. In short, **Sapir-Whorf hypothesis** explains that *language shapes or influences the culture in which it is spoken*.⁷⁰ In other words, the languages we speak shape our social and cultural realities. So if we are speaking English, English (and all of the linguistic sexism found in it) would shape our cultural realities. Going by this hypothesis, one might argue labeling people as “female” or “male” shapes the idea of who the default individual would be. In that sense English can indeed be perceived as sexist, as it conveys intuitive notions that might shape the speaker’s and listener’s point of view. Take, for instance, the examples below:

(S)HE
(WO)MAN
(FE)MALE
(HU)MAN

In addition to language creating “defaults” in our standards for normalcy (and thereby creating deviations from those standards) we also create (or recreate) degradations of the female noun. For example, *hound* keeping its canine meaning, but *bitch* gaining another meaning entirely. *Mistress* and *master* used to be equal in meaning; now *master* evokes power, excellence, and ownership, whereas *mistress* is someone with whom you can cheat on your spouse. Incidentally, you cannot use *master* in the same way. Consider this old riddle that goes something like this: A father and son go out for a camping trip. On the way home from the camping trip the father and son get into a terrible car accident where the father is killed immediately upon impact. The son promptly gets rushed to the emergency room where the doctor inside prepares to save the boy’s life. Until, the doctor walks over to the critically injured boy and says, ‘I can’t operate on this boy. He’s my son.’ This is the end of the riddle. The question then becomes; who is the doctor? If you are like many people you’ll be puzzled at first thinking, “Uh, but you said the father died. How could he be in the emergency room if he is dead?” To which, of course, he cannot be (though, I’ve heard variations on the ghost dad / zombie dad theme numerous times!). That leaves only one option: the boy’s mother is the doctor. “Ahhhhhh, duh!” Yes, duh. But why was this *obvious* answer not immediately apparent? The answer has to do with the theme of this section: language has ways of seeing and understanding the world built into it that both reflect and reconstruct our social structures through our use of them. Since the word ‘doctor’ connotes a position of power, it is often understood to be held by a man. Though we now know full well women can and are doctors, the cultural and linguistic vestige from the past, the legacy of the power in Western culture, predisposes us to thinking the doctor must be a man, blinding us from the obvious fact that most people have two parents (and often a mother and a father)!

So who do we blame? English, right? Grab the pitchforks! Not quite. We cannot blame language; linguistic sexism is abstract and draws on human experiences to give it shape and meaning. And yet there is something in our heads that associates feminine with ‘pretty’ and masculine with ‘strong’. While language isn’t to blame, language does reflect and reinforce the culture of its users. Us!

Is language sexist? Only as much as the user is. Is sexism linguistic? Not *only* linguistic, but yes, the evidence in grammar is enough to draw conclusions pointing to sexism. How can we fight linguistic sexism and sexist language? Language is a reflection of us and does not exist without us, and our realities are shaped by language. So it’s almost like looking in a mirror and becoming frustrated when the image won’t change without us changing it. We would have to reconstruct sexism *in thought* before we could eliminate sexism *in speech*. Then, *eliminating it in speech would reinforce eliminating it in thought*. (However, going back to the examples provide earlier on using inclusive language can help the process of reconstruction our thoughts on sexism and gender standards.)

⁷⁰ Deutscher, G. (2011). *Through the language glass. Why the world looks different in other languages*, Arrow Books, London

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4.4: Media

We often speak of ‘the media’ as some amorphous social institution that is foisted upon us. In some ways this is true of all institutions and the mass media are no exception. But in other ways, this view glosses over the real people and social processes that create one of the biggest shapers of our worldview and outlook on life. Therefore, it is important to note who specifically makes the media content we all consumer. It may not be surprising at this point, but especially behind the scenes, the majority of the cultural gatekeepers; producers, directors and screenwriters are men. This creates a distortion of reality when it comes to whose stories are being told and becoming a part of the culture. For example, “a study, by sociologist Stacy L. Smith, analyzed 11,927 speaking roles on prime-time television programs aired in spring 2012, children’s TV shows aired in 2011 and family films (rated G, PG, or PG-13) released between 2006 and 2011. Smith’s team looked at female characters’ occupations, attire, body size and whether they spoke or not.”⁷¹ Their analysis showed, regarding women employed in key behind the scenes roles for movies, only 18% of these positions were held by women from 1998 – 2012. The study also revealed similar results in primetime television. Although progress has been made, it has been slow. Children’s television programming follows a similar pattern as well with males about twice as likely as female characters. And when there are female characters they are more likely to be shown in sexy attire (in children’s programming!)⁷². Another study of G-rated films from 1990-2005 showed that only 28 percent of the speaking characters (both live and animated) were female and more than four out of five of the narrators were male. Finally, eighty-five percent of the characters were white⁷³. What kinds of stories are being told? And what message might children take away from these stories presenting a ‘normal’ view of the world so heavily skewed?

Much of a child’s socialization is indirect, coming to them through observation, observation in their real- world experiences and observation of the media. Television, film, video games, social media, and other forms are involved in selecting, constructing and representing “reality.” In doing so, the media tend to emphasize and reinforce the values and images of those who create the messages and own the means of distribution. Thus, media play a large role in creating social norms, because various forms of media are present almost everywhere in current culture. In addition, the owners of distribution also take into account commercial (selling) considerations. As a result, the viewpoints and experiences of other people are often left out, or shown in negative ways. In *Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender*, Julia Woods explains:

“Three themes describe how media represent gender. First, women are underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women.”

The underrepresentation of women has a two-pronged effect:

1. We are tempted to believe there really are more men than women, and
2. Men are the cultural standard.

In general, media continue to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human capabilities. Typically men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive, and largely devoid of emotion. Women are often portrayed as sex objects who are usually young, thin, passive, dependent, and often incompetent or dumb. Female characters devote their primary energies to improving their appearances and taking care of homes and people and “landing” the perfect guy. And as far as stereotyping relationships for males and females in media, homosexuality is barely recognized and representations of bisexuality and asexuality are practically non-existent. Sex is a driving force behind advertising, because after all, sex sells...everything. But not just sex, heterocentric representations of sex. Women are often seen as dependent in sexual relationships while men are depicted as being independent and emotionally empty. And men are still portrayed (overwhelmingly) as breadwinners while women are typically awarded the roles of caregivers. Lastly, within the relationship sphere, women are typically represented as objects for men’s pleasure while men are still depicted most often as sexual aggressors. According to the feminist film critic Laura Mulvey (1975), this phenomenon is known as *the male gaze*. The male gaze is the idea that, within popular culture generally, women are portrayed as objects for men’s pleasure. The vast majority of media consumed in the United States depicts women from men’s point of view. An interesting case study in the male gaze happened in 2015 when Caitlyn Jenner first appeared on the cover of *Vanity Fair* magazine as a transgender woman she was immediately praised for her good looks. However, when she was known still known as Bruce Jenner she was praised for her athletic accomplishments and competition in the Olympics.

In order to create a medium which is universal, understandable, and acceptable for diverse recipients, senders very often use stereotypes, which fill the social life and evoke certain associations. For example, when you think of family, what do you see?

When you think of a criminal or a victim, what do you see? When you think of a CEO or an assistant, what do you see? Maybe race, age, religion, or class came to mind, but almost certainly sex and gender played roles in all of the images. What sex and gender roles did you see when prompted to imagine a family? When I asked you to imagine a criminal and a victim, what sexes and genders were they? Almost always (and of course there are exceptions) people will imagine a nuclear heterosexual family structure with traditional gender roles. When prompted to imagine a criminal, people almost always imagine a male, and often people will see a victim as female. And when asked to imagine a CEO and an assistant, people will often imagine a male and female. But where did these images come from? Or at the very least, are they still being reinforced in popular imagery?

Another mechanism by which popular culture defines reality has come to be known as the *smurfette principle*. Coined by Katha Pollitt's 1991 *New York Times* article,

"Contemporary shows are either essentially all-male, like "Garfield," or are organized on what I call the Smurfette principle: a group of male buddies will be accented by a lone female, stereotypically defined... The message is clear. Boys are the norm, girls the variation; boys are central, girls peripheral; boys are individuals, girls types. Boys define the group, its story and its code of values. Girls exist only in relation to boys."

We see this phenomenon in classics like Miss Piggy in the *Muppets*, Penny in the first three seasons of *The Big Bang Theory*, Princess Leia in *Star Wars*, April in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, Elaine Benes in *Seinfeld*, Gamora in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, and Black Widow in *The Avengers*. The messages portrayed by this trope contribute to the symbolic disempowerment by defining girls' and women's stories as unworthy of being told. *The Hunger Games'* producer Nina Jacobson has spoken about the difficulty in convincing Hollywood studio executives that a female fronted film would be financially viable by appealing to more than just girls at the box office.⁷⁴

However, mass media not only provides people information and entertainment, but, it also affects people's lives by shaping their opinions, attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, and realities. So, how might media affect our interpretations of gender roles? In various forms of media, women and girls are more likely to be shown: in the home, performing domestic chores such as laundry or cooking; as sex objects who exist primarily to service men; as victims who can't protect themselves; and as the "natural" recipients of beatings, harassment, sexual assault or murder.

Men and boys are not exempt from being stereotyped in the media. From Don Draper to Jason Born to the Terminator, masculinity is often associated with economic success, competition, independence, emotional detachment, aggression, and violence. Despite the fact that men have considerably more economic and political power in society than women, these trends are very damaging to boys. Think for a moment how most disagreements between men are dealt with in popular culture: a fight, a car race, something to demonstrate whom the "better man" is through physical assertion.

Research tells us that the more television children watch, the more likely they are to hold sexist notions about traditional male and female roles. The problem arises when the traditional gender roles represented on in the media are so tightly constricting of the human potential, turning women into objects of men's pleasure or care-takers and turning men into aggressors.

Advertisements are arguably the most pervasive form of media in our construction of reality. It's estimated we are exposed to as many as 5,000 advertisements per day (and this is compared to about 2,000 ads per day just thirty years ago).⁷⁵ This includes commercials, print ads, Brand labels, Facebook Ads, Google Ads, ads on your phone, or anything a business can produce to get your attention and compel you to buy. Some researchers estimate we are exposed to up to 20,000 ads per day, but those higher numbers not only include ads, but also include every time you pass by a label in a grocery store, all the ads in your mailbox whether you see them or not, the label on everything you wear, the condiments in your fridge, the cars on the highway, etc. However, just because we are in close proximity to an ad, doesn't mean we saw it.

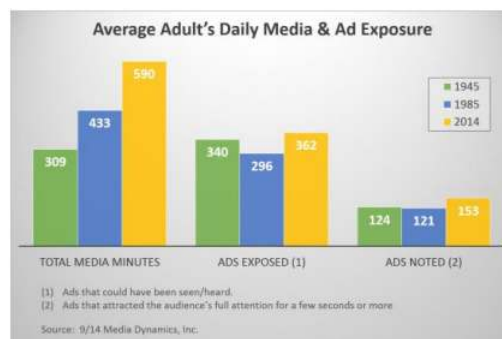


Figure 5.4.1 Bar Graph of "Average Adult's Daily Media & Ad Exposure"⁷⁶

Consider the work of highly influential sociologist Erving Goffman. Specifically, his work on advertising and gender presentation and what he calls **commercial realism**. For Goffman, this is the way advertising portrays a world, which without critical reflection appears normal to us but is anything but (and should not appear normal or natural to us). This is one of the ways in which mass media influences how we see ourselves and learn to present ourselves in highly gendered manners. Advertisements in which women are portrayed as subordinate, weak, docile, delicate and fanciful contribute to what he calls 'the ritualization of subordination'. This process helps to create (and recreate) a world in which to be feminine is to be less than and subordinate to a man. One that relies on the 'benign-ness of the surround' where women are perpetually at a disadvantage vis-a-vis men, blithely unaware of the world around them and men are showed in an opposite manner; poised, aware and ready to react. Consider this example Goffman outlines: **body clowning**. He says, "The use of entire body as a playful gesticulative device, a sort of "body clowning" is commonly used in advertisements to indicate lack of seriousness struck by a childlike pose (p. 50). It helps to present women in a manner that is not meant to be taken seriously (see: the blog "Women Laughing Alone With Salad"⁷⁷). One way to notice the silliness of these sorts of images is to 'flip the script' by imagining the reverse image: men laughing alone with salad, for instance! If we monitor our reaction and are startled, we know a gender norm reinforced through advertising and commercial realism has been breached.

Perpetual discontent is a two-pronged advertising scheme, which emphasizes

1. how broken and flawed we are, and
2. how we can buy hope in the form of a product being sold.

Women in the U.S. are bombarded daily with advertising images that point out their flaws. They are constantly having it brought to their attention how they are too: thin, fat, short, tall, round, wrinkled, blond, brunette, red, dark, light, pale, freckled, flat, busty, etc. This trend is exceptionally cruel for teen and young adult women, but men are not exempt from the abuse of perpetual discontent. However, the media has created an unrealistic feminine ideal resulting in the desire to fulfill this impossible standard. This has resulted in women comparing their real selves to phony, made-up, photo-shopped images of women, and it also allows for men to judge real women against those constructed photos. This is not imply all men are sexually interested in women, or all women are concerned with how men are viewing them, but these are still two major themes sprouting from the media's creation of gender and physical ideals. This media-created ideal has also commonly been blamed for the skyrocketing numbers of eating disorders as well as the rising numbers of cosmetic surgical procedures in the U.S. (especially among young women). At least 30 million Americans suffer from an eating disorder in their lifetime, and eating disorders are the 3rd most common chronic illness among adolescent females.⁷⁸

Plastic Surgery Timelines



Figure 5.4.2 Numbers in Millions of Plastic Surgery Procedures between 1997-2015.

Not only has the media created an unrealistic feminine ideal that no one (and I mean no one!) can achieve, but media most often portray as being endlessly preoccupied by their appearance, and fascinated primarily by improving their appearance for the purpose

of becoming sexually desirable to men. When children, specifically, are exposed to these messages, they internalize them and make them part of their own reality.

Furthermore, children are increasingly being exposed to messages about gender that are really intended for adult eyes only. Girls as young as six years old wanted to be more like dolls who were dressed in a sexy way and showing more skin than dolls who were dressed stylishly, but covered up.⁷⁹ These young girls associated being sexy with being the way they wanted to look, being popular in school, and with whom they wanted to play. According to the American Psychological Association, girls who are exposed to sexual messages in popular culture are more likely to have low self-esteem and depression, and suffer from eating disorders.⁸⁰

The media is perhaps one of the most underestimated elements of society. At the personal level people think of it in terms of convenience and entertainment rather than political influence, power, and control. However, advertising, in particular, has a slow cumulative affect on our perceptions of reality.

According to Debra Pryor and Nancy Nelson Knupfer, “If we become aware of the stereotypes and teach critical viewing skills to our children, perhaps we will become informed viewers instead of manipulated consumers.”⁸¹ Moreover, the commercials evolve along with the development of a society and are the answer to many social and political changes, such as emancipation of women, growing role of individualism, the dismantling of current gender roles reinforcing inequality. More and more advertising specialists produce non-stereotypical commercials, depicting people in non-traditional gender roles. However, the attempts to break down the stereotypes threaten to reject the message; they challenge well-established “common sense”. Hence, a society has to achieve an adequate level of social readiness, so that messages breaking gender stereotypes could be effective.

Suggested Activities (adapted from Video and workbook, *Minding the Set--Making Television Work for You*)

Images - Using TV or video clips and magazine or newspaper pictures, chart similarities and differences in appearance and body size for the good and bad characters. Look again at the clips and make note of the type of camera shots used for the good and bad guys or gals. Compare the characters with self and peers and family members.

Working women - List the jobs that TV mothers have such as teacher, doctor. Do we ever see them working at their jobs? Does your mother have a job? If she works outside the home do you ever visit her there? Why or why not?

I'd rather be me - Form two groups - one of males, the other of females. From various media have the boys list female traits and interests that are most commonly featured, while the girls do the same for male characteristics and concerns. Form new mixed groupings and discuss how males and females feel about the stereotypes by which their sex category and gender have come to be represented. Is there anything artificial about these stereotypes?

Jobs - Examine the media to determine how certain occupations are portrayed, and then interview people in those occupations to ascertain how realistic portrayals are. Count the number of women or men portrayed in jobs. List the types of jobs for women and men portrayed. How do these findings compare to the jobs held by the parents of students?

Posed photos - Select pictures from magazines ads that show the difference between posed photographs of females and males (this can include children, as well). Describe what is emphasized for each.

Twisted tales - Rewrite a fairy tale from the point of view of the opposite sex.

Video games - Design a video game for girls and boys that is not stereotypical or violent.

⁷¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/1...n_2121979.html

⁷² www.now.org/issues/media/women_in_media_facts.html

⁷³ www.now.org/issues/media/women_in_media_facts.html

⁷⁴ <http://www.kcrw.com/news-culture/sho...games-producer>

⁷⁵ Papazian, Ed. *TV Now and Then: How We Use It; How It Uses Us*. January, 2016. Media Dynamics, Inc. <http://www.mediadynamicsinc.com/prod...YYd2J5FB.dpuf>

⁷⁶ Media Dynamics, Inc. retrieved from *TV Now and Then: How We Use It; How It Uses Us*.

⁷⁷ <http://womenlaughingalonewithsalad.tumblr.com/>

⁷⁸ Hudson, J. I., Hiripi, E., Pope, H. G., & Kessler, R. C. (2007). The prevalence and correlates of eating disorders in the national comorbidity survey replication. *Biological Psychiatry*, 61(3), 348–358.

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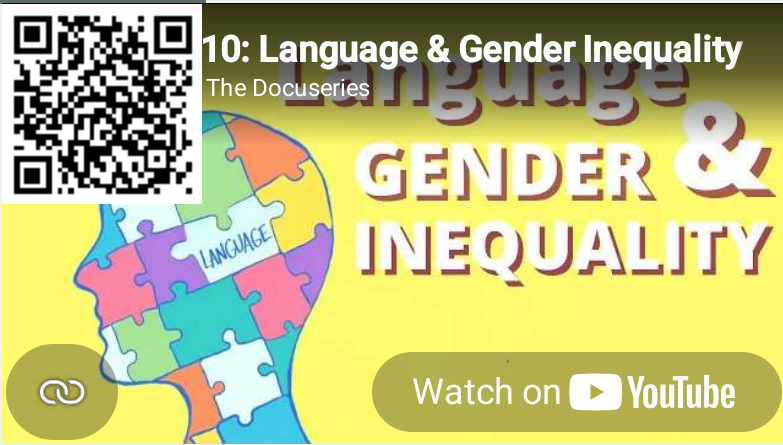
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4.5: Video - Language and Gender Inequality

📌 EP10: Language & Gender Inequality



10: Language & Gender Inequality
The Docuseries

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Western History and Gender Roles

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5.1: Key Perspectives

Learning Objectives

- Compare and contrast the primary goals of the different waves of feminism.
- Articulate how intersectionality helps explain inequalities.
- Analyze how colonialism and globalization have contributed to global inequalities of wealth and power.

If we want to learn about sex and gender from a global perspective, anthropology is a good place to start. This book examines sex and gender through a few particular perspectives or lenses within anthropology. These “lenses” frame how each chapter approaches the study of gender in a particular place and helps us understand why and how certain gendered practices came to be. This chapter outlines the main perspectives in this book, namely: feminism, **intersectionality**, and globalization. These are all complex terms with long histories, but here we’ll try to give just enough background explanation so that you can contextualize the chapters in the book and identify the threads and themes that connect them.

intersectionality

refers to the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, class, and gender that create overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage. The goal of an intersectional analysis is to understand how racism, sexism, and homophobia (for example) interact together to impact our identities and how we live in our society.

FEMINISM

Anthropology did not escape the gender ideologies of the time and place where the discipline first started. It was shaped by its “founding fathers”—Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, Alfred Kroeber, among others—in the late 1800s to early 1900s, about the same time the **first wave** of the feminist movement was fighting for women’s right to vote. Despite the early involvement of women in anthropology such as Margaret Mead and Zora Neale Hurston, the contributions of many of its founding “mothers” were dismissed or overlooked. The dominant male perspective shaped much of what early anthropologists studied and how they communicated their findings. In fact, it wasn’t until the **second wave** of the feminist movement, namely the women’s rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, that anthropologists started to ask some key questions. And it was feminist anthropologists who were some of the first researchers to ask how social constructions of sex and gender vary cross-culturally. Why were they interested in knowing the answer to this question? These feminist anthropologists reasoned that if gender roles and statuses are different in different places and times, then it means that there is nothing “natural” about the gender inequalities in our own culture: they are culturally constructed.

Definition: first-wave feminism

started in the late 1800s and early 1900s and was focused on women’s right to vote.

Definition: second-wave feminism

1960s–1980s addressed issues of equal legal and social rights for women. Its emblematic slogan was “the personal is political.”

Since feminism is a concept we will be encountering in some of this book’s chapters, let’s lay out a working definition before we embark. We take the following definition from Estelle Freedman’s book, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*. Freedman defines feminism as follows: “Feminism is a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. Because most societies privilege men as a group, social movements are necessary to achieve equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies” (Freedman, 2002).



Figure 2.1a. British activist Emmeline Pankhurst traveled constantly, giving speeches throughout Britain and the United States to promote women's suffrage. One of her most famous speeches, "Freedom or Death," was delivered in Connecticut in 1913. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Figure 2.1b. Japanese women engaged in political action to secure women's right to vote (c. 1920). Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Freedman continues with some clarifications of the terms in her definition. She uses the term *equal worth* to emphasize that we need to value traditionally female tasks (e.g., child rearing) as highly as the types of work usually done by men. She is not saying men and women are the same, or that they have to be the same, but rather that men's and women's labor should be valued equally. By men being privileged in most societies, she is referring not only to formal legal and political rights but also to cultural preferences and double standards that give men more freedoms and opportunities than women. Finally, by pointing out that gender always "intersects" with other "social hierarchies," she is referring to the ways in which the experience of being a woman is fundamentally influenced by other social structures such as class, race, age, sexuality, etc. Perhaps most importantly, Freedman is not arguing that there is a universal identity as "woman" that in and of itself communicates something about the experiences of *all* women in the world. She recognizes that women experience their lives very differently in different cultural and historical contexts.

Early feminist ideas, like the 1970s concept of a "global sisterhood," were criticized by feminists of color, such as Audre Lorde, for overlooking the multiple forms of oppression faced by women of color and women in the Global South (Schrock 2013). There are other social inequalities that disadvantage both men and women, and feminism cannot ignore those other systems of power and inequality—like poverty, racism, and homophobia. In her definition of feminism Freedman addresses the issues raised in the **third wave** of the feminist movement, namely that second-wave feminism had focused too heavily on the experiences of white, middle-class women and had failed to see how other social inequalities shape people's lives. The concept of feminism has changed over time and has, at times, been given a bad name because it is often oversimplified and misunderstood. However, when presented as Freedman does, it becomes a stance that both men and women can embrace.

Definition: third-wave feminism

began in the 1990s responding to the shortcomings of the Second Wave, namely that it focused on the experiences of upper-middle-class white women. Third Wave feminism is rooted in the idea of women's lives as intersectional, highlighting how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism.

As a movement, feminism continues to evolve and grow. We are now in what has been called the **fourth wave** of feminism, which began in about 2008. This wave has focused on sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture and, in part, is defined by the use of technology. Fourth-wave feminist activism takes place in the streets, but it is planned and spread online through social media campaigns like the #MeToo movement. Fourth-wave feminism recognizes and celebrates the wide variety of “feminisms” that exist around the world and continues to carry forward ideas of intersectionality. Now, let's take a closer look at intersectionality, which is also central to this book.

Definition: fourth-wave feminism

began around 2012 to address sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture, among other issues. It is characterized by a focus on the global empowerment of women, the greater inclusion of diverse perspectives and voices, and the use of social media in activism.

Table 2.1. Waves of feminism

Waves of Feminism Characteristics	
First wave	Began in late 1800's and focused on the fight for political incorporation of women, primarily the right to vote.
Second wave	1960's-1980's, addressed issues of equal legal and social rights for women. Its emblematic slogan was “the personal is political.” Pushed for, but failed to have the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) added to the US Constitution. Critiqued for primarily focusing on the concerns of white, middle to upper-class women in the Global North.
Third wave	Began in the 1990s responding to the shortcomings of the second wave, namely that it focused on the experiences of upper middle-class white women. This wave is rooted in the idea of women's lives as intersectional, highlighting how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism.
Fourth wave	Began about 2008 and has focused on sexual harassment, body shaming and rape culture and, in part, is defined by the use of technology. Fourth-wave feminist activism that takes place in the streets, but it is planned and spread online, through social media campaigns like #MeToo movement. Fourth-wave feminism recognizes and celebrates the wide variety of “feminisms” that exist around the world, and continues to carry forward ideas of intersectionality.



Figure 2.3. Second-wave feminists fought for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Here ERA supporters march from the Florida governor's mansion to the capitol building in Tallahassee, Florida (1975). Florida Memory/State Library and Archive of Florida.

INTERSECTIONALITY

A key idea that grew out of the third-wave feminist movement—and out of feminist analyses of how gender and race are socially constructed—is intersectionality. Using an intersectional lens allows us to appreciate the ways different social structures and aspects of our identities intersect in different ways for different people. For example, intersectionality allows us to understand how a person's identity and life experiences are shaped by racism, sexism, class, and homophobia (among other categories of difference). At the “inter-section” of various social forces we experience ways of being and moving about the world that differ from another person whose intersectionality may be distinct from our own. Intersectionality also examines how interlocking systems of power affect the most marginalized people in a society. From an intersectional perspective, multiple forms of discrimination combine and transform the experience of oppression. The purpose of using an intersectional lens is to understand how overlapping categories of identity change in combination with each other and how they impact individuals and institutions. The framework of intersectionality is essential to studying relations of privilege and power in efforts to promote social and political equity.

The theory of intersectionality was first articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a lawyer and critical race theorist who was trying to understand how antidiscrimination law could fail to account for the way in which a Black woman might be discriminated against (Crenshaw 1989). She developed the analogy of an “inter-section,” where racism and sexism meet, to help us understand and see the ways in which multiple aspects of our identities—and multiple social forces that helped to shape those identities—could impact us. Crenshaw invented the term *intersectionality* in 1989, and it was adopted in the years that followed by feminist and feminist anthropologists. In 2016 Crenshaw delivered a TED talk entitled, “The Urgency of Intersectionality.” More than thirty years later, the idea of intersectionality is still an urgent one.



Figure 2.4. Kimberlé Crenshaw in Berlin, 2019. Mohamed Badarne, CC-BY-SA-4.0.

EXPLORE: Review Crenshaw’s TED talk to get a better understanding of exactly what this term, “intersectionality,” means, where it came from, and why it is still important today.

EXPLORE: Peter Hopkins, Newcastle University, 2018, April 22. “What Is Intersectionality?” <https://vimeo.com/263719865>.

The chapters in this book are grounded in feminist anthropology and as such they examine gendered lives of men and women intersectionally and situate them in their local contexts. The results are culturally contextualized analyses that are often rooted in the concerns of the people who are being studied. Feminist anthropologists like Chandra Mohanty assert that women’s experiences across the globe are diverse and argue for studies that are context-specific and historically situated (Schrock 2013). In this book, we embrace this challenge by focusing not only on intersectionality but also on the concept of globalization as a way to understand both the cultural specificity and the historical global connections shaping the gendered experiences explored in each chapter. Let’s take a closer look at globalization and the history of colonialism that tied much of the world together centuries ago.

COLONIALISM, GLOBALIZATION, AND GENDER

Inequality among cultural groups, societies, and nations is not a new phenomenon: it has roots in the development of agriculture and a sedentary lifestyle starting ten thousand years ago. Yet the reasons why these inequalities persist have troubled social scientists for decades. In his book *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Jared Diamond puts forward an excellent argument for why some countries were rich and others were poor prior to 1492 (when Columbus first arrived in the Americas). Europeans, he argues, had many advantages over people in the Americas that allowed them to conquer the Aztec and Incan empires, for example. By the early 1500s the Europeans had domesticated horses, and they possessed guns and steel swords, ocean-going ships, large-scale political organizations, and phonetic writing systems, as well as having resistance to several deadly epidemic diseases. In short, guns, germs, and steel gave them key advantages over the Indigenous groups they encountered (Diamond 1999).

Europeans had these advantages, not because of genetic superiority but rather due to their fortuitous geographic location. The Eurasian landmass was home to most of the large mammals that could be domesticated and used in the grain harvesting process. This meant that six thousand years ago, the Eurasians were using large draft animals to power their plows, providing more calories and fueling population growth. The large landmass also allowed for ideas to circulate across cultures, like between Europe, North Africa, and China, bringing innovations that fostered the development of more complex and stratified societies. With these advantages, Spain, Great Britain, Portugal, and other European countries set off on an age of exploration to see what they could learn about and acquire from the New World. However, while this history helps explain why Europeans were able to launch an age of exploration to other continents, it does little to help us understand why some countries are rich and others poor after over five hundred years of global trade. The history and legacy of colonialism give us more insight into these persistent inequalities.

As Europeans colonized the world, they transformed societies that were growing food for their own subsistence into exporters of cash crops for European consumption. Europeans used their military might to capture lands and then levied taxes or created large plantations that forced locals to produce export crops like sugar, coffee, cocoa, and tobacco. They also put colonized peoples to work in dangerous mines, extracting precious metals such as gold and silver. Foods, plants, and diseases spread throughout the world, along with ideas, values, technologies, money, and commodities. Over centuries, a global world economic system emerged in which the wealth and profits earned in the **Global North** depended on the cheap labor, raw materials, and lack of development in the **Global South** (see chapter 15, “The Global North—Introducing the Region,” for more on sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein’s world systems theory).

Definition: Global North

does not refer to a geographic region in any traditional sense but rather to the relative power and wealth of countries in distinct parts of the world. The Global North encompasses the rich and powerful regions such as North America, Europe, and Australia.

Definition: Global South

does not refer to a geographic region in any traditional sense but rather to the relative power and wealth of countries in distinct parts of the world. The Global South encompasses the poor and less powerful countries in areas such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

The slave trade was perhaps the most profound example of this world system in action. Due to the decimation of Indigenous Americans by European diseases, there was ample land for Europeans to settle but not enough labor. Meanwhile, Africans, by virtue of sharing the same continuous landmass with Europeans, had already built up a resistance to European diseases and had a few of their own, like malaria and dengue fever, that made Africa difficult for Europeans to conquer and settle. So instead of settling Africa, Europeans traded with the more powerful African nations, like the West African Dahomey Kingdom (present-day Benin). The most notable “commodity” they traded was people: enslaved Africans. A total of twelve million enslaved people were brought to the Americas to work in the vast sugar, cotton, and tobacco plantations.

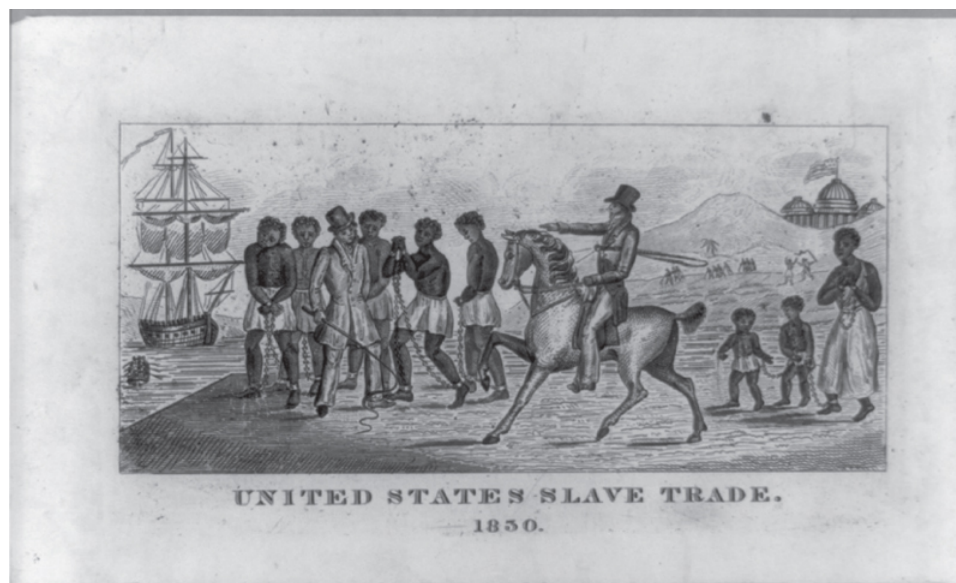


Figure 2.5. Enslaved Africans arriving in the US. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

In the plantation system, the colonizers amassed fabulous levels of wealth. The growing wealth set the stage for the Industrial Revolution in Britain, which only elevated the need for raw materials, while also increasing the European’s capacity to conquer and rule new lands. Remote regions of Africa and the Amazon that had been impenetrable and difficult for Europeans to settle started to come under European control behind the onslaught of machine guns and armaments shuttled in on a growing network of train tracks.

By the late 1800s, the European powers were engaged in the “scramble for Africa,” strategically colonizing every bit of land, laying down train tracks that would slowly drain Africa of its natural resources in rubber, copper, and other precious materials. As had occurred in the Americas and Asia, local subsistence farmers in Africa were forced to transform their production to serve the global market. Northern Ghana shifted production from nutritious yams to cocoa. Liberia produced rubber; Nigeria, palm oil; Tanzania, sisal; and Uganda, cotton. All of them became dependent on global trade for their subsistence. Even after former colonies in Asia, the Americas, and Africa gained independence in the 1960s and 1970s, exploitative economic relationships with the Global North continued. The example in the box below captures this ongoing dynamic of global economic inequality that is the legacy of colonialism.

Structural Power: A Story of Rich and Poor

[Adapted from Michael Wesch, Kansas State University, anth101.com/book]

Let’s look at two communities on opposite ends of a world system today. Rüschlikon, a small village in Switzerland, received over 360 million dollars in tax revenue from a single resident, Ivan Glasenberg, in 2011. That amounts to \$72,000 for each of the village’s five thousand residents. It is one of the richest communities in the world. Glasenberg is the CEO of Glencore, one of the most powerful companies in the world, specializing in mining and commodities. If we follow the commodity chain back to its source, we find copper mines like the Mopani copper mine in Zambia, where 60 percent of people live on less than \$1 per day, the residents struggle to find adequate food and health care, education is difficult to attain, and the air and water are frequently polluted by the mines. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in Switzerland is the highest in the world at just over \$75,000. Zambia is among the lowest at under \$2,000. In fact, Glencore’s revenues alone are ten times the entire GDP of Zambia.

Over a ten-year period in the early 2000s, \$29 billion dollars’ worth of copper was extracted from Zambia, yet Zambia only collected \$50 million per year in taxes while spending over \$150 million a year to provide electricity for the mines. Zambia was actually losing money on their own resources. How did this happen?

During the “scramble for Africa” the region was proclaimed a British Sphere of Influence administered by Cecil Rhodes and named “Rhodesia.” When copper was discovered, it became one of the world’s largest exporters of copper; but the wealth did little to improve the lives of Africans. By the time Zambia gained independence in 1964, they were rich in resources but lacked the knowledge and capital to mine those resources. Nonetheless, they successfully operated the mines under national control for over a decade, and their economy grew on their copper profits. By the mid-1970s, they were one of the most prosperous countries in sub-Saharan Africa. But their entire economy depended on that single commodity, and in the 1970s, the price of copper dropped dramatically as Russia flooded the market with it. Like many other countries that depend on exports of natural resources, their economy collapsed along with the prices.

The Zambian economy was in crisis and had to look to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank for big loans. But soon they could not keep up with their loan payments. Like other developing countries, the loans that were supposed to save them became crippling. For every \$1 they were receiving in aid from rich countries, they were spending \$10 on loan interest. By the year 2000, with copper prices falling again, Zambia was in crisis and could not receive any more loans. The copper mines were privatized and sold to companies like Glencore. They were trapped in a system that left them no more options. They wanted to demand a higher price for their copper, but their impoverished neighboring countries would just undersell them.

Over the next decade, the cost of copper soared, and Glencore made massive profits. But the lives of Zambians did not improve because none of that money found its way into Zambia. As a large multinational corporation, Glencore was able to avoid paying taxes in Zambia through a practice called “transfer pricing.” Glencore is made up of several smaller subsidiary companies. Their Zambian subsidiaries sell the copper very cheaply to their subsidiaries in Switzerland, which has very low taxes on copper exports. Then the Swiss company marks up the price to its true market value and sells the copper. On paper, Switzerland is the largest importer of Zambian copper (60 percent) and one of the world’s largest exporters of copper, yet very little of this copper ever actually arrives in (and then leaves) Switzerland. This little accounting trick is in part why copper accounts for 71 percent of the exports from Zambia, but only contributes 0.2 percent to their GDP.

This is obviously unfair, but Zambia does not have the financial resources to fight Glencore’s army of lawyers. This is just one more chapter in a long history that consistently places Zambia on the weaker end of power. At the dawn of colonization, they faced the military might of the British and lacked the power to defend their land. They entered at the bottom of an emerging global economy and have never had the resources to educate their public and prepare them for success. They now find themselves trapped in cycles of poverty. Without a strong tax base, they cannot fund powerful institutions that could raise health and education standards to create jobs that could diversify the economy.

Colonialism and ongoing globalization have had a gendered impact as well. That is, men and women have been affected differently by colonialism and global capitalism. For example, among the Taureg in Algeria, women had an active role in tribal politics, could own property, and had a respected status as poets in their society. Their position was in stark contrast to many of their Arab neighbors, but the growing influence of Islamo-Arab cultures in the region has diminished women's positions in society (Keenan 2003). Colonialism eroded the status of many Native American women. For example among the matrilineal Cherokee, the Council of Women had significant power including the right to declare war. As a result the British disparagingly referred to them as a "petticoat government" and took measures to undermine their authority (Strickland n.d.). US officials also instituted a "patriarchal colonialism" that destroyed the social foundations and the more egalitarian gender relations of many native peoples (Guerro 2003).

In more recent times, globalization has resulted in the increased flows of people and things across the globe. These **mobilities** can take many forms, from labor migrations, to refugee flows, to travel and tourism, to elite expatriate communities. Here, too, we see how gender, as a fundamental social relation, shapes these phenomena. Scholars have noted a "feminization of migration" as women move around the world to work in domestic service, childcare, large-scale agriculture, and in factories (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003). Through constructions of femininity, multinational corporations see them as a docile and cheap workforce, well suited for repetitive, detailed tasks required on global assembly lines. Migration can reconfigure gender relations between men and women. Migrant women may gain status through jobs and new social networks, while men may lose power in both the public and domestic spheres if they suffer unemployment and discrimination in the new country (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003). Ideas of masculinity and fatherhood are also influenced by migration, as we see in chapter 19, as migrant fathers struggle to remake their role by parenting at a distance.

 Definition: mobilities

the movement of people, things, and ideas, and the social implications of those movements. Mobilities scholars explore topics such as human migration, tourism, and transportation, and the forces that promote or constrain movement.

Global movements and migrations are tied to work but also to pleasure. With the tourism industry, a global sex trade has developed involving both men and women. Eroticized and exoticized ideas of men and women in the Global South play into the fantasies of foreign tourists both for pleasure (Cabezas 2009; Frohlick 2012) and as potential spouses (Constable 2003). Many in the Global South who engage in sexual relations with tourists dream of migrating through marriage to a foreigner (Fernandez 2019). However, often these relationships do not provide the hoped-for outcome, and mail-order brides do not always get the marriages they envisioned (Faier 2007). Global mobilities are intertwined for both work and leisure, and the impact these global movements have on individuals are shaped by factors such as gender, class, nationality, and race.

A gendered, intersectional analysis helps us see the uneven impact globalization has had on people around the world. Globalization provides many benefits to societies including the spread of technology, longer life expectancies, and shared cultural innovations. However, it can also be a source of vulnerability. For instance, the COVID-19 crisis is an example of a global phenomenon that has laid bare the intense interdependence of global economies and societies. Starting in December 2019, a novel coronavirus that causes the deadly COVID-19 disease began to spread throughout the world. The resulting pandemic halted global and local economies and disrupted globalized supply chains. The crisis led to hundreds of thousands of deaths and is expected to markedly change local and global societies, cultural norms, and economies in ways that are yet to be fully appreciated.

Early gendered analyses of the crisis in the United States suggest that shifts in gender roles may be one such result. Jobs that tend to be predominantly held by women (grocery retail workers, nurses, childcare workers) were the ones that were deemed as "essential" early on in the crisis. As a result, heterosexual couples experienced swift role reversals with men providing more childcare and domestic work and women laboring outside the home under often stressful and dangerous conditions. However, as the crisis continued women began to lose their jobs in greater numbers than men, underscoring the inherent vulnerability and inequity of women's labor and income (Institute for Women's Policy Research 2020). Furthermore, for many women around the world the home confinement has increased tensions and has led to a surge in domestic violence: with few support resources operating during the crisis, victims have few options for help. The gendered impact of COVID-19 is shaped by the availability of women's resources. Those who usually have adequate or even abundant resources may lack their former access to reproductive health services, while those with the fewest resources may be particularly vulnerable to the virus itself and may be struggling just to keep their families fed.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we introduced the key perspectives that unite the chapters in this book: feminism(s), intersectionality, and globalization. We explored how feminism has evolved over time and provided anthropology with essential insights into gender diversity and inequality. The following sections, chapters, and profiles will introduce you to the experiences of men, women, and third-gendered people across the globe. The threads that connect them are intersectional analyses and a focus on globalization that links the local to an economic system that spans the globe. We can best understand the practices and cultures we will read about by focusing on how they are connected in the world system and how individual experiences within that culture are shaped by their context-specific position (race, class, gender, age, etc.). From this vantage point, we can see how our own gendered lives, practices, and patterns of consumption are connected to those people we will be reading about.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the four primary waves of feminism.
2. How does intersectionality help us understand social inequalities?
3. How do colonialism and globalization contribute to the ongoing global inequalities of wealth and power today?
4. Discuss some positive and negative impacts globalization has had on your own life.

KEY TERMS

first-wave feminism: started in the late 1800s and early 1900s and was focused on women's right to vote.

fourth-wave feminism: began around 2012 to address sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture, among other issues. It is characterized by a focus on the global empowerment of women, the greater inclusion of diverse perspectives and voices, and the use of social media in activism.

Global North: does not refer to a geographic region in any traditional sense but rather to the relative power and wealth of countries in distinct parts of the world. The Global North encompasses the rich and powerful regions such as North America, Europe, and Australia.

Global South: does not refer to a geographic region in any traditional sense but rather to the relative power and wealth of countries in distinct parts of the world. The Global South encompasses the poor and less powerful countries in areas such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

intersectionality: refers to the interconnected nature of social categories such as race, class, and gender that create overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage. The goal of an intersectional analysis is to understand how racism, sexism, and homophobia (for example) interact together to impact our identities and how we live in our society.

mobilities: the movement of people, things, and ideas, and the social implications of those movements. Mobilities scholars explore topics such as human migration, tourism, and transportation, and the forces that promote or constrain movement.

second-wave feminism: 1960s–1980s addressed issues of equal legal and social rights for women. Its emblematic slogan was “the personal is political.”

third-wave feminism: began in the 1990s responding to the shortcomings of the Second Wave, namely that it focused on the experiences of upper-middle-class white women. Third Wave feminism is rooted in the idea of women's lives as intersectional, highlighting how race, ethnicity, class, religion, gender, and nationality are all significant factors when discussing feminism.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- *Feminism is for Everybody* (Pluto, 2000) by bell hooks presents a straightforward explanation of key ideas and concepts in feminism.
- *Iron Jawed Angels* (2003) a film on Alice Paul and the women's suffrage movement in the United States.
- National Public Radio (NPR)—Planet Money story that followed the making of a single T-shirt in 2013:
<https://apps.npr.org/tshirt/#/title>
- National Public Radio (NPR)—“Goats and Soda: Stories of Life in a Changing World,” a program exploring health and development globally. There's a whole section devoted to stories on women and girls from around the world:
<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/>
- *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (1986) by anthropologist Sidney Wilfred Mintz (Penguin Press, 1986) presents a fascinating history of how sugar transformed from an elite luxury good to a staple in the working-class diet and

what effect that shift had on the world.

- *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* (2015 Vintage) by Jill Lepore recounts the history of the feminist movement in the United States and the evolution of this iconic superhero. There is also a much less inspiring 2017 film based loosely on the book, *Professor Marston and the Wonder Women*.
- The Story of Stuff Project (<https://www.storyofstuff.org/about/>) has created a number of award-winning short animated documentaries on the detrimental effects of our global consumption-based economy. Check out the movies under the “Learn” tab on their website.
- United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to reach by 2030. All countries have agreed to work toward these goals, and you can track their progress at: <https://sdg-tracker.org/>. For more statistical information across the globe also see: OurWorldinData.org.
- *We Should All Be Feminists* (Fourth Estate, 2014), a powerful short book by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The acclaimed author also presents her ideas on feminism in a TED talk: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_we_should_all_be_feminists?language=en.
- WIDE+ (Women in Development Europe+), a European feminist organization, has gathered articles on the gendered impact of the COVID-19 pandemic: <https://wideplus.org/2020/03/26/covid-19-crisis-from-a-feminist-perspective-overview-of-different-articles-published/>.

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5.2: Introduction- Feminist Movements

“History is also everybody talking at once, multiple rhythms being played simultaneously. The events and people we write about did not occur in isolation but in dialogue with a myriad of other people and events. In fact, at any given moment millions of people are all talking at once. As historians we try to isolate one conversation and to explore it, but the trick is then how to put that conversation in a context which makes evident its dialogue with so many others—how to make this one lyric stand alone and at the same time be in connection with all the other lyrics being sung.”

—Elsa Barkley Brown, “‘What has happened here,’” pp. 297-298.

Feminist historian Elsa Barkley Brown reminds us that social movements and identities are not separate from each other, as we often imagine they are in contemporary society. She argues that we must have a relational understanding of social movements and identities within and between social movements—an understanding of the ways in which privilege and oppression are linked and how the stories of people of color and feminists fighting for justice have been historically linked through overlapping and sometimes conflicting social movements. In this chapter, we use a relational lens to discuss and make sense of feminist movements, beginning in the 19th Century up to the present time. Although we use the terms “first wave,” “second wave,” and “third wave,” characterizing feminist resistance in these “waves” is problematic, as it figures distinct “waves” of activism as prioritizing distinct issues in each time period, obscuring histories of feminist organizing in locations and around issues not discussed in the dominant “waves” narratives. Indeed, these “waves” are not mutually exclusive or totally separate from each other. In fact, they inform each other, not only in the way that contemporary feminist work has in many ways been made possible by earlier feminist activism, but also in the way that contemporary feminist activism informs the way we think of past feminist activism and feminisms. Nonetheless, understanding that the “wave” language has historical meaning, we use it throughout this section. Relatedly, although a focus on prominent leaders and events can obscure the many people and actions involved in everyday resistance and community organizing, we focus on the most well known figures, political events, and social movements, understanding that doing so advances one particular lens of history.

Additionally, feminist movements have generated, made possible, and nurtured feminist theories and feminist academic knowledge. In this way, feminist movements are fantastic examples of **praxis**—that is, they use critical reflection about the world to change it. It is because of various social movements—feminist activism, workers’ activism, and civil rights activism throughout the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries—that “feminist history” is a viable field of study today. Feminist history is part of a larger historical project that draws on the experiences of traditionally ignored and disempowered groups (e.g., factory workers, immigrants, people of color, lesbians) to re-think and challenge the histories that have been traditionally written from the experiences and points of view of the powerful (e.g., colonizers, representatives of the state, the wealthy)—the histories we typically learn in high school textbooks.

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5.3: 19th Century Feminist Movements

What has come to be called the first wave of the feminist movement began in the mid 19th century and lasted until the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, which gave women the right to vote. White middle-class first wave feminists in the 19th century to early 20th century, such as suffragist leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, primarily focused on women's suffrage (the right to vote), striking down coverture laws, and gaining access to education and employment. These goals are famously enshrined in the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments, which is the resulting document of the first women's rights convention in the United States in 1848.



“‘Votes for Women’ sellers, 1908.”The Library of the London School of Economics and Political Science is in the Public Domain

Demanding women's enfranchisement, the abolition of coverture, and access to employment and education were quite radical demands at the time. These demands confronted the ideology of the **cult of true womanhood**, summarized in four key tenets—piety, purity, submission and domesticity—which held that white women were rightfully and naturally located in the private sphere of the household and not fit for public, political participation or labor in the waged economy. However, this emphasis on confronting the ideology of the cult of true womanhood was shaped by the white middle-class standpoint of the leaders of the movement. As we discussed in Chapter 3, the cult of true womanhood was an ideology of white womanhood that systematically denied black and working-class women access to the category of “women,” because working-class and black women, by necessity, had to labor outside of the home.

The white middle-class leadership of the first wave movement shaped the priorities of the movement, often excluding the concerns and participation of working-class women and women of color. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony formed the National Women Suffrage Association (NWSA) in order to break from other suffragists who supported the passage of the 15th Amendment, which would give African American men the right to vote before women. Stanton and Anthony privileged white women's rights instead of creating solidarities across race and class groups. Accordingly, they saw women's suffrage as the central goal of the women's rights movement. For example, in the first issue of her newspaper, *The Revolution*, Susan B. Anthony wrote, “We shall show that the ballot will secure for woman equal place and equal wages in the world of work; that it will open to her the schools, colleges, professions, and all the opportunities and advantages of life; that in her hand it will be a moral power to stay the tide of crime and misery on every side” (cited by Davis 1981: 73). Meanwhile, working-class women and women of color *knew* that mere access to voting did not overturn class and race inequalities. As feminist activist and scholar Angela Davis (1981) writes, working-class women “...were seldom moved by the suffragists’ promise that the vote would permit them to become equal to their men—their exploited, suffering men” (Davis 1981: 74-5). Furthermore, the largest suffrage organization, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA)—a descendent of the National Women Suffrage Association—barred the participation of Black women suffragists in its organization.

Although the first wave movement was largely defined and led by middle class white women, there was significant overlap between it and the **abolitionist movement**—which sought to end slavery—and the racial justice movement following the end of the Civil War. Historian Nancy Cott (2000) argues that, in some ways, both movements were largely about having self-ownership and control over one's body. For slaves, that meant the freedom from lifelong, unpaid, forced labor, as well as freedom from the sexual assault that many enslaved Black women suffered from their masters. For married white women, it meant recognition as people in the face of the law and the ability to refuse their husbands’ sexual advances. White middle-class abolitionists often made analogies between slavery and marriage, as abolitionist Antoinette Brown wrote in 1853 that, “The wife owes service and labor to her husband as much and as absolutely as the slave does to his master” (Brown, cited. in Cott 2000: 64). This analogy between marriage and slavery had historical resonance at the time, but it problematically conflated the unique experience of the racialized oppression of slavery that African American women faced with a very different type of oppression that white women faced under coverture. This illustrates quite well Angela Davis’ (1983) argument that while white women abolitionists and feminists of the time made important contributions to anti-slavery campaigns, they often failed to understand the uniqueness and severity of slave women's lives and the complex system of chattel slavery.

Black activists, writers, newspaper publishers, and academics moved between the racial justice and feminist movements, arguing for inclusion in the first wave feminist movement and condemning slavery and **Jim Crow laws** that maintained racial segregation. Sojourner Truth's famous “Ain't I a Woman?” speech, which has been attributed to the Akron Women's Convention in 1851, captured this contentious linkage between the first wave women's movement and the abolitionist movement well. In her speech, she critiqued the exclusion of black women from the women's movement while simultaneously condemning the injustices of slavery:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me!....I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?

Feminist historian Nell Painter (1996) has questioned the validity of this representation of the speech, arguing that white suffragists dramatically changed its content and title. This illustrates that certain social actors with power can construct the story and possibly misrepresent actors with less power and social movements.



“Ida B. Wells-Barnett” by Mary Garrity, restored by Adam Cuerden , Google Cultural Institute is in the Public Domain, CC0

Despite their marginalization, Black women emerged as passionate and powerful leaders. Ida B. Wells , a particularly influential activist who participated in the movement for women’s suffrage, was a founding member of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), a journalist, and the author of numerous pamphlets and articles exposing the violent lynching of thousands of African Americans in the Reconstruction period (the period following the Civil War). Wells argued that lynching in the Reconstruction Period was a systematic attempt to maintain racial inequality, despite the passage of the 14th Amendment in 1868 (which held that African Americans were citizens and could not be discriminated against based on their race) (Wells 1893). Additionally, thousands of African American women were members of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, which was pro-suffrage, but did not receive recognition from the predominantly middle-class, white National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).

The passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 provided a test for the argument that the granting of women’s right to vote would give them unfettered access to the institutions they had been denied from, as well as equality with men. Quite plainly, this argument was proven wrong, as had been the case with the passage of the 18th Amendment followed by a period of backlash. The formal legal endorsement of the doctrine of “separate but equal” with *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, the complex of Jim Crow laws in states across the country, and the unchecked violence of the Ku Klux Klan, prevented Black women and men from access to voting, education, employment, and public facilities. While equal rights existed in the abstract realm of the law under the 18th and 19th amendments, the on-the-ground reality of continued racial and gender inequality was quite different.

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5.4: Early to Late 20th Century Feminist Movements

Social movements are not static entities; they change according to movement gains or losses, and these gains or losses are often quite dependent on the political and social contexts they take place within. Following women's suffrage in 1920, feminist activists channeled their energy into institutionalized legal and political channels for effecting changes in labor laws and attacking discrimination against women in the workplace. The Women's Bureau—a federal agency created to craft policy according to women workers' needs—was established in 1920, and the YWCA, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), and the National Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW) lobbied government officials to pass legislation that would legally prohibit discrimination against women in the workplace.

These organizations, however, did not necessarily agree on what equality looked like and how that would be achieved. For example, the BPW supported the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which they argued would effectively end employment discrimination against women. Meanwhile, the Women's Bureau and the YWCA opposed the ERA, arguing that it would damage the gains that organized labor had made already. The disagreement clearly brought into relief the competing agendas of defining working women first and foremost as women (who are also workers), versus defining working women first and foremost as workers (who are also women). Nearly a century after suffrage, the ERA has yet to be passed, and debate about its desirability even within the feminist movement continues.

While millions of women were already working in the United States at the beginning of World War II, labor shortages during World War II allowed millions of women to move into higher-paying factory jobs that had previously been occupied by men. Simultaneously, nearly 125,000 African American men fought in segregated units in World War II, often being sent on the front guard of the most dangerous missions (Zinn 2003). Japanese Americans whose families were interned also fought in the segregated units that had the war's highest casualty rates (Odo 2017; Takaki 2001). Following the end of the war, both the women who had worked in high-paying jobs in factories and the African American men who had fought in the war returned to a society that was still deeply segregated, and they were expected to return to their previous subordinate positions. Despite the conservative political climate of the 1950s, civil rights organizers began to challenge both the *de jure* segregation of Jim Crow laws and the *de facto* segregation experienced by African Americans on a daily basis. The landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling of 1954, which made "separate but equal" educational facilities illegal, provided an essential legal basis for activism against the institutionalized racism of Jim Crow laws. Eventually, the Black Freedom Movement, also known now as the civil rights movement would fundamentally change US society and inspire the second wave feminist movement and the radical political movements of the New Left (e.g., gay liberationism, black nationalism, socialist and anarchist activism, the environmentalist movement) in the late 1960s.

Although the stories and lives of the leaders of the civil rights movement are centered in popular representations, this grassroots mass movement was composed of working class African American men and women, white and African American students, and clergy that utilized the tactics of non-violent direct action (e.g., sit-ins, marches, and vigils) to demand full legal equality for African Americans in US society. For example, Rosa Parks—famous for refusing to give up her seat at the front of a Montgomery bus to a white passenger in December, 1955 and beginning the Montgomery Bus Boycott—was not acting as an isolated, frustrated woman when she refused to give up her seat at the front of the bus (as the typical narrative goes). According to feminist historians Ellen Debois and Lynn Dumenil (2005), Parks "had been active in the local NAACP for fifteen years, and her decision to make this stand against segregation was part of a lifelong commitment to racial justice. For some time NAACP leaders had wanted to find a good test case to challenge Montgomery's bus segregation in courts" (Debois and Dumenil, 2005: 576). Furthermore, the bus boycott that ensued after Parks' arrest and lasted for 381 days, until its success, was an organized political action involving both working-class African American and white women activists. The working-class Black women who relied on public transportation to go to their jobs as domestic servants in white households refused to use the bus system, and either walked to work or relied on rides to work from a carpool organized by women activists. Furthermore, the Women's Political Caucus of Montgomery distributed fliers promoting the boycott and had provided the groundwork and planning to execute the boycott before it began.



“Photograph of Rosa Parks with Dr. Martin Luther King jr. (ca. 1955)” by National Archives and Records Administration Records of the U.S. Information Agency Record Group 306 is in the Public Domain, CC0

Additionally, the sit-in movement was sparked by the Greensboro sit-ins, when four African American students in Greensboro, North Carolina, sat at and refused to leave a segregated lunch counter at a Woolworth’s store in February of 1960. The number of students participating in the sit-ins increased as the days and weeks went on, and the sit-ins began to receive national media attention. Networks of student activists began sharing the successes of the tactic of the nonviolent sit-in, and began doing sit-ins in their own cities and towns around the country throughout the early 1960s.



“Ella Baker” by The Ella Baker Center for Human Rights is licensed under CC BY 3.0

Importantly, the sit-in movement led to the formation of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), initiated by Ella Baker shortly after the first sit-in strikes in Greensboro. The student activists of SNCC took part in the Freedom Rides of 1961, with African American and white men and women participants, and sought to challenge the Jim Crow laws of the south, which the Interstate Commerce Commission had ruled to be unconstitutional. The freedom riders experienced brutal mob violence in Birmingham and were jailed, but the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and SNCC kept sending riders to fill the jails of Birmingham. SNCC also participated in Freedom Summer in 1964, which was a campaign that brought mostly white students from

the north down to the south to support the work of Black southern civil rights activists for voting rights for African Americans. Once again, Freedom Summer activists faced mob violence, but succeeded in bringing national attention to southern states' foot-dragging in terms of allowing African Americans the legal rights they had won through activism and grassroots organizing.



“Freedom Riders attacked” by Unknown, [The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities](#) is in the [Public Domain](#)

SNCC’s non-hierarchical structure gave women chances to participate in the civil rights movement in ways previously blocked to them. However, the deeply embedded sexism of the surrounding culture still seeped into civil rights organizations, including SNCC. Although women played pivotal roles as organizers and activists throughout the civil rights movement, men occupied the majority of formal leadership roles in the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), the NAACP, and CORE. Working with SNCC, Black women activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Diane Nash became noted activists and leaders within the civil rights movement in the early 1960s. Despite this, women within SNCC were often expected to do “women’s work” (i.e., housework and secretarial work). White women SNCC activists Casey Hayden and Mary King critiqued this reproduction of gendered roles within the movement and called for dialogue about sexism within the civil rights movement in a memo that circulated through SNCC in 1965, titled “Sex and Caste: A Kind of Memo.” The memo became an influential document for the birth of **the second wave feminist movement**, a movement focused generally on fighting patriarchal structures of power, and specifically on combating occupational sex segregation in employment and fighting for reproductive rights for women. However, this was not the only source of second wave feminism, and white women were not the only women spearheading feminist movements. As historian Becky Thompson (2002) argues, in the mid and late 1960s, Latina women, African American women, and Asian American women were developing multiracial feminist organizations that would become important players within the U.S. second wave feminist movement.

In many ways, the second wave feminist movement was influenced and facilitated by the activist tools provided by the civil rights movement. Drawing on the stories of women who participated in the civil rights movement, historians Ellen Debois and Lynn Dumenil (2005) argue that women’s participation in the civil rights movement allowed them to challenge gender norms that held that women belonged in the private sphere, and not in politics or activism. Not only did many women who were involved in the civil rights movement become activists in the second wave feminist movement, they also employed tactics that the civil rights movement had used, including marches and non-violent direct action. Additionally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964—a major legal victory for the civil rights movement—not only prohibited employment discrimination based on race, but Title VII of the Act also prohibited sex discrimination. When the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)—the federal agency created to enforce Title VII—largely ignored women’s complaints of employment discrimination, 15 women and one man organized to form the National Organization of Women (NOW), which was modeled after the NAACP. NOW focused its attention and organizing on passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), fighting sex discrimination in education, and defending *Roe v. Wade*—the Supreme Court decision of 1973 that struck down state laws that prohibited abortion within the first three months of pregnancy.



“bell hooks” by Cmongirl is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#)

Although the second wave feminist movement challenged gendered inequalities and brought women’s issues to the forefront of national politics in the late 1960s and 1970s, the movement also reproduced race and sex inequalities. Black women writers and activists such as Alice Walker, bell hooks, and Patricia Hill Collins developed **Black feminist thought** as a critique of the ways in which second wave feminists often ignored racism and class oppression and how they uniquely impact women and men of color and working-class people. One of the first formal Black feminist organizations was the Combahee River Collective, formed in 1974. Black feminist bell hooks (1984) argued that feminism cannot just be a fight to make women equal with men, because such a fight does not acknowledge that all men are not equal in a capitalist, racist, and homophobic society. Thus, hooks and other Black feminists argued that sexism cannot be separated from racism, classism and homophobia, and that these systems of domination overlap and reinforce each other. Therefore, she argued, you cannot fight sexism without fighting racism, classism, and homophobia. Importantly, black feminism argues that an intersectional perspective that makes visible and critiques multiple sources of oppression and inequality also inspires coalitional activism that brings people together across race, class, gender, and sexual identity lines.

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5.5: Third Wave and Queer Feminist Movements

“We are living in a world for which old forms of activism are not enough and today’s activism is about creating coalitions between communities.”

—Angela Davis, cited by Hernandez and Rehman in *Colonize This!*

Third wave feminism is, in many ways, a hybrid creature. It is influenced by second wave feminism, Black feminisms, transnational feminisms, Global South feminisms, and queer feminism. This hybridity of third wave activism comes directly out of the experiences of feminists in the late 20th and early 21st centuries who have grown up in a world that supposedly does not need social movements because “equal rights” for racial minorities, sexual minorities, and women have been guaranteed by law in most countries. The gap between law and reality—between the abstract proclamations of states and concrete lived experience—however, reveals the necessity of both old and new forms of activism. In a country where white women are paid only 75.3% of what white men are paid for the same labor (Institute for Women’s Policy Research 2016), where police violence in black communities occurs at much higher rates than in other communities, where 58% of transgender people surveyed experienced mistreatment from police officers in the past year (James et. al 2016), where 40% of homeless youth organizations’ clientele are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (Durso and Gates 2012), where people of color—on average—make less income and have considerably lower amounts of wealth than white people, and where the military is the most funded institution by the government, feminists have increasingly realized that a **coalitional politics** that organizes with other groups based on their shared (but differing) experiences of oppression, rather than their specific identity, is absolutely necessary. Thus, Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake (1997) argue that a crucial goal for the third wave is “the development of modes of thinking that can come to terms with the multiple, constantly shifting bases of oppression in relation to the multiple, interpenetrating axes of identity, and the creation of a coalitional politics based on these understandings” (Heywood and Drake 1997: 3).



The ACT UP demonstrations at NIH included various groups from different parts of the United States. This photograph shows the Shreveport, Louisiana ACT UP group at the NIH. “[ACT UP Demonstration at NIH](#)” by [NIH History Office](#) is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#)

In the 1980s and 1990s, third wave feminists took up activism in a number of forms. Beginning in the mid 1980s, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) began organizing to press an unwilling US government and medical establishment to develop affordable drugs for people with HIV/AIDS. In the latter part of the 1980s, a more radical subset of individuals began to articulate a **queer** politics, explicitly reclaiming a derogatory term often used against gay men and lesbians, and distancing themselves from the gay and lesbian rights movement, which they felt mainly reflected the interests of white, middle-class gay men and lesbians. As discussed at the beginning of this text, queer also described anti-categorical sexualities. The queer turn sought to develop more radical political perspectives and more inclusive sexual cultures and communities, which aimed to welcome and support transgender and gender non-conforming people and people of color. This was motivated by an intersectional critique of the existing hierarchies within sexual liberation movements, which marginalized individuals within already sexually marginalized groups. In this vein, Lisa Duggan (2002) coined the term **homonormativity**, which describes the normalization and depoliticization of gay men and lesbians through their assimilation into capitalist economic systems and domesticity—individuals

who were previously constructed as “other.” These individuals thus gained entrance into social life at the expense and continued marginalization of queers who were non-white, disabled, trans, single or non-monogamous, middle-class, or non-western. Critiques of homonormativity were also critiques of gay identity politics, which left out concerns of many gay individuals who were marginalized within gay groups. Akin to homonormativity, Jasbir Puar coined the term **homonationalism**, which describes the white nationalism taken up by queers, which sustains racist and xenophobic discourses by constructing immigrants, especially Muslims, as homophobic (Puar 2007). **Identity politics** refers to organizing politically around the experiences and needs of people who share a particular identity. The move from political association with others who share a particular identity to political association with those who have differing identities, but share similar, but differing experiences of oppression (coalitional politics), can be said to be a defining characteristic of the third wave.

Another defining characteristic of the third wave is the development of new tactics to politicize feminist issues and demands. For instance, ACT UP began to use powerful street theater that brought the death and suffering of people with HIV/AIDS to the streets and to the politicians and pharmaceutical companies that did not seem to care that thousands and thousands of people were dying. They staged die-ins, inflated massive condoms, and occupied politicians’ and pharmaceutical executives’ offices. Their confrontational tactics would be emulated and picked up by anti-globalization activists and the radical Left throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Queer Nation was formed in 1990 by ACT UP activists, and used the tactics developed by ACT UP in order to challenge homophobic violence and heterosexism in mainstream US society.



A mass “die-in” on the lawn of Bldg. 1 closed the demonstration as ranks of uniformed officers, some on horseback, protected NIH headquarters during the “Storm the NIH” demonstration on May 21, 1990. “ACT UP Demonstration on the lawn of Building 1” by NIH History Office is in the [Public Domain](#), CC0

Around the same time as ACT UP was beginning to organize in the mid-1980s, **sex-positive feminism** came into currency among feminist activists and theorists. Amidst what is known now as the “Feminist Sex Wars” of the 1980s, sex-positive feminists argued that sexual liberation, within a sex-positive culture that values consent between partners, would liberate not only women, but also men. Drawing from a social constructionist perspective, sex-positive feminists such as cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1984) argued that no sexual act has an inherent meaning, and that not all sex, or all representations of sex, were inherently degrading to women. In fact, they argued, sexual politics and sexual liberation are key sites of struggle for white women, women of color, gay men, lesbians, queers, and transgender people—groups of people who have historically been stigmatized for their sexual identities or sexual practices. Therefore, a key aspect of queer and feminist subcultures is to create sex-positive spaces and communities that not only valorize sexualities that are often stigmatized in the broader culture, but also place sexual consent at the center of sex-positive spaces and communities. Part of this project of creating sex-positive, feminist and queer spaces is creating media messaging that attempts to both consolidate feminist communities and create knowledge from and for oppressed groups.

In a media-savvy generation, it is not surprising that cultural production is a main avenue of activism taken by contemporary activists. Although some commentators have deemed the third wave to be “post-feminist” or “not feminist” because it often does not utilize the activist forms (e.g., marches, vigils, and policy change) of the second wave movement (Sommers, 1994), the creation of alternative forms of culture in the face of a massive corporate media industry can be understood as quite political. For example, the Riot Grrrl movement, based in the Pacific Northwest of the US in the early 1990s, consisted of do-it-yourself bands predominantly composed of women, the creation of independent record labels, feminist ‘zines, and art. Their lyrics often addressed gendered sexual violence, sexual liberationism, heteronormativity, gender normativity, police brutality, and war. Feminist news websites and magazines have also become important sources of feminist analysis on current events and issues. Magazines such as *Bitch* and *Ms.*, as well as online blog collectives such as *Feministing* and the *Feminist Wire* function as alternative sources of feminist knowledge production. If we consider the creation of lives on our own terms and the struggle for autonomy as fundamental feminist acts of resistance, then creating alternative culture on our own terms should be considered a feminist act of resistance as well.

As we have mentioned earlier, feminist activism and theorizing by people outside the US context has broadened the feminist frameworks for analysis and action. In a world characterized by global capitalism, transnational immigration, and a history of colonialism that has still has effects today, **transnational feminism** is a body of theory and activism that highlights the connections between sexism, racism, classism, and imperialism. In “Under Western Eyes,” an article by transnational feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1991), Mohanty critiques the way in which much feminist activism and theory has been created from a white, North American standpoint that has often exoticized “3rd world” women or ignored the needs and political situations of women in the Global South. Transnational feminists argue that Western feminist projects to “save” women in another region do not actually liberate these women, since this approach constructs the women as passive victims devoid of agency to save themselves. These “saving” projects are especially problematic when they are accompanied by Western military intervention. For instance, in the war on Afghanistan, begun shortly after 9/11 in 2001, U.S. military leaders and George Bush often claimed to be waging the war to “save” Afghani women from their patriarchal and domineering men. This crucially ignores the role of the West—and the US in particular—in supporting Islamic fundamentalist regimes in the 1980s. Furthermore, it positions women in Afghanistan as passive victims in need of Western intervention—in a way strikingly similar to the victimizing rhetoric often used to talk about “victims” of gendered violence (discussed in an earlier section). Therefore, transnational feminists challenge the notion—held by many feminists in the West—that any area of the world is inherently more patriarchal or sexist than the West because of its culture or religion through arguing that we need to understand how Western imperialism, global capitalism, militarism, sexism, and racism have created conditions of inequality for women around the world.

In conclusion, third wave feminism is a vibrant mix of differing activist and theoretical traditions. Third wave feminism’s insistence on grappling with multiple points-of-view, as well as its persistent refusal to be pinned down as representing just one group of people or one perspective, may be its greatest strong point. Similar to how queer activists and theorists have insisted that “queer” is and should be open-ended and never set to mean one thing, third wave feminism’s complexity, nuance, and adaptability become assets in a world marked by rapidly shifting political situations. The third wave’s insistence on coalitional politics as an alternative to identity-based politics is a crucial project in a world that is marked by fluid, multiple, overlapping inequalities.

In conclusion, this unit has developed a relational analysis of feminist social movements, from the first wave to the third wave, while understanding the limitations of categorizing resistance efforts within an oversimplified framework of three distinct “waves.” With such a relational lens, we are better situated to understand how the tactics and activities of one social movement can influence others. This lens also facilitates an understanding of how racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions and privileges lead to the splintering of social movements and social movement organizations. This type of intersectional analysis is at the heart not only of feminist activism but of feminist scholarship. The vibrancy and longevity of feminist movements might even be attributed to this intersectional reflexivity—or, the critique of race, class, and gender dynamics in feminist movements. The emphasis on coalitional politics and making connections between several movements is another crucial contribution of feminist activism and scholarship. In the 21st century, feminist movements confront an array of structures of power: global capitalism, the prison system, war, racism, ableism, heterosexism, and transphobia, among others. What kind of world do we wish to create and live in? What alliances and coalitions will be necessary to challenge these structures of power? How do feminists, queers, people of color, trans people, disabled people, and working-class people go about challenging these structures of power? These are among some of the questions that feminist activists are grappling with now, and their actions point toward a deepening commitment to an intersectional politics of social justice and praxis.

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5.6: Video - The History of Western Feminism

 The history of western feminism explained

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Global Perspectives on Gender

[6.1: Gender Inequality in Cultures \(video\)](#)

[6.2: Transnational Production and Globalization](#)

[6.3: Racialized, Gendered, and Sexualized Labor in the Global Economy](#)

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6.1: Gender Inequality in Cultures (video)

Gender Inequality in Cultures

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6.2: Transnational Production and Globalization

Globalization is an oft-cited term that can usefully serve as shorthand. However, this shorthand runs the risk of lumping together a broad range of complex economic, political, and cultural phenomena. Globalization describes both the benefits and costs of living in a globally connected world. The Internet was once heralded as the great equalizer in global communications. Certainly, we are now accustomed to getting news from across the globe from a variety of perspectives. Activists in other countries, like Egypt and Iran, have famously used social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter to report what is happening from the ground, in the absence of formal news sources. Egyptian activists also utilized these social networking websites to coordinate demonstrations and marches, leading to the Egyptian government to shut down the Internet for several days during the “Arab Spring” uprisings in early 2011. Globalization makes it possible for social change activists in different countries to communicate with each other, and for people, information, and products to cross borders, with benefits for some and costs to others. It allows for Massachusetts residents to have fresh fruit in winter, but lowers the wages of agricultural workers who gather the fruit in tropical countries, supports repressive government policies in those countries, and increases the carbon footprint of producing and distributing food. Globalized contexts can lead social movements and state, development and conservation agencies to influence each other. For example, Colombian activists’ use of neoliberal development discourses both legitimized the presence of state, development and conservation agencies and influenced these agencies’ visions and plans (Asher 2009). As such, globalization is not uniformly good or bad, but has costs and benefits that are experienced differently depending on one’s social location.

Nations of the world are linked in trade relationships. The US depends on resources and capabilities of other nations to the extent that our economy relies on imports (e.g., oil, cars, food, manufactured goods). So, how is it that the US economy is still largely profitable? Factories in the US producing manufactured goods did not simply close down in the face of competition; **multinational corporations**—corporations that exist across several political borders—made concerted efforts to increase their profits (Kirk & Okizawa-Rey 2007). One way to massively increase profits is to pay workers less in wages and benefits. In the US, labor laws and union contracts protect workers from working extensive hours at a single job, guarantee safe working environments, and set a minimum wage. Thus, American workers are expensive to corporations. This is why companies based in the US outsource production to the nations of the Global South where workers’ rights are less protected and workers make less money for their labor. One consequence of outsourcing is the development of **sweatshops** (known as *maquiladoras* when based in Mexico in particular) in which workers work long hours for little pay and are restricted from eating or using the restroom while at work (Kirk & Okizawa-Rey 2007). These workers seldom purchase the goods they assist in producing, often because they could not afford them, and because the global factories in which they work ship goods to be sold in wealthier countries of the Global North. These factories predominantly employ young, unmarried women workers in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean because they are considered the most docile and obedient groups of workers; that is, corporations consider them less likely to make demands of employers or to unionize (Kirk & Okizawa-Rey 2007).



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Rather than a nation’s workers producing goods, selling those goods back to its people, and keeping profits within the nation’s borders, multinational corporations participate in **global commodity chains**. As Cynthia Enloe’s (2008) article “The Globetrotting Sneaker” makes clear, globalization makes it possible for a shoe corporation based in Country A to extract resources from Country B, produce goods in Country C, sell those goods in Countries D, E, and F, and deposit waste in the landfills of Country G. Meanwhile, the profits from this production and sales of goods return largely to the corporation, while little goes into the economies of the participating nations (Enloe 2008). Companies like Nike, Adidas, and Reebok were initially attracted by military regimes in South Korea in the 1980s that quashed labor unions. Once the workers in South Korea organized successfully, factories

moved to Indonesia (Enloe 2008). This process of moving to remaining areas of cheap labor before workers organize is known as the **race to the bottom** logic of global factory production.

With the increasing globalization of the economy international institutions have been created. The purpose of these international institutions is, ostensibly, to monitor abuses and assist in the development of less developed nations through loans from more developed nations. The World Bank provides monetary support for large, capital-intensive projects such as the construction of roads and dams. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) provides loans and facilitates international trade relationships particularly through structural adjustment programs (SAP). Essentially, in a SAP, a country of the Global North lends money to another country in the Global South in exchange for resources. For instance, the US may lend money to Chile to assist with the growth and harvesting of grapes and production of wine. In exchange, the US would acquire grapes and wine from Chile at a discounted rate, and have control in how Chile spends the money, while Chile repays the initial loan. The problem with this is that, in many cases, the lending process is circular such that the country accepting the loan remains constantly indebted to the initial lending nation. For example, a nation may produce most of its crop to export elsewhere and be unable to feed its own people and therefore require additional loans. Consequences of SAPs are devalued currency, privatized industries, cut social programs and government subsidies, and increasing taxes to fund the development of infrastructure.

Free trade describes a set of institutions, policies, and ideologies, in which the governmental restrictions and regulations are minimal, allowing corporate bodies to engage in cross-border enterprises to maximize profit. One institution that was created to foster free trade is the World Trade Organization (WTO), an international unelected body whose mission is to challenge restraints on free trade. Some countries limit pollution levels in industry; the WTO considers any limits on production as barriers to free trade. They operate on the theory that unfettered, free market capitalism is the best way to generate profits. It may be more profitable to pay people minimally and circumvent environmental regulations, but proponents of free trade do not factor in the human costs to health, safety, and happiness—costs that cannot be put into dollars and cents. One such free trade agreement is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994. NAFTA is an agreement between Canada, the US, and Mexico to promote the unregulated movement of jobs and products. The biggest result of this legislation is the mass relocation of factories from the US to Mexico in the form of *maquiladoras* that supply goods at low prices back to US consumers, resulting in a loss of around 500,000 union jobs in North America (Zinn 2003). The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) of 2002 expands NAFTA to include the entire Western hemisphere—except Cuba, due to trade sanctions against its communist government. At the time of this writing, the impact of these free trade agreements is a hotly contested political issue. Some people have argued that it resulted in unionized, higher paying jobs, while others have argued that even with many negative impacts, overall access to jobs, products, and resources has yielded many improvements. In the face of moves to promote free trade, **fair trade** movements that support safe working conditions and sustainable wages have also cropped up, especially in the coffee and chocolate industries.

The current global economic system is guided by an ideology of neoliberalism. In the contemporary U.S. context, the term “liberal” is identified with the American Democratic Party, but in terms of political theory, the term **liberalism** refers to restrictions on state power to prevent government infringement on individual rights (Grewal and Kaplan 1994), which transcend party affiliations. **Economic liberalism**, the belief that markets work best without any governmental regulation or interference, describes the free trade economic policies we discussed above, and should not be confused with the liberalism associated with the Democratic Party. **Neoliberalism** is a market-driven approach to economic and social policy, where capitalism’s profit motive is applied to social policies and programs (like welfare and taxation), cutting them to increase profits. A crucial project of neoliberalism is the downsizing of the public sphere and social welfare programs that unions and racial justice activists have fought for since the early 20th Century. Feminist historian Lisa Duggan (2003) argues that neoliberalism is more than just the privatization of the economy, but is an ideology that holds that once marginalized groups (LGBTQ people, people of color, the working-class) have access to mainstream institutions (like marriage and service in the military) and consumption in the free market, they have reached equality with their privileged peers (straight people, white people, the middle- and upper-classes). Neoliberal ideology therefore assumes that our society has reached a post-civil rights period where social movements that seek to fundamentally alter mainstream institutions and build up social welfare programs are obsolete. However, as this textbook has shown, mainstream institutions and structures of power often reproduce inequalities.

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6.3: Racialized, Gendered, and Sexualized Labor in the Global Economy

The structure of the global economy affects people differently not only by the economic situations of the nations in which they live, but also by gender and race. Predatory trade relationships between countries roughly reproduce the political situation of colonization in many nations of the Global South. This has led many to characterize neoliberal economic policies as a form of **neocolonialism**, or modern day colonization characterized by exploitation of a nation's resources and people. Colonialism and neocolonialism are concepts that draw attention to the racialized global inequalities between white, affluent people of the Global North—historical colonizers—and people of color of the Global South—the historically colonized. **Postcolonial theory** emerged out of critiques of colonialism, empire, enslavement, and neocolonial racist-economic oppression more generally, which were advanced by scholars in the Asian and Middle Eastern diasporas. Postcolonial scholars primarily unpack and critique colonial discourses, depictions of colonized Others, and European scholars' biased representations of those they colonized, which they figure as knowledge (for example, see Said 1995 and Spivak 1988). **Decoloniality** theoretical approaches, emerging chiefly in Latin America, illuminated how colonization invented the concepts of “the colonized,” “modernity” and “coloniality,” and disrupted the social arrangements, lives, gender relations, and understandings it invaded, imposing on the colonized European racialized conceptualizations of male and female (Quijano 2007; Lugones 2007).

Women of color of the Global South are disproportionately impacted by global economic policies. Not only are women in Asian and Latin American countries much more likely to work in low-wage factory jobs than men, women are also much more mobile in terms of immigration (Pessar 2005). Women have more labor-based mobility for low-income factory work in other countries as well as in domestic and sex work markets. When women immigrate to other nations they often sacrifice care of and contact with their own children in order to earn money caring for wealthier people's children as domestic workers; this situation is known as **transnational motherhood** (Parreñas 2001). Domestic work and sex work are two sectors of the service economy in which women immigrants participate. Immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, have few options in terms of earning money, and economic circumstances are such that undocumented immigrants can make more money within illegal and unregulated markets in nations of the Global North, rather than regulated markets of the formal economy. Thus, it is not uncommon for women immigrants to participate in informal economies such as domestic work or sex work that employers and clients do not report in their taxes.

Women immigrants also participate in other parts of the service economy of the Global North. Miliann Kang (2010) has studied immigrant women who participate in beauty service work, particularly nail salons. This type of work does not require high amounts of skill or experience and can support women for whom English is a second language or those who may be undocumented. Like any service job, work in nail salons involves emotional labor. While clients may see the technician in the beauty salon as their confidant (like Queen Latifa's character in *Beauty Shop*), their relationship is primarily an unequal labor relationship in which one party is paid not only for the service they perform but also for their friendly personalities and listening skills. Kang (2010) refers to this type of labor involving both emotional and physical labor as **body labor**. To engage in both emotional and physical labor at work is exhausting. In addition, workers in nail and hair salons work with harsh chemicals that are ultimately toxic to their health and make them more susceptible to cancer than the general population.

Not only do gendered, racialized, and sexualized differences exist in the US domestic labor market, leading to differences in work and pay, these differences also characterize the globalized labor market. Trade relationships between countries and the ideology of neoliberalism that governs them have profound effects on the quality of life of people all over the world. Women bear the brunt of changes to the global marketplace as factory workers in some countries and domestic, sex, and beauty service workers in others. Fortunately, fair trade and anti-sweatshop movements as well as indigenous, decolonial, feminist and labor movements are fighting to change these conditions for the better in the face of well-funded and powerful multinational corporations and global trade organizations.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Gendered Love and Family Relationships

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7.1: Sex, Gender, and Emotions

Girls cry and boys don't, right? I mean, girls are just *naturally* more emotional than boys, right? Hold on to your hats: Males and females are not victims of biological processes dictating their emotional stability or strength based on sex category. In fact, scientific research reveals culture and environment, rather than biology, is a greater indicator for emotional experience.

Western culture often maintains the idea of a binary opposition between reason and emotion, with reason widely believed to be a masculine behavior and emotion being a feminine behavior. This stereotype has become a power social force in constructing and reinforcing the false belief that it is sex category that will determine whether a person is more reasonable or emotional. Once established, we see this pattern replicate throughout most, if not all, of society's institutions effectively structuring the world we inhabit and appearing 'normal' (a process called *reification*).

The stereotype of the emotional women and the rational man was created and maintained in response to the industrial revolution which produced segregation in the workplace. Prior to the industrial revolution, as discussed in earlier chapters, women were relegated to housework and family obligations as a result of reproduction needs for the culture to multiply and survive. After the industrial revolution, women largely remained in those domestic roles, as the roles had become a cultural norm. As will become more evident as we proceed, this change had made reverberations with how we date, fall in love, and structure our families. Notably, the norm of the breadwinner husband and the stay-at-home housewife that took root around this time and was born out of capitalism's need for a reliable workforce.

Today, the rationale for the "emotional woman" helps maintain sex segregation in the work force. It has been argued women could be too emotional for some occupations like police officers, fire fighters, legislatures, or even the President of the United States. In fact, in the most recent presidential race, some (including women) argued women shouldn't be president because her hormones "could start a war in a second."⁸² (And this is when I reflect on how many wars have actually been started by women and how many have been started by men.)

So, what are the differences in emotions between sexes? Well, none, really. But research indicates a difference in emotions between genders (most research focuses on the emotional experience between the binary feminine and masculine as gender categories). In Western culture, women and men differ more in emotional *expression* than in emotional *experience*.⁸³ Meaning, emotions are a human capability, not a feminine or female one. Therefore, men and women experience emotions similarly, but women and men express them differently. Why?

As part of our socialization process, we *learn* how to express our emotions socially appropriately. Women are taught it is more acceptable (or even encouraged) for them to *show* their emotions than it is for men. Furthermore, women are more encouraged to demonstrate prosocial emotions like empathy, compromise, and nurturance. And women are also more likely than men to demonstrate emotions that imply powerlessness, like fear or shame.⁸⁴ Again, these emotions are all *human* capabilities, but women have been more socially permitted to demonstrate these human potentials than men. However, the latter emotions are seen as a contradiction to Western construction of masculinity, and thus have been named as feminine emotions and typically more permissible for women. So engrained in fact are these gendered performances and displays of emotions that they become the very identifiers of one's gender (e.g. cried like a girl when a boy does it and simply *cried* if done by a girl).

According to dominant Western culture, masculine emotions include, but are not limited to, powerful emotions like anger, pride, and competition.⁸⁵ These emotions are more in line with the Western masculine ideal because they are seen as being more these types of emotions tend to enhance or confirm one's social or contextual power. So while women are more likely to express prosocial and emotions that imply powerlessness, and men are more likely to demonstrate powerful emotions, men and women do not *experience* those emotions differently based on sex, rather their *expression* of those emotion are heavily dictated by social norms and constructions.

Culture adheres to collective rather than individualistic belief systems and behavioral norms. Therefore, the stereotype that women are more emotional than men has maintained through cultural constructs found in every realm of culture. It is especially important to understand the stereotypes of gendered emotions because they shape how we view and value (or devalue) others and ourselves.

⁸² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4Zdx97A63s>

⁸³ Fischer, Agneta. *Gender and Emotion: Social Psychological Perspectives*. 200. Cambridge University Press.

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid

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7.2: Sex, Gender, and Friendship

Friendships take many forms: close, family-like, acquaintance, or based on task or leisure activities or even on social media like Facebook. How many people have you heard describe someone as being a “Facebook friend?” Homogenous friends tend to be similar in sex, ethnicity, intelligence, economic status, and sexual orientation. However, homogeneous friends are not more “successful” friendships, nor is there any scientific data supporting the idea that homogeneous friends outlast heterogamous friends.

Children as young as 3 or 4 years old develop and demonstrate preferences for particular playmates. As children grow and continue into their primary socialization, their concepts of friendship become increasingly complex and focus on themes of satisfying interaction. Most children prefer same-sex friendships because of their similar interest in activities. Often, boys okay in larger groups and describe their friendships in terms of loyalty, helping, shared activities, and awareness of each others’ needs, but without overt affection. Girls tend to emphasize themes of closeness, verbal sharing, acceptance, and emotional sharing. A children age, the differences in friendships between the sexes becomes more distinct, with girls sharing information and communication with friends and boy sharing activities with friends.⁸⁶ In many ways, boys tend to view friendship as something that is instrumental and girls view friendship as something emotional.

Boys same-sex friendships also tend to be less intimate than that of girls same-sex relationships. “Research of high school boys has shown that there are several characteristics of upholding masculinity during adolescence that have implications for male friendship.” Vicki Helgeson explains three reasons for this⁸⁷:

1. Boys’ interactions are often fashioned through and characterized by mocking, teasing, and taunting. Boys are excited to tease each other and stand up to the teasing, as well.
2. Boys’ identities are largely defined by heterosexism. They are expected to be heterosexual and masculine, totally unfeminine.
3. Boys are expected to be “tough” by hiding their emotions. Often other boys will cut off another boy’s attempt to share emotion in order to maintain their demonstrated masculinity.

One thing sexes have in common in friendship trends is the rate of homosocial relationships. **Homosocial relationships** are *relationships between people of the same sex within society*. This term essentially describes the social bonds between people of the same sex within a society. Of course, there are a variety of social bonds experienced by people in society, but we continue to observe the majority of lasting friendships being homosocial friendships. Think about it: Homosocial relationships can include teammates in a sex-segregated sport, a bachelorette party, or a “guys’ night out.” Think back to your adolescent friendships. How many of them were homosocial rather than heterosocial?

In adult friendships, we see some of those trends resume. Some researchers tend to emphasize the idea than men prefer to have “side-by side” friendships while women tend to prefer “face-to-face” friendships.⁸⁸ Women’s friendships tend to emphasize reciprocity, whereas men’s friendships tend to be associative rather than reciprocal. However, men often self-disclose in their friendships and women often pursue specific activities with specific friends. So, men’s and women’s friendships may have more overlapping themes than they do differences.

The intimacy level of men’s long-term friendships tend to resemble those of women’s. While most research on adult long-term friendships has focused primarily on women’s friendships, even fewer studies have been conducted on minority men’s long-term friendships. So the intersectional approach to studying men’s long-term friendships is relatively uncharted territory.

Recent research by sociologist Tristan Bridges into so-called “man caves” demonstrates that in addition to being respites from the “feminine domain” of the rest of the house and specifically marked as a “man’s domain,” it is also a place where men *plan* to hang out with their male friends. While they understand this to be a place where “men can be men,” watch sports, curse, and talk openly with one another, it is also a place understood to be primarily used for homosocial bonding.⁸⁹ Sadly, most of the men Bridges spoke to didn’t actually use their man caves for anything, as they had no time with work and family responsibilities!

More research has emerged in the past decade on cross-sex adult friendships as more egalitarian relationships and sex roles have become more accepted and practiced. For women, benefits of being friends with men tend include knowing how men think and access to men’s greater resources and status. For men, some benefits of cross-sex friendships tend to include relief from rivalry within male friendships and enjoying more nurturing and emotional support.⁹⁰ Cross-sex friendships are often more emotionally satisfying for men than for women.⁹¹

⁸⁶ McNelles, L & Connolly, J. (1999). Intimacy between adolescent friends: Age and gender differences in intimate affect and intimate behaviors. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 9(2), 143-159

⁸⁷ Helgeson, V. 2012. *Psychology of Gender*. Fourth Edition, Carnegie Mellon University: Pearson.

⁸⁸ Wright, P. 1998. Toward an Expanded Orientation to the Study of Sex Differences in Friendship. *Sex Roles*.

⁸⁹ <https://melmagazine.com/this-guy-stu...dcc#.h8fso6gic>

⁹⁰ McWilliams, S. & Howard, J. (1993). Solidarity and hierarchy in cross-sex friendships, *Journal of Social Issues*, 49(3), 191-202.

⁹¹ Werking, K. (1997). *We're just good friends: Women and men in nonromantic relationships*. New York: Guilford.

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7.3: Sex, Gender, and Dating

Ahhh, dating. What is dating? Filtering through the eligible pool of partners for the purpose of mate selection, right? Maybe. But here are far more reasons to date than to merely select a mate. Some people date for excitement, revenge, attention, access to resources, recreation, sexual activity, or status. Prior to dating, courting was common in the United States. Courting, which involved strong rules and customs and was often supervised by parents, evolved into dating due to wide-spread use of the automobile after the Industrial Revolution. Automobiles enabled young people to have more freedom (including new found opportunities to explore intimacy without their parents' watchful eyes).

In the United States there are millions of people between the ages of 18-24 (18-24 is considered prime dating and mate selection ages). The U.S. Statistical Abstracts estimates that 9.5% of the U.S. population or about 15,675,000 males and 15,037,000 females are in this age group.⁹²

Today, men are much more likely to date and have multiple dating partners than are women. Yep, there's that double-standard rearing its ugly head again. However, for both men and women, homogamy remains the overriding principle for selecting dating partners. When we see people we filter them as either being in or out of our pool of eligibles (the people we could theoretically meet and have relationships with). **Filtering** is the process of identifying those we interact with as either being in or out of our pool of people we might consider to be a date or mate. There are many filters we use. One is physical appearance. We might include some because of tattoos and piercing or exclude some of the exact same physical traits.

There are a lot of gendered rituals assigned to dating. Like our **sexual scripts**, *blueprints and guidelines for what we define as our role in sexual expression, sexual orientation, sexual behaviors, sexual desires, and the sexual component of our self-definition*, we have dating scripts. These scripts are filled with those gendered rituals. We are not just born with sexual or gendered scripts in place; they are learned. Dating and gender trends are learned via culture and socialization (think about movies aimed at young adults). There are as many unique dating scripts as there are people, yet some of these scripts have common themes and can be viewed as a collective pattern or trend in the larger social level. For example, while there are exceptions, who do we typically expect to "make the first move" in heterosexual dating experiences? Most of would agree: men. (Sigh).

Teens often have mutually self-serving motivations in dating that often make their experiences (often love) feel real and powerful at the time (see Table 6.3.1). For many teens who form heterosexual romantic relationships, the girls are often seeking social status and maturity by having a complex relationship with a boy and by demonstrating to her female friends her social capabilities. Typically teen girls seek love, closeness, intimacy, and the status of being a girlfriend, steady, or even engaged. That works conveniently for boys who are often seeking physical affection and social status.⁹³

Table 6.3.1 Adolescent Intimacy-Sex and Love Matrix

	Plays at	Really wants
Boys	Love	Sex
Girls	Sex	Love

This pattern in Table 6.3.1 has not been found to apply to adults and has not been found to apply to all teen romances. Adults tend to report more sexual and relational satisfaction when intimacy and friendship are part of the overall relationship. Men typically have more power in initial dating situations, and women often see their actions as being dependent on men's. Most research on dating trends have been conducted within heterosexual dating patterns, and so far, this has been a very heterocentric perspective of dating, but we will explore same- sex dating trends and the problems with heterosexual focus in a moment.

In general, people engaging in heterosexual dating practices typically identify potential partners exhibiting traditional feminine and masculine traits as being the most attractive as potential partners. In other words, we tend to filter our dating prospects through gendered lenses. That is, how well does the person conform to or violate genders norms. However, and this is when it gets really exciting, marital relationships between such people tend to have lower satisfaction rates, particularly for women. Think about that! While traditional gender roles might be attractive in dating prospects, they often do not sustain or maintain interpersonal satisfaction in a marriage. Calling Freidan! Remember that little book a lady named Betty wrote back in the 1960s called The Feminine Mystique we discussed in the opening chapter? Well, over fifty years ago Freidan revealed the restlessness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction experienced by so many suburban wives living out the outlined gendered scripts in the privacy of their middle-

and upper-class homes. Turns out, that trend persists. Androgynous individuals and people in egalitarian partnerships and marriages report higher levels in interpersonal satisfaction.

Speaking of changing dating patterns, the single largest method for spouses to meet now is online. Between 2005-2012, more than one-third of couples who got married in the US met through an online dating site. In the past it was said that people would only look as far as they needed to to find a partner. In fact, in 1932, one third of couples who got married had lived within a five-block radius of each other before they got married! As far as they need to go but no further!⁹⁴ This method of mate selection worked insofar as it allowed you to meet an eligible as quickly and as painlessly as possible. Since marriage was understood to be the marker of adulthood it was an urgent matter to find a partner swiftly (to say nothing of the social pressure and ever present fear of becoming a ‘spinster’ or an ‘old maid’!). Potential spouses were filtered primarily through gender roles; could this man be a provider to a wife and children? Could this woman bear and raise children and keep a home? Today, the explicit gender role filtration may have lessened, but it still dominates in our profile pictures. One study even found 90% of your dating success depends on it!⁹⁵ The most effective profile pictures encapsulated crucial gendered themes; for men, avoiding looking at the camera, not smiling, and doing something interesting were most effective. For women, a flirtatious and coy straightforward selfie shot with visible cleavage would do the trick.

Most of us tend to think of personal or psychological characteristics when explaining our dating and spousal choices. As we have seen throughout this chapter however, that is a simplified and incomplete explanation. Instead, we must look to sociology to explain the rest. When asked why we choose our partner we might reply with ‘chemistry’ or something similar. But, as we’ve seen before society is often stacking the odds. Isn’t it uncanny how many of our own parents married heterogamously on most attributes (e.g. race/ethnicity, class, age, religion and even level of attractiveness)? Well, it turns out, society organized our lives to make this outcome likely for most. We tend to live in neighborhoods grouped by race and class. When we meet people in the real world it is often at work or school. The people we run into in either location are also likely to have similar backgrounds to us. In other words, the field of availables is stratified into class and racial groups before we meet anyone! By the way, have you ever noticed how much you have in common with people of similar backgrounds to your own? You have similar socialization experiences, similar cultural understandings and lo and behold, you click! You hit it off with that person, becoming fast friends or dating partners. Sounds a lot like that mysterious ‘chemistry’ we spoke of earlier, doesn’t it?

Much has been made of the ‘hook up’ in recent years, particularly among college students. While its meaning isn’t always clear (does kissing count? Any sexual contact?), it is understood to be occurring more frequently. This is facilitated technologically as well as face to face. Not just dating apps however, sociologist Lisa Wade has documented that young people today use many apps, like social media ones, to facilitate hookups. Additionally, Wade has found that hookups resulting in sex are less enjoyable for women than they are for men and this has everything to do with social forces that privilege men’s pleasure at women’s expense.⁹⁶

⁹² United States Census Bureau. Age and Sex Composition in the United States: 2012

<https://www.census.gov/population/ag.../2012comp.html>

⁹³ Hammon and Cheney. *Intimate Relationship and Family*. “Love and Intimacy.” 2012. Creative Commons License.

⁹⁴ Ansari, Aziz. *Modern Romance*. Penguin Press. ISBN 978-1-59420-627-6.

⁹⁵ Christian Rudder, *Dataclysm*, 2014

⁹⁶ <http://www.alternet.org/sex-amp-rela...-reason-women- get-less-often-men- and-how-fix-it>

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7.4: Same-sex Dating Trends

To what extent do marriage and family therapy journals address gay, lesbian, and bisexual issues such as dating, marriage, divorce, and adoption? Wanda Clark and Julianne Serovich conducted one of the largest studies of its kind to answer these questions. Of the 13,217 articles examined in 17 journals, only 77 (.006%) focused on gay, lesbian, and/or bisexual issues or used sexual orientation as a variable.⁹⁷ Their findings support the claim that LGBTQ+ family issues are largely ignored by marriage and family therapy researchers and most scholars. This poses a bit of a problem for people seeking information on the subjects.

However, we do know many gender normative behaviors in heterosexual relationships are the same for homosexual relationships. For example, people engaging in homosexual dating practices typically identify potential partners exhibiting traditional feminine and masculine traits as being the most attractive as potential partners.

One distinction within homosexual dating relationships are the increased risk youth are for dating violence. Media attention and the literature on LGBTQ+ youth overwhelmingly focus on violence involving hate crimes and bullying (when acknowledged at all). This makes it more difficult to bring to light the increased risk these young people face for dating violence. One study found:

“A total of 5,647 youth (51 % female, 74 % White) from 10 schools participated in a cross-sectional anonymous survey, of which 3,745 reported currently being in a dating relationship or having been in one during the prior year. Results indicated that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are at higher risk for all types of dating violence victimization (and nearly all types of dating violence perpetration), compared to heterosexual youth.”⁹⁸

Dating and relationships for people in the LGBTQI community can be more socially difficult due to oppressive factors within dominant Western culture. This may be particularly true given that lesbians and gay men are stigmatized both on an individual level and a couple level. The effects of oppression and internalized homophobia may create a strain on those dating relationships that are formed, factors that many heterosexual couples do not have to endure. Higher levels of internalized homophobia and discrimination were associated with less positive perceptions of relationship quality among their gay and lesbian participants.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Clark and Serovich. Twenty years Later and Still in the Dark?. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*. Volume 23, Issue 3. July, 1997. Pages 239–253

⁹⁸ Dank, M., Lachman, P., Zweig, J.M. et al. *J Youth Adolescence* (2014) 43: 846. doi:10.1007/s10964-013-9975-8

⁹⁹ Otis, M. D., Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., & Hamrin, R. (2006). Stress and relationship quality in same-sex couples. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 23(1), 81-99.

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7.5: Cohabitation

Cohabiting is living together without marriage. While the legality of cohabiting and married couples differ, the gender variables affecting satisfaction do not differ greatly. However, compared to married couples, a more egalitarian sharing of the household seems to be even more desirable. And there is really very little difference in the level of desire for egalitarian household between homosexual and heterosexual couples. However, among lesbian couples, living together is more likely to have a marital meaning than among gay men.

Some researchers have suggested divorce is more likely among couples who cohabit prior to marriage. However, researchers have found it is not cohabitation that likely enhances divorce rates. What leads to divorce is when people cohabit before they have the maturity and experience to choose compatible partners and to sustain a long-term relationship. Early entry into marriage or cohabitation, especially prior to age 23, is the critical risk factor for divorce. Sometimes people who cohabit get married due to social pressure or out of a feeling of needing to “take the next step” (marriage) and without said pressure may not have otherwise married when they weren’t ready to or their partner wasn’t a long term fit. However getting married out of necessity or pressure are also huge risk factors for divorce.

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7.6: Sociology of the Family

A **family** is a social group where the adults cooperate for the well-being of the group; it can include those related by blood, marriage, or adoption, and also those who live together in an intimate relationship. The family structures that were very common a century ago are not nearly as common today. A **family of orientation** is the family into which an individual is born. Most people grow up and start their own families. The **family of procreation** is the family an individual forms by marriage and or having children. In the U.S. around the year 1900, most families had three generations living in one home (e.g., children, parents, and uncles, aunts, or grandparents) and most participated in the manual labor that maintained the household. Today, many families fall into one of two types: the first is a **nuclear family** or a family group consisting of a mother and or a father, or both, and their children; the second most common family form is the **blended family**, or the family created by a marriage of two adults where one or both of them has one or more children from a prior relationship. The rest are many variations of family types including single parent households (somewhere around 41% of births are to 'single parents' [though, this includes cohabiting partners]). Very few families are multiple generational beyond parents and their children. All the family relations past the nuclear or blended family we call **extended family** (e.g., cousins, aunts and uncles, and grand and great-grandparents).¹⁰⁰

Family households predominated in 1970, when they made up 81 percent of all households. This proportion dropped to around 66 percent by 2012. The most noticeable trend is the decline of married- couple households with their own children, from 40 percent of households in 1970 to 20 percent in 2012. Indeed, the number of married couples without children has grown in recent years, from 28 percent of households in 2005 to 29 percent in 2012. This change is likely related to the aging of householders and delays in childbearing.

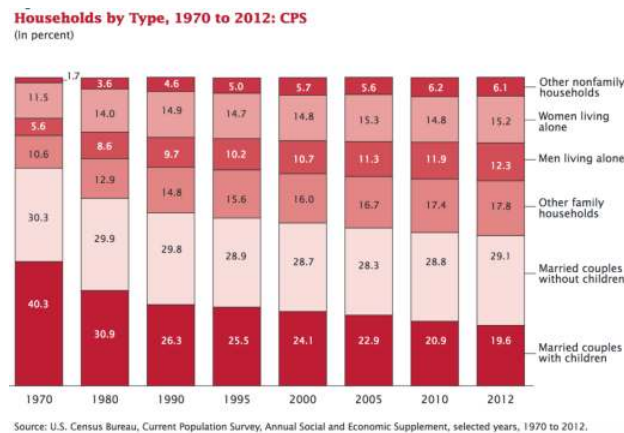


Figure 6.6.1 Households by Type, 1970-2012

Researchers in the sociology of family today often point out the path to marriage and family is varied and nonlinear for many. While many of us learn the song as children about “so-and-so and so-and-so sitting in a tree, k-i-s-s-i-n-g” as a children’s song (and socialization technique into the appropriate path towards marriage and children) not all of us will take that path (at least not in that order). Today’s family landscape is multifaceted and filled with options (especially notable in that this now includes women). Several trends have been identified enabling these options: with the change in the economy toward an information based service economy, young people of all genders require more schooling. This pushes back marriage into the late twenties. Since it is now far more acceptable and easier for young people to engage in premarital sex and there is less rush to have children, we’re doing so later and later. With the aid of reproductive technologies childbearing can be pushed back as well. While it used to be that women needed to be married to effectively begin adulthood, now women can choose other routes to adulthood.¹⁰¹

In studying the family, Functional Theorists have identified some common and nearly universal family functions. That means almost all families in all countries around the world have at least some of these functions in common. Table 6.6.2 shows many of the global functions of the family.

Table 6.6.2 Functions of the Family.

Function	What it provides
Economic support	food, clothing, shelter

Emotional support	intimacy, companionship, belonging
Socialization of children	raising children, parenting
Control of sexuality	defines and controls when and with whom (e.g., marriage)
Control of reproduction	the types of relationships where children should be born
Ascribed status	contexts of race, socioeconomic status, religion, kinship

By far, economic support is the most common function of today's families. When your parents let you raid their pantry, wash clothes in their laundry, or pay for health insurance, that's economic support.

Emotional relationships are also very common, but there is a tremendous amount of cultural diversity in how intimacy is experienced in various families around the world. **Intimacy** is the social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical trust that is mutually shared between family members. Family members share confidences, advice, trust, secrets, and ongoing mutual concern. Many family scientists believe that intimacy in family relationships functions as a strong buffer to the ongoing stresses experienced by family members outside of the home.

Socialization of children is important so that they grow up to be fully functioning members of society. Children are born with the potential to be raised as humans. They will realize this potential if older family members or friends take the time to protect and nurture them into their cultural and societal roles. Today the family is the core of primary socialization, but many other societal institutions contribute to the socialization process as well.

Controlling sexuality and reproduction has traditionally been sanctioned within the context of a family. In some cultures, the father and mother selected the spouse of their children in many countries although it has never been that common in the U.S. Older family members tend to encourage pregnancy and childbirth within marriage or long-term relationships.

The **instrumental family roles** include leadership and decision-making responsibilities. The **expressive family role** sees to it that the emotional needs of the family are met. In traditional families among societies throughout the world the husband is more likely to provide material support and primary leadership authority within the family and the wife is more likely to provide affection and moral support. Although this general role pattern has been historically true, these roles are undergoing some degree of change today, particularly as more women enter the labor force and as family types are changing.

¹⁰⁰ Hammond, R & Cheney, P. (2011). Introduction to Sociology.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/22/ma...d-t.html?pagewanted=all>

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7.7: Sex, Gender and Marital Trends

It's an exciting time for us in the United States! Why? Because we have hit an all-time high for adults who have never been married. One in five adults aged 25 and older have never been married. Men are more likely than women to have never been married (23% vs. 17% in 2012). "And this gender gap has widened since 1960, when 10% of men ages 25 and older and 8% of women of the same age had never married."¹⁰²

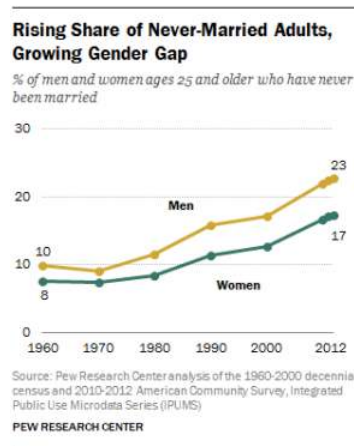


Figure 6.7.1 Rising Share of never-married adults, growing gender gap.

The median age at the time of the first marriage is now 27 for women and 29 for men. This is up from 20 for women and 23 for men in 1960, and about a quarter (24%) of never-married young adults ages 25 to 34 are living with a partner.¹⁰³ This trend cuts across all major racial groups but has been more pronounced among African Americans, wherein African Americans went from 9% to 36% and Whites went from 8% to about 16%.

Married people (43% very happy) are a good bit happier than unmarrieds (24%). This trend has been consistent in research over several decades. In fact, marriage is one of the biggest indicators for self-satisfaction and happiness in adults' lives. It holds up for men as well as for women, for homosexual and heterosexual, and for the old as well as the young. So, marriage is more than "just a piece of paper" and not all marriages are created (or interpreted) as equal. For example, if you were a visitor from another planet and attempted to explain marriage to beings where you were from originally by looking at popular culture, you'd probably have to conclude that marriage is almost exclusively sold, bought, and desired by women. What do I mean by that? Wedding magazines are aimed almost exclusively at brides, not grooms. Reality TV shows highlight *Bridezillas*, not *Groomzillas* and "Saying yes to the Dress" instead of the tuxedo. "If you like it, then you should have put a ring on it."—Queen B. Meanwhile, men are often depicted as being commitment-phobic, uninterested (or uninvited) in planning a wedding, or as thought they are making the "ultimate sacrifice" (their singlehood) for someone. Marriage is depicted as being natural for women, but stifling for men.

These images in popular culture are not completely fiction, as our interpretations of our gender roles are largely shaped by popular culture. For example, research shows women tend to find marriage more appealing than do men. Nearly two-thirds of married same-sex couples are lesbians, and only about a third are gay men.¹⁰⁴ Women tend to be more marriage-focused, be they homosexual or heterosexual.

But while women tend to be more wedding-focused, what about some of those benefits of marriage mentioned earlier? Do women and men enjoy those equally? In fact, the answer is no. Research has shown the "marriage benefits"—the increases in health, wealth, and happiness—are disproportionately enjoyed by men. Married men are better off than single men in these categories. Married women, on the other hand, are not better off than unmarried women. In fact, in the one area where men were traditionally the beneficiaries in different-sex marriages (wealth) men are actually benefitting economically more from marriage today than are women. "In the past, relatively few wives worked, so marriage enhanced the economic status of women more than that of men. In recent decades, however, the economic gains associated with marriage have been greater for men than for women."¹⁰⁵ Since folks with higher incomes are more than those with lower incomes to marry instead of cohabit, and we tend to marry endogamously (so upper class people with upper class people) people higher up the class ladder tend to retain privileges or even increase them through marriage. Households where there are two high income earners are also more likely to be in the upper middle class, cementing further the class divide and the accompanying resources.

The Rise of Wives, 1970 to 2007

Share of Husbands Whose Wives' Income Tops Theirs

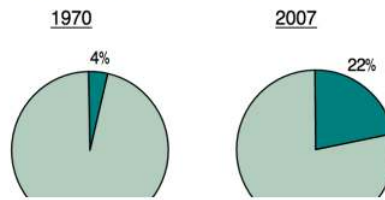


Figure 6.7.2 The Rise of Wives, 1970 to 2007

¹⁰² Pew Research Report. 2014. Record Share of Americans Have Never Married.

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/...-americans-have-never-married/>

¹⁰³ U.S. Census Bureau table MS-2. (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/families/data/marital.html>).

¹⁰⁴ Badgett, M.V., Herman, J. 2011. *Patterns of Relationship Recognition by Same-Sex Couples in the United States*. The Williams Institute.

¹⁰⁵ Richard Fry and D’Vera Cohn. 2010. “Women, Men and the New Economics of Marriage”. Pew Research Center.

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files...f-marriage.pdf>

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7.8: Disruption in Marriage

About 1% of the total number of currently-married or registered same-sex couples get divorced each year, in comparison to about 2% of the total number of married straight couples. Note that the percentage of couples that get divorced eventually is close to 50%, but only 1% or 2% of them get divorced in any particular year. Finally, divorce is less likely for those who marry the first time after the age of 25.

Many people believe cheating to be the leading cause of divorce, however communication problems are the number one reason marriages fail in America today. Another strong factor influencing divorce is getting married for reasons other than love and commitment, such as marrying out of obligation, pregnancy, or for money. And speaking of money, finances (or being on different financial pages) can cause a huge strain on a marriage. “Opposites can attract but when two people are opposites in the financial department, divorce often ensues.”¹⁰⁶

A survey of over 2000 heterosexual couples, found that women initiated nearly 70% of all divorces. Yet there was no significant difference between the percentage of breakups initiated by women and men in non-marriage relationships.¹⁰⁷ Some argue women initiate most divorces because they might be more sensitive to relationship difficulties. However if this were true, women would initiate the breakup of both marriages and non-marital relationships at equal rates. Instead, “married women reported lower levels of relationship quality than married men. In contrast, women and men in non-marital relationships reported equal levels of relationship quality.”¹⁰⁸

Some social scientists argue this might be true because marriage comes with the historical baggage of patriarchal ideology, whereas non-marriage relationships are often free from (or least less affected by) the ideas that within heterosexual marriages women are still expected to take on the bulk of the housework and childcare responsibilities. Heck, women are still expected to take the man’s surname! So while society and culture are moving toward more egalitarian relationship goals, the traditional institution of marriage just hasn’t caught up, making non-marital relationships more adaptable to contemporary expectations and ideals.

An Indiana University study shows that men and women cheat at the same rate.¹⁰⁹ Surprised? Most of us probably would be, especially since the images we often see of the “wondering spouse” is a man on a business trip or a man who is unhappy in his marriage, picking up a woman in a bar or a club. While men and women cheat at about the same rate, the motives between the sexes are often different. Women are more likely to cheat for emotional satisfaction. Often times, when women cheat, there is no physical contact, but becoming emotionally invested in another person means one has likely checked out of their marriage. For men, cheating often takes the form of physical connection. Therefore social scientists often recognize men’s cheating habits being less about having an emotional connection with someone and more about experiencing a physical pleasure. In fact, most men who cheat on their wives claim they are still in love with them and that their infidelities were “hurtful mistakes” rather than an attempt to leave or find someone new.¹¹⁰

Whether or not marriages are disrupted by separation or divorce is explained by a number of factors, such as gender roles adopted by women and men within the family unit. For example, men who are more flexible in their gender roles and identities are more likely to be able to sustain a marriage than are men who are stricter in traditional gender roles.¹¹¹

When people do end a heterosexual marriage arrangement, women are far more likely to retain custody of children than men. About 83% of custodial parents are women.¹¹² However, aside from the financial strain of being a single parent, numerous court visits to receive payments can also be a costly venture. Mothers who are custodial parents are also less likely to retain full-time employment than are fathers who are custodial parents. This can, in turn, cause women to be more financially dependent on child support and/or public assistance. Close to 31.2% of custodial mothers live below the official poverty line, whereas 17.2% of custodial fathers are living below the poverty line. 45.6% of women who are owed child support are paid the full amount, 28% receive partial the amount due, and about 20% receive no payment at all.¹¹³

106 The Huffington Post. “The 10 Most Common Reasons People Get Divorced.” http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yourta...b_8086312.html

107 American Sociological Association. (2015, August 22). Women more likely than men to initiate divorces, but not non-marital breakups. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved January 29, 2017 from www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/08/150822154900.htm

108 Ibid

109 Kristen P. Mark, Erick Janssen, Robin R. Milhausen. *Infidelity in Heterosexual Couples: Demographic, Interpersonal, and Personality-Related Predictors of Extradyadic Sex*. Springer Science+Business Media, LLC 2011.

110 Ibid

¹¹¹ Sherman, Jennifer. 2009. "Bend to Avoid Breaking: Job Loss, Gender Norms, and Family Stability in rural America." *Social Problems* 56 (November): 599-620.

¹¹² U.S. Census Bureau. 2013. Statistical Abstract of the United States. 2013. Washington D.C.
<https://www.census.gov/content/dam/C...mo/P60-255.pdf>

¹¹³ Ibid

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7.9: The Social Construction of Sexuality

Excerpt from: Coleman, K. Alienation through Social Construction: A Call for the Re-humanization of Sexuality. *Journal of Positive Sexuality*, Vol. 1, June 2015, page 25-30.

Sexuality is a topic that comes with a great deal of controversy. The debate over whether sexuality is ascribed or achieved is an old and a loaded one. Often the same people (newscasters, elected officials, religious leaders, etc.) generating discussion on the topic misuse the proper terminology surrounding the subject, resulting in misleading and fallacious constructs being deployed and socially reinforced. While sexual orientation is ascribed,¹¹⁴ sexuality is a social representation of sexual orientation. So to argue whether one is born “gay” or “straight” is a loaded debate without the possibility of a solution because: People cannot be “gay” or “straight”; rather, only behaviors can be categorized in these binary constructs. However, sexual behaviors, social definitions, and interpretations of “gay” and “straight” as descriptors of human sexuality are constantly evolving. Thus, “gay” or “straight” can only be applied as descriptors to individual sexual actions rather than to people as a categorical approach to identity.

The American Sociological Association (ASA), American Medical Association (AMA), American Psychological Association, and American Pediatric Association all recognize sexuality as being experienced by the actor on a continuum and based on a personal sense of identity reflective of sexual attractions. The ASA, AMA, and American Psychological Association recognize that while there is no absolute consensus as to what determines one’s sexual orientation, most people experience little or no sense of choice pertaining to their orientations, leading researchers to conclude, historically, that sexual orientation is biologically determined. “Although we can choose whether to act on our feelings, psychologists do not consider sexual orientation to be a conscious choice that can be voluntarily changed.”¹¹⁵

In addition, actors often portray sexual orientation through behaviors socially interpreted as indicative of that predetermined characteristic; however, sexual behavior may or may not reflect sexual orientation. In other words, the social actor has a choice whether to exercise behaviors indicative of current social definition of heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, or asexuality. The sexual behavior in which an individual engages does not necessarily reflect sexual orientation or desire; rather, sexual behavior is often indicative of the social construction of reality possessed by the social actor and of the motivations for specific sexual activity.¹¹⁶

Despite behaviors exercised by the social actor, sexual orientation remains the same. So, while a social actor might have strong sexual urges for someone of the same sex category, they may never act on it. Conversely, someone having sexual attraction for others of the different sex may exercise behaviors indicative of current cultural definitions descriptive of homosexuality. Thus, behaviors often (mistakenly) become the catalyst for identifying others’ sexual orientation. In addition, social actors’ sexual behaviors are a product of socialization, not biology. For example, we learn (explicitly from parents, teachers, politicians, religious leaders, and other significant figures in our lives, or implicitly from images, themes, or messages in popular culture) how to have sex, with whom to have sex, with what motivations to have sex. We learn there are certain rules, social regulations, and even legislation controlling our interpretations of valuing our own and others’ sexual behaviors. Sexual behaviors—focusing only on behaviors that are products of consensus from both (or all) parties—are behaviors (like all others) that are learned through socialization. They develop and progress as we develop and progress. Consequently, sexual behaviors are not always in response to sexual desire because of two central explanations:

1. Motivations for sexual behavior vary; and
2. The current social construction of normative sexual behavior

is reflective of ultra-conservative (prudish) ideals and saturated with religious underpinnings—or at least the most current culturally valued behaviors are. Nevertheless sexual orientation remains inherent in individuals and, thus, unchanging.

Common terms pertaining to sexuality (sexual orientation, desire, and behavior) are constantly presented in the media as being interchangeable. However, they are not. Subsequently, much of the population is left uneducated (or inaccurately educated) due mainly to this misrepresentation in popular culture and media and to the lack of passable education in the public school system on this topic. Currently, there is no curriculum mandate for teaching human sexuality (vastly different from “sex ed”). This is in combination with the content of sex education most often resulting in the over-emphasis given to abstinence-only education.¹¹⁷ Such restriction on students’ access to fair and adequate education on human sexuality only adds to the distortion of sexuality commonly presented as “normative” in popular culture.

The inconsistency surrounding the use of the mentioned terminology (sexual orientation, sexual desire, and sexual behavior), the lack of education in our public schools, and limited interpretations of sexuality presented in the media have contributed to a poorly

informed public. The incapacity to recognize the differences between these terms outside of the individual only enhances the risk of not being able to identify them correctly within the individual's experiences and the inability for one to fully understand their own complex sexuality. At risk is our ability to understand sexuality as one part of the human experience, instead of focusing on categories created in an attempt to indicate one's full social identity. The ability to separately define behaviors from orientation will allow actors to recognize sexuality as a continuum within the human experience with room for biological variation. After all, biology loves variation; it is we humans who tend to struggle with it.

¹¹⁴ American Psychological Association. (2011). Sexual orientation. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from: www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.aspx

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ Katz, J. (2007). The invention of heterosexuality. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

¹¹⁷ Landry, D. J., Darroch, J., E., Singh, S., Higgins, J., & Donovan, P. (2003). Factors associated with the content of sex education in U.S. public secondary schools. *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 35, 261-269.

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7.10: Binaries? More Like BYE-naries

Contemporary society defines sex as either male or female, as discussed in earlier chapters. However, we know intersexed people challenge this widely-held and reinforced sex myth. Sexuality, though, is also largely defined in binary terms. The word *heterosexuality* didn't appear until 1890s, and it was only in response to the rise of nonprocreative sex. At the time, sex for pleasure was seen as abnormal and even perverted. The word *heterosexuality* was actually created in response to people engaging in sexual acts with people of the *same* sex, and these came to known as homosexual behaviors.¹¹⁸ In other words, the word *heterosexual* didn't exist until there was a need to differentiate people based on their sexual behaviors, depending on whether they were engaging sexually with people of the same sex or a different sex. However these words were created to set the standard for "normal" sexuality (heterosexuality) and "deviant" sexuality (homosexuality). This is an old tune with new lyrics, much like Whiteness, wealth, youth, and masculinity have been set as the standards and much less scrutinized than other variations in those categories, now heterosexuality has been granted the same social beneficiary status pertaining to sexuality. In other words, when sexuality is viewed from a binary perspective, homosexuality is overwhelmingly underappreciated and underrepresented in popular culture and in our collective conscious.

While sociologists have challenged the legitimacy of the binary construction of sexuality, so too have they challenged the idea of heterosexuality being the "normal" of the two. In addition to this social injustice, the binary viewpoint does even more harm. It allows for the dismissal of people who don't identify as being either hetero- or homosexual. Bisexuals are often described as being a combination of the two mutually exclusive categories for sexuality. Nope. Bisexuality is its own sexual category as recognized by the AMA, APA, and ASA, among others.

In addition, the idea that sexuality is binary assumes that homosexual or heterosexual desires exclude one another. Sexuality is, in fact, more fluid than a binary exploration would allow. Asexuality, not having sexual attracted to either male or female, does not align with either the heterosexual or homosexual definitions, and yet there is nearly 1% of the world's population identifying as asexual.¹¹⁹ So the binary exploration of sexuality doesn't make sense socially, biologically, or politically.

¹¹⁸ Katz, J. (2007). *The invention of heterosexuality*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

¹¹⁹ Anthony F. Bogaert. 2004. Asexuality: prevalence and associated factors in a national probability sample, *Journal of Sex Research*, August, 2004.

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7.11: LGBTQ+ Identities

Give me an L! L! you got your L, you got your L! Give me a G! G! you got your G, you got your G! Okay, that's enough, because if we really finished that little cheer, we'd have to spell out LGBTQQIAA. Yep, we'd be here a while. However, these are also the sexual identities we're going to explore in this chapter, as we just discussed why the binary approach to sexuality is no longer social or scientifically valid.

L=Lesbian

A lesbian is a woman who is attracted to other women. The word "attracted" doesn't necessarily imply a sexual attraction. Rather, this can include sexual attraction, sexual activity, sexual fantasies, emotional preference for females, or lesbian identification.

G=Gay

The G represents gay males. While the word gay is an umbrella term that can describe homosexual men and women, typically the word gay is used to represent homosexual males, thus making it necessary to allow a separate identity for homosexual females (lesbians).

B=Bisexual

Bisexual people have sexual desires or behaviors for both men and women, and those desires or behaviors are more than just incidental or occasional. This definition would exclude heterosexual people who "experimented" with homosexual behavior but engaged in only heterosexual behaviors for the rest of their lives, and it would exclude homosexual people who experimented with heterosexual behaviors but exercised homosexual behaviors for the rest of their lives. Bisexuality is NOT a combination of heterosexuality and homosexuality, as previously thought in the sciences only a couple of decades ago.

T=Transgender

Transgender is an umbrella term, encompassing most identities for people who do not conform to traditional gender norms based on their assigned sex category. Some people also refer to being transgender as being gender nonconforming or gender variant. These are all acceptable descriptors for people who "cross gender barriers" but do not change their sex. So women who wear men's clothes or men who wear women's clothes might identify as being transgender. The word transgender is becoming more accepted than the word transvestite, because the word transvestite has an association with the medical community and sometimes has a derogatory meaning.

Transsexuality refers to those who have undergone sex reassignment hormone therapy and/or surgery (gender affirming surgery). People who identify as being transsexual experience gender identity inconsistent with the culturally constructed gender assumptions based on their assigned sex category. While some people who are transsexual reject the label of transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term like transgender.

Q=Queer

The word queer actually means "strange" or "odd." However, in recent decades the word was used to denigrate people who identified as homosexual. The University of Michigan describes the word as such:

Queer:

1. An umbrella term sometimes used by LGBTQA people to refer to the entire LGBT community.
2. An alternative that some people use to "queer" the idea of the labels and categories such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc.

Similar to the concept of genderqueer. It is important to note that the word queer is an in-group term, and a word that can be considered offensive to some people, depending on their generation, geographic location, and relationship with the word.¹²⁰

Queer theory challenges either/or, essentialist notions of sexuality within the mainstream dialogue, and instead suggests an understanding of sexuality that emphasizes blurring boundaries and cultural constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context.

Q=Questioning

The second Q stands for questioning. This second Q represents people who may not feel like they fit nicely and neatly into one of these constructed boxes. While we are seeing some shift toward progress of understanding sexuality as a spectrum, we continue to create labels and identities that ultimately constrict people's identities, behaviors, relationships, and social interpretations of sexuality. So we are seeing progress with more terms and categories than the traditional homosexual or heterosexual binary, but some people (even with the additional contemporary categories) don't identify as strictly one of those. Often people who identify as "questioning" are exploring their identification.

I=Intersex

People who are intersexed have characteristics that are different than the prevalent notions of female and male. Sometimes the I is omitted from the LGBTQIAA because they argue being intersexed is not part of or affect sexuality or sexual identity, and this does not belong in this string of letters. In other words, intersexuality is not about sexuality, it's about sex category. Others argue intersexuality falls under the transgender umbrella and, therefore, belongs in this string of letters. What most sociologists agree on is that expanding our understanding of sexuality, sex, and gender is imperative for the health of our culture and the individuals within. Yes, our understanding is still imperfect and limited, but we are moving in a more enlightened direction.

A=Asexual

Asexuality is a sexual orientation characterized by a persistent lack of sexual attraction toward any gender or sex.¹²¹ At least 1% of people are believed to be asexual. People who are asexual are not genderless people or people with hormone imbalance or people who have a fear or phobia of sexual relationships. Instead, someone who is asexual simply does not experience sexual attraction for others. However, it is important to note, people engage in sexual behaviors for motives other than sexual attraction all the time. So, people who are asexual often date, have sex, masturbate, fall in love, get married, or have children.

A=Ally

Simply put, ally refers to people who are not LGBTQIA but who support the rights of people who are LGBTQIA. Empathy, understanding, and respecting the diverse human experience of sexuality will help lower health risks, hate crimes, discrimination, substance abuse, homelessness, and suicide and will improve social solidarity and the overall health of society.

¹²⁰ <https://internationalspectrum.umich....fe/definitions>

¹²¹ <http://www.whatisasexuality.com/intro/>

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7.12: Problems with Heterosexual Focus

Sexism is *discrimination based on sex*. **Heterosexism** is the *discrimination or prejudice based on not being heterosexual*. In other words, heterosexism described the predominant thinking that there is an inherent superiority in being heterosexual, thereby limiting social acceptance, tolerance, and empathy for people who do not identify as being heterosexual. Sometimes this can come in the form of overt bigotry, but sometimes heterosexism can be harder to identify. For example, as a woman, I cannot tell you how many times I've been asked if I have a boyfriend or husband. However, I can't recall an instance where someone used more inclusive language to gain perspective into my relationship status. Something like, "Do you have a partner?" And I don't think I've ever been asked if I have a girlfriend or wife. Now, this is not to say that all those people are bigots or mean or intending to be exclusive, but we can see how heterosexism has become the normative presumption while other sexual identities have taken a backseat.

Heterocentrism is the *belief that heterosexuality is central and normal in contrast to other sexual orientations*. This leads to other sexual orientations being viewed as inferior, abnormal, or even unacknowledged. Heterocentrism can be a fueling force behind homophobia, both at individual and societal levels. **Homophobia** is *ideology that disadvantages sexual minority groups*. Homophobia can take many forms: violence perpetrated against sexual minorities, failure to allow same-sex marriage, criminalizing homosexual behaviors (it wasn't until 2003 the Supreme Court reversed the decision with *Lawrence v. Texas*, invalidating **sodomy laws** the criminalization of numerous sexual acts between people of the same sex), or discrimination in the workplace. However, homophobia is often overlooked (except in the occasional headline—events such as the brutal murders of Matthew Shepard, Brandon Teena, and Gwen Araujo). 92% of LGBTQ+ students report hearing homophobic slurs in school regularly, 84% of LGBTQ+ student report being threatened because of their sexual orientation, 39% of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students and 55% of transgender students reported having been shoved or pushed, and 64% percent of GLBTQ students reported feeling unsafe at school.¹²²

Where does much of the homophobia come from? Heterocentrism can lead to heterosexism, and if left unchecked, heterosexism will allow homophobia to flourish. Researcher, author, and professor of psychology at the University of Rochester explained:

"Individuals who identify as straight but in psychological tests show a strong attraction to the same sex may be threatened by gays and lesbians because homosexuals remind them of similar tendencies within themselves. In many cases these are people who are at war with themselves and they are turning this internal conflict outward. Sometimes people are threatened by gays and lesbians because they are fearing their own impulses, in a sense they 'doth protest too much.' In addition, it appears that sometimes those who would oppress others have been oppressed themselves, and we can have some compassion for them too, they may be unaccepting of others because they cannot be accepting of themselves."¹²³

Reinforcing the focus on heterosexuality as being the normative or standard sexuality enhances anti- LBGT+ attitudes. Although those attitudes are declining in the United States, the minority still expressing these negative attitudes has a significant impact on LGBTQ+ people, their supporters, and society as a whole. Homonegativity and homophobia differ depending on the perpetrator or provocateur and the person on the receiving end of the negativity.

¹²² Advocates for Youth. 2016. How the Homophobic Climate in the United States Affects GLBTQ Youth. <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/pub...ophobic-climate-in-the-unit ed-states-affects-glbtc-youth>

¹²³ Homophobia is More Pronounced in Individuals Who Have Internal Conflict Regarding Their Own Sexual Identity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. April, 2012.

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7.13: Gender and Sexuality

The body is the place where ascribed sex, achieved gender, and constructed sexuality come together. Sexual behaviors and attitude vary from culture to culture. While examining sex as a social fact, whether or not we are actually born with a sexual nature, sociologists acknowledge it's social factors organizing our thoughts, behaviors, values, and acts pertaining to sex. Sexuality has become such a significant part of our social lives that it has actually come to be interpreted as *identity*. Today, many people take for granted that sexuality is, like gender, an identity. Individuals don't just identify ourselves, but we identify others in terms of sexuality as well. And it doesn't stop there! We have become preoccupied with our own and others' identities because many of us view our own sexuality as a core of our identity. And we're still not done! We often associate and even interchange our gender identities with our sexual identities, making it even more confusing for those trying to understand the human potential in categorical terms rather than in fluid terms.

Sexuality, like gender, is fluid. To try to categorize a human potential like sexuality is like trying to categorize human potentials like happiness. Could you imagine if we grouped people and their potentials by color of their skin? Oh, wait! We do that too! We create the categories because we're comfortable with the categories, but it's the categories themselves that allow for stratification and inequality between the categories.

Our sexuality will take on different forms and degrees of significance over the life course. Furthermore, men and women do not experience sexuality or even sexual behaviors the same way. Women are often challenged with two major themes pertaining to sexuality: 1) the double standard, and 2) the double-bind.

Double Standard

American contemporary society still dictates that females and males are held to difference (and unequal) standards pertaining to sexual practice. According to the sexual double standard, "boys and men are rewarded and praised for heterosexual sexual contacts, whereas girls and women are derogated and stigmatized for similar behaviors."¹²⁴

Try something for a moment. Take out a piece of paper and draw a line down the center of the page, creating two columns. Label the first column "men" and the second column "women." Then in 20 seconds write down every word, label, or slang term used to describe males with multiple sexual partners in the "men's" column. Then go to the women's column, and give yourself 20 seconds to do the same. What do you see? Nearly every person who tries this exercise will have several more terms in women's column, and not in a positive way. He's a stud, but she's a slut, right? And this is not to imply you think this way, after all you didn't create those terms. But it shows our ability to mimic, translate, or at least identify the interpretations of the larger collective.

The relevance of this double standard for sexual development and gender inequality has prompted substantial research on the topic along with the publication of several popular books with titles such as *Slut!*¹²⁵ and *Fast Girls*¹²⁶. Aside from the sociological implications of the sexual double standard, the slut/stud problem has always been my favorite because I can't understand how so many people have bought into this. And for so long! Why is a woman "a slut" or "dirty," because she has sex? Does a penis have some bizarre dirty-making power that I'm unaware of? Every time a woman has sex with a man, has his penis dirtied her more? And what is a slut? I mean, literally, what is a slut? I know what the dictionary says (yes, it's in Webster's Dictionary):

Slut:

1. a slovenly woman
2.
 - a. a promiscuous woman; *especially* : prostitute
 - b. a saucy girl : minx

But, really, what is a slut? Do we have a quantifiable amount of people with whom the harlot must have intercourse? No. Do we have a comprehensive list of sexual behaviors a woman must engage in before being labeled a slut? No. Does a woman even need to have sex before becoming vulnerable to being labeled a slut? No. But we use this word constantly to degrade and shame women about their sexual behaviors and their selves. And let's be clear on a few other points:

1. this is not a "man-on-woman" crime, overwhelmingly women are more likely to use the word slut than men when referring to a female;
2. the word slut is typically reserved for heterosexual behaviors, (and this ideology still evades my comprehension) females engaging in sexual behaviors with other females are less likely to be labeled a slut.

Maybe lesbian sex isn't "real"? Or maybe because there was no dirty penis to dirty her up? I mean, think about it, if women engaging in homosexual behaviors are somehow less dirty than women engaging heterosexual behaviors, then that leaves the penis as the variable causing the dirtiness. Who knows, the point is we need to start questioning these labels and acknowledge the harm they cause, not only to the recipients, but to our collective understanding of gender and sexuality.

And the word *slut* isn't just harmful to our reputations or interpretations of others' reputations. How many times has a woman's claim of having been raped been dismissed because she's a slut? How often are women or girls afraid to obtain birth control for fear of being called a slut? How often are women who are victims of domestic violence called a slut or whore by their partner? How often are women expected to recount their sexual history in rape, assault, or harassment cases?

Like activists such as Jean Kilbourne and Jackson Katz have proclaimed, it's okay to stand up for women, whether you are male, female, both, or neither. And it's okay to speak out against the double-standard imposed on women.

Double Bind

A **double bind** is a situation in which a person is confronted with two irreconcilable demands or a choice between two undesirable courses of action. "Women have long since been categorized as either virgins or whores, but for the first time we are expected to embody both at the same time."¹²⁷ Turn on the TV or open a magazine, and you'll see endless images of women using their sexuality to sell something.

Sandwiches, drinks, cars, clothes, whatever. There has been a standard set for how women should present themselves as being sexually desirable and mature. However, with this whole double-standard thing still looming, women are still expected to be sexually reserved in order to maintain purity. So, women are then faced with the challenge of being sexually available and experienced while maintaining purity. Sound impossible? Because it is. But, it is a reality for women today.

The contradictory narratives of the double bind make an impossible situation for females in the United States. If having sex is bad and not having sex is bad, then women are in a lose-lose position. And men, of course, are not exempt from this inequity. Men are often shamed for not having sex (or enough of it) while others may shame the women they are having intercourse with—at least for those engaging in heterosexual activities.

If we can undo our thinking of intercourse as the social jackpot (as often shown in popular culture) and start considering other methods of expressing sexuality, we could see a healthy attitudinal shift toward sex pervading the culture: one that doesn't hurt both men and women in its antiquated rigidity.

Autonomous Sexuality

In the 1960s and 1970s, the United States saw its "sexual revolution." This "revolution" was in part due to the introduction and mass availability of contraception. A woman "on the pill" could be sexually active with a man without the same fears of unplanned pregnancy as in the past. Many feminists argue the "sexual revolution" was less a victory for women because it was still on men's terms.^{128 129} However, today we are seeing a bit of a progressive shift. There has been an increasing discussion on women's sexual preferences, desires, and needs. One example in popular culture is women's magazines that have allowed for a very public forum for celebrities like Beyoncé and Britney Spears to reveal their sexuality in public. And if you were an adult in 2008, then you probably remember just how much of her sexuality Spears shared with her audience.

So what is sexually empowering for women? To answer this question, women would need to experience sexuality in a world where they don't feel shamed or dirtied by sexual behaviors, where they are not worried about how they look, and where they can be sexually active without fear of unplanned pregnancy or transmitted STDs. Women would need information and education of what "safe" sex really is, accessible contraception, open and honest communication with sexual partners, stronger policies regarding sexual offenses, and the ability to critique and even reject the feminine ideal represented in popular culture.

For many young people, sex has become a "rite of passage," thrusting them from adolescence to adulthood and into a role ready for a "mature relationship." However, many young people (many people in general, really) don't define sex the same way. For example, many teens don't consider oral sex to be "sex." Further, we have systematically deprived our young people of comprehensive education about sex and sexuality. For schools to qualify for federal funding, a program must teach "abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out-of-wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems" and that a "mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity."¹³⁰ About 35% of U.S. sex education programs teach abstinence only, about 51% teach abstinence as the preferred option, and about 14% teach abstinence as one option in broader curriculum for sex education.¹³¹

So, we are essentially creating the perfect storm for high rates of unplanned pregnancy, high rates of STD transmission, and anxiety about sexuality. We are provided—not just providing but saturating—our youth with images of sexuality: how good it looks, how desirable it will make us, how enjoyable and exciting it is, and how we should look when we’re experiencing a sexual act. However, we’re simultaneously depriving our young people of access to adequate education on the topic of sexuality. This relates to sexual agency: With little formal education and popular culture dictating what sexuality should be, can sexuality be empowering for women?

Most sociologists agree that, yes, sexuality can be empowering for women, but there are some requisites that need to be met. First, women would need to be able to dismantle their thinking that their worth is based on the ability to abide by the constructed double standard or double bind. For now, men (at least heterosexual men) are the social beneficiaries of the double standard, wherein men are not judged so harshly for sexual activity, rather they are often celebrated and encouraged to engage in sexual activity. Second, women (and men) can challenge the Western ideal for marriage being a prerequisite for “the right way” to be sexually active. Third, being in an egalitarian relationship, wherein partners are intentionally and regularly maintaining equity in a relationship, is empowering for both partners. Egalitarian relationships tend to be better at providing romance and respect between partners over longer periods of time.

Much like the majority of socially normative behaviors, our sexual behaviors are constantly under scrutiny. As social actors, we are subject to a range of potential sanctions, both positive and negative, in response to our sexual behaviors. These sanctions, or the fear of such sanctions, are what stand in the way of real social change. Our social construction of sexuality and the inequalities bred from such construction, will not change without some serious social education and confrontation of current ignorant ideas surrounding sexual creed.

Perhaps the most effective approach to begin to reach these goals should target our educational institutions in an attempt to change sexually exclusive culture narratives. Allowing inclusive sex education in public schools (including curriculum focusing on the difference between sexual drive, desire, behaviors, and including positive role models for diversity in sexuality) will help “normalize” currently stigmatized sexual behaviors and people practicing those behaviors. Comprehensive sex education should include physical, psychological, and social aspects of sexuality, not simply focusing on disease and pregnancy prevention.

By implementing improved sex education in our schools, we will likely discover that the social and personal benefits of acceptable sex education outweigh the costs of lack of education. In American culture, we also generally agree that stigmatization and inflicting harm to others is unacceptable. A serious lack of formal sex education only allows these problems to flourish in our culture narrative.

Sex education does not necessarily require teaching certain values relating to particular sexual behaviors or current constructions of them. However, sex education should move beyond teaching anatomy, reproduction, and disease or pregnancy prevention¹³² and also include discussions pertaining to gender role socialization, interpersonal behavior, stigmatization, and acceptance.

By not creating such a shift, we risk the permission to accept and value ourselves, as a collective people, for our diverse human experiences in contrast to an ability to mimic antiquated methods of discrimination through heteronormativity and patriarchal ideals that are creating a degrading effect.

¹²⁴ Derek A. Kreager, Jeremy Staff. June 2009. *Social Psychology Quarterly*. Volume: 72 issue: 2, page(s): 143-164

¹²⁵ Tanenbaum Leora. *Slut! Growing Up Female with a Bad Reputation*. New York: Seven Stories Press; 1999.

¹²⁶ White Emily. *Fast Girls: Teenage Tribes and the Myth of the Slut*. New York: Scribner; 2002.

¹²⁷ Kilbourne, J. 2012. *Killing Us Softly 4*.

¹²⁸ Boston Women’s Health Book Collective. 2005. *Our bodies ourselves: A new edition a new era*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

¹²⁹ Rose, T. 2003. *Longing to tell: Black women talk about sexuality and intimacy*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.

¹³⁰ Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, “Guidance Regarding Curriculum Content (Required for CBAE grantees as of FY 2006.),” January 2006.

¹³¹ Alan Guttmacher Institute. 2004. *Sex education: Needs, programs and policies*. New York and Washington D.C.: Alan Guttmacher Insitution.

¹³² Haffner, D.W. (1992). Foreword: Sexuality education in policy and practice. In J. T. Sears (Ed.), *Sexuality and the curriculum: The politics and practices of sexuality education* (pp. vi-viii). New York: Teachers College Press.

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7.14: Reproductive Freedom

Contraception and Abortion

Many cultures around the world still teach that the responsibilities of birth control lies with women. Even in contemporary Western ideology, women are still assigned the burden of birth control efforts. In the United States, this thinking led to social movements being led primarily by women for access to resources such as Planned Parenthood, contraception, and abortion services.

Abortion (and certain forms of contraception) remained illegal in the United States until the 1970s when the Supreme Court issued a series of rulings that made the decision to bear a child part of an individual's constitutionally protected right to privacy. The most significant (and popular) of these rulings was *Roe vs. Wade*, which stated women have a constitutional right to choose abortion and that the state cannot unduly interfere with or prohibit that right. As a result of *Roe*, during the first trimester, the decision to abort was strictly private in all 50 states. Then states had varying legislation on the right to abortion in the second and third trimester. In the second trimester, some states imposed restrictions, but only to safeguard women's health. And in the third trimester, some states prohibited abortions because of the viability of the fetus (the ability of the fetus to live outside the female's body).

However, there have been recent efforts by some politicians to curtail or repeal rights which disproportionately affect women pertaining to access to reproductive health services. Some examples include attempts to defund Planned Parenthood, repeal women's rights to choose abortion or criminalize abortion, and creating barriers to access to contraception. Some refer to this phenomenon as the War on Women. **War on Women** is a political catchphrase in United States politics used to describe certain policies and legislation as a wide-scale effort to restrict women's rights, especially reproductive rights.

A few examples of recent legislative efforts include: In March 2020, Arizona passed the "Tell Your Boss Why You're on the Pill" bill. House Bill 2625 "permits employers to ask their employees for proof of medical prescription if they seek contraceptives for non-reproductive purposes, such as hormone control or acne treatment."²¹² In 2020, the Supreme Court upheld a Trump Administration mandate allowing employers to opt out of the 2010 Affordable Care Act mandate guaranteeing no-cost contraceptive services for women.²¹³

Legislators in various states introduced a wide array of laws designed to either outlaw abortion or to discourage it by making sometimes humiliating or even painful requirements of women who might consider having a pregnancy terminated. As of October, 2021, 1,336 abortion restrictions had been enacted since *Roe v. Wade* went into effect and before it was overturned in June 2022.²¹⁴ Some states mandated ultrasounds for women seeking abortions. Since many women's pregnancies are not far enough along to get an image via a traditional ultrasound (a little jelly on the belly with a camera on the stomach), transvaginal ultrasounds, which involve the physician inserting a probe into the woman's vagina, may be required. Critics have questioned the value of having a medically unnecessary procedure, and characterized it as similar to some states' legal definition of rape. Several states have ultrasound laws on the books even though routine ultrasounds are not medically necessary in first-trimester abortions.

Today, the majority of Americans support allowing individuals to access evidence-based health care services and to make decisions about their own care in consultation with their medical team. According to a recent PEW research report, "about six-in-ten Americans (62%) say abortion should be legal in all (29%) or most (33%) cases. Around a third of the public (36%) says abortion should be illegal in all (8%) or most (28%) cases."²¹⁵ It's important to mention here that one can be anti-abortion and pro-choice at the same time. Pro-choice ≠ pro-abortion.

However, even with more people identifying as pro-choice, laws and policies on abortion have been changing rapidly across the United States since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the federal constitutional right to abortion (*Roe v. Wade*) in late June in *Dobbs v. Jackson*. But, as of August 2022:²¹⁶

- 27 states regulate the provision of ultrasound by abortion providers.
 - 6 states mandate that an abortion provider perform an ultrasound on each person seeking an abortion and require the provider to show and describe the image.
 - 10 states mandate that an abortion provider perform an ultrasound on each person seeking an abortion, and 8 of these require the provider to offer the patient the opportunity to view the image.
 - 8 states require that a patient be provided with the opportunity to view an ultrasound image if their provider performs the procedure as part of preparation for an abortion.
 - 6 states require that a patient be provided with the opportunity to view an ultrasound image.

Many argue body autonomy is a human right, and the right to choose when and with whom to have children is part of that fundamental right. Support for this right is found in a number of human rights instruments, which contain provisions that ensure freedom in decision-making about private matters. The rights to sex equality and gender equality are fundamental principles of human rights law.

Sociologists often focus on the systems or institutions that hold power and/or control and how those systems or institutions exercise, propagate, maintain, and enforce that power. While research will be conducted for years to come on the social consequences of overturning *Roe v. Wade*, many are predicting this legislation will disproportionately affect already vulnerable or marginalized groups: women & gender minorities, low-income communities, survivors of domestic & sexual violence, refugees & asylum seekers, communities of color, and many others who are affected by systemic oppression and who rely upon rights not explicitly granted in the Constitution.²¹⁷ Some have already pointed to the access to contraception, marriage equality, and gay and trans rights as being vulnerable to reconsideration for legal protection, as these are also not as not explicitly guaranteed in the Constitution.²¹⁸

Others argue the lack of access to safe abortions in the U.S. will have a range of health and financial ramifications, compounding factors like poverty and systemic racism.²¹⁹ While the actual figure on how many abortions are performed each year in the United States vary, it is well established that the majority of people seeking a legal abortion are low-income and the rate of abortion for people of color is significantly higher than for white people.²²⁰ Poverty, access to healthcare, and education are disproportionately racialized. In some circumstances, carrying a pregnancy to term can endanger the pregnant person's life, disrupt educational plans, and change someone's career trajectory, compounding disadvantages for already marginalized groups.

Sociologists can evaluate likely consequences of social policies.²²¹ On abortion, for example, they can estimate how a policy might affect the birthrate, population growth, expenditures for welfare and education, the disparate impacts on various groups, or impacts on family structure in the U.S. Access to contraception and abortion opened doors to changes in trends in the family structure. "The gradual control over reproduction liberated time for further female education, more female tertiary sector employment, etc."²²² This, in turn, resulted in other societal shifts away from the traditional nuclear family: cohabitation and (optional) marriage at later ages, legal divorce with less stigma, childbearing without marriage, and substantial movement toward gender equality in families. Sociologist Philip Cohen writes, "Reproductive rights are a prerequisite for the changes in family life that underlie all progress toward gender equality."²²³

²¹² House Bill 2635. State of Arizona. <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/50leg/2...ls/hb2625c.pdf>

²¹³ Supreme Court Ruling. (2019). *Little Sisters of the Poor Saints Peter and Paul Home v. Pennsylvania*. https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinion...9-431_5i36.pdf

²¹⁴ Guttmacher Institute. (2021). U.S. states have enacted 1,336 abortion restrictions since *Roe v. Wade* was decided in 1973. <https://www.guttmacher.org/infograph...1336-abortion-restrictions-roe-v-wade-was-decided-1973>

²¹⁵ "Majority of Public Disapproves of Supreme Court's Decision To Overturn *Roe v. Wade*." *Pew Research Center*, Washington, D.C. (2022). <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics...isapproves-of-supreme-courts-decision-to-overturn-roe-v-wade/>

²¹⁶ Guttmacher Institute. (2022). Requirements for Ultrasound. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/requirements-ultrasound#>

²¹⁷ Pan, D. (May 4, 2022). 'Everyone who is vulnerable in some way' will bear the brunt if court overturns *Roe*, specialists say. *Boston Globe*.

²¹⁸ Cohen, P. (2022). Overturning *Roe* is an attack on the modern family. *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/1662...-modern-family>

²¹⁹ Dehlendorf C, Harris LH, Weitz TA. Disparities in abortion rates: a public health approach. *Am J Public Health*. 2013 Oct;103(10):1772-9.

²²⁰ Kortsmit K, Mandel MG, Reeves JA, et al. Abortion Surveillance — United States, 2019. *MMWR Surveill Summ* 2021;70(No. SS-9):1–29. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss7009a1>

²²¹ Becker, H. (1996). *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York : The Free Press.

²²² Lesthaeghe, R. (2014). The second demographic transition: A concise overview of its development. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Vol. 111, No. 51.

²²³ Cohen, P. (2022). Overturning *Roe* is an attack on the modern family. *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/1662...-modern-family>

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7.15: Discrimination

United States House Representative Bella Abzug introduced to Congress the Equality Act of 1974, the first federal civil rights act to include protection for gay and lesbian people. It failed. Gay and lesbian anti-discrimination bills were reintroduced through the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, and although each garnered increasing support, it was never enough for passage. In 1996, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) was introduced to the floor of the United States Senate, but was defeated by a single vote. As of 2020, ENDA has yet to garner passage.

Executive orders were an easier method to extend LGBTQ protections. In 1998, President Clinton signed an executive order to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in the federal service workforce. In 2014, President Obama signed an executive order to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity for all federal contractors.

When the United States Supreme Court decided in 1986 that private sexual acts would continue to be deemed illegal in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, it threatened LGBTQ civil rights at a fundamental level. Many lower courts used the precedent to rule that LGBTQ people could be judged implicitly criminal and unfit for a number of rights. One example was the 1995 Virginia Supreme Court decision *Bottoms v. Bottoms*, in which Pamela Kay Bottoms won custody of her daughter Sharon's child in part because Sharon was openly lesbian. Following similar rationales, state supreme courts in North Carolina and Alabama affirmed the removal of children from lesbian and gay parents.

LGBTQ activists and organizations fought off discriminatory state initiatives in Idaho, Oregon and Maine in the mid-1990s. However in Colorado, they were not so successful. In reaction to lesbian and gay anti-discrimination ordinances adopted in Aspen, Boulder, and Denver, Colorado voters passed Amendment 2 in 1992 to prohibit any city, town, or county in the state from any action designed to protect its lesbian or gay citizens. LGBTQ activists fought the measure in the courts, and turned one of their biggest defeats into one of their biggest legal victories. In 1996, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Romer v. Evans* that Colorado's Amendment 2 was unconstitutional. This Supreme Court decision was the first to claim that lesbian and gay people were equal to any other citizens and could not be denied participation in society and politics. Besides providing a legal standing to challenge government discrimination, it checked the power of voters or legislators to deny equal rights to LGBTQ people nationwide.

In 2003, the United States Supreme Court delivered another victory for LGBTQ rights when it ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* that sodomy laws were unconstitutional. Just as the federal affirmation of sodomy laws had a wide-reaching impact on the LGBTQ community, so too did the abolition. When, in 2004, Massachusetts' judges ruled that the ban against same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, they cited *Lawrence v. Texas* and its implication that governments should not intrude on "consensual adult expressions of intimacy and one's choice of partner." *Lawrence v. Texas* also cast doubt on such far-reaching practices as the deportation of non-citizen same-sex partners of American citizens, the ban of LGBTQ people from military service, and the removal of children from LGBTQ parents.

Although *Romer v. Evans* and *Lawrence v. Texas* were critical decisions in supporting LGBTQ rights, the United States Supreme Court did not indicate by their rulings that LGBTQ citizens necessarily had the same status and rights as other minority groups. The justices ruled in 1995 that an LGBTQ group could legally be excluded from a public parade solely because parade organizers disapproved of their message. In 2000, the judges ruled that the Boy Scouts of America, as a private club, could exclude LGBTQ people because the latter's presence conflicted with the group's mission and beliefs. At a time when no gender, ethnic, or racial group could be excluded merely because an organization disapproved of them, these Supreme Court decisions suggested that LGBTQ people did not merit the same equal protection.

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7.16: Marriage

Same - Sex Marriage was first publicized in an August 1953 cover story in ONE Magazine. That story resulted in the confiscation of the issue by postal authorities, who deemed the topic of same-sex marriage as a violation of obscenity statutes. In the gay liberation movement of the early 1970s, several same-sex couples applied for marriage licenses, but were universally denied. Legal challenges were similarly defeated.

The prohibition of gay and lesbian people from marriage had ramifications beyond the institution itself. It meant that same-sex partners of hospitalized LGBTQ people could be denied visitation and decision-making power. The death of an LGBTQ person left the surviving partner without any of the benefits granted to married couples. Lengthy legal battles were often required to recognize the survivor's rights in housing, inheritance, and child custody. Same-sex partners were barred from tax and insurance benefits. American citizens could not keep non-citizen same-sex partners from being deported. Same-sex partners could be excluded from adopting. LGBTQ status could be used to dismiss the custody claims of separated gay or lesbian parents.

In 1996, the Hawaii State Supreme Court ruled that the state could not legally deny same-sex couples the opportunity to marry. Although Hawaiian voters approved an amendment prohibiting the implementation of same-sex marriage, the court's decision ignited a backlash across the nation. By the end of 1996, sixteen states had implemented laws banning same-sex marriage, and the federal government had passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). DOMA denied same-sex couples the federal benefits and rights of marriage, even if a state legally recognized the union.

In 2000, Vermont passed the nation's first civil unions law, which conferred upon same-sex couples all the state's rights and benefits of married heterosexual couples. In 2004, the Massachusetts State Supreme Court ruled that the prohibition of same-sex marriage was unconstitutional, and the state became the first to officially recognize gay and lesbian marriages. In reaction, twenty-two more states instituted legislation banning same-sex marriage. An amendment to the United States constitution to ban same-sex marriage was proposed but defeated in 2004 and 2006.

Between 2004 and 2012, only six more states legalized same-sex marriage. Then from November 2012 to December 2013, 11 more states legalized same-sex marriage, bringing the total to 18. When Thea Spyer died in 2009, Edith "Edie" Windsor, her partner of over 40 years, was denied the federal estate tax exemption for surviving spouses because of DOMA and was sent a tax bill for \$363,053. She sued, and in 2013, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *United States v. Windsor* that DOMA was unconstitutional, thereby granting same-sex married couples the same federal rights as heterosexual couples.

By 2015, multiple challenges to state bans on same-sex marriage had made their way through the court of appeals, with four rulings against the ban, and one upholding the ban. Consolidating the cases under *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Supreme Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution gave same-sex couples the right to marry across the United States. The ruling overturned all state bans on same-sex marriage and granted all gay and lesbian United States citizens the right to marry regardless of where they lived.



Figure 7.16.1:

Although marriage permits could not be issued for same-sex marriages, couples still underwent marriage ceremonies across the country to affirm their commitment and love for one another. These marriage ceremonies took place (clockwise from upper left) in San Francisco (1973), Los Angeles, CA (1970); Jackson, MS (1989); and Philadelphia, PA (1957)



Figure 7.16.1: In 1974, Anthony Sullivan (right), an Australian citizen, had exhausted his legal options for remaining in the United States. When Sullivan and his partner Richard Adams, an American citizen, were refused legal recognition for their marriage, the Immigration and Naturalization Service initiated deportation proceedings. Refusing to end their fifteen year relationship, Sullivan and Adams went into hiding. They remained together in the United States until Adams' death in 2012.



Figure 7.16.1: The White House in rainbow colors to celebrate the Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage.

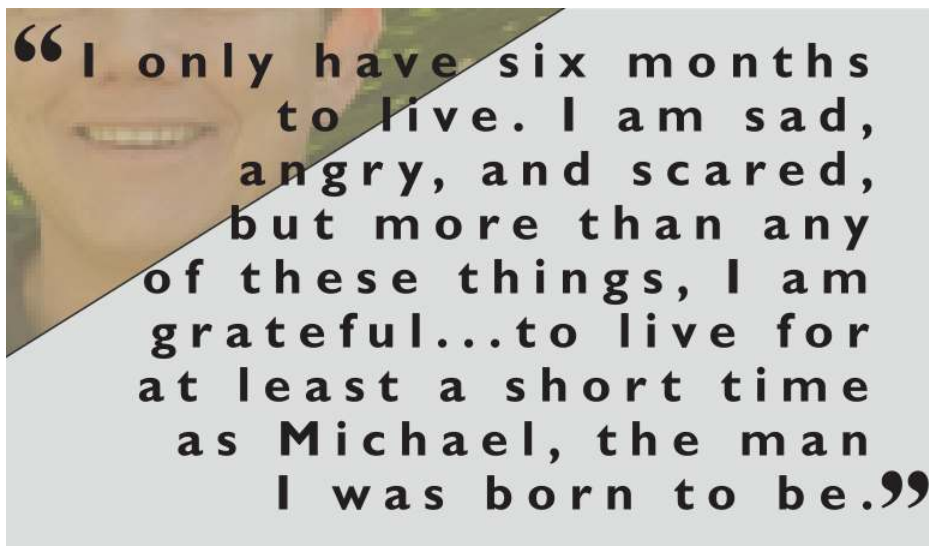


Figure 7.16.1: "I hereby grant your

petition for a change of name and gender." With these five words by the judge, my life-long dream was realized; I was officially male! Growing up, I was told I was a girl and that no matter how much I wanted it, I would never be the boy that I wanted to be. At school, I was teased by classmates, and by the age of five, I had learned to be ashamed of who I was. At eleven, I started to develop breasts, the hideous foreign objects that tormented me every moment of every day. My attempts to hide them proved futile and I could not have been more disgusted and ashamed of my body.

I came out as a lesbian at nineteen, before coming out as transgender at thirty-two. Telling people you're a transman takes a whole different type of courage. While I ached for the love and support of my family, it was not to be. The good news is that the LGBTQ community embraced me, creating a new and more meaningful family of queer kinships.

Like most trans-identified men, I was socialized to adhere to female gender norms. Thus after coming out, I was constantly questioning my gender expression. Am I trans enough? Am I enough of a man? What makes a man a man? But I learned that I am a man simply because I say I am and I get to choose how to express my gender. Like sexuality, gender identity is fluid. It constantly evolves and each of us must find his or her authentic self in a hodgepodge of deeply ingrained stereotypes and expectations.

On August 13, 2014, I was told that due to brain cancer, I only have six months to live. I am sad, angry, and scared, but more than any of these things, I am grateful. I am grateful that my dream came true and that I had the opportunity to live for at least a short time as Michael, the man I was born to be.

– Michael Saum

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7.17: Transgender Equal Rights

Andrea Jenkins was the first openly transgender black woman elected in the United States, when she took office in the Minneapolis City Council in 2018. As of 2020, she served as vice president of the council and as chair of the Race Equity Subcommittee. In her previous work as a policy aide, curator, and artist, she long advocated on behalf of transgender voices.



Figure 7.17.1: Andrea Jenkins 1961 -

Kim Coco Iwamoto became the highest-ranked openly transgender official in the United States when she won a seat on Hawaii's Board of Education in 2006. Iwamoto has continuously advocated and worked with LGBTQ youth as a licensed therapeutic foster parent, lawyer and public figure. She was appointed to the Hawaii Civil Rights Commission in 2012.



Figure 7.17.2: Kim Coco Iwamoto 1968 -

Although the 1980s saw the emergence of Lou Sullivan's FTM (female-to-male) International and Myrissa Sherrill Lynn's International Foundation for Gender Education, a national movement did not coalesce until the early years of the 1990s. The first Southern Comfort transgender conference began in 1991 and soon became one of the largest transgender gatherings in the country. Future Texas Judge, Phillis Frye, organized the first of six annual transgender law conferences the next year and also helped organize local transgender activists into a national contingent at the 1993 March on Washington. Fantasia Fair, a week-long conference for heterosexual MTF (male-to-female) cross-dressers that started in 1975, blossomed in the 1990s into a world renowned event for all transgender people.



Figure 7.17.3: Historically, murders of transgender people have been under-

investigated, under-convicted, and under- punished. For example, when pioneering transgender activist Marsha P. Johnson was found floating in the Hudson River in 1992, the suspicious death was ruled a suicide with minimal investigation. When police refused to arrest transgender Brandon Teena's rapists in 1993, the rapists later hunted down and murdered Teena.

Legal and police practices regarding transgender victims has gradually improved. After the killers of Gwen Araujo tried to use a trans panic defense in 2004, California enacted legislation restricting the use of the victim-blaming tactic. The killer of Angie Zapata, murdered in Colorado in 2008, was the first to be convicted of a hate crime against a transgender person. A year later, Lateisha Green's murderer was convicted of a hate crime in New York.

Hate crimes and murders still disproportionately affect the transgender community. The brutal 1998 murder of Rita Hester led to a candlelight vigil in her honor and inspired Gwendolyn Ann Smith to start the Transgender Day of Remembrance the next year. The Day of Remembrance has since become an annual worldwide event held on November 20 to honor and raise awareness of those who die from transgender hate crimes every year.

Anne Ogborn created Transgender Nation within the San Francisco chapter of Queer Nation in 1992, with other chapters soon opening across the United States. Transgender Nation introduced a confrontational style of advocacy that had not been seen since Sylvia Rivera and Angela Davis in the 1970s. Riki Wilchens used this kind of activism in 1994 with her group Transexual Menace, which conducted vigils at court houses where transgender hate crime perpetrators were being tried.

Transgender issues had been historically neglected by mainstream gay and lesbian advocacy organizations. Gay and lesbian anti-discrimination measures often did not include protections for transgender people. However, transgender activists during this era increasingly integrated transgender issues into a broader LGBTQ movement. Although transgender people were unmentioned in previous Washington, D.C., marches, the 2000 Millennium March on Washington was the first to include a transgender plank. This more cohesive LGBTQ advocacy, combined with the emergence of local and national transgender advocacy groups, has had the power to affect greater political and social influence.

Minneapolis implemented the first municipal law protecting transgender citizens in 1976, with Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Seattle, Washington, following in the 1980s. By 2018, over 200 cities and counties had enacted laws protecting transgender people. Minnesota passed the first statewide protection for transgender people in 1993, and by 2018, had been joined by eighteen states and the District of Columbia.

In 2012, the federal government released a statement that transgender students are protected from discrimination under the provisions of Title IX, a federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in schools. The United States Department of Education issued guidelines for Title IX protection in 2014, a position later supported by the Justice Department. In 2013, California passed a law to require that public schools recognize a student's gender identity and to provide access to facilities based on that gender identification. The law was the first to specifically protect the rights of transgender students.

The mismatch of personal identity and official documentation creates huge challenges for those who have transitioned their gender identity. In 2010, the federal government changed their policy to allow gender changes on passports without requiring sex reassignment surgery. As of 2019, some states permit gender changes in state identity documents, others allow the change but only with proof of sex reassignment surgery, while two other states do not permit gender changes in state documentation. In 2017,

Oregon became the first state to allow non-binary "X" gender markers on state identification documents, a move quickly followed by nineteen other states.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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8.4: Video - Gender Appropriate Toys

8.5: Video - Masculinity in Disney Films

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8.1: Masculinities

Another concept that troubles the gender binary is the idea of **multiple masculinities** (Connell, 2005). Connell suggests that there is more than one kind of masculinity and what is considered “masculine” differs by race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. For example, being knowledgeable about computers might be understood as masculine because it can help a person accumulate income and wealth, and we consider wealth to be masculine. However, computer knowledge only translates into “masculinity” for certain men. While an Asian-American, middle-class man might get a boost in “masculinity points” (as it were) for his high-paying job with computers, the same might not be true for a working-class white man whose white-collar desk job may be seen as a weakness to his masculinity by other working-class men. Expectations for masculinity differ by age; what it means to be a man at 19 is very different than what it means to be a man at 70. Therefore, masculinity intersects with other identities and expectations change accordingly.

Judith (Jack) Halberstam used the concept of **female masculinity** to describe the ways female-assigned people may accomplish masculinity (2005). Halberstam defines masculinity as the connection between maleness and power, which female-assigned people access through drag-king performances, butch identity (where female-assigned people appear and act masculine and may or may not identify as women), or trans identity. Separating masculinity from male-assigned bodies illustrates how performative it is, such that masculinity is accomplished in interactions and not ordained by nature.

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8.2: Video - Boys Won't Be Boys

📌 Boys won't be boys. Boys will be what we teach them to be. | Ben Hurst | TEDxLondonWomen



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8.3: Gender Inequality

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Explain the influence of socialization on gender roles in the United States
- Explain the stratification of gender in major American institutions
- Provide examples of gender inequality in the United States
- Describe the rise of feminism in the United States
- Describe gender from the view of each sociological perspective



Figure 12.8: Traditional images of U.S. gender roles reinforce the idea that women should be subordinate to men. (Credit: Sport Suburban/flickr)

Gender and Socialization

The phrase “boys will be boys” is often used to justify behavior such as pushing, shoving, or other forms of aggression from young boys. The phrase implies that such behavior is unchangeable and something that is part of a boy’s nature. Aggressive behavior, when it does not inflict significant harm, is often accepted from boys and men because it is congruent with the cultural script for masculinity. The “script” written by society is in some ways similar to a script written by a playwright. Just as a playwright expects actors to adhere to a prescribed script, society expects women and men to behave according to the expectations of their respective gender roles. Scripts are generally learned through a process known as socialization, which teaches people to behave according to social norms.

Socialization

Children learn at a young age that there are distinct expectations for boys and girls. Cross-cultural studies reveal that children are aware of gender roles by age two or three. At four or five, most children are firmly entrenched in culturally appropriate gender roles (Kane 1996). Children acquire these roles through socialization, a process in which people learn to behave in a particular way as dictated by societal values, beliefs, and attitudes. For example, society often views riding a motorcycle as a masculine activity and, therefore, considers it to be part of the male gender role. Attitudes such as this are typically based on stereotypes,

oversimplified notions about members of a group. Gender stereotyping involves overgeneralizing about the attitudes, traits, or behavior patterns of women or men. For example, women may be thought of as too timid or weak to ride a motorcycle.



Figure 12.9: Although our society may have a stereotype that associates motorcycles with men, women make up a sizable portion of the biker community. (Credit: Robert Couse-Baker/flickr)

Gender stereotypes form the basis of sexism. Sexism refers to prejudiced beliefs that value one sex over another. It varies in its level of severity. In parts of the world where women are strongly undervalued, young girls may not be given the same access to nutrition, healthcare, and education as boys. Further, they will grow up believing they deserve to be treated differently from boys (UNICEF 2011; Thorne 1993). While it is illegal in the United States when practiced as discrimination, unequal treatment of women continues to pervade social life. It should be noted that discrimination based on sex occurs at both the micro- and macro-levels. Many sociologists focus on discrimination that is built into the social structure; this type of discrimination is known as institutional discrimination (Pincus 2008).

Gender socialization occurs through four major agents of socialization: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Each agent reinforces gender roles by creating and maintaining normative expectations for gender-specific behavior. Exposure also occurs through secondary agents such as religion and the workplace. Repeated exposure to these agents over time leads men and women into a false sense that they are acting naturally rather than following a socially constructed role.

Family is the first agent of socialization. There is considerable evidence that parents socialize sons and daughters differently. Generally speaking, girls are given more latitude to step outside of their prescribed gender role (Coltrane and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000; Raffaelli and Ontai 2004). However, differential socialization typically results in greater privileges afforded to sons. For instance, boys are allowed more autonomy and independence at an earlier age than daughters. They may be given fewer restrictions on appropriate clothing, dating habits, or curfew. Sons are also often free from performing domestic duties such as cleaning or cooking and other household tasks that are considered feminine. Daughters are limited by their expectation to be passive and nurturing, generally obedient, and to assume many of the domestic responsibilities.

Even when parents set gender equality as a goal, there may be underlying indications of inequality. For example, boys may be asked to take out the garbage or perform other tasks that require strength or toughness, while girls may be asked to fold laundry or perform duties that require neatness and care. It has been found that fathers are firmer in their expectations for gender conformity than are mothers, and their expectations are stronger for sons than they are for daughters (Kimmel 2000). This is true in many types of activities, including preference for toys, play styles, discipline, chores, and personal achievements. As a result, boys tend to be particularly attuned to their father's disapproval when engaging in an activity that might be considered feminine, like dancing or

singing (Coltraine and Adams 2008). Parental socialization and normative expectations also vary along lines of social class, race, and ethnicity. African American families, for instance, are more likely than Caucasians to model an egalitarian role structure for their children (Staples and Boulin Johnson 2004).

The reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes continues once a child reaches school age. Until very recently, schools were rather explicit in their efforts to stratify boys and girls. The first step toward stratification was segregation. Girls were encouraged to take home economics or humanities courses and boys to take math and science.

Studies suggest that gender socialization still occurs in schools today, perhaps in less obvious forms (Lips 2004). Teachers may not even realize they are acting in ways that reproduce gender differentiated behavior patterns. Yet any time they ask students to arrange their seats or line up according to gender, teachers may be asserting that boys and girls should be treated differently (Thorne 1993).

Even in levels as low as kindergarten, schools subtly convey messages to girls indicating that they are less intelligent or less important than boys. For example, in a study of teacher responses to male and female students, data indicated that teachers praised male students far more than female students. Teachers interrupted girls more often and gave boys more opportunities to expand on their ideas (Sadker and Sadker 1994). Further, in social as well as academic situations, teachers have traditionally treated boys and girls in opposite ways, reinforcing a sense of competition rather than collaboration (Thorne 1993). Boys are also permitted a greater degree of freedom to break rules or commit minor acts of deviance, whereas girls are expected to follow rules carefully and adopt an obedient role (Ready 2001).

Mimicking the actions of significant others is the first step in the development of a separate sense of self (Mead 1934). Like adults, children become agents who actively facilitate and apply normative gender expectations to those around them. When children do not conform to the appropriate gender role, they may face negative sanctions such as being criticized or marginalized by their peers. Though many of these sanctions are informal, they can be quite severe. For example, a girl who wishes to take karate class instead of dance lessons may be called a “tomboy” and face difficulty gaining acceptance from both male and female peer groups (Ready 2001). Boys, especially, are subject to intense ridicule for gender nonconformity (Coltraine and Adams 2004; Kimmel 2000).

Mass media serves as another significant agent of gender socialization. In television and movies, women tend to have less significant roles and are often portrayed as wives or mothers. When women are given a lead role, it often falls into one of two extremes: a wholesome, saint-like figure or a malevolent, hypersexual figure (Etaugh and Bridges 2003). This same inequality is pervasive in children’s movies (Smith 2008). Research indicates that in the ten top-grossing G-rated movies released between 1991 and 2013, nine out of ten characters were male (Smith 2008).

Television commercials and other forms of advertising also reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes. Women are almost exclusively present in ads promoting cooking, cleaning, or childcare-related products (Davis 1993). Think about the last time you saw a man star in a dishwasher or laundry detergent commercial. In general, women are underrepresented in roles that involve leadership, intelligence, or a balanced psyche. Of particular concern is the depiction of women in ways that are dehumanizing, especially in music videos. Even in mainstream advertising, however, themes intermingling violence and sexuality are quite common (Kilbourne 2000).

Social Stratification and Inequality

Stratification refers to a system in which groups of people experience unequal access to basic, yet highly valuable, social resources. There is a long history of gender stratification in the United States. When looking to the past, it would appear that society has made great strides in terms of abolishing some of the most blatant forms of gender inequality (see timeline below) but underlying effects of male dominance still permeate many aspects of society.

- Before 1809—Women could not execute a will
- Before 1840—Women were not allowed to own or control property
- Before 1920—Women were not permitted to vote
- Before 1963—Employers could legally pay a woman less than a man for the same work
- Before 1973—Women did not have the right to a safe and legal abortion (Imbornoni 2009)

The Pay Gap

Despite making up nearly half (49.8 percent) of payroll employment, men vastly outnumber women in authoritative, powerful, and, therefore, high-earning jobs (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Even when a woman’s employment status is equal to a man’s, she will

generally make only 81 cents for every dollar made by her male counterpart (Payscale 2020). Women in the paid labor force also still do the majority of the unpaid work at home. On an average day, 84 percent of women (compared to 67 percent of men) spend time doing household management activities (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). This double duty keeps working women in a subordinate role in the family structure (Hochschild and Machung 1989).

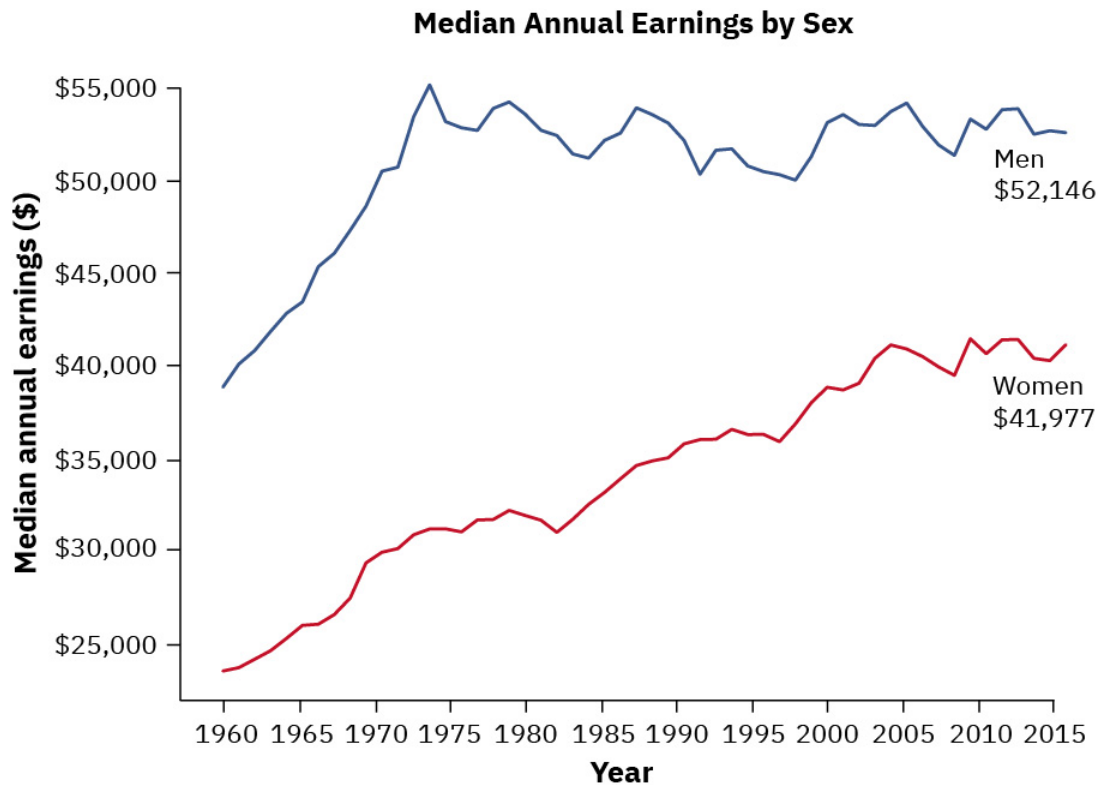


Figure 12.10: In 2017 men's overall median earnings were \$52,146 and women's were \$41,977. This means that women earned 80.1% of what men earned in the United States. (Credit: Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor)

Gender stratification through the division of labor is not exclusive to the United States. According to George Murdock's classic work, *Outline of World Cultures* (1954), all societies classify work by gender. When a pattern appears in all societies, it is called a cultural universal. While the phenomenon of assigning work by gender is universal, its specifics are not. The same task is not assigned to either men or women worldwide. But the way each task's associated gender is valued is notable. In Murdock's examination of the division of labor among 324 societies around the world, he found that in nearly all cases the jobs assigned to men were given greater prestige (Murdock and White 1968). Even if the job types were very similar and the differences slight, men's work was still considered more vital.



Figure 12.11: In some cultures, women do all of the household chores with no help from men, as doing housework is a sign of weakness, considered by society as a feminine trait. (Credit: Evil Erin/flickr)

Part of the gender pay gap can be attributed to unique barriers faced by women regarding work experience and promotion opportunities. A mother of young children is more likely to drop out of the labor force for several years or work on a reduced schedule than is the father. As a result, women in their 30s and 40s are likely, on average, to have less job experience than men. This effect becomes more evident when considering the pay rates of two groups of women: those who did *not* leave the workforce and those who did: In the United States, childless women with the same education and experience levels as men are typically paid with closer (but not exact) parity to men. However, women with families and children are paid less: Mothers are recommended a 7.9 percent lower starting salary than non-mothers, which is 8.6 percent lower than men (Correll 2007).

This evidence points to levels of discrimination that go beyond behaviors by individual companies or organizations. As discussed earlier in the gender roles section, many of these gaps are rooted in America's social patterns of discrimination, which involve the roles that different genders play in child-rearing, rather than individual discrimination by employers in hiring and salary decisions. On the other hand, legal and ethical practices demand that organizations do their part to promote more equity among all genders.

The Glass Ceiling

The idea that women are unable to reach the executive suite is known as the glass ceiling. It is an invisible barrier that women encounter when trying to win jobs in the highest level of business. At the beginning of 2021, for example, a record 41 of the world's largest 500 companies were run by women. While a vast improvement over the number twenty years earlier – where only two of the companies were run by women – these 41 chief executives still only represent eight percent of those large companies (Newcomb 2020).

Why do women have a more difficult time reaching the top of a company? One idea is that there is still a stereotype in the United States that women aren't aggressive enough to handle the boardroom or that they tend to seek jobs and work with other women (Reiners 2019). Other issues stem from the gender biases based on gender roles and motherhood discussed above.

Another idea is that women lack mentors, executives who take an interest and get them into the right meetings and introduce them to the right people to succeed (Murrell & Blake-Beard 2017).

Women in Politics

One of the most important places for women to help other women is in politics. Historically in the United States, like many other institutions, political representation has been mostly made up of White men. By not having women in government, their issues are being decided by people who don't share their perspective. The number of women elected to serve in Congress has increased over the years, but does not yet accurately reflect the general population. For example, in 2018, the population of the United States was 49 percent male and 51 percent female, but the population of Congress was 78.8 percent male and 21.2 percent female (Manning

2018). Over the years, the number of women in the federal government has increased, but until it accurately reflects the population, there will be inequalities in our laws.

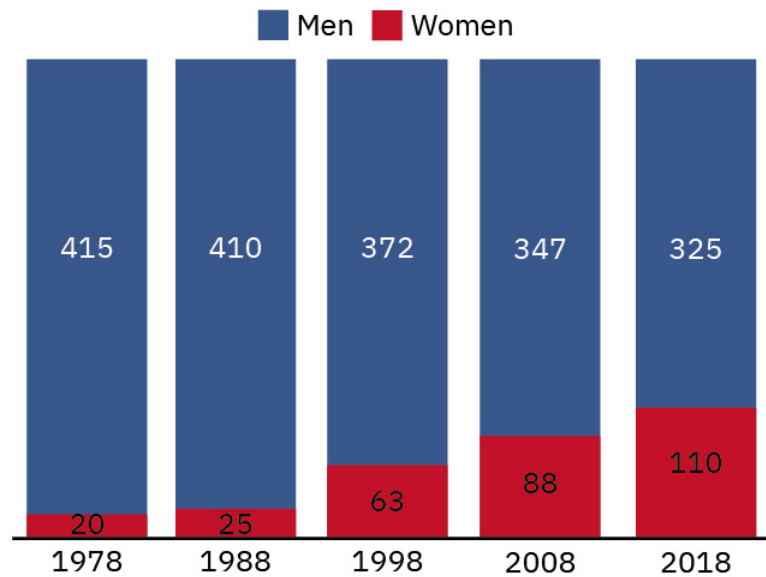


Figure 12.12: Breakdown of Congressional Membership by Gender. 2021 saw a record number of women in Congress, with 120 women serving in the House and 24 serving in the Senate. Gender representation has been steadily increasing over time, but is not close to being equal. (Credit: Based on data from Center for American Women in Politics, Rutgers University)

Movements for Change: Feminism

One of the underlying issues that continues to plague women in the United States is misogyny. This is the hatred of or, aversion to, or prejudice against women. Over the years misogyny has evolved as an ideology that men are superior to women in all aspects of life. There have been multiple movements to try and fight this prejudice.

In 1963, writer and feminist Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in which she contested the post-World War II belief that it was women's sole destiny to marry and bear children. Friedan's book began to raise the consciousness of many women who agreed that homemaking in the suburbs sapped them of their individualism and left them unsatisfied. In 1966, the National Organization for Women (NOW) formed and proceeded to set an agenda for the *feminist movement*. Framed by a statement of purpose written by Friedan, the agenda began by proclaiming NOW's goal to make possible women's participation in all aspects of American life and to gain for them all the rights enjoyed by men.

Feminists engaged in protests and actions designed to bring awareness and change. For example, the New York Radical Women demonstrated at the 1968 Miss America Pageant in Atlantic City to bring attention to the contest's—and society's—exploitation of women. The protestors tossed instruments of women's oppression, including high-heeled shoes, curlers, girdles, and bras, into a "freedom trash can." News accounts incorrectly described the protest as a "bra burning," which at the time was a way to demean and trivialize the issue of women's rights (Gay 2018).

Other protests gave women a more significant voice in a male-dominated social, political, and entertainment climate. For decades, *Ladies Home Journal* had been a highly influential women's magazine, managed and edited almost entirely by men. Men even wrote the advice columns and beauty articles. In 1970, protesters held a sit-in at the magazine's offices, demanding that the company hire a woman editor-in-chief, add women and non-White writers at fair pay, and expand the publication's focus.

Feminists were concerned with far more than protests, however. In the 1970s, they opened battered women's shelters and successfully fought for protection from employment discrimination for pregnant women, reform of rape laws (such as the abolition of laws requiring a witness to corroborate a woman's report of rape), criminalization of domestic violence, and funding for schools that sought to counter sexist stereotypes of women. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade* invalidated a number of state laws under which abortions obtained during the first three months of pregnancy were illegal. This made a nontherapeutic abortion a legal medical procedure nationwide.

Gloria Steinem had pushed through gender barriers to take on serious journalism subjects, and had emerged as a prominent advocate for women's rights. Through her work, Steinem met Dorothy Pittman-Hughes, who had founded New York City's first shelter for domestic violence victims as well as the city's Agency for Child Development. Together they founded *Ms. Magazine*,

which avoided articles on homemaking and fashion in favor of pieces on women's rights and empowerment. *Ms.* showcased powerful and accomplished women such as Shirley Chisholm and Sissy Farenthold, and was among the first publications to bring domestic violence, sexual harassment, and body image issues to the national conversation (Pogrebrin 2011).

Many advances in women's rights were the result of women's greater engagement in politics. For example, Patsy Mink, the first Asian American woman elected to Congress, was the co-author of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Title IX of which prohibits sex discrimination in education. Mink had been interested in fighting discrimination in education since her youth, when she opposed racial segregation in campus housing while a student at the University of Nebraska. She went to law school after being denied admission to medical school because of her gender. Like Mink, many other women sought and won political office, many with the help of the National Women's Political Caucus (NWPC). In 1971, the NWPC was formed by Bella Abzug, Gloria Steinem, Shirley Chisholm, and other leading feminists to encourage women's participation in political parties, elect women to office, and raise money for their campaign.



Figure 12.13: “Unbought and Unbossed”: Shirley Chisholm was the first Black United States Congresswoman, the co-founder of the Congressional Black Caucus, and a candidate for a major-party Presidential nomination.

Shirley Chisholm personally took up the mantle of women's involvement in politics. Born of immigrant parents, she earned degrees from Brooklyn College and Columbia University, and began a career in early childhood education and advocacy. In the 1950's she joined various political action groups, worked on election campaigns, and pushed for housing and economic reforms. After leaving one organization over its refusal to involve women in the decision-making process, she sought to increase gender and racial diversity within political and activist organizations throughout New York City. In 1968, she became the first Black woman elected to Congress. Refusing to take the quiet role expected of new Representatives, she immediately began sponsoring bills and initiatives. She spoke out against the Vietnam War, and fought for programs such as Head Start and the national school lunch program, which was eventually signed into law after Chisholm led an effort to override a presidential veto. Chisholm would eventually undertake a groundbreaking presidential run in 1972, and is viewed as paving the way for other women, and especially women of color, achieving political and social prominence (Emmrich 2019).

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender

Sociological theories help sociologists to develop questions and interpret data. For example, a sociologist studying why middle-school girls are more likely than their male counterparts to fall behind grade-level expectations in math and science might use a feminist perspective to frame her research. Another scholar might proceed from the conflict perspective to investigate why women are underrepresented in political office, and an interactionist might examine how the symbols of femininity interact with symbols of political authority to affect how women in Congress are treated by their male counterparts in meetings.

Structural Functionalism

Structural functionalism has provided one of the most important perspectives of sociological research in the twentieth century and has been a major influence on research in the social sciences, including gender studies. Viewing the family as the most integral component of society, assumptions about gender roles within marriage assume a prominent place in this perspective.

Functionalists argue that gender roles were established well before the pre-industrial era when men typically took care of responsibilities outside of the home, such as hunting, and women typically took care of the domestic responsibilities in or around the home. These roles were considered functional because women were often limited by the physical restraints of pregnancy and nursing and unable to leave the home for long periods of time. Once established, these roles were passed on to subsequent generations since they served as an effective means of keeping the family system functioning properly.

When changes occurred in the social and economic climate of the United States during World War II, changes in the family structure also occurred. Many women had to assume the role of breadwinner (or modern hunter-gatherer) alongside their domestic role in order to stabilize a rapidly changing society. When the men returned from war and wanted to reclaim their jobs, society fell back into a state of imbalance, as many women did not want to forfeit their wage-earning positions (Hawke 2007).

Conflict Theory

According to conflict theory, society is a struggle for dominance among social groups (like women versus men) that compete for scarce resources. When sociologists examine gender from this perspective, we can view men as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group. According to conflict theory, social problems are created when dominant groups exploit or oppress subordinate groups. Consider the Women's Suffrage Movement or the debate over women's "right to choose" their reproductive futures. It is difficult for women to rise above men, as dominant group members create the rules for success and opportunity in society (Farrington and Chertok 1993).

Friedrich Engels, a German sociologist, studied family structure and gender roles. Engels suggested that the same owner-worker relationship seen in the labor force is also seen in the household, with women assuming the role of the proletariat. This is due to women's dependence on men for the attainment of wages, which is even worse for women who are entirely dependent upon their spouses for economic support. Contemporary conflict theorists suggest that when women become wage earners, they can gain power in the family structure and create more democratic arrangements in the home, although they may still carry the majority of the domestic burden, as noted earlier (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is a type of conflict theory that examines inequalities in gender-related issues. It uses the conflict approach to examine the maintenance of gender roles and inequalities. Radical feminism, in particular, considers the role of the family in perpetuating male dominance. In patriarchal societies, men's contributions are seen as more valuable than those of women. Patriarchal perspectives and arrangements are widespread and taken for granted. As a result, women's viewpoints tend to be silenced or marginalized to the point of being discredited or considered invalid.

Sanday's study of the Indonesian Minangkabau (2004) revealed that in societies some consider to be matriarchies (where women comprise the dominant group), women and men tend to work cooperatively rather than competitively regardless of whether a job is considered feminine by U.S. standards. The men, however, do not experience the sense of bifurcated consciousness under this social structure that modern U.S. females encounter (Sanday 2004).

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism aims to understand human behavior by analyzing the critical role of symbols in human interaction. This is certainly relevant to the discussion of masculinity and femininity. Imagine that you walk into a bank hoping to get a small loan for school, a home, or a small business venture. If you meet with a male loan officer, you may state your case logically by listing all the hard numbers that make you a qualified applicant as a means of appealing to the analytical characteristics associated with masculinity. If you meet with a female loan officer, you may make an emotional appeal by stating your good intentions as a means of appealing to the caring characteristics associated with femininity.

Because the meanings attached to symbols are socially created and not natural, and fluid, not static, we act and react to symbols based on the current assigned meaning. The word *gay*, for example, once meant "cheerful," but by the 1960s it carried the primary meaning of "homosexual." In transition, it was even known to mean "careless" or "bright and showing" (Oxford American Dictionary 2010). Furthermore, the word *gay* (as it refers to a person), carried a somewhat negative and unfavorable meaning fifty years ago, but it has since gained more neutral and even positive connotations. When people perform tasks or possess

characteristics based on the gender role assigned to them, they are said to be doing gender. This notion is based on the work of West and Zimmerman (1987). Whether we are expressing our masculinity or femininity, West and Zimmerman argue, we are always "doing gender." Thus, gender is something we do or perform, not something we are.

In other words, both gender and sexuality are socially constructed. The social construction of sexuality refers to the way in which socially created definitions about the cultural appropriateness of sex-linked behavior shape the way people see and experience sexuality. This is in marked contrast to theories of sex, gender, and sexuality that link male and female behavior to biological determinism, or the belief that men and women behave differently due to differences in their biology.

Sociological Research: Being Male, Being Female, and Being Healthy

In 1971, Broverman and Broverman conducted a groundbreaking study on the traits mental health workers ascribed to males and females. When asked to name the characteristics of a female, the list featured words such as unaggressive, gentle, emotional, tactful, less logical, not ambitious, dependent, passive, and neat. The list of male characteristics featured words such as aggressive, rough, unemotional, blunt, logical, direct, active, and sloppy (Seem and Clark 2006). Later, when asked to describe the characteristics of a healthy person (not gender specific), the list was nearly identical to that of a male.

This study uncovered the general assumption that being female is associated with being somewhat unhealthy or not of sound mind. This concept seems extremely dated, but in 2006, Seem and Clark replicated the study and found similar results. Again, the characteristics associated with a healthy male were very similar to that of a healthy (genderless) adult. The list of characteristics associated with being female broadened somewhat but did not show significant change from the original study (Seem and Clark 2006). This interpretation of feminine characteristic may help us one day better understand gender disparities in certain illnesses, such as why one in eight women can be expected to develop clinical depression in her lifetime (National Institute of Mental Health 1999). Perhaps these diagnoses are not just a reflection of women's health, but also a reflection of society's labeling of female characteristics, or the result of institutionalized sexism.

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8.4: Video - Gender Appropriate Toys

📌 Mom argues with child over gender appropriate toys | What Would You Do



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8.5: Video - Masculinity in Disney Films

📌 Sexism, Strength, and Dominance: Masculinity in Disney Films

403 Forbidden

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8.6: The Benefits and Costs of Being Male

Learning Objectives

- List some of the benefits of being male.
- List some of the costs of being male.

Most of the discussion so far has been about women, and with good reason: in a sexist society such as our own, women are the subordinate, unequal sex. But “gender” means more than “female,” and a few comments about men are in order.

Benefits

In Chapter 7, we talked about “white privilege,” the advantages that whites automatically have in a racist society whether or not they realize they have these advantages. Many scholars also talk about male privilege, or the advantages that males automatically have in a patriarchal society whether or not they realize they have these advantages (McIntosh, 2007). McIntosh, P. (2007). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondence through work in women’s studies. In M. L. Andersen & P. H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (6th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

A few examples illustrate male privilege. Men can usually walk anywhere they want or go into any bar they want without having to worry about being raped or sexually harassed. Susan Griffin was able to write “I have never been free of the fear of rape” because she was a woman: it is no exaggeration to say that few men could write the same thing and mean it. Although some men are sexually harassed, most men can work at any job they want without having to worry about sexual harassment. Men can walk down the street without having strangers make crude remarks about their looks, dress, and sexual behavior. Men can apply for most jobs without worrying about being rejected or, if hired, not being promoted because of their gender. We could go on with many other examples, but the fact remains that in a patriarchal society, men automatically have advantages just because they are men, even if race, social class, and sexual orientation affect the degree to which they are able to enjoy these advantages.

Costs

Yet it is also true that men pay a price for living in a patriarchy. Without trying to claim that men have it as bad as women, scholars are increasingly pointing to the problems men face in a society that promotes male domination and traditional standards of masculinity such as assertiveness, competitiveness, and toughness (Kimmel & Messner, 2010). Kimmel, M. S., & Messner, M. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Men’s lives* (8th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Socialization into masculinity is thought to underlie many of the emotional problems men experience, which stem from a combination of their emotional inexpressiveness and reluctance to admit to, and seek help for, various personal problems (Wong & Rochlen, 2005). Wong, Y. J., & Rochlen, A. B. (2005). Demystifying men’s emotional behavior: New directions and implications for counseling and research. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 6, 62–72. Sometimes these emotional problems build up and explode, as mass shootings by males at schools and elsewhere indicate, or express themselves in other ways. Compared to girls, for example, boys are much more likely to be diagnosed with emotional disorders, learning disabilities, and attention deficit disorder, and they are also more likely to commit suicide and to drop out of high school.

Men experience other problems that put themselves at a disadvantage compared to women. They commit much more violence than women do and, apart from rape, also suffer a much higher rate of violent victimization. They die earlier than women and are injured more often. Because men are less involved than women in child-rearing, they also miss out on the joy of parenting that women are much more likely to experience.

Growing recognition of the problems males experience because of their socialization into masculinity has led to increased concern over what is happening to American boys. Citing the strong linkage between masculinity and violence, some writers urge parents to raise their sons differently in order to help our society reduce its violent behavior (Miedzian, 2002). Miedzian, M. (2002). *Boys will be boys: Breaking the link between masculinity and violence*. New York, NY: Lantern Books. In all of these respects, boys and men—and our nation as a whole—are paying a very real price for being male in a patriarchal society.

Conclusion

- In a patriarchal society, males automatically have certain advantages, including a general freedom from fear of being raped and sexually assaulted and from experiencing job discrimination on the basis of their gender.

- Men also suffer certain disadvantages from being male, including higher rates of injury, violence, and death and a lower likelihood of experiencing the joy that parenting often brings.

For Your Review

1. What do you think is the most important advantage, privilege, or benefit that men enjoy in the United States? Explain your answer.
2. What do you think is the most significant cost or disadvantage that men experience? Again, explain your answer.

Reducing Gender Inequality: What Sociology Suggests

Gender inequality is found in varying degrees in most societies around the world, and the United States is no exception. Just as racial/ethnic stereotyping and prejudice underlie racial/ethnic inequality (see Chapter 7), so do stereotypes and false beliefs underlie gender inequality. Although these stereotypes and beliefs have weakened considerably since the 1970s thanks in large part to the contemporary women's movement and the gay and lesbian rights movements, they obviously persist and hamper efforts to achieve full gender equality.

A sociological perspective reminds us that gender inequality stems from a complex mixture of cultural and structural factors that must be addressed if gender inequality is to be reduced further than it already has been since the 1970s. Despite changes during this period, children are still socialized from birth into traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, and gender-based stereotyping incorporating these notions still continues. Although people should generally be free to pursue whatever family and career responsibilities they desire, socialization and stereotyping still combine to limit the ability of girls and boys and women and men alike to imagine less traditional possibilities. Meanwhile, structural obstacles in the workplace and elsewhere continue to keep women in a subordinate social and economic status relative to men. Cultural and structural factors also continue to produce inequality based on sexual orientation, an inequality that is reinforced both by the presence of certain laws directed at gays and lesbians (such as laws in many states that prohibit same-sex marriage) and by the absence of other laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation (such as laws prohibiting employment discrimination).

To reduce gender inequality, then, a sociological perspective suggests various policies and measures to address the cultural and structural factors that help produce gender inequality. These might include, but are not limited to, the following:

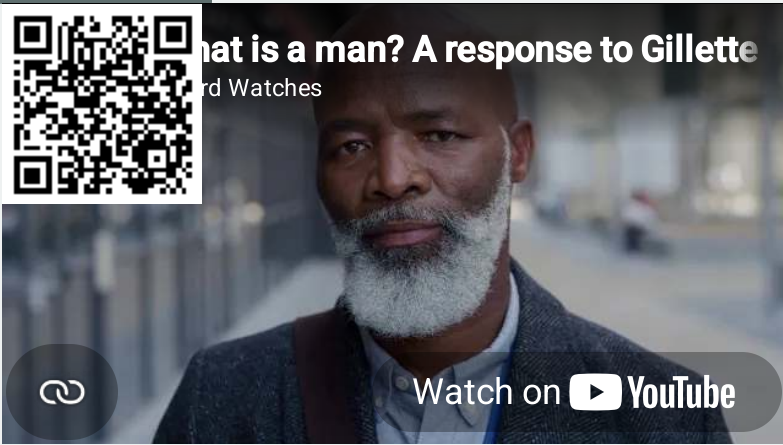
1. Reduce socialization by parents and other adults of girls and boys into traditional gender roles.
2. Confront gender stereotyping and sexual orientation stereotyping by the popular and news media.
3. Increase public consciousness of the reasons for, extent of, and consequences of rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
4. Increase enforcement of existing laws against gender-based employment discrimination and against sexual harassment.
5. Increase funding of rape-crisis centers and other services for girls and women who have been raped and/or sexually assaulted.
6. Increase government funding of high-quality day-care options to enable parents, and especially mothers, to work outside the home if they so desire, and to do so without fear that their finances or their children's well-being will be compromised.
7. Pass federal and state legislation banning employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and allowing same-sex couples to marry and enjoy all the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of heterosexual married couples.
8. Increase mentorship and other efforts to boost the number of women in traditionally male occupations and in positions of political leadership.

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8.7: Video - What Is a Man?

What is a man? A response to Gillette



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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9.1: Segregation in the Workplace

Occupational sex segregation refers to *the degree in which men and women are concentrated in occupations in which workers of one sex predominate*. For example, we will discuss in this chapter how women continue to dominate nursing and elementary school teaching. Gender stereotypes have been used as justifications for hiring women for secretarial, domestic, clerical, and health services professions. One instance of this stereotype is illustrated in the idea that women's natural dexterity and compliant personalities made the ideal for office work.

Industry sex segregation occurs when *women and men hold the same job title in a particular field or industry, but actually perform different jobs*. More often than not, women are placed in the lower paying and less prestigious occupations. For example, women being hired in the mining industry are usually concentrated in the laboring jobs, which is the lowest level of mining, typically involving mine maintenance.

Establishment sex segregation occurs when *women and men hold the same job title at an individual establishment or company, but actually do different jobs*. Women's jobs are usually lower paid and less prestigious. It is not uncommon for women at a law firm to be concentrated in the family law division while men dominate more lucrative corporate and commercial law department.

More than fifty years after the second wave of feminism, we have seen huge strides toward gender equality. Women are working in nearly all occupations that once were exclusively the reserved for men, and many are in prominent leadership roles in business and government. Yet, sex segregation in the workplace remains a problem as social norms continue to restrict occupational choices for women and men.

Despite the early gains of women in professional and service jobs that require a college education, many such occupations remain disproportionately male, particularly at the highest levels. Furthermore, most technical and manual "blue-collar" jobs have undergone little to no integration since the 1970s.

Traditional economic theory explained occupational segregation by sex or gender as an inevitable consequence of "natural differences" in skills between women and men, but contemporary economists have refocused the explanation on gender discrimination by employers, coworkers, and other actors. Despite a decline in explicit sexism, gender discrimination today, whether in the form of stereotypes or social pressures, is perpetuated by a new, "egalitarian" form of **gender essentialism**—*the belief that women and men's social, economic, and familial roles are and should be fundamentally different*. While most people now support women's access to all economic opportunities, they simultaneously expect men and women to pursue traditionally "male" and "female" jobs and regard parenting as the primary responsibility of mothers.

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9.2: Work

Essentially all women work. Some are artists, politicians, assistants, farmers, soldiers, teachers, parents, spouses, architects, or dishwashers. Some find their work enjoyable, and some are working out of necessity. Economists today separate paid and unpaid work with the terms “productive” and “unproductive” work. This distinction is essential when we’re exploring many women’s everyday struggle to balance their daily lives. With this definition, anyone who spends their days making meals, doing dishes, folding laundry, ironing, carpooling, feeding the dogs, cleaning the cat box, helping with homework, setting up play dates, getting kids to soccer practice, and grocery shopping is not involved in “productive work.”

In recent decades, women have entered the workforce and obtained jobs that were once reserved for men. However, most paid jobs in the United States are still divided by gender lines. In 2019, 57.4 percent of all women participated in the labor force while the labor force participation rate for men was 69.2 percent. Women accounted for 51.8 percent of all workers employed in management, professional, and related occupations in 2019, somewhat more than their share of total employment (47.0 percent). By industry, women accounted for more than half of all workers within several sectors in 2019: education and health services (74.8 percent), financial activities (52.6 percent), and leisure and hospitality (51.2 percent). However, women were substantially underrepresented (relative to their share of total employment) in manufacturing (29.4 percent), agriculture (26.2 percent), transportation and utilities (24.1 percent), mining (15.8 percent), and construction (10.3 percent).²⁶⁶

Women continue to dominate in positions in supportive or service areas. These types of jobs would include being secretaries, assistants, health aids, servers, day-care workers, elderly caregivers, and in other people’s homes. In these types of positions, women are often treated as expendable and replaceable in their positions. This treatment also places the people in these occupations are greater risk for labor and wage exploitation. In her book *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*, sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo shares the voices, experiences, and views of Mexican and Central American women who care for other people’s children and homes. In it, she describes how paid domestic work has largely become the domain of disenfranchised immigrant women of color. Many of these workers were not earning a living wage, and some employers even exercise great pains not to flaunt their affluence. In one telling moment, Hondagneu-Sotelo writes:

Some employers try to snip off the price tags on new clothing and home furnishings before the Latina domestic workers read them because they fear the women will compare the prices of those items with their wages - which they invariably do. While some employers often feel guilty about 'having so much' around someone who 'has so little,' the women who do the work resent not their affluence but the job arrangements, which generally afford the workers little in the way of respect and living wages.²⁶⁷

Women in professional jobs tend to dominate occupations like teaching (76%),²⁶⁸ social work (83%),²⁶⁹ and nursing (89%).²⁷⁰ There is a definite emphasis on care-giving or serving others in women’s professions. But there is another difference between women’s and men’s work, and that comes in the form of their wages. “You don’t have to look to Venus or Mars to find the difference in men and women. Just look at their paychecks.”²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2021). Women in the labor force: a databook. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/wom.../2020/home.htm>

²⁶⁷ Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2007). *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. University of California Press. Pg 11-12.

²⁶⁸ National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). Characteristics of Public School Teachers. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, *Institute of Education Sciences*. Retrieved [August 2022], from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/clr>.

²⁶⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

²⁷⁰ Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Cheridan Christnacht, “Your Health Care is in Women’s Hands,” *US Census Bureau*, August 14, 2019.

²⁷¹ Tucker, Cynthia. 1996. Women’s practical vote for Clinton. *Chicago Tribune*. Page 3

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9.3: Gender, Work and Wages in the U.S.

Corporations are constantly trying to find new ways to cut the costs of their production—no matter the product being produced—and maximize their production and profits. One way to achieve this goal is to hire low-wage workers or replace them entirely! Think about it, why do we have salad bars, ATM machines, online bill pay, or self-check-out at the grocery store? With salad bars, we don't need a server, and with ATMs and online bill pay we don't need bankers, and with self-check-out at the grocery we don't need a checker.

One result of the idea of minimizing cost of production has been the income inequality between people with college degrees and high school education and people in professional and technical positions. We are able to economically justify why one's labor power is worth more than others'. And with globalization allowing for more and more outsourcing of goods being produced outside of the United States, it has become increasingly difficult for families to economically thrive. This has made it imperative for more and more women to become "productive workers."

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (2019) 57.4% of women participated in the labor force and 72.3% of women with kids under 18 are in the workforce.²⁷² Today, women make up nearly half of our workforce, and many women are the primary breadwinners for their families. In fact, for single, widowed or divorced moms, the rate was 77.6%.²⁷³

In 2021 the 20 occupations with the highest median weekly earnings among women who were full-time wage and salary workers were:²⁷⁴

1. Physicians, \$2,283
2. Pharmacists, \$2,087
3. Lawyers, \$1,912
4. Computer and information systems managers, \$1,908
5. Nurse practitioners, \$1,903
6. Chief executives, \$1,904
7. Physician assistants, \$1,855
8. Software developers, \$1,840
9. Computer programmers, \$1,677
10. Public relations and fundraising managers, \$1,659
11. Public relations specialists, \$1,615
12. Financial and investment analysts \$1,607
13. Industrial engineers, including health and safety, \$1,571
14. Human resources managers, \$1,545
15. Civil engineers, \$1,531
16. Physical scientists, \$1,500
17. Marketing managers, \$1,490
18. Postsecondary teachers, \$1,483
19. Physical therapists, \$1,478
20. Occupational therapists, \$1,470

Women's notable progress over the years is reflected in their increased educational attainment, higher earnings, and a larger presence in leadership positions and entrepreneurial fields. So, our work is done, right? Not quite.

²⁷² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Employment characteristics of families. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/famee.pdf>

²⁷³ Ibid

²⁷⁴ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

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9.4: Structural Forces

Millions of women in the United States are more likely to live in poverty than men and still face significant structural barriers to economic security and stability, including: occupational segregation; barriers to moving into higher-level positions; low wages and unequal pay; inadequate workplace flexibility; and pregnancy and sex discrimination. Author and historian Stephanie Coontz described some structural impediments influencing and maintaining the barriers in place including the gender wage gap, the relative absence of family-friendly workplace policies, and the lack of high-quality affordable and accessible childcare.²⁷⁵

The Pay Gap

Women continue to earn less than men, and almost twice as many women as men earn minimum wage or less each year. In 2021, the uncontrolled gender pay gap was \$0.82 for every \$1 that men made. The uncontrolled gender pay gap measures the median salary for all men and women regardless of job type or worker seniority. The controlled gender pay gap was \$0.99 for every \$1 men make, which is one cent closer to equal but still not equal. "The controlled gender pay gap tells us what women earn compared to men when all compensable factors are accounted for — such as job title, education, experience, industry, job level, and hours worked. This is equal pay for equal work. The gap should be zero. It's not zero."²⁷⁶

Both the uncontrolled gender pay gap and the controlled gender pay gap measurements are important for understanding how society values women and women's work. The uncontrolled gender pay gap is an indication of what types of jobs — and the associated earnings and value of that work — are occupied by women overall versus men overall. Remember the list of jobs dominated by women discussed earlier in the chapter? We will discuss occupational segregation later in the chapter, but jobs and careers where women are overrepresented tend to pay less and are less likely to include benefits, like employer-provided health insurance and retirement plans compared to jobs held by men. The differences in valuing of work in measurable occupational segregation allows us to explore how wealth and power is gendered and the value that women have compared to men within our society.

The wage gap results in significant lost wages that continue to add up over a woman's lifetime. This number has narrowed in the last few decades, because women's wages have risen, but also because men's wages have fallen. Women of color, who are already disproportionately affected by the gender gap also experienced unemployment at higher rates in recent years, affecting the data around the gender pay gap:

"Due to the economic turmoil of COVID-19, women — especially women of color — have disproportionately faced unemployment at higher rates than in typical years. When women with lower wages leave the workplace, it moves the median pay for women up — slightly closing the gap between men and women's pay overall. When unemployed women return to work, they could face a disproportionate wage penalty from being unemployed compared to men, suggesting that the gender pay gap could widen again in subsequent years. However, this depends on the market and the pay women receive after unemployment."²⁷⁷

When broken down in different ways—by race, age, education, physical ability, migration status, sexual orientation and so on—the wage gap varies dramatically. But in each group, women earn less money than their male counterparts. Intersecting racial, ethnic, and gender biases reflect a disproportionate outcome in the pursuit of economic stability, as the gender pay gap is wider for women of color. In 2020 for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men working full-time year around: Asian American women were paid 87 cents; white, non-Hispanic women 79 cents; Black women 63 cents; Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander women 63 cents; Native American women 60 cents; and Latina/Hispanic women 55 cents.²⁷⁸

Education

The higher a person's educational attainment, the more likely they will be a labor force participant (working or looking for work) and the less likely they will be unemployed.²⁷⁹ For people age 25 and over with less than a high school diploma, 46.2 percent were labor force participants; high school diploma, no college, 56.1 percent; some college, or associate degree, 62.6 percent; and bachelor's degree or higher, 73 percent. So, education pays off! But, it is important to remember not all educational opportunities or access to adequate education are equal.

Census Bureau figures show that the typical worker (ages 25 and older) earned \$59,371 in 2020, but a worker with at least a bachelor's degree earned \$71,283 and worker with a high school diploma but no college earned \$42,417.²⁸⁰ In the Gender and Education chapter, we discussed women's advancements in college education, surpassing men in enrollment and completion. While women have been a majority of college-educated adults for more than a decade, they are only recently matching men in the

college-educated workforce participation. Women's growing representation among the college-educated labor force has important economic implications for individual workers and the economy.

One study found that the average earnings of transgender women workers fall by nearly one-third after transition. "While transgender people have the same human capital after their transitions, their workplace experiences often change radically. We estimate that average earnings for female-to-male transgender workers increase slightly following their gender transitions, while average earnings for male-to-female transgender workers fall by nearly 1/3."²⁸¹ The findings in this study align with other gender trends in the workplace pertaining to differences in power, authority, and value.

Family/Work/Home Balance

The U.S. workforce is still largely structured on the presumption that men are the breadwinners in a family unit, despite the rising number of single-parent families and women entering the workforce in higher numbers than ever before. Trying to balance (or more appropriately "juggle") home and work life, can be a huge challenge for women especially. While the workforce is still largely structured and fashioned through a patriarchal design, home maintenance and care are still often thought to be "women's responsibilities". Social and policy structures send strong reinforcing messages about the responsibility for home and childcare as women's work.

Inequality in the workforce is more significant for mothers than for fathers. Often, women who leave the workforce for maternity leave are looked over for promotional opportunities, affecting retirement, hours, income, and pensions. In addition, mothers who work full-time, year-round typically have lower earnings than fathers (\$42,000 compared to \$60,000): mothers are paid about 70 cents for every dollar paid to fathers.²⁸² Mothers of every race are typically paid less than white, non-Hispanic fathers.²⁸³

Employers' negative stereotypes about mothers can also have negative effects on mothers' job and salary prospects. In comparing equally qualified women candidates, one sociological study revealed that mothers were recommended for significantly lower starting salaries, were perceived as less competent, and were less likely to be recommended for hire than nonmothers in what they called the "motherhood penalty". The study also revealed the effects for fathers were just the opposite — fathers were recommended for significantly higher pay and were perceived as more committed to their jobs than men without children.²⁸⁴

Some mothers look for jobs compatible with children's school hours (for those with kids who are school-age), as the rising cost of childcare has affected the cost of parents working outside of the home. Childcare is the fourth highest cost for a family after housing, food, and taxes. That means for some women who want to work, the cost of childcare can be prohibitive, as childcare is still seen predominantly as women's responsibilities. The high cost of child care and a lack of paid leave make it less likely that women with caregiving responsibilities are able to stay in the workforce.²⁸⁵ Relatedly, increased access to contraception is one reason the gender wage gap began to shrink in the last few decades. This access allowed women more opportunities to control their fertility, another social responsibility assigned to women.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in March and April of 2020, when large segments of the economy were shut down, many people were laid off or permanently lost their jobs. However, many other women, mostly married, heterosexual women in two-earner households, "voluntarily" left the labor force because the responsibilities for virtual schooling and childcare fell disproportionately on them.²⁸⁶ The pandemic shed a harsh light on the outdated (but maintained) gender gap in unpaid household and care work in the United States.

In addition, many have suggested reimagining and redefining how we value and pay "productive" and "unproductive" work, as they heavily influence not only likelihood of remaining in the workforce, but also can have effects on salary and income. Women perform unpaid household and care work amounting, on average, to 5.7 hours per day compared with 3.6 hours for men. This means that on an average day, women in the United States spend 37 percent more time on unpaid household and care work than men.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Coontz, Stephanie. "Why Gender Equality Stalled." New York Times, 16 February 2013.

²⁸⁶ Payscale. 2022 State of the Gender Pay Gap Report. <https://www.payscale.com/research-an...ender-pay-gap/>

²⁸⁷ Ibid

²⁸⁸ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2020 – People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2020, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Disability Status. Retrieved 14 August 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/t...c/pinc-05.html>

²⁸⁹ U.S. Department of Labor. (2022) Employment status of the civilian population 25 years and over by educational attainment. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Retrieved 10 August 2022. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t04.htm>

²⁸⁰ U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC-05: Work Experience in 2020 – People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2020, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and

Disability Status. Retrieved 14 August 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/t...c/pinc-05.html>

²⁸¹ Schilt, K., & Wiswall, M. (2008). Before and after: Gender transitions, human capital, and workplace experiences. *B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis and Policy*, 8(1), [39].

²⁸² NWLC. (2020). Motherhood Wage gap for mothers overall. <https://nwlc.org/resources/motherhood-wage-gap-for-mothers-overall/>.

²⁸³ NWLC. (2020). The wage gap for mothers by race, state by state. <https://nwlc.org/resources/the-wage-gap-for-mothers-state-by-state-2017/>.

²⁸⁴ Shelley J. Correll, Stephan Benard, & In Paik. (2007). Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty. *American Journal of Sociology*.

²⁸⁵ Schochet, L. (2019). Child Care Crisis Is Keeping Women Out of the Workforce. *Center for American Progress*. <https://www.americanprogress.org/iss...88/child-care-crisis-keeping-women-workforce/>

²⁸⁶ Ewing-Nelson, Claire. "Nearly 2.2 Million Women Have Left the Labor Force Since February." *National Women's Law Center Fact Sheet*. <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/...r-Jobs-Day.pdf>.

²⁸⁷ Hess, C., Tanima Ahmed, and Jeff Hayes. (2021). "Providing Unpaid Household and Care Work in the United States: Uncovering Inequality." *Institute for Women's Policy Research Briefing Paper*.

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9.5: Discrimination in the Workforce

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a serious problem disproportionately affecting women in the workplace. It is defined by the federal Equal Opportunity Commission guidelines as:

It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person's sex. Harassment can include "sexual harassment" or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature.

Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.²⁸⁸

However, sexual harassment varies widely, and there are often misconceptions of what actually does constitute as being harassment. In 1986 the first case concerning sexual harassment reached the Supreme Court with *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson*. The Court established that sexual harassment includes the creation of an abusive or hostile work environment and the victim identifying the harassments as "unwelcome advances."

People of all sexes and genders can (and do) experience sexual harassment in the workplace. However, women outnumber men in these experiences; many working women will experience sexual harassment at some point in their careers. While some report this harassment, some leave their jobs to escape the harassing environment, which can have lasting effects on career attainment and create financial stress.²⁸⁹

LGBTQ+ Employees, Workplace Discrimination and Harassment

8.1 million LGBTQ+ workers (16 and over) live in the U.S.²⁹⁰ In recent years, there have been increased efforts for the advancement of LGBTQ+ rights at work in the United States. For example, 2020 saw a landmark Supreme Court ruling that protected LGBTQ+ people from workplace discrimination stating 1964 Civil Rights Act protects gay, lesbian, and transgender employees from discrimination based on sex. However, there has also been some pushback. For example, some states have filed lawsuits seeking to overturn directives allowing transgender workers and students to use bathrooms that correspond with their gender identity.

According to a report from UCLA School of Law's Williams Institute, almost 30% LGBTQ+ employees reported experiencing at least one form of employment discrimination (being fired or not hired) because of their sexual orientation or gender identity at some point in their lives. And LGBTQ+ employees of color report this form of discrimination at a slightly higher rate than White LGBTQ+ employees.²⁹¹ The study states:

Transgender employees were also significantly more likely to experience discrimination based on their LGBT status than cisgender LGB employees: Nearly half (48.8%) of transgender employees reported experiencing discrimination (being fired or not hired) based on their LGBT status compared to 27.8% of cisgender LGB employees. More specifically, over twice as many transgender employees reported not being hired (43.9%) because of their LGBT status compared to LGB employees (21.5%).²⁹²

In addition, LGBTQ+ employees reported having experienced harassment at a higher rate than non-LBGTQ+ employees with almost 38% reporting they had experiences either physical, verbal, or sexual harassment in the workplace.

There have been some efforts to dismantle systemic barriers to employment, work performance, and career progression for trans* employees. In *Being Transgender at Work* the authors suggest employers and businesses offer LGBTQ+ affirming benefits, craft inclusive policies or programs (i.e.: HR reviewing policies and removing gender-specific language from things like dress codes), foster inclusive environments through normalizing the use of pronouns (i.e.: in emails or zoom screens), and providing gender neutral bathrooms.²⁹³

Age Discrimination

61% of U.S. workers at or over the age of 45 reported witnessing or experiencing ageism in the workplace.²⁹⁴ 72% of women say they have experienced age discrimination in the workplace, compared to 57% of men.²⁹⁵ Ageism is prejudice or discrimination on the grounds of a person's age, and it can occur in subtle ways like being removed from projects, replaced by younger coworkers, or

not offered professional development opportunities. The impact of age discrimination (like other forms) can have harsh effects in a person's career. Gendered ageism refers to differences in ageism faced by women and men.²⁹⁶

From 1990 to 2017, there was a 15% increase in the number of Age Discrimination in Employment Act charges by women at or over the age of 40, and charges by men within the same age bracket decreased by 18%.²⁹⁷ Older women face marginalization based on gendered youthful (and literally impossible for any aging person to maintain) beauty ideals in addition to the unfounded societal biases that older employees are less innovative, dedicated, capable, adaptive, or generally less qualified. Here, the intersectional marginalizing factors of age and gender merge.

When searching for employment, older women experience more employment rejections than older men.²⁹⁸ A study found that younger women (under age 45) are more likely to be called back for another interview (almost double the rate for older women).²⁹⁹

The wage gap between men and women actually increases with age. One effect of corporate downsizing is the increased number of older, more experienced workers being laid off. Often times, this group is seen as too young to retire but too old or too experienced (expensive) to hire. For women over 40, age can complicate securing a job. Women over 40 typically earn even less than the average of the wage disparity between men and women, and if they are returning to the workforce after an absence, they often return to lower paying or part-time jobs.

Gendered Discrimination against People with (Dis)abilities

Women with disabilities are often labeled as being too dependent, passive, incapable, or incompetent. Work disabilities are more common among older women than young women. At the same time, many women who are unable to participate in the workforce continue to do their own cooking, cleaning, and home maintenance (“unproductive work”). Women with disabilities, in general, have lower educational attainment than do women who do not report having disabilities, which often times can exclude them from applying for higher paying jobs. There is a lengthy list of reasons why women with disabilities have lower educational attainment: being too ill to complete school, missing a lot of school, not having fair access to adequate educational programs, etc.

Added to these challenges is discrimination from the prejudices of employers. Women with disabilities often have to make special (and costly) arrangements to be able to participate in the workforce, having sometimes to arrange transportation, or extra support in the home or with childcare.

²⁸⁸ United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. <https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>

²⁸⁹ McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C., & Blackstone, A. (2017). The Economic and Career Effects of Sexual Harassment on Working Women. *Gender & Society*, 31(3), 333–358.

²⁹⁰ Kerith J. Conron & Shoshana K. Goldberg, Williams Inst. (2020). LGBT People in the US Not Protected by State Non-Discrimination Statutes.

²⁹¹ Sears, B., Mallory, C., Flores, A. R., & Conron, K. J. (2021). LGBT People’s Experiences of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment. *UCLA: The Williams Institute*.

²⁹² Ibid

²⁹³ Baboolall, D., Sarah Greenberg, Maurice Obeid, and Jill Zucker. (2021). Being Transgender at Work. McKinsey Quarterly, McKinsey & Company.

²⁹⁴ Rebecca Perron, The Value of Experience: Age Discrimination Against Older Workers Persist (AARP, 2018).

²⁹⁵ (2017). 10 Things You Should Know About Age Discrimination. AARP. <https://www.aarp.org/work/age-discrimination/facts-in-the-workplace/>

²⁹⁶ Sophie Beaton, Gendered Ageism in the Canadian Workforce (Samuel Center for Social Connectedness, 2019).

²⁹⁷ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “Chart Data for the State of Age Discrimination and Older Workers in the U.S. 50 Years After the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA);” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, “Age Discrimination.”

²⁹⁸ Noah Higgins-Dunn, “Older Workers Are America’s Fastest-growing Labor Pool—And the Least Protected from Workplace Discrimination,” *CNBC*, April 13, 2019

²⁹⁹ David Neumark, Ian Burn, and Patrick Button, “Age Discrimination and Hiring of Older Workers,” *Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco*, February 27, 2017.

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9.6: U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau

The Women's Bureau has outlined three major strategies to create more equity between sexes in the workforce:

- **Improve Workplace Practices and Supports:**

The Women's Bureau identifies, fosters, and promotes policies and efforts that enable women to succeed in their work and personal lives. Today's labor force comprises an increasing number of working mothers and women who care for disabled or elderly family members. Many low-paying occupations that tend to employ large shares of women lack adequate flexibility, benefits, and supports.

- **Promote Greater Access to and Preparation for Better Jobs for Women:**

The Women's Bureau aims to help women prepare for, participate and advance in, and retain non-traditional, high-growth, and higher-paying jobs. Female-dominated occupations have been found to pay less than male-dominated occupations with the same skill levels, and women have relatively low shares of employment in high-paying jobs such as those in transportation, construction, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields.

- **Promote Fair Compensation and Equal Pay:**

The Women's Bureau seeks to educate workers on their rights and employers on their legal obligations to ensure fair compensation. Although women earn less than men for reasons such as the lower-paying jobs they traditionally perform, around 40% of the difference in wages remains unexplained. The Bureau conducts research to identify additional factors that contribute to the wage gap and how to overcome them, as well as look for ways to improve compensation for lower-wage jobs that employ large numbers of women.³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. Updated 2016. https://www.dol.gov/wb/overview_14.htm. Retrieved 10 October 2016.

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9.7: Gender and Work in the Global Economy

Work is an arena in which gendered processes intersect with multiple social inequalities to influence what jobs people have, how they experience those jobs, and whether those jobs provide them with secure, fulfilling and upwardly mobile careers, or relegate them to insecure, dead-end, dangerous, or even degrading labor. In the US, hard work is supposed to lead to a whole host of social and material rewards (i.e., respect, power, a house, a car, a yacht). The context surrounding hard work, for instance whether that work is paid or unpaid, compensated at a minimum wage or six-figure salary, is gendered in deep and complex ways. As we mentioned previously, childcare is hard work that is often underpaid or not paid at all and is most often done by women. Furthermore, even if women do not perform most of this work themselves, certain career trajectories are forced on them, and they are placed in lower paying and less prestigious “mommy tracks” whether or not they choose this themselves. We can also see institutionalized labor inequalities at the global scale by looking at who cares for North American children when middle-class mothers take on full-time jobs and hire nannies, typically immigrant women from Eastern Europe and the Global South, to care for their children.

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9.8: Gender and Work in the US

Now, more than ever, women in the US are participating in the labor force in full-time, year-round positions.^[1] This was not always the case. Changes in the economy (namely, the decline of men's wages), an increase in single-mothers, and education and job opportunities and cultural shifts created by feminist movement politics from the 1960s and 1970s have fueled the increase in women's labor force participation. Dual-earner homes are much more common than the breadwinner-homemaker model popularized in the 1950s, in which women stayed home and did **unpaid labor** (such as laundry, cooking, childcare, cleaning) while men participated in the paid labor force in jobs that would earn them enough money to support a spouse and children. It turns out this popular American fantasy, often spoken of in political "family values" rhetoric, was only ever a reality for some white, middle-class people, and, for most contemporary households, is now completely out of reach.

Though men and women are participating in the labor force, higher education, and paid work in near-equal numbers, a wage gap between men and women workers remains. On average, women workers make 77% of what men make. This gap persists even when controlling for educational differences, full-time work versus part-time work, and year-round versus seasonal occupational statuses. Thus, women with similar educational backgrounds who work the same number of hours per year as their male counterparts are making 23% less than similarly situated men. So, how can this gap be explained? Researchers put forth four possible explanations of the gender wage gap: 1) discrimination; 2) occupational segregation; 3) devalued work; and 4) inherent work-family conflicts.

Most people believe discrimination in hiring is a thing of the past. Since the 1964 Civil Rights Act passed it has been illegal to discriminate in hiring based on race or gender. However, although companies can no longer say "men only" in their hiring advertisements, they can make efforts to recruit men, such as circulating job ads in men's social networks and choosing men to interview from the applicant pool. The same companies can also have non-accommodating family-leave provisions that may discourage women, who they assume are disproportionately more likely to be primary caregivers, from applying. In addition, discrimination cases are very difficult to prosecute legally since no government agency monitors general trends and practices, and so individuals must complain about and prove specific instances of discrimination in specific job settings. Hiring discrimination in particular is extremely difficult to prove in a courtroom, and can thus persist largely unchecked. In addition, even when they are hired, women working in male-dominated fields often run into a **glass ceiling**, in that they face difficulties in being promoted to higher-level positions in the organization. One example of the glass ceiling and gender discrimination is the class action lawsuit between Wal-Mart and its female managerial staff. Although Wal-Mart has hired some women in managerial positions across the country, they also have informal policies, at the national level, of promoting men faster and paying them at a different wage scale. While only six women at Wal-Mart initiated the suit, the number of women that would be affected in this case numbered over 1.5 million. Wal-Mart fought this legal battle over the course of ten years (2001-2011). The case was finally decided in June 2011 when the US Supreme Court sided with the defendant, Wal-Mart, citing the difficulty of considering all women workers in Wal-Mart's retail empire as a coherent "class." They agreed that discrimination against individuals was present, but the fact that it could not be proven that women, as a class, were discriminated against by the Wal-Mart corporation kept them from being found guilty (*Wal-Mart Stores Inc. v. Dukes, et al.*, 2011). Although Wal-Mart did nothing to curb its male managers who were clearly and consistently hiring and promoting men over women, this neglect was not enough to convict Wal-Mart of class-action discrimination. In this example, it becomes apparent that while gender discrimination is illegal it can still happen in patterned and widespread ways. Additionally, there are a series of factors that make it hard to prosecute gender discrimination.



“Walmart mall entrance in Pincourt, Quebec, Canada.” by Bull-Doser is in the [Public Domain](#), CC0

Occupational segregation describes a split labor market in which one group is far more likely to do certain types of work than other groups. Gendered occupational sex segregation describes situations in which women are more likely to do certain jobs and men others. The jobs women are more likely to work in have been dubbed “**pink-collar**” jobs. While “white collar” describes well-paying managerial work and “blue collar” describes manual labor predominantly done by men with a full range of income levels depending on skill, “pink collar” describes mostly low-wage, female-dominated positions that involve services and, often, emotional labor. The term **emotional labor**, developed by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983), is used to describe work in which, as part of their job, employees must control and manage their emotions. For instance, a waitress risks being fired by confronting rude and harassing customers with anger; she must both control her own emotions and help to quell the emotions of angry customers in order to keep her job. Any service-based work that involves interacting with customers (from psychiatrists to food service cashiers) also involves emotional labor. The top three “pink-collar” occupations dominated by women workers—secretaries, teachers, and nurses—all involve exceptional amounts of emotional labor.



“An Austrian Airlines flight attendant serving refreshments to passengers” by Austrian Airlines is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

Feminized work, or work thought to be “women’s work” is not only underpaid, it is also socially **undervalued**, or taken to be worth less than work thought to be “men’s work.” Care work is an area of the service economy that is feminized, involves intense emotional labor, and is consistently undervalued. Caretakers of children and the elderly are predominantly women. Economist

Nancy Folbre (2001) has argued that care work is undervalued both because women are more likely to do it and because it is considered to be natural for women to know how to care. Women have traditionally done care work in the home, raising children and caring for sick and dying relatives, usually for free. Perhaps this is because women bear children and are stereotyped as naturally more emotionally sensitive than men.

Some feel it is wrong to ever pay for these services and that they should be done altruistically even by non-family members. Women are stereotyped as having natural caring instincts, and, if these instincts come naturally, there is no reason to pay well (or pay at all) for this work. In reality, care work requires learned skills like any other type of work. What is interesting is that when men participate in this work, and other pink-collar jobs, they actually tend to be paid better and to advance to higher-level positions faster than comparable women. This phenomenon, in contrast to the glass ceiling, is known as the **glass escalator** (Williams, 1992). However, Adia Harvey Wingfield (2009) has applied an intersectional analysis to the glass escalator concept and found that men of color do not benefit from this system to the extent that white men do.



“This work” by mimikama is in the [Public Domain, CC0](#)

Finally, the fourth explanation for the gender wage gap has to do with the conflict between work and family that women are more likely to have to negotiate than men. For instance, women are much more likely to interrupt their career trajectories to take time off to care for children. This is not an inherent consequence of childbearing. Many countries offer women (and sometimes men) workers paid leave time and the ability to return to their jobs with the same salaries and benefits as when they left them. In contrast, the strongest legal policy protecting people’s jobs in the case of extended leave to care for the sick or elderly, or take personal time for pregnancy and childcare in the United States is the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1996. Under this act, most employers are obligated to allow their workers to take up to twelve weeks of *unpaid* leave. Unfortunately, few people can afford to be away from their jobs for so long without a paycheck and this policy remains underutilized. Additionally, only about half of the US work force is eligible for leave under FMLA, because the act only applies to workers who are employed by companies that have more than 50 employees. On top of that, many employers are unaware of this act or do not inform their workers that they can take this time off. Thus, women are more likely to quit full-time jobs and take on part-time jobs while their children are young. Quitting and rejoining the labor force typically means starting at the bottom in terms of pay and status at a new company, and this negatively impacts women’s overall earnings even when they return to full-time work.

1. Much of the material in this chapter was adapted from a classroom guest lecture by Dale Melcher, given on October 26, 2009.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Education and Gender

[10.1: Education Introduction](#)

[10.2: A Very Brief History of Education in the United States](#)

[10.3: Contemporary Education](#)

[10.4: Positive Progress](#)

[10.5: Equity and Gender-Based Education \(TEDx video\)](#)

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10.1: Education Introduction

Module 11: Gender Through an Educational Lens

Module Overview

In this module, we will focus on the educational experiences of males and females. We will look at how experiences differ in the preschool and school ages. We will also discover how school performance in various subjects differs between genders. We will also consider the concept of academic motivation, factors that contribute to academic motivation, and gender differences in this motivation.

Module Outline

- 11.1. Preschool
- 11.2. School
- 11.3. School Performance

Module Learning Outcomes

- Learn about preschool-age experiences and how gender impacts these experiences.
- Understand varying abilities and experiences in school-aged children.
- Recognize the factors that differentially impact boys' and girls' performance and motivation at school.

11.1. Preschool

Section Learning Objectives

- Define self-competence and self-esteem and understand how (1) these impact school experiences and (2) differ between boys and girls.
- Gain a detailed knowledge of the role play has in preschooler's development and how play varies between genders.

11.1.1. Self-Competence

A child's ability to self-regulate (e.g., their ability regulate following experiences of stress, excitement, and/or arousal) may lead to better social competence (e.g., relationship skills and abilities) which then leads to higher self-esteem and self-concept (e.g., the ability to cope with correction/failure), and then ultimately leads to higher social school readiness (e.g., higher cooperation with peers, positive views about school, fostered ability to listen and focus; Joy, 2016).

11.1.1.1. Self-Esteem. Preschoolers tend to have very high self-esteem (Harter, 2006). This is likely because preschoolers struggle to truly differentiate the level of difficulty in a task and overestimate their own abilities which actually leads them to trying challenging tasks more often, and exposing themselves to learning a variety of skills. This fosters motivation and learning in preschoolers. Overall, boys and girls tend to have similar self-esteem (Cole et al., 2001; Marsh & Ayotte, 2003; Young & Mroczek, 2003); however, society assumes boys have higher self-esteem, and it may be that girls internalize this assumption that society has. Thus, some studies show that girls have lower self-esteem (Hagbor, 1993).

What impacts self-esteem? Parenting styles and teachers can certainly impact self-esteem in young children. Parents that practice warm, but firm parenting (authoritative parenting), have children with higher self-esteem. Parents that are overly correcting or controlling deny children the ability to develop self-esteem fully, and these children have lower self-esteem ratings (Kernis, 2002; Donellan et al., 2005).

Does how similar a model have anything to do with how we learn and master tasks, and thus, self-esteem and competence? Maybe. The *model-observer similarity hypothesis* posits that when learners perceive themselves to be similar to the model "teacher" then they will show greater self-efficacy. However, there is mixed support of this, and that is largely explained by *what* we are learning. Overall, when a model is the same-sex as us, it does not change how much we learn, but it does impact our behavior. This is because we internalize the behavior as appropriate if a same-sex model does it, and the environment accepts it. Essentially, task appropriateness (male versus female tasks), is learned best by same-sex models. Student perceived same-gender models as more similar to them than opposite-gender models. Same-sex models may also increase perceived confidence, but does not necessarily improve performance, increased confidence, or increased self-efficacy (Hoogerheid, van Wermeskerken, Van Nassau, & Van Gog, 2018).

As children get older, self-competence declines. How fast it declines depends on the subject area. For example, self-competence actually increases for sports, but declines for language arts. Specifically, research indicates that males tend to have more perceived self-competence in sports and math and females have more self-competence in language arts (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2002).

11.1.2. The Role of Play in the Development of Gender Roles

As you might expect, preschool children engage in play as a primary activity in their preschool setting. This is developmentally appropriate for them and they gain extensive knowledge about their world and environment through play – and understanding of gender is no different. Play provides children and their peers an opportunity to test out different roles and ideas as well as to provide feedback as to what works, is acceptable, and/or preferred. Sex-role socialization theory explains differentiated behaviors among sexes due to society creating specific roles for males and females, partially that historically have aligned with their eventual adult roles (e.g., males for labor/work, females for nurturing/child rearing); thus, as young children, we are socialized into roles. The theory posits that there are two opposing categories of sex – male and female (Martin & Beese, 2017). Thus, play is either masculine or feminine and either aligns with the male-sex role or female-sex role. So, playing with baby dolls aligns with the female-sex role of nurturing and child rearing; whereas pretending to build with toy tools aligns with the male-sex role of manual labor and working.

Interestingly, before the age of 2, it is difficult for children to distinguish between boys and girls. However, by age 3, they are better able to do this and certainly begin to evidenced varied behaviors and preferences based on gender. Further, by age 5, children will not only prefer to play with their own gender, they will likely reject or show a bias against the other gender (Martin & Beese, 2017; Hill & Portrie-Bethke, 2017; Hill & Haley, 2017).

Ultimately, if we want to reduce this within a school context, and see more gender-equal environments and culture among peers, teachers will have to reteach what is acceptable. Essentially, they would need to provide models and examples of non-sexist behavior. Moreover, they may need to encourage this by being careful to choose gender neutral language (e.g., firefighter instead of fireman), as well as encourage play that is non-sexist (e.g., encouraging boys to play with dolls and girls to play with trucks), and utilize visual materials that are gender neutral or shows both genders doing a task (e.g., girls in male-typical jobs such as a girl as a doctor, and vice versa such as a male as a teacher). Although these may be recommended, they may also be largely ineffective, according to research (Martin & Beese, 2017).

Another theory about gender-role development in the context of preschool and play is the *Feminist Post-Structural theory*. It posits that children not only model gender-normed behavior, they construct their own gender. This theory suggests that gender is not specific to distinct categories; rather, female is defined in relation to male and vice versa. Thus, masculine and feminine characteristics are actually interdependent and exist within a continuum. This theory suggests that, because of this, there is an emotional investment in gender roles and encouraging nonsexist behavior is actually not appropriate. This is because it is suggested that doing this requires an individual to give up something they perceive as desired and pleasurable. For example, if we encourage a girl to play with trucks instead of toys, but they find pleasure in playing with dolls, we are asking that girl to give up a toy she truly likes and enjoys (Martin & Beese, 2017).

What about bullying or teasing based on gender in these young ages? Well it exists. However, 25% of girls reported feeling teased by boys and this usually consisted of behaviors such as boys pushing them too hard/high on a swing, hitting them, etc. This being the case, it would make sense that some girls may want to play with other girls, rather than boys. As such, encouraging nonsexist play and forced gender-mixed play may not be the best option – at least from a feminist post-structural theory standpoint (Martin & Beese, 2017).

11.2. School

Section Learning Objectives

- Recognize overall math abilities in girls as well as overall academic achievement in boys.
- Understand the various components to school culture that contribute to boys' and girls' experiences at school
- Uncover what is defined as “masculine” and the consequences that occur when males do and do not align with the “cool” masculinity traits that are scripted for them.
- Define gender tracking and how this occurs in the school-setting.

11.2.1. Math Ability in Girls

As you know by now from our discussion in the cognitive chapter, there are minimal differences in actual cognitive capacities between genders. Math abilities are no exception. There are no actual differences in abilities with mathematics between girls and boys. However, girls are often perceived to have lower math abilities by adults (e.g., parents and teachers; Tomasetto, Alparone, & Cadinu, 2011; Beilock, Gunderson, Ramirez, & Levine, 2010), peers, and themselves (Correll, 2001). As we discussed with stereotype threat and self-fulfilling prophecies, this perception may then lend itself to girls actually performing lower in math. So, it is not actually that girls have lower math abilities, rather, social and environmental factors impact girls' math performance, leading to lower math performance.

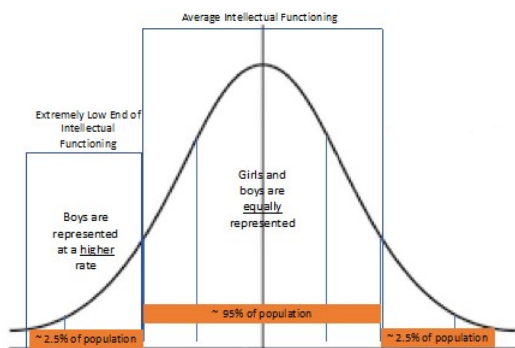
Despite having equivalent math abilities, girls tend to take fewer math and STEM-related courses in grade school years. Because of this, they may be less prepared to pursue STEM-related majors in higher education years, and thus, pursue careers in STEM fields at a lower rate than males. There have been some efforts to combat this, and those efforts may be working, to a degree. Rates of females pursuing STEM-related fields increased. In fact, there appears to be equivalent numbers, largely speaking, between males and females, in seeking STEM-related courses in grade school and even into college. However, this does not necessarily carry out into careers as men are represented to a higher degree in completing STEM-majors and securing STEM-related careers (Martin & Beese, 2017). Potentially contributing to self-fulfilling prophecies.

11.2.2. Boy's Achievement

Although boys appear to get more attention and focus in school from teachers, it is actually a well-documented phenomenon that boys tend to underachieve compared to girls. So although there seems to be a lot of chatter about girls being underestimated and underchallenged with math, boys are falling behind in educational experiences and performance in general. So, really, the conversation may need to shift to boys more (Kafer, 2007)!

For example, girls tend to be more engaged in school, perform higher in academics, are more likely to go to college, and are more likely to complete their college degree, compared to boys. Boys tend to experience more academic struggles and are referred for behavioral problems more than girls. In fact, about 60% of special education services are for boys! Boys are also more susceptible to using substances, getting either suspended or expelled, dropping out, going to jail, and dying by suicide or homicide. You may be asking yourself why – why. Why are boys at risk for such negative outcomes? Well, there may be a few explanations, although we still really don't have a great understanding of this phenomenon (Kafer, 2007).

Figure 11.1. Extreme Scores in Males



So, is it differences in intelligence? Yes and no. Boys and girls equally fall within the “Average” area of intellectual functioning meaning boys and girls are equally represented in the middle of the bell curve (see the blue area of Figure 17.1). However, when we examine the extreme lower end of the curve (see the green area of Figure 17.1), boys may be represented at a higher rate than girls, meaning boys are more likely to have lower cognitive functioning abilities than girls, when looking at only low intellectual abilities (Kafer, 2007).

Another explanation is that schools may not focus enough on boys' literacy and reading skills. Although there is a literacy gap noted in public schooling, this gap is not found in homeschooled children (Kafer, 2007). So why is that? Are we not fostering reading and writing skills enough in boys in the traditional-public school setting? What do we do? Would creating a school that is more focused and intune to boys' needs and abilities increase achievement in boys? If so, is considering school choice and charter schools the best option for increasing male achievement rates?

Neall (2002) recommends that, within school settings, boys' self-esteem can be raised by teachers praising achievements and reminding them of their success, encouraging their desire for competition and high activity by fostering their involvement in

competitive sports and allowing them to move more when learning, perhaps considering single-sex classrooms, and using the model-observer similarity, increasing male teachers (Skelton, 2006).

11.2.3. Culture

The culture created at school and in a classroom is incredibly important for the outcomes of youth. So, what about cultures as it relates to gender specifically? Well, much of culture comes from social norms and expectations. For example, girls are expected to be quiet and prosocial. As such, they receive high amounts of praise for these qualities and a strong focus is placed on their appearance. If girls stray from these expectations, they may receive negative evaluations. For example, girls are not expected to be assertive, so when they exert assertiveness, they are often labeled as disruptive (Martin & Beeese, 2017).

What about when peers do not conform to gender norms or identify as non-heterosexual? What is the school culture like for them? In general, despite increasing acceptance and tolerance, there still remains a high level of hostility. These youth often experience sexual harassment and discrimination. These experiences at school, due to the culture that persists, may lead to these youth avoiding school and under-engaging, leading to poorer outcomes academically. Increased emotional distress has also been noted. (Martin & Beeese, 2017).

11.2.4. “Cool” Masculinity

Masculinity, particularly as an adolescent, is highly valued in our society. To be perceived as masculine, boys must avoid looking weak, limit their emotional expressions, be competitive, and exert power and control. Anger and aggression are not only acceptable, they are often encouraged when in conflict. We socialize this from a young age, expressing direct and indirect messages to young boys that crying and backing down are signs of weakness. In fact, when boys do not appear masculine and adhere to these expectations, they are often ridiculed by peers. While males may reinforce masculine traits in other males, when a female reinforces a male’s engagement in masculine behavior, it is more powerful and salient (Smith, 2017). If a boy is perceived as too feminine, they are heavily ridiculed. Despite females being somewhat encouraged when they break gender norms and display interest in some masculine areas (e.g., sports), boys do not get any real social encouragement when they deviate from traditional masculine roles and characteristics. In fact, they are often shamed and masculinity is often “policed.”

Interestingly, when we encourage males to restrict their emotions and to “be tough” we may be encouraging aggression toward themselves and toward others (Feder, Levant, & Dean 2007). Think about it, we don’t only tolerate aggression in males, we encourage it. Think about our soldiers, which are male-dominant. We celebrate their bravery and courage and they are often trained to restrict emotions – similarly, we see this in first responders as well. We see aggression in males modeled on television too. Miedzian (2002) defines this focus of aggression in males the *masculine mystique*. Whereas boys with higher SES and more resources may find appropriate ways to channel this masculinity and aggression, boys in lower SES status may struggle to find adaptive ways to channel this, thus, resulting to more negative means and criminal behaviors.

11.2.5. Gender Tracking

Gender tracking is when students are channeled into different areas of focus/paths solely based on their gender. Although this can happen overtly, it may more commonly happen covertly. How children are gender tracked may vary based on age as well. For example, we begin gender tracking children as soon as we know the sex of a baby – picking toys, clothes, names, and décor that are specific to their gender. Fast forward to elementary aged children, and teachers continue to track girls and boys into playing with gender-typical toys. These are more overt channels. However, a covert path is when teachers begin calling on boys more and attending to boys more. This leads to girls raising their hands less frequently. Moreover, boys tend to be identified as requiring special education services more, thus tracking them into an alternative school option more frequently (Jones, 2017).

Tracking in secondary education may be two-fold. First, lower achieving students may be tracked into vocational learning. As such, within that tracking, boys are often tracked into traditionally considered masculine trades (mechanical and masonry tasks), whereas girls are tracked into traditionally feminine trades (e.g., food trades, child care, and cosmetology). The greater concern is that, often, the feminine trades often have a lower incoming potential (Jones, 2017).

So, what about high achieving youth – are they tracked too? In fact, they are. Higher achieving males tend to be tracked into STEM-related classes whereas higher achieving girls tend to be tracked into humanities, social sciences, etc. The only area that seems someone immune to gender tracking is history and biology with both males and females equally represented in such (Jones, 2017).

11.3. School Performance

Section Learning Objectives

- Learn how teachers impact the academic performance of boys and girls.
- Understand the benefits and drawbacks of single-sex schooling
- Uncover the factors that contribute to academic motivation and how gender may differentially impact motivation

11.3.1. Teachers

Teachers play an important role in a child's educational experiences. While teachers often have good intentions and verbalize a desire to help each of their students equally, teachers have biases that they are sometimes unaware of that impact students' educational experiences. This bias occurs when teachers form expectations regarding a student's ability to perform on factors unrelated to the student's prior academic performance. Those factors may include the child's gender, their racial or ethnic identity, or their social/financial status. For example, a teacher that assumes a female student has lower abilities simply because she is female (not because of previous test grades by that student), or that an African American student is going to perform lower in their class because of their race, not because of previous performance. My guess is, if you asked a teacher if they held these beliefs, they would say no. I think most of us would say no. The fact is, sometimes we have beliefs we are not aware of (sometimes these beliefs are so automatic and we are so unaware of them, they are referred to implicit beliefs; (Casad & Bryant, 2017).

Robert Rosenthal, one of the first researchers to examine teacher bias, defined the "Pygmalion effect", which is when teacher's expectancies were shown to actually impact IQ scores (keep in mind, IQ is not a construct we think should be impacted in this way). Moreover, the younger a student was, the more likely their score was to be impacted (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Casad & Bryant, 2017). Ultimately, if a teacher expects a student to underperform, and treats them in that way, students will not be likely to persevere and try hard in a challenge, and then this will likely result in them actually performing lower on tasks (Casad & Bryant, 2017). What we are likely seeing at play here is the self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy is a phenomenon of when someone expects something to occur, the person believes it, and their behaviors then become congruent to lead to that outcome. For example, a teacher believes a student will do poorly, the student then believes this and stops studying, and then they perform poorly, thus confirming the prediction. Teachers' expectations that then lead to self-fulfilling prophecies in students may actually contribute to achievement gaps (Robinson-Cimpian et al., 2014). Specifically, how teachers communicate to boys and girls, particularly, if they foster expectations that boys will be better in math and girls better in language, then teachers may contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies that are then reflected in gender gaps in math and language (Robinson-Cimpian, et al., 2014).

11.3.2. Single-Sex Schooling

Single-gender or single-sex schooling is a controversial topic. While some are avid proponents of this option, others strongly discourage this route. To understand the controversy, let's first take a look at each side and the reasons for the varying viewpoints. Then we will discuss what the research actually supports.

11.3.2.1. All those in favor of single-sex schooling. Proponents of the tendency to indicate that boys and girls learn differently; that there are differences in how their brains are developed and in their abilities. They argue single-sex schooling would allow to account for this and tailor education specific to a child's potential learning/cognitive strengths and weakness based on their sex. They also argue that it this type of setting allows for biases in classrooms to be minimized. Remember how we learned that teachers tend to focus more on boys than girls, and that boys' academics are emphasized whereas girls' prosocial behaviors, quietness, and helping behaviors are emphasized? Well proponents of single-sex schooling school argue that the nature of single-sex classes would eliminate these biases, particularly for girls (Halpern et al., 2011).

11.3.2.2. All those against single-sex schooling. Although the individuals that are proponents of single-sex schools site learning and cognitive differences as a logical rationale in support of single-sex schooling, as discussed in the cognitive chapter, there are very little differences, cognitively speaking, between girls and boys. And, when those differences are present, they are very minor. Thus, those against single-sex schooling argue that this rationale is founded on pseudoscience and does not have any real basis. Those arguing against single-sex schooling also argue that these settings increase gender division, segregation, and stereotypes due to the clear divide it presents. In fact, research actually supports this argument (Bigler & Liben, 2006; Martin & Halpern, 1981; Hilliard & Liben, 2010). Essentially, when segregation occurs, children formulate assumptions that the segregation occurred because the two groups have differences that are important to highlight; thus, biases, particularly intergroup biases, increase. This structure also limits the availability and opportunity for boys and girls to learn to work together (Halpern et al., 2011).

11.3.2.3. The evidence. Most research actually shows that there is no advantage to single-sex schooling when it comes to overall academic performance. Although you may come across research that seems to support single-sex schooling, flaws in the research

have commonly been noted (Leonard, 2006). Specifically, more often than not, findings supporting single-sex schooling tend to disappear when critical confounding factors are controlled for. For example, many students in single-sex schooling options tend to be more academically advanced students to start with. Thus, when you simply compare the single sex school (that contains a higher concentration of advanced performing students) to other mixed-sex schools, it seems like the single-sex schooling is excelling, and the conclusion is often that this is due to the single-sex context. However, when one controls for the more advanced students, there is no statistical difference showing advantages for single-sex schooling (Hayes, Phalke, & Bigler, 2011; Pahlke, Hyde, & Allison, 2014). In the same respect, children that are underperformers will often transfer out of single-sex schooling; thus, continuing to artificially inflate the academic performance scales of single sex schools (Halpern et al., 2011).

The argument that gender stereotypes may be reduced in single-sex schools is not supported. In a Swedish study, it was found that boys were overconfident in math whereas girls were underconfident in math in single-sex schooling; thus, single-sex schooling did not help dispel the stereotype of poor math abilities in girls. Moreover, this was repeated in an El Salvador study which again found the same results (Jakobsson, Levin, Kotasdam, 2013)

Although there does not appear to be a genuine overall advantage to single-sex schooling, there may be smaller or isolated benefits to single sex schooling. For example, there may be some slight advantages for girls in math, regarding single-sex schooling. Still, some research shows differing results. For example, Bell (1989) and Spielhofer (2002) found that children in single-sex schools were more likely to choose science than children in coeducational settings. Stables (1990) found that children sought out gender-atypical classes more often in single-sex schooling, and this was particularly true for younger students. However, Francis (2003) found conflicting results revealing that girls showed similar preferences and sought out similar experiences equally in single-sex and coeducational settings (Leonard, 2006).

Overall there is very little support for single-sex schooling, from an empirical stance. Moreover, very little is actually known about the long-term impacts of single-sex schooling and outcomes (Leonard, 2006).

11.3.3 Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation is the “motivation relevant to performance on tasks in which there are criteria to judge success or failure.” (Wigfield & Cambria, 2010). The motivation to be successful, particularly in academics, has important outcomes. For example, academically motivated youth tend to perform better at school, have increased prosocial behavior, and higher attendance at a school. So, what leads to academic motivation? Females have more intrinsic motivation (e.g., self-motivating) to achieve high in academics whereas males rely more on external motivation (e.g., praise, external rewards; Vecchione, Alessandri, and Marsicano, 2014). Moreover, an individual’s perceived competence in an area, as well as determination, impact the level of motivation one has, academically, which also happens to impact their performance in a positive way (Fortier, Valleranda, & Frederic, 1995). Parents that engage in warm, but firm parenting, also foster higher academic motivation.

Attribution styles also impact achievement motivation. *Learned helplessness* is an attribution style in which failures are attributed to one’s ability and success is attributed to external things like luck. This attribution style is one in which a person believes they cannot improve on weaknesses, so, if a task is difficult, they don’t feel like they can do anything to overcome it and may give up. *Mastery-oriented attribution style* is when an individual explains successes as a result of their ability, as well as explaining failures as a result of controllable factors, such as their effort. Thus, they approach challenges as something they have control over, persevering and putting forth effort (Heyman & Dweck, 1998). Master-oriented individuals focus on learning goals whereas learned helplessness individuals focus on performance (Heyman and Dweck, 1998). Children with a learned helplessness attribution style do not end up developing the necessary skills such as self-regulation to strive and succeed in high achieving contexts; thus, academic motivation may be lower. If teachers focus more on learning than performance and grades, then they end up fostering more master-oriented students (Anderman et al., 2001). It appears that girls are more likely than boys to attribute failure to ability (Bleeker and Jacobs, 2004).

Boys report more interests and ability in math and science whereas girls report more ability and interests in language and writing. Moreover, gender differences with motivation show up early and increase as children age. This is especially true with language arts. Specifically, as children get older, the gender gap in math and science motivation (with boys having more motivation in this area) begins to decrease whereas as the gender gap in language arts (with girls having more motivation) actually increases (Meece, Bower Glienke, & Burg, 2006).

Module Recap

In this module, we first focused on understanding the unique experiences of preschoolers and how their development of self-competence and self-esteem occurs, factors that impact their development, and the importance of their play in their development.

We then moved on to school-aged children and learned about various similarities and differences in their abilities, motivations, and experiences. We also discussed the benefits and drawbacks of single-sex schooling. Finally, we ended our discussion with understanding gender differences in academic motivations.

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10.2: A Very Brief History of Education in the United States

By 1850, all 50 states had established government-funded schools in which White children (of any social class) could attend. Black children were formally excluded from public education opportunities until after the Civil War; and even after the Civil War, schools remained segregated. In 1867 the Department of Education was established, and its primary role was to collect information on schools and teaching that would help the States establish effective school systems.²²⁴ By 1870, public schools were present in every state with secondary public schools outnumbering private schools. However, three years later in 1873, an economic depression hurt formal education. Many schools closed because they lacked the funds to staff the school with teachers and supplies.

During this time, public schools remained racially segregated. Native American Boarding Schools (also known as Indian Boarding Schools) were established by the U.S. government in the late 19th century, using a model based off an education program designed in Fort Marion Prison in St. Augustine, Florida experimenting with Native American assimilation education on imprisoned and captive Indigenous people. In 1886 Army Captain Richard Henry Pratt opened one of the most well-known of these schools, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania. Attendance to the boarding schools was made mandatory by the U.S. Government regardless of whether or not Indigenous families gave their consent. Pratt's educational goal for American Indians was to “civilize them” through total and forced cultural assimilation - an attempt to eliminate entire cultures and peoples. This philosophy meant administrators forced students to speak English, were assigned Anglo-American names, had their hair cut or buzzed, and forced to wear military-style uniforms in exchange of their traditional clothing. As Pratt put it in an 1892 speech: “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”²²⁵ Carlisle was one of 357 Indigenous boarding schools that operated throughout the country.



Figure 8.1.1: Photo Source: John N. Choate. Boys and girls pose outdoors at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, in Carlisle, Pa., after their arrival at the boarding school from Fort Marion, Fla.²²⁶



Figure 8.1.2: Photo Source: John N. Choate. The same INdian students (from the previous image) are shown four months after arriving at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.²²⁷

In 1896, the Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson* established separate public schools for black and white students. The decision also deprived African American children of equivalent educational advantages. Schools for Black children had to make do with scant financial support and negligible resources. There were typically far too few teachers, too many students, and students of

all ages (from toddler to teen) in one schoolhouse (which is really one school room). Often times, schools for Black children were so underfunded (or not funded at all) that building these centers for learning were privately founded by Black women. Teaching was an attractive career for Black women for economic reasons, but also because it was an alternative to working in a White family's house in a domestic role.

It was not until 1832 that women were allowed to attend college with men. Oberlin College in Ohio was the first co-ed college in the U.S., and it was also the first White college to admit Black students. Progressive? Maybe. But are you ready for this?! Female students were expected to remain silent in lecture halls and during public assembly. AND they were required to care for themselves as well as do the laundry for male students, clean the male students' rooms, and serve male students their meals. Can you imagine?! Think about some of the students in your class. If you are a female, imagine having to do the laundry of some of your male classmates to be able to learn at the same university. And if you're male, imagine expecting your female classmates having to do your laundry and serve you meals. Hopefully (and maybe I am being too hopeful here) we can all agree the inequality was apparent and disturbing, at best.

In addition to having to accomplish domestic roles to serve male students, female students were often channeled into areas of study including home economics, elementary education, and nursing; whereas male students were often encouraged to enter areas of study such as engineering, physical and natural sciences, business, law, and medicine. We will discuss how some of these trends persist today later in the chapter.

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The government funded schools available to White children had two major outcomes:

1. White female literacy raised to meet the rate of White male literacy; and
2. The increase in elementary schools across the country

allowed for more career opportunities for women as school teachers. Because of the proliferation of schools in the U.S. in the late 1800s and early 1900s, teaching became a full-time job, and largely dominated by women. However, this job paid far too little to support a family, so as a result, school administrators employed women in large numbers as cheap and efficient means to implement mass education.

As far as college education, it was not until 1832 that women were allowed to attend college with men. Oberlin College in Ohio was the first co-ed college in the U.S., and it was also the first racially segregated college to admit Black students. Progressive? Maybe. But are you ready for this? Female students were expected to remain silent in lecture halls and during public assembly. AND they were required to care for themselves as well as do the laundry for male students, clean the male students' rooms, and serve male students their meals. In fact, female students were excused from class on Mondays to fulfill their domestic responsibilities at the college. Can you imagine?! Think about some of the students in your class. If you are a female, imagine having to do the laundry of some of your male classmates to be able to learn at the same university. And if you're male, imagine expecting your female classmates having to do your laundry and serve you meals. Hopefully (and maybe I am being too hopeful here) the inequality is apparent and disturbing, at best.

In addition to having to accomplish domestic roles to serve male students, female students were often channeled into areas of study including home economics, elementary education, and nursing; whereas male students were often encouraged to enter areas of study such as engineering, physical and natural sciences, business, law, and medicine. We will discuss how some of these trends persist today later in the chapter.

The Progressive Era (1890-1930s) was notable for a dramatic expansion in the number of schools and students served, especially in the fast-growing metropolitan cities. After 1910, smaller cities also began building high schools. By 1940, 50% of young adults had earned a high school diploma.²²⁸ The Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 1960s helped publicize the inequities of segregation. In 1954, the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* unanimously declared that separate facilities were inherently unequal and unconstitutional.

By the 1970s segregated districts had practically vanished in the South. Although required by court order, integrating the first Black students in the South was met with intense opposition. In 1972 Title IX was passed, making discrimination against any person based on their sex in any federally funded educational program(s) in America illegal.²²⁹

By 1980, women were enrolled in American colleges at the same rate as men, and by 1982 women actually earned more bachelor's degrees than men. It wasn't until 1987 that women began earning more Master's degrees than men. Were you alive in 2005? Because it wasn't until that year that women earned the majority of doctoral degrees in the United States.²³⁰

Although full equity in education has still yet to be achieved, technical equality in education had been achieved by the early 1970s.

²²⁴ U.S. Department of Education. The Federal Role in Education. Revised 6/2021. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/f...hool%20systems>.

²²⁵ Churchill, W. (2004). Kill the Indian, save the man: The genocidal impact of American Indian residential schools. San Francisco: City Lights.

²²⁶ Photo by John N. Choate is in the public domain

²²⁷ Photo by John N. Choate is in the public domain

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²²⁹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Reviewed October 2021. <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for...l%20assistance>.

²³⁰ Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, Women Can't Win: Despite Making Educational Gains and Pursuing High-Wage Majors, Women Still Earn Less than Men, 2018

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10.3: Contemporary Education

Today, school settings are a key site of gender socialization. The messages children receive about appropriate behavior, attitudes, and appearance for their gender are both explicit and implicit, and come from school policies, teachers, fellow students, as well as the curriculum.

Elementary School

Student/Teacher Interactions

Male and female students typically have very different experiences in elementary schools. One notable example is the interactions between teachers and their students. Male students tend to interact with their teachers more often, and males receive more instructional attention from their teachers. This is more likely a result of male students being more demanding of attention from their teachers than female students rather than teachers intentionally investing more time into their male students' education. For example, male students are more likely to call out answers in class, resulting in either punishment or reinforcement (both interactive) from the teacher.

There are other trends worth mentioning, as well. Teachers tend to spend more time problem solving with boys and posed more academic challenges to them. Boys were praised more often for the intellectual quality of their work, whereas girls are more often praised for being neat and polite.^{231 232} Sound unfair? I hope so! But boys are not always the beneficiaries of sex inequalities in elementary school. Boys are more likely to incur formal and informal punishments from the teacher, and their punishments are usually harsher and publicly handed out, whereas girls are awarded more "warnings" and more often afforded privacy in disciplinary actions.²³³

Curricula

During the elementary school years, girls often show lower self-esteem rates and earlier than their male peers. Some of this is attributed to the interactions between the teacher and pupil, but another major factor is women (and minorities) are widely underrepresented (and sometimes totally overlooked) in textbooks. Textbooks are powerful and authoritative because teachers, administrators, government, and other authorities approve them. As a result, elementary school children are likely to consider the way women and men are portrayed in textbooks as unquestionable and truthful. When women (or any group of people) are portrayed as unimportant or incapable by leaving them out, this sends powerful messages to kids about men and women and their roles in contemporary society.

Sex Segregation Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes

A common practice in elementary school is separating groups or participants by sex category, I.E.: boys in one line, girls in the other. Or, how many times were you separated by your sex category to play a sport in school? Or, maybe for the purpose of jobs in the classrooms? Boys lift the chairs on the desks and girls dust or water plants? Sex separation can reinforce gender stereotypes, particularly when it involved a division of labor in the classroom. In addition, separating children by sex prevents girls and boys from working together, cooperatively. This denies children the opportunity to learn about and sample one another's interests or abilities.

Children also receive messages about sex and gender in the way adult jobs are distributed in their schools. About 97% of preschool and kindergarten teachers are female, and about 80% of elementary and middle school teachers are female.²³⁴ Women remain underrepresented in administrative and upper management positions in these schools and their districts. In 2018, 68 percent of elementary school principals were women, in public middle schools only 40 percent were women, and in public high schools only 33 percent were women.²³⁵ This shows that while women are the majority in principal positions in elementary schools, they are still largely concentrated or relegated to elementary schools. As the schools progress in age and curriculum, men still dominate the principal positions.

Secondary Schools

Dress Codes

Dress codes are one example of formal policies in schools directly shaping gender roles and ideals. Common themes in dress codes often focus on traditional examples of feminine dress, like forbidding short skirts or bra straps showing or specific body parts like no showing knees, thighs, shoulders, cleavage, or midriffs. This means body parts are being outlined as "violations". In addition, a

clothing item could be a violation on one body but not on another based on how the clothing fits. This then punishes a person based on their body not based on the specific clothing items. Some compare this kind of restriction being focused primarily on feminine dress and (assumed) girls who wear them that their bodies are objects of attraction and therefore can become distracting when even partially exposed. These rules punish the person who is being sexualized rather than the engaging in conversations with the person who is “being distracted” about respect and bodily autonomy.²³⁶ Some of these dress codes can also have the effect of regulating the dress and appearance of trans* students, as when a dress code prohibits long hair for boys, or stipulates that only (cisgender) boys may wear tuxedos to prom, and only (cisgender) girls may wear dresses.

Gender Norms and Attitudes about Academic Achievement

Research indicates girls tend to feel embarrassed or uneasy about academic success. And some girls avoid subjects considered to be “masculine” because they fear rejection from their peers. For example, girls tend to take fewer advanced mathematical and scientific courses.²³⁷ Girl’s low participation in these domains has been explained by in terms of discriminatory barriers that block girls’ paths and facilitate boys’ success. There is biased advisement in course selection in high school, and some teachers still reinforce gender stereotypes in the classroom by lending their style to “boys can, and girls can sometimes” pedagogy.²³⁸

A 2013 article by sociologist Michael Kimmel, outlines the correlations between expectations about gender norms for boys to attitudes about school. Kimmel argues that “[h]ow little they care about school, about studying, about succeeding—these are markers of manhood in peer groups of middle and high school boys across the country.”²³⁹ Kimmel then further argues part of boys’ masculine display includes demonstrating a lack of interest in academic achievement. The article concludes with a call to change the messages boys receive about academic success and masculinity by making academic engagement as sign in manhood.

Sports

School sports can also allow for the maintenance of gender stereotyping and inequality. Girls are often sent the message in high school that to be athletic is to be unfeminine. And school officials reinforce this by underfunding or totally ignoring girls’ sports. I’ve had some students say, “Well, football makes money for the school!” Sometimes this is true. But why is football only for boys? And think about what the baseball field looked like compared to the softball field (another example of sex segregation). Was there a softball field? What did the baseball uniforms versus the softball uniforms look like? You might even be unable to answer this question, because maybe you never went to a softball game? Or maybe you didn’t go to either, but if you did, how often did school officials or administrators attend girls’ sports events at your school?

According to a new state-by-state ranking by the National Women’s Law Center, 28% of co-ed public high schools with interscholastic sports programs have what are considered to be “large” gender disparities in access to team sports. Nearly 4,500 public high schools across the United States have large gender inequality in sports and could be in violation of Title IX. These campuses account for well over a fourth—28 percent—of the country’s public high schools.²⁴⁰

The problem of underfunding girls’ sports does not exist only within the confines of the school itself. Rather it seeps into communities, as well. Take for instance outside sponsorships for high school teams. Sponsorships affects funding for teams greatly. Teams can sell sponsorship spots during big games or receive goods from various sponsors. In the clip below, Coach John Olive explains how the majority of funding for the boys’ team at Torrey Pines High School comes from corporate sponsors and one fundraiser.²⁴¹ In fact, they’re able to raise about 2/3 of their annual budget in only a few days in their Holiday Classic tournament and they have a major sponsorship from Under Armor. Olive goes on to explain the girls’ basketball team has had to rely heavily on contributions from players’ parents. This trend is not uncommon across high school sports. The clip can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPdxnHItAcA>.

The problem does not only lie in school sports; there is a huge gap remaining in professional women’s and men’s sports as well. This serves as an example for young people that women’s sports are less important than men’s sports. In a segment on “Late Night with Seth Meyers,” Seth Meyers and Amy Poehler took a Sports Illustrated NFL writer to task after he tweeted that women’s sports are “not worth watching.” “Really?!” the comic duo repeatedly said, bringing up the power of tennis champ Serena Williams and winning goals in the women’s World Cup. Poehler ridiculed Sports Illustrated for how its annual swimsuit edition is dedicated entirely to women who are not in sports. “Unless you think it’s a sport to cover both boobs with one arm,” said Amy Poehler.



Figure 8.2.1: Amy Poehler and Seth Meyers. To watch the entire of this conversation with Amy Poehler [click here](#).

College and Graduate Schools

Enrollment

College enrollment has been steadily rising in the past few decades, but recently women have outpaced men in enrollment. According to a PEW research report, in 2012 the share of women enrolled in college immediately after high school had increased to 71% from 63% in 1994. Men who enrolled immediately after high school was at 61% in 1994, and in 2012 it remained at 61%.²⁴² The graph below demonstrates differences in enrollment by sex and race. In 1994 nearly half of Hispanic males and females who graduated high school enrolled in college. Nearly two decades later, college enrollments for both groups improved, but females outpaced males. However, there is a different trend among Black high school graduates. In 1994, Black men outpaced Black women in college enrollment just after graduating from high school. But by 2012 the share of young Black men enrolled in college remained about the same, while the share of young Black women enrolled in college increased to 69%, creating a 12% gap from males.

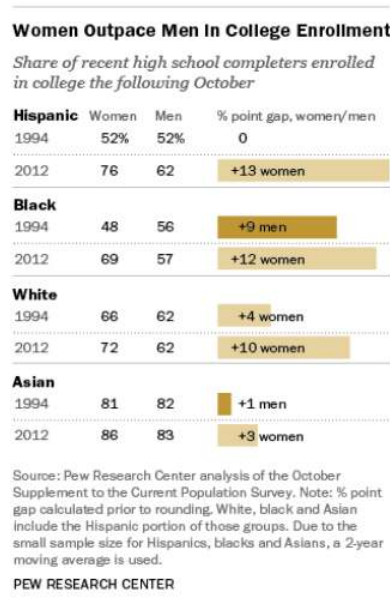


Figure 8.2.2: Diagram of "Women Outpace Men in College Enrollment"²⁴³

Among Asian Americans, the share of high school graduates going to college immediately after graduation also grew during this time period for both young men and young women, but the gap is much smaller than that among other groups.

Degrees Conferred

The highest percentage of bachelor's degrees conferred to women in the U.S., by major are:²⁴⁴

1. Health Professions (85% women): nursing assistant, veterinary assistant, dental assistant, etc.
2. Public Administration (82%): social work, public policy, etc.
3. Education (79%): pre-K, K-12, higher education, etc.

4. Psychology (77%): cognitive psychology, clinical psychology, etc.

40-45% of the degrees in Math, Statistics, and the Physical Sciences were conferred to women in 2012, and a majority of Biology degrees in 2012 (58%) were earned by women. The largest gender gap in majors in U.S. college remains in Computer Sciences and Engineering. Computer Science and Engineering majors have stagnated at less than 10% of all degrees conferred in the U.S (with less than 20% of all of those will being awarded to women) for the past decade, while positions with programming or engineering skills remain unfilled each year.

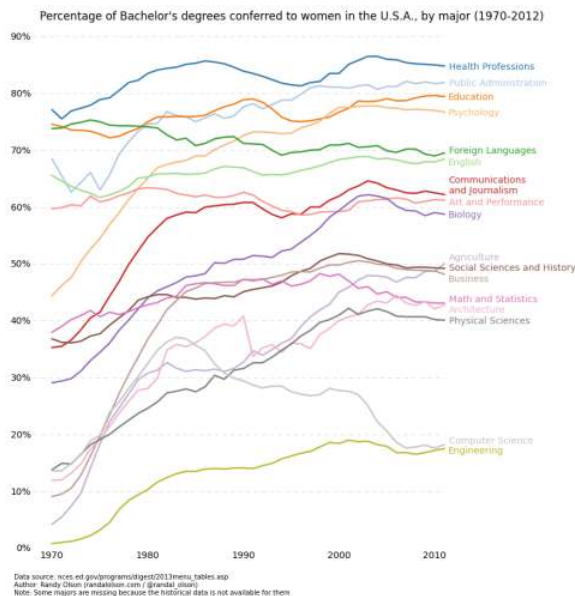


Figure 8.2.3: Graph of Percentage of Bachelor's degrees conferred to women in the U.S.A., by major (1970-2012)"²⁴⁵

Reviewing the graph above, you can see dramatic increases in Psychology, Physical Sciences, Journalism, and Communication Studies since the 1970. Perhaps the most dramatic increase is in Agriculture. With only 4% of degrees conferred to women in Agriculture in 1970 and grew to an even 50% by 2012

Faculty and Administration

In addition to the gender gap in some majors, there remains a significant gap among college faculty. While women held nearly 47% of all full-time faculty positions in 2018, they held just 43% of tenured or tenure-track positions,²⁴⁶ and women were more likely to be found in lower- ranking academic positions.²⁴⁷

Women are also overrepresented among the ranks of temporary, part-time, and adjunct faculty, they are also underrepresented in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. For example, according to the Society for Women in Engineering, as of 2019, "Only 17.4% of tenure/tenure-track faculty in colleges of engineering in the U.S. are women."²⁴⁸

In 2018-19, women made up just 43% full-time professor positions,²⁴⁹ but also held 55.7% of all instructor positions, among the lowest ranking positions in academia.²⁵⁰

In addition, raising a family more negatively impacts women's academic career than men's.²⁵¹ Among tenured faculty, only 44% of women were married with children, compared to 70% of men.²⁵²

Further, an analysis of 106 tenure-track positions at the University of Southern California revealed a promotion gap.²⁵³ Between 1998 and 2012, 92% of white male faculty were awarded tenure, while the same was true of only 55% of women and minority faculty.²⁵⁴

Women of color are even more underrepresented in higher academia. Asian women held 4.4% of full-time tenured and tenure-track positions, while Black women held about 3%, Hispanic women held just over 2%, and American Indian/Alaska Native women held less than 0.5% of all full-time tenured or tenure-track positions.²⁵⁵

Women have made great progress in academic leadership (even though there is still a lot of work to do to achieve equality). From 1986 to 2011 the number of women college and university presidents jumped from 10% to 26%.²⁵⁶ Women are more likely to lead

- two-year institutions than four-year institutions with about 33% of community college presidents being women compared to 23% of four-year institutions.²⁵⁷ During the academic year 2013-2014, 42% of new deans were women.²⁵⁸
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- ²⁴⁴ Olson, R. (2014). Percentage of Bachelor's degrees conferred to women in the U.S.A., by major (1970-2012). <https://randalolson.com/2014/06/14/p...jor-1970-2012/>
- ²⁴⁵ Graph by Randy Olson is in the public domain
- ²⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Full-Time Instructional Staff, by Faculty and Tenure Status, Academic Rank, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender (Degree-granting institutions): Fall 2018," *Fall Staff 2018 Survey* (2018). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/...t19_315.20.asp
- ²⁴⁷ Ibid
- ²⁴⁸ Society for Women in Engineering. "Tenure/Tenure-Track Faculty Levels." <https://research.swe.org/2016/08/ten...aculty-levels/>.
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- ²⁵⁸ "Almanac of Higher Education 2014: Background of Newly Appointed Provosts, 2013-14," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 18, 2014; "Almanac of Higher Education 2014: Background of Newly Appointed Deans, 2013- 14," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 18, 2014.

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10.4: Positive Progress

Education remains a critical domain in which sex and gender inequities can be dismantled or modified. From the early years in k-12, teachers, curriculum, textbook, and administrators can adopt more inclusive pedagogical approaches. This would allow students to feel acknowledged, important, and capable. It may also leave students without the internalization of varying jobs or talents being reserved for specific sex categories. When respect in the classroom is mutual between teacher and student (despite sex, gender, sexuality, race, or learning level), a productive classroom can be formed.

More and more schools and districts are recognizing the need for equity as a foundation, mindset, and approach. Culturally responsive teaching practices and curricula in the classrooms is a large piece to modernizing of mass education in the United States. While the type of institutionalized change that is needed to make lessons culturally responsive (and sustaining) cannot occur through a single initiative or concrete practice, the emphasis in these efforts are making huge strides in administrative and professional development opportunities, as well as formal changes in legislative codes to support these efforts and serve historically underrepresented groups.²⁵⁹

One example of promoting equity in the classroom is evaluating how current curriculum might be unintentionally promoting gender disparities. Instructional materials, including textbooks, handouts or workbooks, can be studied to determine whether they are gender-biased, gender-neutral or gender-responsive. In k-12 and in colleges, curricula should include elements that recognize gender equality-related issues in learning materials, and how those issues can be faced by teachers once they take up the profession and start to use these materials in their classes.²⁶⁰

As discussed earlier, school dress codes that unfairly target young girls and trans* students are common. But some high schools are beginning to rethink antiquated dress codes and rewrite them with student inclusivity and equity in mind. For example, the Oregon chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW) created a mock model for school dress codes wherein self-expression is embraced and working to get rid of gender bias and sexism is emphasized. Evanston Township High School in Evanston, Illinois, adopted the Oregon NOW model its revised 2017/18 dress code policy. According to the school, the new dress code was created to support "our goal of inspiring our students to learn while leaving primary decisions around student clothing and style to students and their parent(s)/Guardian(s)."²⁶¹

The current socialization of gender trends within our schools assures students are made aware that girls are unequal to boys. Every time students are seated or lined up by sex category, teachers are affirming that girls and boys should be treated differently. When an administrator ignores an act of sexual harassment, they are allowing the degradation of that pupil. When different behaviors are tolerated for boys than for girls because "boys will be boys," schools are perpetuating the oppression of females and reinforcing unwanted behavior in male students. We can ensure girls and boys are not socialized in ways that work against gender equity by emphasize attitudes and values that promote gender equality and removing gender-based stereotypes that contribute towards perpetuating gender inequalities. In the United States, the Second Step program emphasizes the importance of social emotional learning in schools and teaches skills such as communication, coping and decision-making with the objective to help young people navigate peer pressure, substance abuse and in person and online bullying and has been suggested as a possible teaching and learning strategy for addressing or preventing school-related gender-based violence.²⁶²

What happens when we grade all students "the same"? As discussed earlier, gender stereotypes affect grades in school, i.e.: gender stereotypes are negatively affecting girls' math grades and positively affecting boys'.²⁶³ "The long-term effects are amplified by socioeconomic factors and family structure—girls from families where fathers were better educated than mothers and who are from lower socioeconomic communities were the most negatively affected."²⁶⁴ Studies have suggested similar implicit biases in delivery of instruction have unconsciously undermined boys' interest in the arts and language, enabling gender gaps interest and formal study in these areas. What can we do? We have to grade, right? Enter "ungrading"! Ungrading is a newer, modern take on assessment in the classroom. Ungrading does not mean "not grading"; rather, this term described a pedagogical approach which emphasizes thoughtful feedback and resubmission over than traditional (and unfair) "marks" meant to symbolize students' understanding of material. Ungrading can also relive some of the vulnerability for implicit biases to seep into the grading process and to engage student work rather than evaluate it. While ungrading is gaining some momentum on college campuses, many of its credited pioneers are in k-12 education, and much of its movement was rooted in a deep dissatisfaction of the status quo and gaps in achievement.

"Until educational sexism is eradicated, more than half our children will be shortchanged and their gifts lost to society."²⁶⁵

- ²⁵⁹ U.S. Department of Education. 2022 Agency Equity Plan related to Executive Order 13985. <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/equity...quity-plan.pdf>
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10.5: Equity and Gender-Based Education (TEDx video)

📌 Equity and Gender-Based Education: Elizabeth Wolfson at TEDxMileHighWomen



Equity and Gender-Based Education: Elizabeth Wolfson at TEDx Talks



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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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11.1: The Sociological Approach to Religion

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you should be able to:

- Discuss the historical view of religion from a sociological perspective
- Describe how the major sociological paradigms view religion



Figure 15.2: Universality of religious practice, such as these prayers at the The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, can create bonds among people who would otherwise be strangers. Muslim people around the world pray five times each day while facing the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca (pictured in Section 15.2). Beyond the religious observance, such a unifying act can build a powerful sense of community. (Credit: Arian Zwegers/flickr).

From the Latin *religio* (respect for what is sacred) and *religare* (to bind, in the sense of an obligation), the term religion describes various systems of belief and practice that define what people consider to be sacred or spiritual (Fasching and deChant 2001; Durkheim 1915). Throughout history, and in societies across the world, leaders have used religious narratives, symbols, and traditions in an attempt to give more meaning to life and understand the universe. Some form of religion is found in every known culture, and it is usually practiced in a public way by a group. The practice of religion can include feasts and festivals, intercession with God or gods, marriage and funeral services, music and art, meditation or initiation, sacrifice or service, and other aspects of culture.

While some people think of religion as something individual because religious beliefs can be highly personal, religion is also a social institution. Social scientists recognize that religion exists as an organized and integrated set of beliefs, behaviors, and norms centered on basic social needs and values. Moreover, religion is a cultural universal found in all social groups. For instance, in every culture, funeral rites are practiced in some way, although these customs vary between cultures and within religious affiliations. Despite differences, there are common elements in a ceremony marking a person's death, such as announcement of the death, care of the deceased, disposition, and ceremony or ritual. These universals, and the differences in the way societies and individuals experience religion, provide rich material for sociological study.

In studying religion, sociologists distinguish between what they term the experience, beliefs, and rituals of a religion. Religious experience refers to the conviction or sensation that we are connected to “the divine.” This type of communion might be experienced when people pray or meditate. Religious beliefs are specific ideas members of a particular faith hold to be true, such as that Jesus Christ was the son of God, or that reincarnation exists. Another illustration of religious beliefs is the creation stories we find in different religions. Religious rituals are behaviors or practices that are either required or expected of the members of a particular group, such as bar mitzvah or confession of sins (Barkan and Greenwood 2003).

The History of Religion as a Sociological Concept

In the wake of nineteenth century European industrialization and secularization, three social theorists attempted to examine the relationship between religion and society: Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx. They are among the founding thinkers of modern sociology.

As stated earlier, French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) defined religion as a “unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things” (1915). To him, sacred meant extraordinary—something that inspired wonder and that seemed connected to the concept of “the divine.” Durkheim argued that “religion happens” in society when there is a separation between the profane (ordinary life) and the sacred (1915). A rock, for example, isn’t sacred or profane as it exists. But if someone makes it into a headstone, or another person uses it for landscaping, it takes on different meanings—one sacred, one profane.

Durkheim is generally considered the first sociologist who analyzed religion in terms of its societal impact. Above all, he believed religion is about community: It binds people together (social cohesion), promotes behavior consistency (social control), and offers strength during life’s transitions and tragedies (meaning and purpose). By applying the methods of natural science to the study of society, Durkheim held that the source of religion and morality is the collective mind-set of society and that the cohesive bonds of social order result from common values in a society. He contended that these values need to be maintained to maintain social stability.

But what would happen if religion were to decline? This question led Durkheim to posit that religion is not just a social creation but something that represents the power of society: When people celebrate sacred things, they celebrate the power of their society. By this reasoning, even if traditional religion disappeared, society wouldn’t necessarily dissolve.

Whereas Durkheim saw religion as a source of social stability, German sociologist and political economist Max Weber (1864–1920) believed it was a precipitator of social change. He examined the effects of religion on economic activities and noticed that heavily Protestant societies—such as those in the Netherlands, England, Scotland, and Germany—were the most highly developed capitalist societies and that their most successful business leaders were Protestant. In his writing *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), he contends that the Protestant work ethic influenced the development of capitalism. Weber noted that certain kinds of Protestantism supported the pursuit of material gain by motivating believers to work hard, be successful, and not spend their profits on frivolous things. (The modern use of “work ethic” comes directly from Weber’s Protestant ethic, although it has now lost its religious connotations.)

Big Picture: The Protestant Work Ethic in the Information Age

Max Weber (1904) posited that, in Europe in his time, Protestants were more likely than Catholics to value capitalist ideology, and believed in hard work and savings. He showed that Protestant values directly influenced the rise of capitalism and helped create the modern world order. Weber thought the emphasis on community in Catholicism versus the emphasis on individual achievement in Protestantism made a difference. His century-old claim that the Protestant work ethic led to the development of capitalism has been one of the most important and controversial topics in the sociology of religion. In fact, scholars have found little merit to his contention when applied to modern society (Greeley 1989).

What does the concept of work ethic mean today? The work ethic in the information age has been affected by tremendous cultural and social change, just as workers in the mid- to late nineteenth century were influenced by the wake of the Industrial Revolution. Factory jobs tend to be simple, uninvolved, and require very little thinking or decision making on the part of the worker. Today, the work ethic of the modern workforce has been transformed, as more thinking and decision making is required. Employees also seek autonomy and fulfillment in their jobs, not just wages. Higher levels of education have become necessary, as well as people management skills and access to the most recent information on any given topic. The information age has increased the rapid pace of production expected in many jobs.

On the other hand, the “McDonaldization” of the United States (Hightower 1975; Ritzer 1993), in which many service industries, such as the fast-food industry, have established routinized roles and tasks, has resulted in a “discouragement” of the

work ethic. In jobs where roles and tasks are highly prescribed, workers have no opportunity to make decisions. They are considered replaceable commodities as opposed to valued employees. During times of recession, these service jobs may be the only employment possible for younger individuals or those with low-level skills. The pay, working conditions, and robotic nature of the tasks dehumanizes the workers and strips them of incentives for doing quality work.

Working hard also doesn't seem to have any relationship with Catholic or Protestant religious beliefs anymore, or those of other religions; information age workers expect talent and hard work to be rewarded by material gain and career advancement.

German philosopher, journalist, and revolutionary socialist Karl Marx (1818–1883) also studied the social impact of religion. He believed religion reflects the social stratification of society and that it maintains inequality and perpetuates the status quo. For him, religion was just an extension of working-class (proletariat) economic suffering. He famously argued that religion “is the opium of the people” (1844).

For Durkheim, Weber, and Marx, who were reacting to the great social and economic upheaval of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Europe, religion was an integral part of society. For Durkheim, religion was a force for cohesion that helped bind the members of society to the group, while Weber believed religion could be understood as something separate from society. Marx considered religion inseparable from the economy and the worker. Religion could not be understood apart from the capitalist society that perpetuated inequality. Despite their different views, these social theorists all believed in the centrality of religion to society.

Theoretical Perspectives on Religion



Figure 15.3: Functionalists believe religion meets many important needs for people, including group cohesion and companionship. Hindu pilgrims come from far away to Ram Kund, a holy place in the city of Nashik, India. One of the rituals performed is intended to bring salvation to the souls of people who have passed away. What need is this practice fulfilling? (Credit: Arian Zwegers/flickr)

Modern-day sociologists often apply one of three major theoretical perspectives. These views offer different lenses through which to study and understand society: functionalism, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory. Let's explore how scholars applying these paradigms understand religion.

Functionalism

Functionalists contend that religion serves several functions in society. Religion, in fact, depends on society for its existence, value, and significance, and vice versa. From this perspective, religion serves several purposes, like providing answers to spiritual mysteries, offering emotional comfort, and creating a place for social interaction and social control.

In providing answers, religion defines the spiritual world and spiritual forces, including divine beings. For example, it helps answer questions like, “How was the world created?” “Why do we suffer?” “Is there a plan for our lives?” and “Is there an afterlife?” As another function, religion provides emotional comfort in times of crisis. Religious rituals bring order, comfort, and organization through shared familiar symbols and patterns of behavior.

One of the most important functions of religion, from a functionalist perspective, is the opportunities it creates for social interaction and the formation of groups. It provides social support and social networking and offers a place to meet others who hold similar values and a place to seek help (spiritual and material) in times of need. Moreover, it can foster group cohesion and integration. Because religion can be central to many people’s concept of themselves, sometimes there is an “in-group” versus “out-group” feeling toward other religions in our society or within a particular practice. On an extreme level, the Inquisition, the Salem witch trials, and anti-Semitism are all examples of this dynamic. Finally, religion promotes social control: It reinforces social norms such as appropriate styles of dress, following the law, and regulating sexual behavior.

Conflict Theory

Conflict theorists view religion as an institution that helps maintain patterns of social inequality. For example, the Vatican has a tremendous amount of wealth, while the average income of Catholic parishioners is small. According to this perspective, religion has been used to support the “divine right” of oppressive monarchs and to justify unequal social structures, like India’s caste system.

Conflict theorists are critical of the way many religions promote the idea that believers should be satisfied with existing circumstances because they are divinely ordained. This power dynamic has been used by Christian institutions for centuries to keep poor people poor and to teach them that they shouldn’t be concerned with what they lack because their “true” reward (from a religious perspective) will come after death. Conflict theorists also point out that those in power in a religion are often able to dictate practices, rituals, and beliefs through their interpretation of religious texts or via proclaimed direct communication from the divine.



Figure 15.4: Many religions, including the Catholic faith, have long prohibited women from becoming spiritual leaders. Feminist theorists focus on gender inequality and promote leadership roles for women in religion. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

The feminist perspective is a conflict theory view that focuses specifically on gender inequality. In terms of religion, feminist theorists assert that, although women are typically the ones to socialize children into a religion, they have traditionally held very

few positions of power within religions. A few religions and religious denominations are more gender equal, but male dominance remains the norm of most.

Sociology in the Real World: Rational Choice Theory: Can Economic Theory Be Applied to Religion?

How do people decide which religion to follow, if any? How does one pick a church or decide which denomination “fits” best? Rational choice theory (RCT) is one way social scientists have attempted to explain these behaviors. The theory proposes that people are self-interested, though not necessarily selfish, and that people make rational choices—choices that can reasonably be expected to maximize positive outcomes while minimizing negative outcomes. Sociologists Roger Finke and Rodney Stark (1988) first considered the use of RCT to explain some aspects of religious behavior, with the assumption that there is a basic human need for religion in terms of providing belief in a supernatural being, a sense of meaning in life, and belief in life after death. Religious explanations of these concepts are presumed to be more satisfactory than scientific explanations, which may help to account for the continuation of strong religious connectedness in countries such as the United States, despite predictions of some competing theories for a great decline in religious affiliation due to modernization and religious pluralism.

Another assumption of RCT is that religious organizations can be viewed in terms of “costs” and “rewards.” Costs are not only monetary requirements, but are also the time, effort, and commitment demands of any particular religious organization. Rewards are the intangible benefits in terms of belief and satisfactory explanations about life, death, and the supernatural, as well as social rewards from membership. RCT proposes that, in a pluralistic society with many religious options, religious organizations will compete for members, and people will choose between different churches or denominations in much the same way they select other consumer goods, balancing costs and rewards in a rational manner. In this framework, RCT also explains the development and decline of churches, denominations, sects, and even cults; this limited part of the very complex RCT theory is the only aspect well supported by research data.

Critics of RCT argue that it doesn’t fit well with human spiritual needs, and many sociologists disagree that the costs and rewards of religion can even be meaningfully measured or that individuals use a rational balancing process regarding religious affiliation. The theory doesn’t address many aspects of religion that individuals may consider essential (such as faith) and further fails to account for agnostics and atheists who don’t seem to have a similar need for religious explanations. Critics also believe this theory overuses economic terminology and structure and point out that terms such as “rational” and “reward” are unacceptably defined by their use; they would argue that the theory is based on faulty logic and lacks external, empirical support. A scientific explanation for *why* something occurs can’t reasonably be supported by the fact that it *does* occur. RCT is widely used in economics and to a lesser extent in criminal justice, but the application of RCT in explaining the religious beliefs and behaviors of people and societies is still being debated in sociology today.

Symbolic Interactionism

Rising from the concept that our world is socially constructed, symbolic interactionism studies the symbols and interactions of everyday life. To interactionists, beliefs and experiences are not sacred unless individuals in a society regard them as sacred. The Star of David in Judaism, the cross in Christianity, and the crescent and star in Islam are examples of sacred symbols. Interactionists are interested in what these symbols communicate. Because interactionists study one-on-one, everyday interactions between individuals, a scholar using this approach might ask questions focused on this dynamic. The interaction between religious leaders and practitioners, the role of religion in the ordinary components of everyday life, and the ways people express religious values in social interactions—all might be topics of study to an interactionist.



Figure 15.5: The symbols of fourteen religions are depicted here. In no particular order, they represent Judaism, Wicca, Taoism, Christianity, Confucianism, Baha'i, Druidism, Islam, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Shinto, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Can you match the symbol to the religion? What might a symbolic interactionist make of these symbols? (Credit: ReligiousTolerance.org)

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11.2: Crash Course Video - What Do Sex and Gender Have to Do with Religion?

What Do Sex and Gender Have to Do with Religion?: Crash Course Religions #20



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11.3: Video - Feminism and Religion

📌 Feminism and Religion | Beliefs in Society | A-Level Sociology

403 Forbidden

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11.4: Religion in Women's Lives Worldwide

At a glance, the condition of women in religion across the globe often appears bleak. Religious systems foster and promote the power and voices of men at the expense of the women who make up the majority of adherents. Long-standing traditions and cultural or familial ties often make it difficult, if not impossible, for women to speak or to act on their own behalf. No major religion has ever allowed women to remain agents of their own spiritual destiny—each has eventually shuttered women out of its leadership and practices, leaving them subservient to men within official structures of the faith. Yet women do make up the majority of practitioners in every religion.

That leads us to ask why women continue to participate in religions that sideline or subordinate them. Are women simply passive recipients of religious teachings that relegate them to submission? Do they simply accept their oppression? Why don't they leave?

Some do. We also know that many push back against the constraints of beliefs and practices that relegate them to second class status. Some do so by staying within their religious tradition and working for change. Others seek different religious traditions that offer a more egalitarian vision and empower them to live and work as people of faith.

There are no simple solutions when it comes to women and religion, but there are a lot of stories we can hear and a lot of hard questions to ask of ourselves and others. There are patterns, there are leaders, there are sacred texts and ancient stories, there is faith beyond ourselves, and there is hope in despair. Women are resilient and strong. They have carved lives out of deserts of despair and rocks of indifference. The voice and practice of one woman can change an entire generation. The global community in which we live now has given women unprecedented access to the stories of other women across their differences. This allows us to learn from women of faith and to come alongside women all around the world. All of us can support the work of women to continue to generate wholeness and well-being from within each religion and culture. In this chapter we will learn how to support women and men as they regenerate their own religious systems and structures from within their cultures and experiences, supported by their own ancient texts and stories, to create space for each person to actively and freely engage their own religion in their own particular cultural context.



by Janet Lockhart

JL: *What brought you to Buddhism?*

CN: Growing up in the Dominican Republic, I saw a mix of traditions, such as West African spiritual/nature practices incorporated into the dominant Catholicism. My parents were Christian *and* meditated daily.

Later, I explored, reading the Qur'an, and visiting Christian temples—Buddhism made sense to me. Its “philosophy” aspect allows any spiritual affiliation. I appreciate its focus on being part of the world and spiritual at the same time.

JL: *Do you face any challenges as a female BIPOC Buddhist?*

CN: Some of the challenges are the same as in any spiritual practice. I may be the only person of color in a sangha/temple; I may feel “other.”

However, that would not get in the way of my immersion in Buddhist practice. The point is to let go of *all* your identities, to figure out your own true nature so labels don't define you.

JL: *What do you want people to know about Buddhism?*

CN: The media is over-focused on the principle of mindfulness. It goes hand in hand with compassion, loving kindness, and sympathetic joy [Sanskrit: *mudita*, feeling delight at another person's well-being].

JL: *How does Buddhism enact transnational activism?*

CN: Buddhism emphasizes interdependence. The concept of the “global sangha” (a community without borders) reflects the tendency for transnational activism. “Engaged Buddhism” supports the struggles of others, including women, the Indigenous peoples of Washington state, the people of Tibet . . .

It is easier to engage in activism when your actions in the moment align with your true values. To be an activist, it is important to “sit and listen,” to see the “other” within yourself.

American, BIPOC, Buddhist: Interview with Claudia Nuñez

by Janet Lockhart

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A Little History

When new religions are founded or ancient religions begin massive transitions, women are always at the forefront of the work—they are teaching, organizing classes and groups, meeting community needs, and speaking on behalf of themselves and others. Jesus was surrounded by women, and a woman announced his resurrection to the men. Mohammed's wives were his primary counselors as military advisors, businesswomen, and educators.

As religions spread, they require organization to preserve a sense of cohesion. While women remain the primary participants of religion, history and theology record them as eventually losing power and voice as men controlled the institutionalization of religions. Why does this happen? Because for most of history, women have been unable to control their own fertility, being primarily responsible for child-rearing and maintenance of the home. With their time and energy invested there, they have been prevented from leading in public. Women who hoped to avoid a life of marriage and childbearing often chose single life as a nun to remain focused on their spiritual work. Yet even these women found themselves under male authority as men built religions as patriarchal institutions.



by Sarah Baum

One of the most fundamental human rights is the ability to decide if and when to reproduce. This was easier said than done for most of human history, but with the twentieth century came effective and safe means of birth control. With these methods, women and men now could plan when, or when not, to have a child, but the issue didn't stay so clear-cut. Right next to the fundamental right to start a family (or not) is freedom of religion, and [these two subjects butt up against each other](#) in an interaction that is highly personal for believers.

The Catholic Church has long forbidden any means of birth control except the “rhythm method,” holding that sexual intercourse is intended for procreation only. Protestants have been allowed access to birth control since 1930 (although it may or may not be encouraged), because there is nothing in scripture forbidding it. In Islam, some birth control is allowed because the Qur'an

expresses that children need to be provided for, which can only be accomplished if the parents are ready to start a family. In Hinduism and Buddhism, there is no prohibition on the use of birth control. In Judaism, certain types of birth control are allowed.

These are just some broad beliefs, as [all religions have various sects that are more or less conservative](#). Most interesting of all is how things are changing. The benefits of family planning are so great that there is a growing demand for changes in doctrine. As the methods and means of birth control advance and evolve, so do most religious views on the subject. Will we see a time when religion won't regulate this vital area of human life? Who can say?

God Said What?

by Sarah Baum

One of the most fundamental human rights is the ability to decide if and when to reproduce. This was easier said than done for most of human history, but with the twentieth century came effective and safe means of birth control. With these methods, women and men now could plan when, or when not, to have a child, but the issue didn't stay so clear-cut. Right next to the fundamental right to start a family (or not) is freedom of religion, and [these two subjects butt up against each other](#) in an interaction that is highly personal for believers.

The Catholic Church has long forbidden any means of birth control except the "rhythm method," holding that sexual intercourse is intended for procreation only. Protestants have been allowed access to birth control since 1930 (although it may or may not be encouraged), because there is nothing in scripture forbidding it. In Islam, some birth control is allowed because the Qur'an expresses that children need to be provided for, which can only be accomplished if the parents are ready to start a family. In Hinduism and Buddhism, there is no prohibition on the use of birth control. In Judaism, certain types of birth control are allowed.

These are just some broad beliefs, as [all religions have various sects that are more or less conservative](#). Most interesting of all is how things are changing. The benefits of family planning are so great that there is a growing demand for changes in doctrine. As the methods and means of birth control advance and evolve, so do most religious views on the subject. Will we see a time when religion won't regulate this vital area of human life? Who can say?

Here we see another noticeable pattern in history. Either women slowly capitulate to men, or men slowly exert power over women. Religions themselves attempt to explain this universally repeated, historical phenomenon. The Bible speaks of the Fall, where the man Adam and woman Eve sinned by craving more knowledge than was beyond their abilities, knowledge that was for the divine and outside the nature of humans. Then God outlined the consequences—one of them being that women would crave men, and men would crave ruling over women. (Note: the Bible describes this as an outcome, not a punishment, as many people believe and teach.) Early Islamic writings record the words and actions of Muhammad and his wives, but after his death, his male followers continued to write interpretations of the original Qur'an and Hadith without including the wisdom or voices of his widows. These male writers eventually reinterpreted the role of women in Islam as nothing more than domestic servants and teachers of children. The early Vedas record women gurus, and the numerous Hindu gods are all "reimaginings" of the female goddess, but Hindu women are barred from many temples while they are menstruating.



Hindu women offering water of the Ganges River to the Sun God

Ancient texts record that men across cultures from Asia to Africa commonly feared the power of women's fertility—comparing it with the power of the earth to bring life and death. So men, fearful of what they could not do themselves, sought to control the creative power of the cosmos by controlling the women who possessed it. In an agrarian culture, where people cannot eat if they cannot grow their own food and babies come from women's bodies like crops come from the ground, it was easy to correlate evidence of this cosmic power to create life and even death with women, and to fear it.

In modern times, we still see how religions attempt to control women's sexuality and reproduction—from opposition to contraception and abortion to purity balls to laws that discriminate against queer and trans women. We see women who themselves accept and advocate for this control, believing it is the will of the Divine. We also see women who resist and work within religious traditions to bring about change and create transformation toward equitable and life-affirming faith and practice.

In the rest of this chapter, we will draw from a wide variety of academic fields of knowledge to compare, learn, and develop compassion and understanding as we work to understand the relationship between people and religion and move into the future together. First, we'll discuss women in religion generally, and then we'll look at some of the ways women experience and participate in religion in homogenous communities, in refugee and immigrant communities, and in multireligious communities.

What Is Religion?

The ancient Greeks explored knowledge and used definitions to separate the process of knowing (philosophy) with what we know (the world) and how we choose to interact with the world and our knowledge (religion). For cultures that were influenced by the Greeks, religion is a way of understanding the world we live in and what happens beyond what we see. These beliefs consciously and unconsciously affect how we interpret events, how we live our lives today, and how we plan for the future. We see the influence of Greek thought in Christianity as it evolved in its first few centuries and later in Islamic jurisprudence. In other cultures, outside Greek influence, religion, and philosophy remain melded together as a whole, and the world is understood holistically. In these cultures, religion is not primarily about belief but about all of existence experienced as a unified whole.

The Diverse Divine



by Ramona Flores

Throughout history, mythology about the divine has included lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, or intersex plus (LGBTQI+) figures, either as gods themselves or as protectors of queer people. Stories of deities' origin and significance often play loosely with the gender binary, one example being the Hindu deity *Vaikuntha Kamalaja*, the androgynous form of the Hindu god Vishnu and his partner Lakshmi; another is the Greek *Hermaphroditus*. *Ometeotl*, an Aztec god of duality, was a self-created deity that presented as both male and female and contained every multitude of the world.

Classical [Greek](#) mythology included a number of gay, bisexual, lesbian, and intersex entities (Achilles, Apollo, Artemis, Bacchus/Dionysus, Callisto, Pan, Neptune, Zeus). Further presence of queer supreme beings can be found in Chinese mythology, with [Tu Er Shen](#), the rabbit god, serving as the patron saint of homosexual love.

There are also many deities that serve as patrons of queer people. [Xōchipilli](#), an Aztec god of art, games, and dance, also serves as the patron saint of homosexuals, and [Tlazolteotl](#), the goddess of filth, purification, and illicit sex, was served by priestesses who cared for those who sought her blessings or cleansing, all of whom were said to be lesbians or transgender women.

In Chinese folklore, there is a story of an isolated island populated entirely by women, not unlike the legend of the [Isle of Lemnos](#) in Hellenic legend, where all relationships are between women, and reproduction is facilitated by the blowing of the wind when the island's inhabitants sleep on the beach.

These legends share similarities despite being geographically and culturally distant, with the connecting thread being a place where queerness is the norm.

Queerness is not a new invention or new revelation. It is tied deeply to humanity's origin stories and creation myths.

Religion is also about people's relationship to the sacred and the ways they make meaning of existence. For many people around the world, religion is one of the most significant means by which they understand and interact with the world around them and think about the world beyond what they can see. Religion not only provides a framework for understanding the world and events, but it also influences our decision-making as we live in that world. Religion offers explanations of significant and traumatic events. In most cultures, it also offers definitions of a being ("god") or multiple beings (pantheon) that interact with humans beyond the world we can see and touch. Religion is not just mystical; it is also practical. It grounds us to the earth where we live as well as the heavens beyond our reach. Women have always been at the forefront of creating a localized, life-giving system of religious practices that balance theological beliefs about the universe and cosmic spirits/deities with the everyday responsibilities of food and shelter in such a way that it nurtures both home and community and is adaptable over a life span as needs and responsibilities change. By the gendered necessity of caring for children, home, and neighbors, women have figured out how to practice religion that integrates these concerns. We can see evidence of this integration in home altars, care of local religious sites, and practices of hospitality and healing.



Women at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem

Belief systems can be categorized as religions because they share commonalities in form and function. They define existence as well as practices. They attach meanings to locations and experiences. They explain the seen as well as the unseen. They call people to live outside of themselves in the larger community of humanity as well as in their local environment. Religions also define the parts and experiences of existence. They practice exclusion, as they name who is "in" and who is "out" by determining who does and does not share similar interpretations of reality. Originally, when religions were embedded in their local communities, religion, race, and environment were commonly all understood together as a localized whole—a group's understanding of their identity and existence. Later, as ethnic groups or individuals were displaced or traveled into different areas with different belief systems, religious definitions became part of "oppositional identity"—how we tell ourselves apart from "others."

Women's Religious Leadership

Over time, women became excluded from leadership and lost both voice and identity in their own religions even though they practiced and taught it in the home. Few religions gave women any alternative to marriage and childbirth. Women who desired their own spiritual agency had to give up home and family relationships to live under the authority of a man. Nuns and monks were common to Buddhism, but Buddha, compelled by his own lascivious youth, feared women's sexuality and confined the privileges of nuns within boundaries strictly controlled by local monks. Similarly, Catholic nuns were subservient to priests because only men could accurately reflect and authentically contain the image and work of God on earth. While women served as leaders in early Christianity, their leadership was limited and obscured as the church became institutionalized. Women emerged again as public leaders in some of the dissenting traditions following the Reformation—among Quakers, Methodists, and Baptists, for example. Still, women's leadership among Protestant churches remained contentious, even as some women were ordained as ministers starting in the nineteenth century. Even today, the Catholic Church and many Protestant churches continue to exclude women from leadership. Only Daoism offered women free passage into religious service and retained their voice as primarily influencers. Nuns could rise to “Celestial Immortality,” as sexual energy was valued as the basis for transformation, and the female cosmic force of yin was superior to the yang (Despeaux and Kohn 2003, 167 and 250). Daoist nuns were also free to create monastic communities; they could marry, and children were an assumed part of monastic life.

Women Clergy: Broadening Their Faith Communities

by Andi Boyer

Finding your “self” in modern Christian religions may prove challenging as a woman. Christianity has historically been practiced as a patriarchal religion, with different rules of acceptable behavior and expectations for male and female practitioners. Most biblical teachings portray women in a role that is subordinate to men, though the Catholic faith does grant sainthood to women recognized for “[great deeds or meritorious conduct](#),” which could be as varied as giving birth to a male saint or losing their lives in defense of their faith, as well as for their contributions to the Catholic church and their communities.

Recently, however, there seems to be a shift happening in some religious cultures. In formal western religions, women are beginning to be recognized in customarily patriarchal roles such as clergy. Although women have often provided a consistency of practice that holds a congregation together week after week, as they become part of the clergy, the diversity within their congregations expands and becomes inclusive of more races and identities.

Women as clergy seem to influence the expression of faith as well. Women are bringing into the ministry a perspective of becoming more focused on the actions of *living* their faith, compared to identifying one's merit by learning and remembering a set of rules, as seems to be a governing practice of a religious patriarchy. This inclusiveness provides an opportunity for people to take their god “out of the box” and define the divine in a way that is meaningful within their own lives while continuing to participate in a common community.

References

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Theology and Religious Texts

Religions are not monolithic even when they appear so at first glance. Their theology (beliefs) and practices are not static or identical over time and space. They vary from culture to culture. Despite concrete anchoring points in history, most religions today show creative varieties across cultures and history. For example, evangelical Christianity in the United States, with its emphasis on converting people and influencing politics, differs greatly from the ancient Christianity of Iraq or Palestine, where families live alongside their neighbors without the pressure to convert them or determine whether they can access health care or have an abortion. Likewise, Buddhism across Southeast Asia holds firmly to beliefs and practices that require women to return in their next life as men and excludes them from education and access to Nirvana in their female bodies. But Buddhism in the United States and Europe embraces and affirms not only women and men, but also those who are transgender or gender nonbinary. Within Islam today, the issue of veiling is a multilayered and complex practice that reflects interpretations of ancient texts as well as modern cultural contexts. In some places, veiling, which is not required by the Qur'an, is required by the civil and/or religious law for women. In other places, wearing a veil is banned by the government for being too religious. In none of these places are the women themselves allowed to choose how their dress does or does not reflect their religious beliefs. Historically, women rarely wore veils. But over the past few decades, an upsurge in conservative Muslim influence (Wahhabism) and the ensuing inter-Islamic and anti-western violence forced women to veil and judged the purity of a local culture primarily on the appearance and subjection of its women. In other places, where women want to make their faith visible, some moderate Muslim women are choosing to wear hijab to make a public statement that is layered with political and religious sentiments. The current conversations about laws, modesty, stereotypes, personhood, and faith are an excellent example of the twists, turns, complications, and symbolisms of religion, culture, and gendered practices in the everyday lived experience of women.



Veiled women attend a mosque in the western Sahara

While official beliefs and practices of most religions have mostly been developed by men, women have also shaped religions from their unique perspectives and experiences. For example, rich traditions across the majority of Indigenous religions around the world honor women as keepers of sacred sites and relics as well as healers in their communities. Many groups also honor girls and boys as they come of age, with boys acknowledged for strength or prowess and girls for their ability to create and bring forth life. In

Tamil Nadu, India, Manjal Neerattu Vizha (a turmeric bathing ceremony) is a celebration of a girl's onset of menstruation. While most Hindu ceremonies are led by men, this one is conducted mostly by women. It begins with ritual seclusion, where the girl is cared for by other girls and women and engages in ritual bathing, and ends with a public function in which people give the girls gifts, including silk sarees.

In Judaism, feminist thinkers have challenged traditional beliefs about women. Some have modified old practices. For example, some feminists have created Passover seders (ritual ceremonies) that center women. So instead of setting out a cup for the prophet Elijah, feminists set a cup for Miriam, the sister of Moses, who often becomes the primary character in the telling of the Passover story.

Scholars today are using the breadth of culturally specific experiences to reformulate theology and practices for today's cultures in which people of all genders experience spiritual agency. Contextual theologies recognize individual and group experiences as the starting place for constructing theologies. Kwok Pui-lan, for example, a displaced Christian postcolonial feminist Chinese theologian, notes that the Bible is "highly diverse and pluralistic," showing both the "indelible marks of imperialistic theology" and the challenges to the "dominant power" that have "liberating possibilities" (Kwok 2005, 8). Islamic scholars from Southeast Asia to Africa are using the Qur'an to challenge the "cult of virginity" theology, which assumes that through marriage, men are to own a trophy wife to carry on their male line rather than create a life partnership of mutual respect. They also write against the subjugation of women under Sha'ria laws that highlight the difference between the Qur'an (written by Mohammed) and the early Hadith (interpretations written by Mohammed's friends and students) from the later Hadith interpretations that devalue women (interpretations written by men promoting their own cultural beliefs centuries after Mohammed died).

When we look at ancient texts from the Qur'an, to the Torah, to the Bible, to the Vedas, we must remind ourselves that the "winners write history" and theology. Those who are in the room shape the decisions that will be implemented outside the room and taught as "fact" even if they are little more than culturally influenced interpretations. Today, we have the privilege and the challenge to read between the lines of ancient texts and stories and interpretations and to notice what human voices and experiences are missing as well as those which are included. Then we can evaluate how the interpretation is incomplete and invite in those voices we need to complete the whole of our religious beliefs. This work is best done from inside each faith community. We do justice by asking hard questions of our own religion and supporting honest questions asked by adherents of other religions.

Impacts of Colonization

More than any other outside force, colonization has affected religious beliefs and practices around the world, and religious beliefs have often propelled and maintained colonization. From the ancient Persians to the Romans, to the Chinese, to the European powers, active colonization of land for the financial benefit of an outside dynasty has intentionally used religion to further its self-serving interests. From displacing peoples from their land to forcing them to change their names and stripping them of civil and religious power, Confucianism, Christianity, and Islam have often become transnational in service to civil masters. As African postcolonial feminist biblical scholar Musa Dube notes, colonizers of Africa took land and resources for "God, gold, and glory." She also notes a fourth "g"—gender, arguing that practices and impacts of colonization had specific detrimental consequences for African women. European colonizers used the Bible to justify the taking of land and control of people they considered to be innately inferior. In Africa, as in North America, colonizers assumed the inferiority of Indigenous religions and sought to impose Christianity on Indigenous people through evangelization that was often accompanied by violence. Through these generations of colonization, the religious traditions of both colonizers and colonized interacted and shaped one another, usually to the benefit of the colonizer.



Havasupai People representative Diana Sue Uqualla blesses an amphitheater at Grand Canyon National Park

Scholars today are wrestling with the arduous task of untangling (as much as possible) the effects of colonization of people (both oppressed and oppressors) and are seeking creative ways to integrate transnational faiths with ancient Indigenous stories and practices. This is not an easy process, as evidenced in the United States and Canada in debates over land. For example, scientists recently won approval to build a new telescope on a volcano on the Big Island of Hawai'i, over the opposition of Indigenous Hawai'ians, who consider Mauna Kea to be sacred. Similarly, Indigenous activists have fought a decade-long battle against the Keystone XL Pipeline, which would cross their lands and could threaten their water. (One of the first acts by President Joe Biden was to cancel the Keystone XL Pipeline project.) In Guatemala, Indigenous Mayan human rights defenders draw strength from traditional Mayan ceremonies by engaging in struggles over land and water rights, ending violence against women, and seeking justice for the genocide during the thirty-six-year internal armed conflict in the latter part of the twentieth century. The Chinese government represses religion in Tibet because it sees Tibetan Buddhism and its reverence for its leader, the Dalai Lama, as threats to its control. China is also trying forcibly to assimilate its Uighur Muslim minority in what the US State Department calls "genocide."

In contrast, postcolonial theologians are uncovering colonial entanglements in belief and practice and are imagining new ways of doing religion that do not perpetuate colonization. Each religion must navigate these tensions between theology and practice, history and current events, freedom and gendered teachings, and must do so within the larger field of global, multireligious conversations and applications.

Women practice their faith in many contexts around the world, and these contexts shape the practice of faith, even as the practice of faith shapes these contexts. In the next sections, we'll look at religious experiences and issues for women in their local historical communities that are characterized by a dominant religion practiced by most of the population, women in diasporic communities where they are refugees or immigrants, and women in multireligious or pluralistic societies.

Women in Their Local Communities

Many women around the world still live and practice Indigenous religions in their own communities, where that religious faith is dominant. These women live on the same land as their ancestors, within a place where it is easy to consider their own experience as normal, and it may be hard to delineate between culture, religion, race, and ethnicity. On the one hand, this means women may feel supported by a community of like-minded people; on the other, it may mean women's possibilities are limited by religious beliefs and practices that seem natural and inevitable because they are unchallenged.



Yoruba festival of Zangbeto (guardians of the night) in Benin

The African traditional religions (ATRs) practiced in sub-Saharan Africa inform all aspects of life from birth to death. Within these traditions, to be human is to be in community and to participate in the community's rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. At the same time, women are mostly excluded from religious leadership, although there are rare exceptions, like the Shona and the Chewa of Malawi.

Legacies of Colonialism

Indigenous communities and religions are often shaped by legacies of colonialism that are particularly devastating for women, as well as for people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, or intersex plus (LGBTQI+). Before the colonization of North America, for example, many Indigenous communities welcomed and revered Two-Spirit people. Contact with Christianity, however, disrupted Two-Spirit status in many Indigenous communities as missionaries taught traditional western gender roles and sexual mores.

In Africa, Asia, and Latin America, transnational colonial religions have had many adverse impacts on women. For example, women in Ecuador possess the fewest rights in South America. A woman there gives up her property and money when she is married under Catholic law. If her husband dies, the inheritance goes to male relatives who can choose to support her or not (Wilson 2013, 8). From North America to South America today, the lines between religion and politics are so blurred that many political campaign promises are made to incorporate conservative Evangelical or Catholic beliefs into law. In his inauguration speech on January 1, 2019, President Bolsonaro of Brazil said, "We will unite people, value the family, respect religions and our Judeo-Christian tradition, combat gender ideology and rescue our values." His ministers of education and family have followed his lead and reinforced gender stereotypes, including "appropriate" colors of clothing for boys and girls and removal of discussions of gender from classrooms (Faiola 2019). In Southeast Asia, 20 percent of the population lives or works in another country for financial gain or education or because of a natural disaster. The global economy has led to massive migrations, and national citizenship is often subservient to local ethnic group and religious membership. As a result, migrants are easy targets of gendered policies and religious persecution, such as women and children without citizenship or rights, persecution of ethnic and religious minorities, and a ban in Singapore on foreign workers worshipping at local temples, mosques, and churches.

Women's Religious Resistance

Despite colonial impositions and patriarchal religious interpretations, women remain at the forefront of grassroots discussions around the world, supported by the United Nations (UN), nongovernmental organizations, religious organizations, and diasporic populations. In Malaysia, women came together in the 1990s because "they were observing such a disparity between lived realities and their ideas of what they thought represented justice and equality" (Ali 2019, 71). They recognized the necessity of "grappling with the trajectory of Islamic discourses critically with regard to gender in order to challenge how they get manifested in real lives either by culture or by policy." They decided that "the context of people's lives takes precedence over text." In an "exegesis of

praxis” within an Islamic faith historically based in jurisprudence, “Can there be justice if Muslim women do not experience justice?” (Ali 2019, 72).

Across the world, in western Africa, Methodist Mercy Oduyoye, who lives in the colonized country of Ghana but came from the ruling line of an ancient matrilineal tribe, noticed how the male theologians around her talked about polygamy. “I found that the men were talking for women all the time, and I thought, well, it’s about time they heard the women’s voices in the first person” (Oredein 2016, 160). She notes that a fellow male theologian said to her, “This is a good thing you have started, because a bird with one wing does not fly.” She has prioritized the voices of women not only to tackle issues such as polygamy and HIV/AIDS that disproportionately affect women, but also to challenge patriarchal notions of masculinity. She has also encouraged her religious community to ask, “What does it mean to be a man?” so men could change their behavior. To do this well, she has engaged the critical necessity of cultivating interreligious relationships (Oredein 2016, 161).

In the 1990s, Buddhist Theravada nuns were ordained in Sri Lanka for the first time anywhere in Southeast Asia in a millennium, even though they are still not officially recognized by the local governments or the ruling monks (Paudel and Dong 2017, 13-14). The Sakyadhita Conferences address topics like abuse, power, and sexuality in Buddhism while affirming that enlightenment is contingent upon the mind, which is genderless, and not on the physical body (Langenberg 2018, 11). Women have greater access than before to online support, international groups, and scholarly theological and historic writings. We see the results of this in the religious and social changes women are bringing to health care, education, and access to their own religious rites and sites.



Buddhist nuns in Myanmar

Reimagining Religions

There are both positive and negative effects for a religion embedded in its own historical community. On the positive side, sorting through the effects of colonization, growth, and reimagining that comes from within a particular religion and culture avoids another layer of colonial damage. Scholars today note how unpacking the effects of colonialism ironically also continues the legacy of damage to ancient cultures and religions. In short, you cannot undo the past; you can only struggle to move into the future with integrity. In Ghana, Mercy Oduyoye, leading the Circle of Concerned Theologians, notes, “We are awake to our responsibility as creative beings made in the image of God” (Oduyoye 2001b, 99). “We need new myths, new metaphors, new language” (between men and women) to “become a source of healing for the unhealthy relations foisted upon us by patriarchy and androcentricism” (Oduyoye 2001a, 44). In India, women inspired by the #MeToo campaign online have begun demanding access to their own temples and publicly questioning the religious hypersexualization of women, which has led to cultural bans on discussing the common human experience of menstruation and has normalized a gang rape culture of girls and women alike. In places like Botswana, new models of enculturated faiths are emerging, like Vashti Christianity as a model for preventing HIV infection and promoting patriarchal resistance (Kebaneilwe 2011). Queen Vashti, who in the Bible refused to be paraded as a sex object in front of the king’s friends, is seen as a hero for women and a model for resisting marital violence and HIV.

Gender Violence and Intolerance

On the negative side, gender violence and religious intolerance remain deep seated in many places. For example, across sub-Saharan Africa, many Muslims practice female genital cutting (FGC) even though Islam does not call for it. In some places, even outsiders who live in these areas feel pressured to participate in FGC as a rite of passage. One journalist tells how she would not allow her daughter to be circumcised while they lived in Africa even though her daughter begged and said “all of her friends were” as a sign of their womanhood. Sikh women, in their native Punjab, as the minority religion in a Muslim majority culture, now fear leaving their homes or exercising leadership in their religious community. Because of culturally accepted norms, they now experience intimate partner violence at the same rate as their Muslim neighbors, even though their faith is one of equality in theology and practice. Sikh women can now only freely and safely practice their faith in diaspora communities.

Because religion and culture are deeply mixed and reinforcing, change can be slow and difficult. Religions around the world continue to exert enormous pressure on vulnerable populations that perpetuate oppression of women, children, and Indigenous tribal populations in the name of civil leadership and stability. Even when nations commit to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was ratified by the UN General Assembly in 1948, or to other human rights treaties, they may still apply for religious waivers to subject the international charters to local religious laws that nullify the protection of women, minorities, children, and LGBTQI+ populations as human rights are subsumed to religious practices.

Women in Diaspora

Women who live in diasporic communities, either as refugees or immigrants, encounter different advantages and challenges to living out their religion than women in their local communities. A diaspora community is any place where people of similar ethnicity and language live together that is not their original home. Diaspora communities retain their culture (religion, rituals, food, etc.) in a new location. Women can live in a diasporic community on the same continent as their ancestors (in a refugee camp), or they can live across the world (as an immigrant). Those who live close often assume their diaspora to be temporary and hold hope of normalizing their life and returning “home” eventually. Wars, local violence, natural disasters, and/or economic need commonly create refugees across Africa and Asia, where identity is found in local tribes and communities rather than in colonially created national identities. Long-distance travel and formal immigration to another country can create a permanent diaspora for an individual or family, but the vast majority of refugees plan to return home as soon as possible. “What remains consistent through various kinds of diasporic migration . . . is an ongoing identification with a communal identity based on a culture of origin.” Marie Griffith notes that diaspora includes imagined communities, cultural hybridity, and “timeless connections to a monolithic and primordial continent” (Griffith and Savage 2006, xii). That is, immigrants and refugees hold a dual relationship both with their “original homes” and culture on the continent where their people have always lived and the “communities where they now live,” whether they are close to their place of origin or around the world (Marshall and Corman 2016, 2).

New Ways of Practicing Faith



Negotiating faith in new settings

Because a woman in diaspora is a woman “out of time and place,” a space of dissonance and growth is created within her where she can work out new ways of living, worship, and passing on her faith to her children. Identity formation and retention, recognition of religious traditionalism, and adaptation and innovation all commonly occur in this new context (Behloul 2016; Rüländ, Lübke, and Baumann 2019, 69). Women are at the practical theological forefront in diaspora settings, working through creative ways to practice their religion with internal integrity and transmitting valued traditions and beliefs to their children. In diaspora, women come to experience for themselves, firsthand, the separation between culture and religion. In some instances, this may mean women have greater agency and ability to create new understandings and practices of their faith. Other women may face greater constraints because of pressure to maintain the faith of home amid another culture. Women in particular may be considered responsible for producing the future for a people. In Orthodox Jewish communities formed after the Holocaust, for example, women experience great pressure to produce new generations to preserve the future for Orthodox Jews.

Many women also begin to write more in diaspora. Separation from home drives inner reflection and finds expression in novels and poetry as well as theological work. “Contemporary Muslim women writers from migrant backgrounds often write about the intersections of gender, religion, and violence inflicted by religion in particularly complex and illuminating ways” (Friedman 2018, 202). It is easier to see how “women’s accounts of their religious experiences may demonstrate multiple shifting claims to power that are sometimes built on and sometimes defiant of their understandings of womanhood” (Griffith and Savage 2006, xv). In diaspora, people tend to gather by religion as well as by language and race. In the United States, this often creates a “Little Italy” or “Chinatown” where people are comfortable among those who look, act, and believe in similar ways. Such groups are emotionally and relationally necessary to first-generation refugees and immigrants because of the emotional burdens of transition, language barriers, and cultural misunderstandings. Second- and third-generation immigrants and refugees are more or fully integrated into the local community, having shared educational experiences and being skilled in language and cultural differences. While integration benefits the children of diasporic communities, it also causes relational challenges with close-knit family and community over religious differences in theology and practice and cultural ideas of individuality and choice.

Challenges of Integration

Women in diaspora not only encounter people of other religions, but they also meet people who practice the same religion in difference ways. They make alliances within the sphere of religion across ethnic and national boundaries in ways that were unimaginable back “home” (Behloul 2016, 66). While unique forms of coming together are possible under a broader understanding of transnational religion, women also face challenges of language and cultural misunderstanding.

In Vancouver, British Columbia, where the Canadian ideal of equality in diversity is actively pursued from civil land planning to education, researchers have observed that recent Afghan refugees have had to remain “other” in order to receive the help they need and to find a place to “belong.” This means that Afghan refugees need special assistance to learn a new language or job skills, or to navigate new stores and schools, but as they do this, they must present themselves as genuinely Afghan. They need to remain “immigrant” at the same time they are trying to integrate into a new society. This is an unexpected result of intentional diasporic places in pluralistic cultures. Immigrants and refugees work hard but do need help, as local economies are generally far more expensive than the ones from which they came, and it takes time to become financially stable in a new job or career. In Canada, “There must be the multiplicity of cultural identities in order to sustain the contemporary Canadian multicultural identity” (O’Bryan 2014, iv), but how can refugees also become “Canadian” while still being Afghan or any other former nationality? Time solves this problem for the ensuing generations, but immigrants right now face a pressing question: “How do I integrate into Canadian society and still create financial stability for my family?” This Canadian diasporic experience is different than the United States, where immigrants are less welcomed and more pressured by “bootstrap theology” to “prove themselves” economically worthy of becoming an American.

Supporting Others

For an immigrant woman in diaspora, practicing her religion may look different from how her children practice their religion. She may cling more to the “old ways” because her sense of self has been disrupted as she has moved into a new place and culture. She may also be at the forefront of creating new ways to pass on beliefs and practices that once were traditional in the old country. In Britain, for example, *satsang* and *bala vihar*s (devotional and educational groups) have sprung up to keep the descendants of Indian immigrants connected to their culture of origin (Lourenço 2011, 40). Scholars have also noted that women in diaspora raise and give more money back to their home country than into their local religious centers. In fact, women in diaspora raise more money for disaster relief than anyone else in the world. Women may also find they eventually have the space to reflect on their faith and the ways in which it was practiced in their home country that may be incongruent with their religion’s original writings and beliefs

—in short, how cultural traditions highjacked authentic religious practices over time. Women may find space to imagine new ways of living and worshipping with greater equality, especially where their human rights are protected by the civil government rather than subsumed under local religious practices. Many women also create ways to support and encourage other women back home. The Kaur Collective in Canada began as a way for Sikh women, free to worship and lead in British Columbia, to remind their fellow Sikh women in the Punjab and around the world that they have the freedom to be themselves, look like themselves, and practice and lead their faith for themselves in their communities as well as in their homes—that oppression and gender violence are cultural experiences, not a part of their Sikh history, theology, or practices.

Dissonance, Adaptation, and Creativity

Often, when women have been displaced by violence, famine, or a natural disaster, they find their way into UN refugee camps, where they meet aid workers and encounter people who may hold different values, especially about women. For many women, this experience can create dissonance and disruptions as religious beliefs come into contact with the discourse of human and women's rights. For some women, these encounters underline agency and self-determination and mark the beginning of a journey into personal exploration. Women may also take these new ideas back into their local communities or their new communities in ways that shape the practice of religion there.

Women in diaspora also come to make creative and localized forms of religious syncretism. They draw from their own religious tradition as well as the traditions of their new places of residence and blend them into meaningful religious beliefs and practices for themselves. For example, “Mostly Tamil-speaking Hindus in Guyana, Trinidad, and Suriname worship Mother Kali. In Trinidad, a syncretistic worship of Mother Kali sees her as the Catholic Virgin Mary. This Catholic *La Divina Pastora*, meaning ‘The Divine Shepherdess’ was adapted as a dark-skinned Virgin Mary and is worshipped on Good Friday. She is credited for traveling with the Indian people across the ocean to their new home” (Naidu 2007, 15).

Diasporic living creates both positive and negative religious and personal experiences for women as they encounter new communities, beliefs, and practices. It can provide distance, space, and opportunities for women to reflect on what they believe and why. It may allow creative and personalized adaptation of religion to real life instead of forcing life experiences to conform to religious beliefs. It may allow women to speak hope and ideas (theology and practices) back into the communities of origin in hopes of restoring original beliefs lost over time, patriarchal control, and culture (Kaur Collective). It may allow creative improvisation and compromise that attain a sense of purpose and make peace over reality within lives with little to no control (Griffith and Savage 2006, xvi). It may give those who take note of “lived religion” a variety of examples of how people of the same faith tradition in various places create and navigate space—dominant theological themes can lose power, and dormant ones can spring back to life. It may reveal “new and old oppressions” but also “opportunities to defy them” through citizenship in a new space (Lourenço 2011, 40).

Pushback and Backlash

For all people, change often creates fear—fear of the unknown—and this fear without thoughtful direction can create religious backlash and a felt need to dig in one's heels to preserve religious “purity.” Women themselves may struggle with the new people and beliefs they encounter and may hold even more tightly to the beliefs and practices they brought with them. The emotional energy (fear and anger) in these situations often plays out as gender violence against the most vulnerable—women, children, minoritized and Indigenous people, and LGBTQI+ people. When women do begin to question traditional beliefs or practices, they may also encounter resistance from more conservative members of their communities of origin who may claim religious beliefs are necessary to preserve culture or tradition. Often, however, this pushback is really about control and power over women. Women may face labels of “faithlessness” or “rebellious” from men when they encounter opportunities in their own communities that challenge traditional beliefs and practices, such as in Afghanistan or Iraq, as women work outside the home or seek safety in domestic violence shelters supported by the UN or NGOs.



by Janet Lockhart

In 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law making it [no longer a crime](#) for a man to beat his wife, child, or elder parent. Instead, a perpetrator might have to pay a fine if the survivor of his abuse pressed charges (providing her own evidence, since police no longer have to investigate). Both houses of the Russian Parliament passed the bill by wide margins. Protests and debates about it were stifled.

Astonishingly, the Orthodox Church in Russia supported this move, saying, among other things, that the state should not interfere in family matters, and that protecting women against domestic violence is a western phenomenon that they call “gender ideology,” which flies in the face of Russian culture and so should be rejected.

The church [denies there is a problem](#), saying domestic violence is not an issue because the church supports the [traditional structure](#) of the family, with men in charge, women subordinate, and parent-child relationships based on “[authority and power](#).” It urges women to forgive their abusers, emphasizes keeping families together in spite of harm to individuals within them, and even [opposes programs to prevent violence](#) in the first place.

Russian activists are working to [reduce the impact](#) of domestic violence by supporting survivors, advocating for changes in the law, including the introduction of restraining orders, and using social media to bring awareness to the problem. In the meantime, Russian women—some estimate as many as [fourteen thousand per year](#)—die at the hands of their own husbands, sons, and fathers.

Church-Sanctioned Domestic Violence in Russia

by Janet Lockhart

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The experience of diaspora can create both opportunities to reflect on and reshape faith, or it may feel threatening and overwhelming and lead to a retreat into even more tightly held convictions about beliefs and practices. Practicing one’s faith in a diasporic community can provide a sense of familiarity and comfort in new and challenging circumstances. As immigrants and refugees encounter diverse people and faiths and people who practice the same faith in different ways, they may begin to think differently about gender in particular, recognizing and perhaps challenging cultural practices and adapting beliefs and rituals to fit with new experiences and communities.

Women in Pluralistic Communities

Pluralistic societies are those in which different types of people with different beliefs coexist. People who advocate for pluralism believe that living and working together across differences is a good thing that strengthens societies. Some religions embrace pluralism, recognizing that diverse beliefs reveal the varied experiences that contribute to larger social understandings and benefits. Many religions, however, struggle with pluralism. Convinced that their religion is the only true religion, practitioners may hold negative beliefs about people of other faiths or refuse to cooperate with them. They may proselytize or even try to impose their convictions on others through influence in public processes. Typically, in pluralistic societies, governments try to protect the religious rights of all people, even when one religion dominates, although, as we will see, these efforts are not always successful.



Druids or neo-pagans may struggle for religious recognition

Human Rights and Religious Rights

It is easy for us to assume that women in pluralistic communities experience freedom to live out their religious beliefs without interference according to their own wishes, but as we are seeing with the worldwide and highly politicized debate over the veiling of Muslim women, this is not necessarily the case. In France, for example, women are not allowed to wear a hijab or other religious marking in school or public buildings in an effort to preserve France's secularity. In Turkey, which has maintained a civic rather than religious core despite its overwhelming Muslim population, the wearing of headscarves was banned in civil service jobs and in government offices until 2013. In Quebec, Canada, the hijab has been banned for civil leaders such as teachers and judges, but the French-speaking province is being pressured by the pluralistic priorities of those who want full religious freedom for citizens to dress as they see fit.

In many secular governments, laws and policies are guided by a human rights framework, which recognizes the freedoms and conditions inherent to all people as a result of their humanity. In a pluralistic or multireligious community, these human rights precede (come before) religious rights and may clash with religions when religious practices conflict with secular laws. So, for example, female genital cutting on a girl under the age of 18 is illegal in the United States even if it is a traditional religious practice within a family or local religious community. We also see this when gay couples are denied service because of a business owner's religious beliefs. Then the courts must affirm the functioning order of human and religious rights.

Even in secular communities, religion often has a significant influence in political and social life. The dominant religion in a community in particular may shape women's experiences. Often, these dominant religions have played a considerable role in colonizing Indigenous communities and imposing gendered roles on women and men. In the United States, for example, Christianity is the dominant religion, and even though the Constitution forbids the government from establishing, favoring, or prohibiting religion, many laws and policies have been shaped by Christian belief. To a great extent, laws that limit abortion access reflect conservative Christian viewpoints about when human life begins. Laws that allow businesses to deny service to LGBTQI+ people result from beliefs about the sinfulness of diverse sexualities. In India, Hindu nationalists have begun to challenge the nation's secularism and have targeted Muslims for discrimination and violence. In Myanmar, majority Buddhists have participated in genocidal violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority.



by Karly Michon

[Lutheranism](#) is the largest religion in northern and Western European countries such as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. But there is [variety](#) within and between these countries in their attitudes toward and treatment of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, or intersex plus (LGBTQI+), on issues such as same-sex marriage, adoption of children, serving as clergy, and expressions of sexuality.

Take time to research Lutheranism in a few of these countries, and note the church's stance and policies on the LGBTQI+ community.

- How do they interpret the Bible and other religious texts and speak about LGBTQI+ people?
- Are LGBTQI+ people allowed to have church weddings in these countries?
- Are LGBTQI+ people able to serve as clergy? Are there any restrictions on their service?
- Are LGBTQI+ church members able to be "out" about their sexuality in the church community?

Do you think the various branches of Lutheranism are supportive of the LGBTQI+ community, based on your findings?

Are there any correlations between acceptance of LGBTQI+ people in Lutheranism and governmental policies for that country?

Take notes on the information you find, and share it with classmates or friends to raise awareness of the issues facing the religious LGBTQI+ community on a global scale.

Find some ways to get involved with your local LGBTQI+ community.

Learning Activity: Treatment of LGBTQI+ People across Lutheran Majority Countries in Europe

by Karly Michon

[Lutheranism](#) is the largest religion in northern and Western European countries such as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden. But there is [variety](#) within and between these countries in their attitudes toward and treatment of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, or intersex plus (LGBTQI+), on issues such as same-sex marriage, adoption of children, serving as clergy, and expressions of sexuality.

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Religious fundamentalism roots itself in an imagined past in which a purer form of faith was practiced and ruled social and political life. Fundamentalism, no matter the religion, advocates for strict adherence to rigid interpretations of sacred texts and belief in fixed traditional beliefs. In the present, fundamentalism can fuel oppression when it dominates in a society or conflict when fundamentalists are a minority and feel threatened by changes brought about by modernity or plurality. Religious fundamentalism requires the suppression of women, and in pluralistic communities that profess women's equality, women's oppression often plays out in religious life and in the home.

Pluralism and Syncretism

Religions can be flexible, and practitioners can adapt beliefs and traditions as they come into contact with diverse people, customs, and faiths. "Majority and minority cultures also change as they adapt to each other" (Friedman 2018, 206), and in pluralistic societies, diverse religions interact with and influence one another. At times, syncretistic forms of religion are begun, such as Vodou in Haiti and Santería in Cuba. Syncretism is an attempt to take the best of more than one religion and combine them,

generally, in a way that adapts Indigenous beliefs with an influential and imported transnational religion such as Christianity or Islam. Both Vodou and Santería combine traditional West African religions, which were practiced by many enslaved people, with Catholicism. In both Vodou and Santería, women are honored and can serve as priests.



A santera (priestess of Santería) in Cuba

People in pluralistic communities today are reimagining ways in which ancient religions can coexist and create meaning alongside each other in today's globalized world—where people are agents of their own spiritual destiny and support each other across religious beliefs for the sake of all people in all communities. For example, women on the border of Pakistan (Muslim) and India (Hindu) work hard in their communities to support and care for each other and their families, believing common humanity is more important than the religious threats of the governments that seek to divide people. In openly pluralistic societies like the United States, religious leaders in cities from Los Angeles, California, to Birmingham, Alabama, come together to engage public issues from housing to racial justice. Religious and civil leaders find common ground in kindness, compassion, mercy, and hope as the foundation of all faiths to work together across religions and denominations to address issues of the common good for all people.

Pluralistic communities offer distinct religious opportunities and challenges as diverse people coexist in geographic proximity. In many places, these relationships are complicated by legacies of colonialism. As both Muslim and Christian postcolonial theologians note, people who belong to dominant and colonizing groups and people who belong to oppressed and colonized groups both have distinct work to do to bring about reconciliation and justice. Pluralistic communities offer women opportunities to reflect on their religious beliefs and practices in conversation with other beliefs and practices in a mutual process of sharing and shaping religion.

Women Speaking and Writing around the World

Women also have opportunities to encounter different people and belief systems around the world with expanded access to global platforms such as international conferences, distance educational opportunities, and online religious academic circles and theological groups. Women writers from many religious traditions publish both in traditional print formats and online, making their writings much more widely available. For many women writers, however, publishing online also brings a level of danger, from trolling to threats and instances of violence. Some women are protected or defended by their academic or religious community; most are not. For example, Susan Shaw of Oregon State University wrote a piece on white Christians and climate change in 2020 that was picked up by Breitbart News and quickly went viral. Almost instantly, her email and phones were trolled, and she was harassed and threatened. Her university stood by her and encouraged her to write about her experiences in a follow-up article. Others, such as Buddhist nuns Tenzin Dadon and Thubten Chodron in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, live and teach outside their mainstream faith. Dadon and Chodron must remain “freelance nuns,” unattached to a monastery, because nuns, as women, are still not accepted as fully ordained leaders. The male leaders will not openly support them, and they do not want to take vows of

obedience to a male monk. Both women hold degrees in higher education, teach, write, and share their experiences trying to live faithful to Buddhism even when their gender is not accepted as fully capable of pursuing Nirvana. Conservative Muslims across the world still denounce African American Muslim scholar Amina Wadud for leading prayer in a mosque in New York in 2005, simply because she was a woman. Amnesty International continues to monitor the danger women face in multiple social media platforms, whether they are civil or religious leaders or even which country they live and work within. A globalized world offers both greater protection and greater threats for women who speak and write openly online.

Creating and sustaining healthy, peaceful, multireligious societies is difficult. As we have seen in the immigration crisis in Europe, particularly as people have fled civil war in Syria, when diverse religious traditions come into close contact, even in a secular society, conflict is likely. As the European Union (EU) has opened its border to millions of refugees, secularized societies such as France and Germany find some communities are open and welcoming, while in others there is an increase in violence against refugees of other faiths or violence against residents by refugees with different cultural and religious assumptions. In the fall of 2020, French teacher Samuel Paty was killed by an immigrant who was offended that the teacher had shown a cartoon depicting the prophet Muhammad in a class on free speech. Many French citizens believe the ban on images of Muhammad is not acceptable in a secular society, but many Muslims hold this as a foundational belief. In Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel accepted more than the quota of refugees to set an example for other EU nations. She suffered political backlash and lost political support for her position. In many places in Europe, integration has proven difficult, as many Muslim immigrants live in ethnic enclaves. Islamist extremism among some immigrants and among some native Europeans (post 9/11) continue to widen the gap between these communities, which desperately need to find common ground in their humanity.

Women Theologians

In response to increasing globalization and global awareness, women theologians around the world are seeking new ways to learn from each other and work together in interdependence to effect social change that affirms the personhood of all people. In Africa, the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) Women's Commission gathers women from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and seeks to explore theologies that are relevant to their own cultural contexts. Mercy Amba Oduyoye became the first woman president of the EATWOT in 1997 and founded the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, which continues to engage pressing issues, such as polygamy and AIDS in African communities, and to share those issues from women's perspectives instead of listening to men tell them what they think and feel and believe. Biblical critic Musa Dube of Botswana writes extensively on AIDS, postcolonialism, translation, and gender issues in religion. Melba Padilla Maggay is a Filipina anthropologist who founded the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture. Sikh Valarie Kaur recently took a year of sabbatical retreat to think and write on what it means for all of us to come together across religions to view each other with respect and to work together for the common welfare of all people. Now she is speaking on how to transition America to a truly multiracial democracy so that a sustainable cultural future can become a reality. Muslim professor and Los Angeles resident Najeeba Syeed joined fellow Southeast Asian scholars from a number of faiths to compile a reader edited by Hong Kong native and postcolonial scholar Kwok Pui-lan. In this text, students can read and learn from diverse Asian and Asian American religions.

Women across religions are busy on Zoom and email, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting one another personally and professionally and redefining what it means to work together with an attitude of learning and respect, and with a focus on implementing theologies in communities where all people benefit because leaders and followers of all faiths respect one another and work together. For now, full implementation of respectful and flourishing pluralism remains a pipe dream in many cities and towns, but we have excellent examples lighting the way forward.



by Shannon Garvin

Images of deities have long caused both inspiration and confusion among humans. Whether they are in word or sculpted form, images of a deity both reflect and then reinforce and teach cultural stereotypes. There is much discussion now even among traditional and transnational religious scholars on the benefits of more gender-diverse symbols and the limitations of our inherited and traditional religious imagery.

For instance, Christianity prohibits physical forms to represent God, yet the male writers of the Scriptures had no problem reflecting their own male life experience in their descriptions of their ungendered God. As a result, generations of Christians struggle to view God as anything more than male, and the "maleness" of the ungendered Christian God has diminished the understanding of God into patriarchy and power. In Islam, while Mohammed himself did not seem to have held particular gender bias and was married to several strong and powerful women, the men who followed him were concerned with interpreting his

writings in a manner that coalesced their expanding power base (militarily and economically) at the expense of women and foreigners.

Religions may be about the divine, but they are held and shaped by humans and communicated through verbal and visual symbols. It is impossible for humans not to leave their own mark with their prejudices, lusts, and fears. Today, as women find larger spaces and voices, it is not surprising that they also want larger, less gendered—or multi-gendered—symbols of deities. They want religious convictions and deities that are life-giving—for the good of all people. This idea is both threatening and liberating in and out of religious circles. These are necessary conversations and reflective reimaginings if we are going to continue to grow as a whole human community.

Gods, Goddesses, and Reimaginings

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Conclusion

As citizens of a multireligious planet, we all face the daunting task of living and working together to create a more inclusive, equitable, and just world. Feminist theologian Letty Russell reminds us that “there is a great deal of painful oppression in the stories of women, which has to be dealt with if we are going to reconstruct theologies in partnership with one another” (Russell 1988, 16). We can learn a great deal from one another if we listen actively and with an open heart and commit to creating change together. “Solidarity has a dimension of being with the other in spite of distance, time, and physical presence” (Russell 1988, 136). This is why feminist theologians across religions remind us that we all have the ability to live out core, foundational beliefs that are shared across the world religions: kindness, courage, love, hospitality, and hope. While religions can play a role in maintaining systems of oppression, these core values also offer the possibility of religious participation as resistance. Especially for women and LGBTQI+ people, across their differences, religion is complex terrain, and our study of it reminds us of both the difficulties and possibilities of the work of justice.

Learning Activities

1. What is religion and why is it important, according to Garvin?
2. What is the historical relationship between religion and colonization? How do legacies of colonization continue to affect the lives of Indigenous peoples?
3. What are the potential challenges and benefits of practicing religion in diaspora?
4. How does religion influence political and social life in secular communities?
5. How can religions play a role in maintaining systems of oppression, according to Gavin? How can they play a role in resistance against systems of oppressions? Provide at least three examples of oppression and three examples of resistance from the chapter.

6. Working in a small group, add these key terms to your glossary: diaspora, contextual theology, pluralism, fundamentalism, syncretism.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

12: Media

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12.1: Media Introduction

Take a minute to think about how much media you are exposed to in one day—from watching television and movies, to cruising the Internet, reading newspapers, books, and magazines, listening to music and watching music videos, or playing video games. The majority of this media is produced by corporations, and infused with advertisements.

According to a Nielson Company—a marketing corporation that collects statistics on media usage—report, the average American “18-34 spent two hours and 45 minutes daily watching live TV in the 4th Quarter of 2015, and one hour and 23 minutes using TV-connected devices—a total of four hours and 8 minutes using a TV set for any purpose” (Nielson Company, 201). The pervasiveness of media in culture begs a number of questions: what are the effects of such an overwhelming amount of exposure to media that is often saturated with advertisements? How do media construct or perpetuate gendered, sexualized, classed, ableized, and racialized differences and inequalities? What is the relationship between media and consumers, and how do consumers interact with media?

Media expert and sociologist Michael Kimmel (2003) argues that the media are a primary institution of socialization that not only reflects, but creates culture. Media representation is a key domain for identity formation and the creation of gendered and sexualized difference. For example, think back to Disney movies you were probably shown as a child. The plots of these movies typically feature a dominant young man—a prince, a colonial ship captain, a soldier—who is romantically interested in a young woman—both are always assumed to be heterosexual—who at first resists the advances of the young man, but eventually falls in love with him and marries him. These Disney movies teach children a great deal about gender and sexuality; specifically, they teach children to value **hegemonic masculinity** and **emphasized femininity**. Hegemonic masculinity refers to a specific type of culturally-valued masculinity tied to marriage and heterosexuality and patriarchal authority in the family and workplace, and maintains its privileged position through subordinating other less dominant forms of masculinity (i.e., dominance over men of lower socioeconomic classes or gay men). Emphasized femininity, meanwhile, refers to a compliance with the normative ideal of femininity, as it is oriented to serving the interests of men (Connell 1987).

What do Disney movies have to do with how people actually live their lives? It is *because* they are fictional and do not have to be verified by reality, and they are so pervasive in our culture and shown to us at such a young age that they may shape our gendered and sexualized selves in ways that we do not even realize. How many times have you heard people say that they want a “fairy tale wedding,” or heard the media refer to a celebrity wedding as a “fairy tale wedding?” This is one example of how media reproduces dominant ideologies—the ideas, attitudes, and values of the dominant culture—about gender and sexuality.

Media also reproduce racialized and gendered normative standards in the form of **beauty ideals** for both women and men. As Jean Kilbourne’s video series *Killing Us Softly* illustrates, representations of women in advertising, film, and magazines often rely on the **objectification** of women—cutting apart their bodies with the camera frame and re-crafting their bodies through digital manipulation in order to create feminized bodies with characteristics that are largely unattainable by the majority of the population. Kilbourne shows how advertising often values the body types and features of white women—having petite figures and European facial features—while often exoticizing women of color by putting them in “nature” scenes and animal-print clothing that are intended to recall a pre-civilizational past. The effect of this is to cast women of color as animalistic, savage creatures—a practice that has historically been used in political cartoons and depictions of people of color to legitimate their subjugation as less than human. In addition, media depict the world from a masculine point of view, representing women as sex objects. This kind of framing, what Laura Mulvey called the **male gaze**, encourages men viewers to see women as objects and encourages women to see themselves as objects of men’s desire; the male gaze is thus a heterosexual male gaze. These are just a couple of examples of how media simultaneously reflect and construct differences in power between social groups in society through representing those groups.

Another way in which media reflect and simultaneously produce power differences between social groups is through **symbolic annihilation**. Symbolic annihilation refers to how social groups that lack power in society are rendered absent, condemned, or trivialized through mass media representations that simultaneously reinforce dominant ideologies and the privilege of dominant groups. For example, as we argued earlier, gay and lesbian, as well as transgender and disabled characters in mass media are often few and when they are present they are typically stereotyped and misrepresented. Trans women characters portrayed through the cisgender heterosexual male gaze are often used as plot twists or objects of ridicule for comedic effect, and are often represented as “actually men” who deceive men in order to “trap” them into having sex with them; these representations function to justify and normalize portrayals of disgust in response to them and violence against them. These kinds of portrayals of trans women as “evil deceivers” and “pretenders” have been used in court cases to pardon perpetrators who have murdered trans women (Bettcher 2007).



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <http://openbooks.library.umass.edu/introwgss/?p=74>

This video discusses dehumanizing representations of trans women.

Rantasmø. (2014, July 16). *“It’s a Trap!”: Depictions of Trans Deception*. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q78qaT8JZ_A.

While Jean Kilbourne’s insights illustrate how beauty ideals produce damaging effects on women and girls, her model of how consumers relate to media constructs media consumers as passively accepting everything they see in advertising and electronic and print media. As Michael Kimmel (2003) argues, “The question is never whether or not the media do such and such, but rather *how* the media and its consumers interact to create the varying meanings that derive from our interactions with those media” (Kimmel 2003: 238). No advertisement, movie, or any form of media has an inherent, intended meaning that passes directly from the producer of that media to the consumer of it, but consumers interact with, critique, and sometimes reject the intended messages of media. In this way, the meanings of media develop through the interaction between the media product and the consumers who are interacting with it. Furthermore, media consumers can blur the distinction between producer and consumer through creating their own media in the form of videos, music, pamphlets, ‘zines, and other forms of **cultural production**. Therefore, while media certainly often reproduce dominant ideologies and normative standards, media consumers from different standpoints can and do modify and reject the intended meanings of media.

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12.2: Gender Messages in Mass Media

In mass media, women tend to have less significant roles than men, and are often portrayed in stereotypical roles, such as wives or mothers.

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the types of gender socialization people get from viewing various types of media

Key Points

- Gender socialization occurs through four major agents: family, education, peer groups, and mass media.
- Television commercials and other forms of advertising reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes.
- Particularly concerning are instances when women are depicted in dehumanizing, violent, and oppressive ways, especially in music videos.
- The mass media is able to deliver impersonal communications to a vast audience.

Key Terms

- **Gender socialization:** The process of educating and instructing males and females as to the norms, behaviors, values, and beliefs of group membership as men or women.
- **impersonal communications:** The mass media are the means for delivering impersonal communications directed to a vast audience, and include radio, advertising, television, and music.
- **television commercials:** Television commercials and other forms of advertising also reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes.

Gender socialization occurs through four major agents: family, education, peer groups, and mass media. Because mass media has enormous effects on our attitude and behavior, notably in regards to aggression, it is an important contributor to the socialization process. This is particularly true with regards to gender. In television and movies, women tend to have less significant roles than men. They are often portrayed as wives or mothers, rather than as main characters. When women are given a lead role, they are often one of two extremes: either a wholesome, saint-like figure or a malevolent, hyper-sexual figure. This same inequality is similarly pervasive in children's movies. Research indicates that among the 101 top-grossing, G-rated movies released between 1990 and 2005, three out of every four characters were male. Out of those movies, only seven films were even close to having a balanced cast of characters, with a ratio of less than 1.5 male characters per 1 female character.

Television commercials and other forms of advertising reinforce inequality and gender-based stereotypes. Women almost

exclusively appear in ads that promote cooking, cleaning, or childcare-related products. In general, women are underrepresented in roles, or ads, that reference leadership, intelligence, or a balanced psyche. Particularly concerning are instances when women are depicted in dehumanizing, oppressive ways, especially in music videos. The music video for "Pimp," a song by 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg, and G-Unit, demonstrates how harmful gender messages can be disseminated through mass media. In the video, women are objectified and portrayed as only existing to serve men. They wear little clothing and are walked around on leashes by men, as if they were dogs and not humans.



Gender Messages in Mass Media: Traditional images of American gender roles reinforce the idea that women should be subordinate to men.



50 Cent feat Snoop Dogg & G-Unit
XxCyborgPsPxX

Watch on  YouTube

The music video for “PIMP,” a collaboration between 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg, and G-Unit, demonstrates how gender is constructed through mass media. In the video, women are depicted and portrayed as only existing to serve men, a theme reinforced by the fact that men walk women home in part of the video.

A transcript of the lyrics has been provided. A transcript of the lyrics has been provided in Genius: [P.I.M.P. Lyrics](#).

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12.3: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of racial and gender diversity in mass media.
- Identify the ethical concerns associated with race and gender stereotypes.
- List some common concerns about sexual content in the media.

In the competitive and rapidly changing world of mass-media communications, media professionals—overcome by deadlines, bottom-line imperatives, and corporate interests—can easily lose sight of the ethical implications of their work. However, as entertainment law specialist Sherri Burr points out, “Because network television is an audiovisual medium that is piped free into ninety-nine percent of American homes, it is one of the most important vehicles for depicting cultural images to our population.”^[1] Considering the profound influence mass media like television have on cultural perceptions and attitudes, it is important for the creators of media content to grapple with ethical issues.

Stereotypes, Prescribed Roles, and Public Perception

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. According to U.S. Census statistics from 2010, 27.6 percent of the population identifies its race as non-White.^[2] Yet in network television broadcasts, major publications, and other forms of mass media and entertainment, minorities are often either absent or presented as heavily stereotyped, two-dimensional characters. Rarely are minorities depicted as complex characters with the full range of human emotions, motivations, and behaviors. Meanwhile, the stereotyping of women, gays and lesbians, and individuals with disabilities in mass media has also been a source of concern. Straightwashing, when minor groups are portrayed by a cis or heterosexual actor in media, has been an issue constantly tackled again and again. Although awareness of the issue is being brought upon, cis actors can still be seen being offered trans roles, and the same with heterosexual actors and homosexual roles.^[3]

The word stereotype originated in the printing industry as a method of making identical copies, and the practice of stereotyping people is much the same: a system of identically replicating an image of an “other.” The origins and current meaning of stereotypes is also reflected off of the general expectations about particular social group members.^[4] As we saw previously, D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, a film that relied on racial stereotypes to portray Southern Whites as victims in the American Civil War, stereotypes—especially those disseminated through mass media—become a form of social control, shaping collective perceptions and individual identities. Stereotyping is often used to make sense of the world. For example, stereotypical expectations activate specific areas in the brain that help one identify, interpret, and remember what we see, hear, and learn about others.^[5] In American mass media, the White man is still shown as the standard: the central figure of TV narratives and the dominant perspective on everything from trends, to current events, to politics. White maleness becomes an invisible category because it gives the impression of being the norm.^[6]

Minority Exclusion and Stereotypes

In the fall of 1999, when the major television networks released their schedules for the upcoming programming season, a startling trend became clear. Of the 26 newly released TV programs, none depicted an African American in a leading role, and even the secondary roles on these shows included almost no racial minorities. When minorities do appear on screen, they are narrowed down to stereotypical and derogatory depictions whether they are black or gay.^[7] In response to this omission, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), an advocacy group for Hispanic Americans, organized protests and boycotts. Pressured—and embarrassed—into action, the executives from the major networks made a fast dash to add racial minorities to their prime-time shows, not only among actors but also among producers, writers, and directors. Four of the networks—ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox—added a vice president of diversity position to help oversee the networks’ progress toward creating more diverse programming.^[8]

Despite these changes and greater public attention regarding diversity issues, minority underrepresentation is still an issue in all areas of mass media. In fact, the trend in recent years has been regressive. In a recent study, the NAACP reported that the number of minority actors on network television has actually decreased, from 333 during the 2002–2003 season to 307 four years later.^[9] There is also the case of whitewashing, in which a character of color in the media is portrayed by a white actor. Some modern examples include Johnny Depp as a Native American in *Lone Ranger* (2013) and Scarlett Johansson as a Japanese woman in *Ghost in the Shell* (2017).^[10] Racial minorities are often absent, peripheral, or take on stereotyped roles in film, television, print media,

advertising, and even in video games. Additionally, according to a 2002 study by the University of California, Los Angeles, the problem is not only a visible one, but also one that extends behind the scenes. The study found that minorities are even more underrepresented in creative and decision-making positions than they are on screen.^[11] This lack of representation among producers, writers, and directors often directly affects the way minorities are portrayed in film and television, leading to racial stereotypes. There is also the case of colorblindness. What originally started as a way to give minorities the same opportunities as white actors by “not seeing race,” colorblindness, unfortunately, failed to acknowledge social borders and denied the existence of racism.^[12]

Though advocacy groups like the NCLR and the NAACP have often been at the forefront of protests against minority stereotypes in the media, experts are quick to point out that the issue is one everyone should be concerned about. As media ethicist Leonard M. Baynes argues, “Since we live in a relatively segregated country...broadcast television and its images and representations are very important because television can be the common meeting ground for all Americans.”^[13] There are clear correlations between mass media portrayals of minority groups and public perceptions. In 1999, after hundreds of complaints by African Americans that they were unable to get taxis to pick them up, the city of New York launched a crackdown, threatening to revoke the licenses of cab drivers who refused to stop for African American customers. When interviewed by reporters, many cab drivers blamed their actions on fears they would be robbed or asked to drive to dangerous neighborhoods.^[14]

Racial stereotypes are not only an issue in entertainment media; they also find their way into news reporting, which is a form of storytelling. This topic goes into the discussion of ethnic or transnational literature presenting a challenge to historical ways of thinking as well as organizing the study of the terms of nations, religions, etc. These challenges are unfortunately overlooked and dismissed in favor of preferring privileged literacy over historical constructions of identity.^[15] Journalists, editors, and reporters are still predominately white. According to a 2000 survey, only 11.6 percent of newsroom staff in the United States were racial and ethnic minorities.^[16] The situation has not improved dramatically during the past decade. According to a 2008 newsroom census released by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the percentage of minority journalists working at daily newspapers was a scant 13.52 percent.^[17] Because of this underrepresentation behind the scenes, the news media is led by those whose perspective is already privileged, who create the narratives about those without privilege. In the news media, racial minorities are often cast in the role of villains or troublemakers, which in turn shapes public perceptions about these groups. Media critics Robert Entman and Andrew Rojecki point out that images of African Americans on welfare, African American violence, and urban crime in African American communities “facilitate the construction of menacing imagery.”^[18] Similarly, a study by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists found that only 1 percent of the evening news stories aired by the three major U.S. television networks cover Latinos or Latino issues and that when Latinos are featured, they are portrayed negatively 80 percent of the time.^[19] Still others have criticized journalists and reporters for a tendency toward reductive presentations of complex issues involving minorities, such as the religious and racial tensions fueled by the September 11 attacks. By reducing these conflicts to “**opposing frames**”—that is, by oversimplifying them as two-sided struggles so that they can be quickly and easily understood—the news media helped create a greater sense of separation between Islamic Americans and the dominant culture after September 11, 2001.^[20]

Since the late 1970s, the major professional journalism organizations in the United States—Associated Press Managing Editors (APME), Newspaper Association of America (NAA), American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ), Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA), and others—have included greater ethnic diversity as a primary goal or ethic. However, progress has been slow. ASNE has set 2025 as a target date to have minority representation in newsrooms match U.S. demographics.^[21]

Because the programming about, by, and for ethnic minorities in the mainstream media is disproportionately low, many turn to niche publications and channels such as BET, Univision, Telemundo, Essence, Jet, and others for sources of information and entertainment. In fact, 45 percent of ethnic-minority adults prefer these niche media sources to mainstream television, radio programs, and newspapers.^[22] These sources cover stories about racial minorities that are generally ignored by the mainstream press and offer ethnic-minority perspectives on more widely covered issues in the news.^[23] It is possible for people who are not minorities to use their privilege to fight for equality and spread awareness. By being exposed to and learning of the hardships that minorities and the LGBTQ community have faced, others will recognize their role in supporting them and engaging in forms of activism.^[24] Entertainment channels like BET (a 24-hour cable television station that offers music videos, dramas featuring predominantly Black casts, and other original programming created by African Americans) provide the diverse programming that mainstream TV networks often drop.^[25] Print sources like *Vista*, a bilingual magazine targeting U.S. Hispanics, and *Vivid*, the most widely circulated African American periodical, appeal to ethnic minority groups because they are controlled and created by individuals within these groups. Though some criticize ethnic niche media, claiming that they erode common ground or, in some

instances, perpetuate stereotypes, the popularity of these media has only grown in recent years and will likely continue in the absence of more diverse perspectives in mainstream media sources.^[26]^[27]

Femininity in Mass Media

In the ABC sitcom *The Donna Reed Show* (1958–1966), actress Donna Reed plays a stay-at-home mother who fills her days with housework, cooking for her husband and children, decorating, and participating in community organizations, all while wearing pearls, heels, and stylish dresses. Such a traditional portrayal of femininity no doubt sounds dated to modern audiences, but stereotyped gender roles continue to thrive in the mass media. Women are still often represented as subordinate to their male counterparts—emotional, non-competitive, domestic, and sweet-natured. These expectations and representations can impact the career opportunities that both men and women can receive. For example, mothers are approximately two times less likely to be recommended for a job than childless women, while men don’t receive any changes in their likability.^[28] In contrast to these types, other women are represented as unattractively masculine, crazy, or cruel. In TV dramas and sitcoms, women continue to fill traditional roles such as mothers, nurses, secretaries, and housewives. By contrast, men in film and television are less likely to be shown in the home, and male characters are generally characterized by dominance, aggression, action, physical strength, and ambition.^[29] In the mainstream news media, men are predominantly featured as authorities on specialized issues like business, politics, and economics, while women are more likely to report on stories about natural disasters or domestic violence—coverage that does not require expertise.^[30] These “characteristics” of men and women can be seen as a kernel of truth underlying gender stereotypes. A kernel of truth is the core accuracy and main point of a claim or narrative that contains fictitious elements, such as not accounting for the far-reaching inferences that are made about more essential and factual differences between men and women.^[31]

Not only is the white male perspective still presented as the standard, authoritative one, but also the media itself often comes to embody the male gaze. Media commentator Nancy Hass notes that “shows that don’t focus on men have to feature the sort of women that guys might watch.”^[32] Men often claim that their ideal romantic partner is someone who is as intelligent as or more intelligent than they are despite appearing less attracted to a woman who outsmarts them. Despite claiming to value assertive and independent women, it is assumed that men will be more attracted to women with accommodating and agreeable behaviors.^[33] Feminist critics have long been concerned by the way women in film, television, and print media are defined by their sexuality. Few female role models exist in the media who are valued primarily for qualities like intelligence or leadership. Inundated by images that conform to unrealistic beauty standards, women come to believe at an early age that their value depends on their physical attractiveness. According to one Newsweek article, eating disorders in girls are now routinely being diagnosed at younger ages, sometimes as early as eight or nine. The models who appear in magazines and print advertising are unrealistically skinny (23 percent thinner than the average woman), and their photographs are further enhanced to hide flaws and blemishes. Meanwhile, the majority of women appearing on television are under the age of 30, and many older actresses, facing the pressure to embody the youthful ideal, undergo surgical enhancements to appear younger.^[34] One recent example is TV news host Greta Van Susteren, a respected legal analyst who moved from CNN to Fox in 2002. At the debut of her show, *On the Record*, Van Susteren, sitting behind a table that allowed viewers to see her short skirt, had undergone not only a hair and wardrobe makeover, but also surgical enhancement to make her appear younger and more attractive.^[35]

In addition to the prevalence of gender stereotypes, the ratio of men to women in the mass media, in and behind the scenes, is also disproportionate. Surprisingly, though women slightly outnumber men in the general population, over two-thirds of TV sitcoms feature men in the starring role.^[36] Among writers, producers, directors, and editors, the number of women lags far behind. In Hollywood, for instance, only 17 percent of behind-the-scenes creative talent is represented by women. Communications researcher Martha Lauzen argues that “when women have more powerful roles in the making of a movie or TV show, we know that we also get more powerful female characters on-screen, women who are more real and more multi-dimensional.”^[37] The best way to learn from these stereotypes and move on for better representation is for people to acknowledge and re-evaluate the nature of different social roles, educate others on the description and controversies of stereotypes, and support everyone equally and not treat anyone with a disadvantage.^[38]

Sexual Content in Public Communication

Creators of all forms of media know that sex—named, innuendoed, or overtly displayed—is a surefire way to grab an audience’s attention. “Sex sells” is an advertising cliché; the list of products that advertisers have linked to erotic imagery or innuendo, from cosmetics and cars to vacation packages and beer, is nearly inexhaustible. Most often, sexualized advertising content is served up in the form of the female body, in part or in whole, featured in provocative or suggestive poses beside a product that may have nothing to do with sexuality. However, by linking these two things, advertisers are marketing desire itself.



Figure 1: 1916 Ladies' Home Journal version of the famous seduction-based ad by Helen Lansdowne Resor at J. Walter Thompson Agency. It shows a man hugging a woman from behind. The headline at the top reads: "A-SKIN-YOU-LOVE-TO-TOUCH."

Sex is used to sell not just consumer goods; it sells media, too. Music videos on MTV and VH1, which promote artists and their music, capture audience attention with highly suggestive dance moves, often performed by scantily clad women. Movie trailers may flash brief images of nudity or passionate kissing to suggest more to come in the movie. Video games feature female characters like Lara Croft of *Tomb Raider*, whose tightly fitted clothes reveal all the curves of her Barbie-doll figure. An experimental study reported that teens who were persuaded into playing video games with highly sexualized female characters showed diminished self-efficiency.^[39] And partially nude models grace the cover of men's and women's magazines like *Maxim*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Vogue* where cover lines promise titillating tips, gossip, and advice on bedroom behavior.^[40] Most male models are portrayed with more imagery of the face and upper body while most female models have full body images, facilitating the tendency to evaluate a woman based on her dress style and body shape.^[41]

In the 1920s and 1930s, filmmakers attracted audiences to the silver screen with the promise of what was then considered scandalous content. Prior to the 1934 Hays Code, which placed restrictions on "indecent" content in movies, films featured erotic dances, male and female nudity, references to homosexuality, and sexual violence. D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) includes scenes with topless actresses, as does *Ben Hur* (1925). In Warner Bros.' *Female* (1933), the leading lady, the head of a major car company, spends her evenings in sexual exploits with her male employees, a storyline that would never have passed the Hays Code a year later.^[42] *Trouble in Paradise*, a 1932 romantic comedy, was withdrawn from circulation after the institution of the Hays Code because of its frank discussion of sexuality. Similarly, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), which featured a prostitute as one of the main characters, was also banned under the code.^[43]

In the 1960s, when the sexual revolution led to increasingly permissive attitudes toward sexuality in American culture, the Hays Code was replaced with the MPAA rating system. The rating system, designed to warn parents about potentially objectionable material in films, allowed filmmakers to include sexually explicit content without fear of public protest. Since the replacement of the Hays Code, sexual content has been featured in movies with much greater frequency.

The problem, according to many media critics, is not that sex now appears more often but that it is almost always portrayed unrealistically in American mass media.^[44] This can be harmful, they say, because the mass media are important **socialization agents**—that is, ways that people learn about the norms, expectations, and values of their society.^[45] Sex, as many films, TV shows, music videos, and song lyrics present it, is frequent and casual. Rarely do these media point out the potential emotional and physical consequences of sexual behavior. According to one study, portrayals of sex that include possible risks like sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy only occur in 15 percent of the sexually explicit material on TV.^[46] Additionally, actors and models depicted in sexual relationships in the media are thinner, younger, and more attractive than the average adult. This creates unrealistic expectations about the necessary ingredients for a satisfying sexual relationship.

Social psychologists are particularly concerned with the negative effects these unrealistic portrayals have on women, as women's bodies are the primary means of introducing sexual content into media targeted at both men and women. Media activist Jean Kilbourne points out that "women's bodies are often dismembered into legs, breasts or thighs, reinforcing the message that women are objects rather than whole human beings." *Adbusters*, a magazine that critiques mass media, particularly advertising, points out the sexual objectification of women's bodies in a number of its spoof advertisements, such as the one in the figure below, bringing home the message that advertising often sends unrealistic and harmful messages about women's bodies and sexuality. Additionally, many researchers note that in women's magazines, advertising, and music videos, women are often implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—given the message that a primary concern should be attracting and sexually satisfying men.^[47] Furthermore, the recent increase in entertainment featuring sexual violence may, according to some studies, negatively affect the way young men behave toward women.^[48]

These negative behaviors can also lead to the topic of rape culture. Though young men, especially gay men, can be victims of sexual harassment, women tend to get the most spotlight when discussing rape culture and have fought hard to make their voices heard, and rape education and activism has recently increased in the early 2020s, with students learning consent training and the slogans "consent is sexy" and "sex without consent is rape" being heavily pushed and popularized especially on social media to fill the absence of empirical research discussing the concept of consent and rape convention.^[49]



Figure 2: A white silhouette of a woman's body on a black background. The head is labeled: "I guess it doesn't matter what's up here." There is a hand-drawn heart over the approximate location of the heart, which reads "or in here". An arrow points down to the vulva and reads "as long as there's no hair here." Sexual objectification: Women's bodies are often headless or dismembered into legs, breasts, or thighs in media portrayals.

Young women and men are especially vulnerable to the effects of media portrayals of sexuality. Psychologists have long noted that teens and children get much of their information and many of their opinions about sex through TV, film, and online media. In fact, two-thirds of adolescents turn to the media first when they want to learn about sexuality.^[50] The media may help shape teenage and adolescent attitudes toward sex, but they can also lead young people to engage in sexual activity before they are prepared to handle the consequences. According to one study, kids with high exposure to sex on television were almost twice as likely to initiate sexual activity compared to kids without exposure.^[51]

Cultural critics have noted that sexually explicit themes in mass media are generally more widely accepted in European nations than they are in the United States. However, the increased concern and debates over censorship of sexual content in the United States may in fact be linked to the way sex is portrayed in American media rather than to the presence of the sexual content in and of itself. Unrealistic portrayals that fail to take into account the actual complexity of sexual relationships seem to be a primary concern. As Jean Kilbourne has argued, sex in the American media "has far more to do with trivializing sex than with promoting it. We are offered a pseudo-sexuality that makes it far more difficult to discover our own unique and authentic sexuality."^[52] However, despite these criticisms, it is likely that unrealistic portrayals of sexual content will continue to be the norm in mass media unless the general public stops consuming these images.

Key Takeaways

- In American mass media, where the White male perspective is still presented as the standard, stereotypes of those who differ—women, ethnic minorities, and gays and lesbians—are an issue of ethical concern.
- Racial minorities are often absent, peripheral, or stereotyped in film, television, print media, advertising, and video games.
- Racial stereotypes occur in news reporting, where they influence public perceptions.
- Underrepresentation of women and racial and ethnic minorities is also a problem in the hiring of creative talent behind the scenes.
- The media still often subordinate women to traditional roles, where they serve as support for their male counterparts.
- The objectification of women in various visual media has particularly led to concerns about body image, unrealistic social expectations, and negative influences on children and adolescent girls.
- “Sex sells” consumer products and media such as movies and music videos.
- The issue of sexual content in the media has become a source of concern to media critics because of the frequency with which it occurs and also because of the unrealistic way it is portrayed.

Exercises

Choose a television show or movie you are familiar with and consider the characters in terms of racial and gender diversity. Then answer the following short-answer questions. Each response should be one to two paragraphs.

1. Does the show or movie you’ve chosen reflect racial and gender diversity? Why or why not? Explain why this kind of diversity is important in media.
2. Are there any racial or gender stereotypes present in the show or movie you’ve chosen? If so, identify them and describe how they are stereotypical. If not, describe what elements would prevent the portrayal of female or ethnic minority characters from being stereotypical.
3. Does the show or movie you’ve selected feature any sexual content? If so, do you think that the content is gratuitous or unrealistic, or does it serve the story? Explain your answer. Then explain why the use of sexual content in media is a concern for many media critics.
4. Watch segments of the evening news on three major television networks. Based on the information presented here about representations of women and racial minorities, what do you observe? Do your observations corroborate claims of stereotyping and underrepresentation? Do you notice important differences among the three networks regarding these issues?
5. Create a mock advertisement that breaks with common racial stereotypes, gender myths, or media representations of sexuality.

Media Attributions

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12.4: Video - How Media Affects Gender Perceptions

📌 How does gender stereotypes portrayed in media affect our perceptions of gender?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

13: Power, Politics, and Law

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- [13.3: Feminism and Sexism](#)
- [13.4: It's Time for More Women in Politics \(TEDx Video\)](#)
- [13.5: Medicine, Health, and Reproductive Justice](#)
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13.1: Reducing Gender Inequality

Learning Objectives

1. Describe any three policies or programs that should help reduce gender inequality.
2. Discuss possible ways of reducing rape and sexual assault.

Gender inequality is found in varying degrees in most societies around the world, and the United States is no exception. Just as racial/ethnic stereotyping and prejudice underlie racial/ethnic inequality (see Chapter 3 “Racial and Ethnic Inequality”), so do stereotypes and false beliefs underlie gender inequality. Although these stereotypes and beliefs have weakened considerably since the 1970s thanks in large part to the contemporary women’s movement, they obviously persist and hamper efforts to achieve full gender equality.

A sociological perspective reminds us that gender inequality stems from a complex mixture of cultural and structural factors that must be addressed if gender inequality is to be reduced further than it already has been since the 1970s. Despite changes during this period, children are still socialized from birth into traditional notions of femininity and masculinity, and gender-based stereotyping incorporating these notions still continues. Although people should certainly be free to pursue whatever family and career responsibilities they desire, socialization and stereotyping still combine to limit the ability of girls and boys and women and men alike to imagine less traditional possibilities. Meanwhile, structural obstacles in the workplace and elsewhere continue to keep women in a subordinate social and economic status relative to men.

To reduce gender inequality, then, a sociological perspective suggests various policies and measures to address the cultural and structural factors that help produce gender inequality. These steps might include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Reduce socialization by parents and other adults of girls and boys into traditional gender roles.
2. Confront gender stereotyping by the popular and news media.
3. Increase public consciousness of the reasons for, extent of, and consequences of rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.
4. Increase enforcement of existing laws against gender-based employment discrimination and against sexual harassment.
5. Increase funding of rape-crisis centers and other services for girls and women who have been raped and/or sexually assaulted.
6. Increase government funding of high-quality day-care options to enable parents, and especially mothers, to work outside the home if they so desire, and to do so without fear that their finances or their children’s well-being will be compromised.
7. Increase mentorship and other efforts to boost the number of women in traditionally male occupations and in positions of political leadership.

As we consider how best to reduce gender inequality, the impact of the contemporary women’s movement must be neither forgotten nor underestimated. Since it began in the late 1960s, the women’s movement has generated important advances for women in almost every sphere of life. Brave women (and some men) challenged the status quo by calling attention to gender inequality in the workplace, education, and elsewhere, and they brought rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment, and domestic violence into the national consciousness. For gender inequality to continue to be reduced, it is essential that a strong women’s movement continue to remind us of the sexism that still persists in American society and the rest of the world.

Reducing Rape and Sexual Assault

As we have seen, gender inequality also manifests itself in the form of violence against women. A sociological perspective tells us that cultural myths and economic and gender inequality help lead to rape, and that the rape problem goes far beyond a few psychopathic men who rape women. A sociological perspective thus tells us that our society cannot just stop at doing something about these men. Instead it must make more far-reaching changes by changing people’s beliefs about rape and by making every effort to reduce poverty and to empower women. This last task is especially important, for, as Randall and Haskell (1995, p. 22) observed, a sociological perspective on rape “means calling into question the organization of sexual inequality in our society.”

Aside from this fundamental change, other remedies, such as additional and better funded rape-crisis centers, would help women who experience rape and sexual assault. Yet even here women of color face an additional barrier. Because the antirape movement was begun by white, middle-class feminists, the rape-crisis centers they founded tended to be near where they live, such as college campuses, and not in the areas where women of color live, such as inner cities and Native American reservations. This meant that

women of color who experienced sexual violence lacked the kinds of help available to their white, middle-class counterparts (Matthews, 1989), and despite some progress, this is still true today.

Key Takeaways

- Certain government efforts, including increased financial support for child care, should help reduce gender inequality.
- If gender inequality lessens, rape and sexual assault should decrease as well.

For Your Review

1. To reduce gender inequality, do you think efforts should focus more on changing socialization practices or on changing policies in the workplace and schools? Explain your answer.
2. How hopeful are you that rape and sexual assault will decrease significantly in your lifetime?

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13.2: Crash Course Video - What Is Feminism?

📌 What is Feminism, and Where Does it Go From Here?



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13.3: Feminism and Sexism

Learning Objectives

- Define feminism, sexism, and patriarchy.
- Discuss evidence for a decline in sexism.
- Understand some correlates of feminism.

Recall that more than one-third of the public (as measured in the General Social Survey) agrees with the statement, “It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? If you are like the majority of college students, you disagree.

Today a lot of women, and some men, will say, “I’m not a feminist, but...” and then go on to add that they hold certain beliefs about women’s equality and traditional gender roles that actually fall into a feminist framework. Their reluctance to self-identify as feminists underscores the negative image that feminists and feminism hold but also suggests that the actual meaning of feminism may be unclear.

Feminism and sexism are generally two sides of the same coin. Feminism refers to the belief that women and men should have equal opportunities in economic, political, and social life, while sexism refers to a belief in traditional gender role stereotypes and in the inherent inequality between men and women. Sexism thus parallels the concept of racial and ethnic prejudice discussed in Chapter 7. Both women and people of color are said, for biological and/or cultural reasons, to lack certain qualities for success in today’s world.



Figure 8.9. Feminism as a social movement began in the United States during the abolitionist period before the Civil War. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were active abolitionists who made connections between slavery and the oppression of women. Source: Stanton photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a28976>; Mott photo courtesy of U.S. Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a42877>.

In the United States, feminism as a social movement began during the abolitionist period preceding the Civil War, as such women as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, both active abolitionists, began to see similarities between slavery and the oppression of women. This new women’s movement focused on many issues but especially on the right to vote. As it quickly grew, critics charged that it would ruin the family and wreak havoc on society in other ways. They added that women were not smart enough to vote and should just concentrate on being good wives and mothers (Behling, 2001). Behling, L. L. (2001). *The masculine woman in America, 1890–1935*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

One of the most dramatic events in the woman suffrage movement occurred in 1872, when Susan B. Anthony was arrested because she voted. At her trial a year later in Canandaigua, New York, the judge refused to let her say anything in her defense and ordered the jury to convict her. Anthony’s statement at sentencing won wide acclaim and ended with words that ring to this day: “I shall earnestly and persistently continue to urge all women to the practical recognition of the old revolutionary maxim, ‘Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God’” (Barry, 1988). Barry, K. L. (1988). *Susan B. Anthony: Biography of a singular feminist*. New York, NY: New York University Press..

After women won the right to vote in 1920, the women’s movement became less active but began anew in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as women active in the Southern civil rights movement turned their attention to women’s rights, and it is still active today. To a profound degree, it has changed public thinking and social and economic institutions, but, as we will see coming up, much gender inequality remains. Because the women’s movement challenged strongly held traditional views about gender, it has

prompted the same kind of controversy that its 19th-century predecessor did. Feminists quickly acquired a bra-burning image, even though there is no documented instance of a bra being burned in a public protest, and the movement led to a backlash as conservative elements echoed the concerns heard a century earlier (Faludi, 1991). Faludi, S. (1991). *Backlash: The undeclared war against American women*. New York, NY: Crown.

Several varieties of feminism exist. Although they all share the basic idea that women and men should be equal in their opportunities in all spheres of life, they differ in other ways (Lindsey, 2011). Lindsey, L. L. (2011). *Gender roles: A sociological perspective* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. *Liberal feminism* believes that the equality of women can be achieved within our existing society by passing laws and reforming social, economic, and political institutions. In contrast, *socialist feminism* blames capitalism for women's inequality and says that true gender equality can result only if fundamental changes in social institutions, and even a socialist revolution, are achieved. *Radical feminism*, on the other hand, says that patriarchy (male domination) lies at the root of women's oppression and that women are oppressed even in noncapitalist societies. Patriarchy itself must be abolished, they say, if women are to become equal to men. Finally, an emerging *multicultural feminism* emphasizes that women of color are oppressed not only because of their gender but also because of their race and class (M. L. Andersen & Collins, 2010). Andersen, M. L., & Collins, P. H. (Eds.). (2010). *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. They thus face a triple burden that goes beyond their gender. By focusing their attention on women of color in the United States and other nations, multicultural feminists remind us that the lives of these women differ in many ways from those of the middle-class women who historically have led U.S. feminist movements.

The Growth of Feminism and the Decline of Sexism

What evidence is there for the impact of the women's movement on public thinking? The General Social Survey, the Gallup Poll, and other national surveys show that the public has moved away from traditional views of gender toward more modern ones. Another way of saying this is that the public has moved toward feminism.

To illustrate this, let's return to the General Social Survey statement that it is much better for the man to achieve outside the home and for the woman to take care of home and family. Figure 8.10 shows that agreement with this statement dropped sharply during the 1970s and 1980s before leveling off afterward to slightly more than one-third of the public.

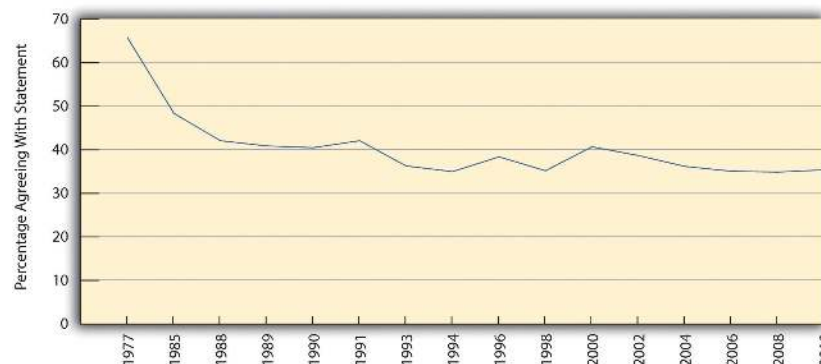


Figure 8.10 Change in Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family, 1977–2010. Percentage agreeing that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” Source: Data from General Social Survey.

Another General Social Survey question over the years has asked whether respondents would be willing to vote for a qualified woman for president of the United States. As Figure 8.11 illustrates, this percentage rose from 74% in the early 1970s to a high of 96.2% in 2010. Although we have not yet had a woman president, despite Hillary Rodham Clinton's historic presidential primary campaign in 2007 and 2008 and Sarah Palin's presence on the Republican ticket in 2008, the survey evidence indicates the public is willing to vote for one. As demonstrated by the responses to the survey questions on women's home roles and on a woman president, traditional gender views have indeed declined.



Figure 8.11 Change in Willingness to Vote for a Qualified Woman for President. Source: Data from General Social Survey.

Correlates of Feminism

Because of the feminist movement's importance, scholars have investigated why some people are more likely than others to support feminist beliefs. Their research uncovers several correlates of feminism (Dauphinais, Barkan, & Cohn, 1992). Dauphinais, P. D., Barkan, S. E., & Cohn, S. F. (1992). Predictors of rank-and-file feminist activism: Evidence from the 1983 general social survey. *Social Problems*, 39, 332–344. We have already seen one of these when we noted that religiosity is associated with support for traditional gender roles. To turn that around, lower levels of religiosity are associated with feminist beliefs and are thus a correlate of feminism.

Several other such correlates exist. One of the strongest is education: the lower the education, the lower the support for feminist beliefs. Figure 8.12 shows the strength of this correlation by using our familiar General Social Survey statement that men should achieve outside the home and women should take care of home and family. People without a high school degree are almost five times as likely as those with a graduate degree to agree with this statement.

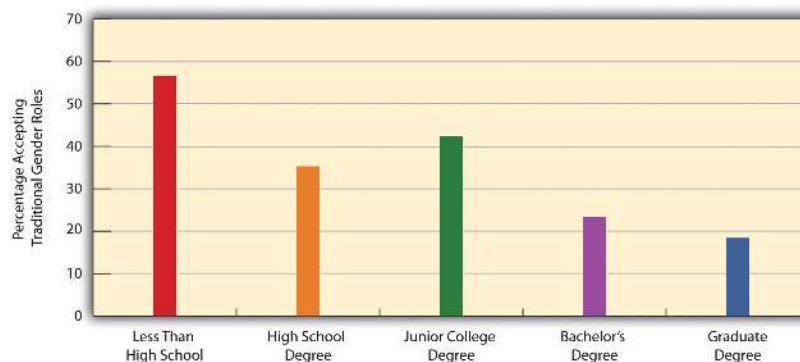


Figure 8.12 Education and Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family. Percentage agreeing that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Age is another correlate, as older people are more likely than younger people to believe in traditional gender roles. Again using our familiar statement about traditional gender roles, we see an example of this relationship in Figure 8.13, which shows that older people are more likely than younger people to accept traditional gender roles as measured by this statement.

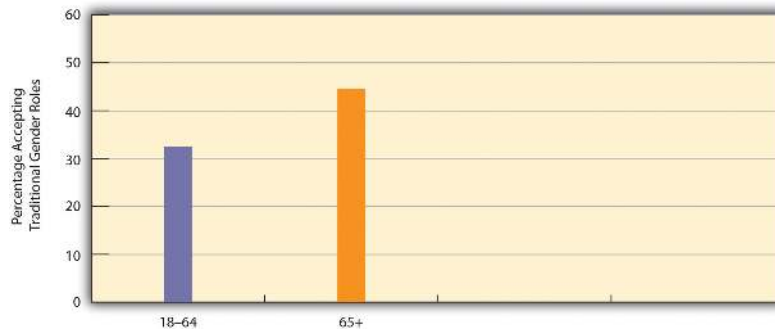


Figure 8.13 Age and Acceptance of Traditional Gender Roles in the Family. Percentage agreeing that “it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” Source: Data from General Social Survey, 2010.

Conclusion

- Feminism refers to the belief that women and men should have equal opportunities in economic, political, and social life, while sexism refers to a belief in traditional gender role stereotypes and in the inherent inequality between men and women.
- Sexist beliefs have declined in the United States since the early 1970s.
- Several correlates of feminist beliefs exist. In particular, people with higher levels of education are more likely to hold beliefs consistent with feminism.

For Your Review

1. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?
2. Think about one of your parents or of another adult much older than you. Does this person hold more traditional views about gender than you do? Explain your answer.

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13.4: It's Time for More Women in Politics (TEDx Video)

📌 It's Time For More Women in Politics | Martina Fitzgerald | TEDxTrinityCollegeDublin



Time For More Women in Politics | x Talks

Watch on  YouTube

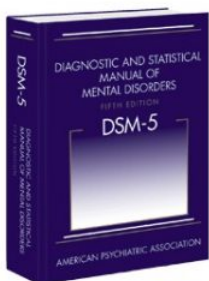
Video produced by TEDx, all rights reserved. It is not openly licensed but freely available to all. This version has auto-captioning, which may have errors. Click the CC button at the bottom of this alternate version to access accurate captions: [It's Time For More Women in Politics with corrected captions](#).

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13.5: Medicine, Health, and Reproductive Justice

We often think of medicine and medical knowledge as objective, neutral, and vitally important to our well being the well being of and society. There is no doubt that medicine has produced life-saving technologies, treatments, and vaccines. However, medicine is not a neutral field that exists independent of the cultures and societies within which it is created. Medicine relies on the **medical model**, which contains a number of assumptions. First, it assumes that the body is governed by laws and processes independent of culture, social life and institutions. Second, it assumes that physicians are those qualified to evaluate and define the body's health or pathology and treat it as they see necessary. In sum, the medical model is a medical-biological understanding of the body, which constructs the systems, pathologies, or indicators of health of the body as independent of culture, ideology, economy, and the state. Feminist and critical theorists have critiqued this understanding of the body, showing both how doctors and medicine *medicalize* bodies in particular ways according to gender ideologies. Furthermore, feminists have argued that we need to pay attention to how race, gender, and class inequalities shape the health outcomes of differently situated groups in society.

Medical sociologist Peter Conrad (2007) defines **medicalization** as the process whereby human problems “become defined and treated as medical problems, usually in terms of illness and disorders” which are then managed and treated by health professionals. Medicalization constructs medical problems, which are codified in policy by governing bodies, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, that recommend treatment. For example, two different diagnostic categories for the experience of low sexual desire—one for men (Male Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder), and one for women (Female Sexual Interest/Arousal Disorder)—newly appeared in the most recent edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, the *DSM-5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Low sexual desire does not threaten a person's health, but these categories treat low sexual desire as a problem and construct the experience as essentially distinct for women than for men. A number of the members of the work groups that created diagnostic categories in the *DSM-5* had conflicting interests, such as ties to pharmaceutical companies (Welch et al., 2013). This diagnostic category followed the development and marketing of the first product to treat “female sexual dysfunction”—called EROS—by Urometrics, a pharmaceutical company. The Food and Drug Administration defines “female sexual dysfunction” as “decreased sexual desire, decreased sexual arousal, pain during intercourse, or inability to climax” (Shah 2003). This pathologization of decreased sexual arousal emerged in a specific social context in which Pfizer's \$1.3 billion profit windfall from Viagra in 2000 spurred pharmaceutical companies to develop an equivalent product to market to women, and a diagnostic category emerged next to encourage prescriptions and sales of the drug.



DSM-5
2013

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In this example, heterosexual women's sexuality becomes medicalized to serve various interests other than their own health and pleasure. Feminists have been critiquing the ways in which women's sexual needs and desires are often subordinated to men's sexual needs and desires for decades—diagnosing the problem as stemming from exhaustion from both paid work and unpaid housework, as well as inattentive male partners. Urometrics and the doctors who developed EROS, in contrast, diagnose the problem as stemming from female bodily dysfunction. Instead of addressing the deeper social and cultural reasons for why heterosexual women may not be fulfilled sexually, EROS offers a commodified, FDA-approved, medically indicated treatment for a medically-defined “bodily dysfunction.” Relatedly, gender nonconformity transgender identity has been medicalized for the past several decades. The current diagnostic category in the DSM-5 is called “Gender Dysphoria.”

Medicalization is an aspect of **bio-power**. Bio-power, according to philosopher Michel Foucault (1979) refers to the practices of modern states to regulate their subjects through technologies of power. Foucault argued that in complex modern societies populations will not tolerate totalitarian uses of state power. Therefore, modern states must find less overt ways to control their

populations, such as collecting data on the health, reproductive capacities, and sexual behaviors of their populations for the purpose of state regulation and intervention. For example, historian Laura Briggs shows how in the United States colonial occupation of Puerto Rico in the early 20th century, public health officials treated the problem of venereal disease as a problem of overpopulation and sexual immorality, and sought to institute eugenics policies (discussed below) to limit Puerto Rican women's ability to reproduce. Importantly, Foucault argued that medical knowledge, combined with modern states' collection of data on their populations, created new norms of health which populations internalize. Thus, the intended effect of bio-power is that people regulate themselves according to norms proliferated by medical knowledge and the state.

As we have argued before, not all women's health and sexuality has been medicalized in the same ways, or with the same effects. Class and race differences and inequalities have made poor or working-class white women and women of color, along with people with disabilities, the targets of public health campaigns to regulate their sexuality and reproduction. Such was the case with the example of the United States' use of bio-power in Puerto Rico above. In that example, working-class and poor Puerto Rican women's sexuality and reproduction became medicalized in ways that wealthy Puerto Ricans' and white women's sexuality and reproduction were not.

The eugenics movement began in the late 19th century, but has had far-reaching impacts around the world. **Eugenics** is a medical/scientific ideology and social movement that takes the root of social and psychological problems (poverty, mental illness, etc.) to be the genetic make-up or heredity of specific groups within the population, and as a result, seeks to eliminate those groups through sterilization or genocide. Eugenics takes biological determinism and bio-power to their furthest logical conclusions. Eugenists believe that selective breeding of those groups that they construct as "inherently superior"—nondisabled, heterosexual, white, middle-class, Northern and Western Europeans—is a rational-scientific answer to "solve" social problems. The most obvious and well-known example of eugenics in practice is the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, but what many people do not know is that eugenics-based sterilization was enforced by law in the United States for much of the 20th Century. In 1907, the world's first eugenics-based compulsory sterilization law was passed in Indiana, followed by 30 states soon after (Lombardo, 2011). The Nazi government widely cited a report that praised the results of sterilization in California as evidence that extensive sterilization programs are feasible and humane (Miller, 2009). Between 1907 and 1963, over 64,000 individuals were forcibly sterilized under eugenic legislation in the United States (Lombardo, 2011). The eugenics movement also took shape in immigration policies in the United States into the first half of the 20th Century (Allen, 1996). Eugenics projects are still in effect today. Sterilization is still coerced or forced on women and girls, and especially disabled women and girls, in a number of countries (Guterman, 2011). Women in California prisons have continued to be forcibly sterilized, as recently as 2010 (Campos, 2013). In addition, as of April 2017, 20 countries in Europe require sterilization in order for trans people to obtain legal gender recognition (Transgender Europe, 2017).

In addition to overt genocidal projects, social relations within conditions of inequality increasingly expose stigmatized groups to environmental and health hazards at rates higher than privileged groups, affecting birth and health outcomes. For example, according to the National Association of City and County Health Officials, in the United States, the wealthier a person is, the lower their risk of disease, cancer, infant death, and diabetes (NACCHO, 2008). However, two physicians who study premature birth—Richard David and James Collins—found that African Americans who were middle-class or upper-class did *not* experience the same lower risks for premature birth as their white peers. They attempted to find out if there was a "premature birth gene" specific to African Americans, through comparing newborns among African American women, white women, and African women. They found that African women and white American women had similar pregnancy outcomes, but *African American* women were still 3 times more likely to have premature births than both these groups—suggesting that there is no genetic basis for difference between pregnancy outcomes for white and black women. Therefore, David and Collins explain the pregnancy gap by arguing that African Americans, regardless of social class, experience significant amounts of stress due to their daily experiences with racism in the United States. For African Americans—particularly African American women—who are middle-class or upper-class, the necessity of being on the ball constantly and performing at the highest caliber at all times, in order to refute racist stereotypes, results in a continuous, accumulating amount of stress which translates into higher risk for negative health outcomes (*Unnatural Causes*, 2008). Such findings suggest that intersecting race, class, and gender inequalities have real impacts on the health outcomes of differently situated groups in society.

Recognition of the effects of social inequalities on women's health motivates the activism of the **reproductive justice** movement. A reproductive justice framework for understanding the politics of health and reproduction highlights race, class, and gender inequalities and how these inequalities constrain the abilities of women to control their lives. It centers the necessary social and cultural conditions for poor women and women of color to be able to make choices, including equal wages for equal work, employment, affordable housing, healthcare, and lives free from violence. The reproductive justice movement was born out of the

tensions between white, middle-class feminist activists and women of color activists in feminist movements. White, middle-class feminist activists framed their argument for abortion under a **reproductive rights** framework that relied on a language of “choice,”—an individualizing way of talking about reproductive politics that overlooked the ways that poverty, race, laws and medical authorities imposed control over many women’s reproductive lives.

Following the passage of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 (the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion), the burgeoning conservative movement of the mid to late 1970s succeeded in getting the **Hyde Amendment** passed. The Hyde Amendment prohibits federal funds—specifically Medicaid—from being used to fund abortions. This Amendment disproportionately affects poor women, who are disproportionately women of color. One would think that the National Organization of Women (NOW) would have rallied to block or reverse the Hyde Amendment, but they did not. This led women of color activists to critique the reproductive rights framework, arguing that this framework reflects the interests and experiences of white, middle-class feminists and ignores the broader racial and class inequalities that limit the abilities of women to actually make choices about reproduction and family.

The reproductive justice movement challenges the individualizing and depoliticizing tendencies of the medicalization of women’s bodies by arguing that social inequalities limit choice and expose differently situated female-bodied people to illness and disease depending on their social location within multiple axes of identity. As such, it shows how health and illness are deeply social and not solely determined by biology or genetics.

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13.6: Rape and Sexual Assault

Rape is a global problem, and the **United States** is no exception. Rape is a **violent crime** defined as the unlawful sexual activity (sexual assault) involving sexual intercourse performed without consent or forcibly or under threat of injury against a person's will.

In the United States, about 43.6% of women and 24.8% of men experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime, according to the **National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS)**. About 21.3% of women surveyed reported completed or attempted rape at some point in their lives, with 1.2% reporting completed or attempted rape in the 12 months preceding the survey. About 2.6% of men reported experiencing completed or attempted rape at some point in their lives. About 81.3% of female victims and 70.8% of male victims experienced their first completed or attempted rape before the age of 25.

It is important to note that rape is widely unreported, and therefore statistics on rape are not always accurate depictions of the actual number of incidents. However, the #MeToo movement has helped encourage more victims to report their rape and sexual assault incidents. Rape statistics vary from state to state and can be influenced by factors such as demographics, culture, economics, and law enforcement capabilities. Numbers in this article from the **FBI's 219 Crime in the U.S. report**.

Sexual Assault Facts

FACT: Men, women and children of all ages, races, religions, and economic classes can be and have been victims of sexual assault. Sexual assault occurs in rural areas, small towns and larger cities. It is estimated that one in three girls and one in six boys will be sexually assaulted by the age of eighteen. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, a rape or attempted rape occurs every 5 minutes in the United States.

FACT: Sexual assault is NEVER the victim's fault. Sexual assault is a violent attack on an individual, not a spontaneous crime of sexual passion. For a victim, it is a humiliating and degrading act. No one "asks" for or deserves this type of attack.

FACT: Most sexual assaults are committed by someone the victim knows. Studies show that approximately 80%-90% of women reporting sexual assaults knew their assailant.

FACT: A sexual assault can happen anywhere and at any time. The majority of assaults occur in places ordinarily thought to be safe, such as homes, cars and offices.

FACT: Reported sexual assaults are true, with very few exceptions. According to CONNSACS, only 2% of reported rapes are false. This is the same rate of false reporting as other major crime reports.

FACT: Men can be, and are, sexually assaulted. Current statistics indicate that one in six men are sexually assaulted in their lifetime. Sexual assault of men is thought to be greatly under-reported.

FACT: Almost all sexual assaults occur between members of the same race. Interracial rape is not common, but it does occur.

FACT: Sexual assault is motivated by hostility, power and control. Sexual assaults are not motivated by sexual desire. Unlike animals, humans are capable of controlling how they choose to act on or express sexual urges.

FACT: Sexual offenders come from all educational, occupational, racial and cultural backgrounds. They are "ordinary" and "normal" individuals who sexually assault victims to assert power and control over them and inflict violence, humiliation and degradation.

FACT: Anytime someone is forced to have sex against their will, they have been sexually assaulted, regardless of whether or not they fought back or said "no". There are many reasons why a victim might not physically fight their attacker including shock, fear, threats or the size and strength of the attacker.

FACT: Survivors exhibit a spectrum of emotional responses to assault: calm, hysteria, laughter, anger, apathy, shock. Each survivor copes with the trauma of the assault in a different way.

Attribution: [Rape Culture](#), [Victim Blaming](#), [And The Facts](#)

The [World Population Review website](#) has more information about [sexual violence rates in each state](#).

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13.7: Violence Against Women- Rape and Pornography

Learning Objectives

- Describe the extent of rape and the reasons for it.
- Discuss the debate over pornography

When we consider interpersonal violence of all kinds—homicide, assault, robbery, and rape and sexual assault—men are more likely than women to be victims of violence. While true, this fact obscures another fact: women are far more likely than men to be raped and sexually assaulted. They are also much more likely to be portrayed as victims of pornographic violence on the Internet and in videos, magazines, and other outlets. Finally, women are more likely than men to be victims of *domestic violence*, or violence between spouses and others with intimate relationships. The gendered nature of these acts against women distinguishes them from the violence men suffer. Violence is directed against men not because they are men *per se*, but because of anger, jealousy, and the sociological reasons discussed in Chapter 5's treatment of deviance and crime. But rape and sexual assault, domestic violence, and pornographic portrayals of violence are directed against women precisely because they are women. These acts are thus an extreme extension of the gender inequality women face in other areas of life. We discuss rape and pornography here but will leave domestic violence for Chapter 11.

Rape

Susan Griffin (1971, p. 26) Griffin, S. (1971, September). Rape: The all-American crime. *Ramparts*, 10, 26–35. began a classic essay on rape in 1971 with this startling statement:

I have never been free of the fear of rape. From a very early age I, like most women, have thought of rape as a part of my natural environment—something to be feared and prayed against like fire or lightning. I never asked why men raped; I simply thought it one of the many mysteries of human nature.

What do we know about rape? Why do men rape? Our knowledge about the extent and nature of rape and reasons for it comes from three sources: the FBI Uniform Crime Reports and the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), both discussed in Chapter 5, and surveys of and interviews with women and men conducted by academic researchers. From these sources we have a fairly good if not perfect idea of how much rape occurs, the context in which it occurs, and the reasons for it. What do we know?

The Extent and Context of Rape

According to the Uniform Crime Reports, about 88,000 reported rapes (including attempts) occurred in the United States in 2009, for a rate of about 55 for every 100,000 women age 12 or older (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2010). *Crime in the United States: 2009*. Washington, DC: Author. Because women often do not tell police they were raped, the NCVS probably yields a better estimate of rape. According to the NCVS, almost 106,000 rapes and sexual assaults occur annually, for a rate of 0.8 for every 1,000 women age 12 or older (or 130 per 100,000) (Truman & Rand, 2010). Truman, J. L., & Rand, M. R. (2010). *Criminal victimization, 2009*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Other research indicates that up to one-third of U.S. women will experience a rape or sexual assault, including attempts, at least once in their lives (Barkan, 2012). Barkan, S. E. (2012). *Criminology: A sociological understanding* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. A study of a random sample of 420 Toronto women involving intensive interviews yielded even higher figures: 56% said they had experienced at least one rape or attempted rape, and two-thirds said they had experienced at least one rape or sexual assault, including attempts. The researchers, Melanie Randall and Lori Haskell (1995, p. 22), Randall, M., & Haskell, L. (1995). Sexual violence in women's lives: Findings from the women's safety project, a community-based survey. *Violence Against Women*, 1, 6–31. concluded that "it is more common than not for a woman to have an experience of sexual assault during their lifetime."



Figure 8.17: Up to one-third of U.S. women experience a rape or sexual assault, including attempts, at least once in their lives. © Thinkstock

These figures apply not just to the general public but also to college students. About 20%–30% of women students in anonymous surveys report being raped or sexually assaulted (including attempts), usually by a male student they knew beforehand (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Gross, Winslett, Roberts, & Gohm, 2006). Fisher, B. S., Cullen, F. T., & Turner, M. G. (2000). *The sexual victimization of college women*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice and Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice; Gross, A. M., Winslett, A., Roberts, M., & Gohm, C. L. (2006). An examination of sexual violence against college women. *Violence Against Women*, 12, 288–300. Thus at a campus of 10,000 students of whom 5,000 are women, about 1,000–1,500 will be raped or sexually assaulted over a period of 4 years, or about 10 per week in a 4-year academic calendar.

The public image of rape is of the proverbial stranger attacking a woman in an alleyway. While such rapes do occur, most rapes actually happen between people who know each other. A wide body of research finds that 60%–80% of all rapes and sexual assaults are committed by someone the woman knows, including husbands, ex- husbands, boyfriends, and ex-boyfriends, and only 20%–35% by strangers (Barkan, 2012). Barkan, S. E. (2012). *Criminology: A sociological understanding* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. A woman is thus two to four times more likely to be raped by someone she knows than by a stranger.

Explaining Rape

Sociological explanations of rape fall into cultural and structural categories similar to those presented earlier for sexual harassment. Various “rape myths” in our culture support the absurd notion that women somehow enjoy being raped, want to be raped, or are “asking for it” (Franiuk, Seefeldt, & Vandello, 2008). Franiuk, R., Seefeldt, J., & Vandello, J. (2008). Prevalence of rape myths in headlines and their effects on attitudes toward rape. *Sex Roles*, 58(11/12), 790–801. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9372-4. One of the most famous scenes in movie history occurs in the classic film *Gone with the Wind*, when Rhett Butler carries a struggling Scarlett O’Hara up the stairs. She is struggling because she does not want to have sex with him. The next scene shows Scarlett waking up the next morning with a satisfied, loving look on her face. The not-so-subtle message is that she enjoyed being raped (or, to be more charitable to the film, was just playing hard to get).

A related cultural belief is that women somehow ask or deserve to be raped by the way they dress or behave. If she dresses attractively or walks into a bar by herself, she wants to have sex, and if a rape occurs, well, then, what did she expect? In the award-winning film *The Accused*, based on a true story, actress Jodie Foster plays a woman who was raped by several men on top of a pool table in a bar. The film recounts how members of the public questioned why she was in the bar by herself if she did not want to have sex and blamed her for being raped.

A third cultural belief is that a man who is sexually active with a lot of women is a stud. Although this belief is less common in this day of AIDS and other STDs, it is still with us. A man with multiple sex partners continues to be the source of envy among many of his peers. At a minimum, men are still the ones who have to “make the first move” and then continue making more moves. There is a thin line between being sexually assertive and sexually aggressive (Kassing, Beesley, & Frey, 2005). Kassing, L. R., Beesley, D., & Frey, L. L. (2005). Gender role conflict, homophobia, age, and education as predictors of male rape myth acceptance. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 27(4), 311–328.

These three cultural beliefs—that women enjoy being forced to have sex, that they ask or deserve to be raped, and that men should be sexually assertive or even aggressive—combine to produce a cultural recipe for rape. Although most men do not rape, the cultural beliefs and myths just described help account for the rapes that do occur. Recognizing this, the contemporary women’s movement began attacking these myths back in the 1970s, and the public is much more conscious of the true nature of rape than a

generation ago. That said, much of the public still accepts these cultural beliefs and myths, and prosecutors continue to find it difficult to win jury convictions in rape trials unless the woman who was raped had suffered visible injuries, had not known the man who raped her, and/or was not dressed attractively (Levine, 2006). Levine, K. L. (2006). The intimacy discount: Prosecutorial discretion, privacy, and equality in the statutory rape caseload. *Emory Law Journal*, 55(4), 691–749.

Structural explanations for rape emphasize the power differences between women and men similar to those outlined earlier for sexual harassment. In societies that are male dominated, rape and other violence against women is a likely outcome, as they allow men to demonstrate and maintain their power over women. Supporting this view, studies of preindustrial societies and of the 50 states of the United States find that rape is more common in societies where women have less economic and political power (Baron & Straus, 1989; Sanday, 1981). Baron, L., & Straus, M. A. (1989). *Four theories of rape in American society: A state-level analysis*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Sanday, P. R. (1981). The socio-cultural context of rape: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Social Issues*, 37, 5–27. Poverty is also a predictor of rape: although rape in the United States transcends social class boundaries, it does seem more common among poorer segments of the population than among wealthier segments, as is true for other types of violence (Rand, 2009). Rand, M. R. (2009). *Criminal victimization, 2008*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Scholars think the higher rape rates among the poor stem from poor men trying to prove their “masculinity” by taking out their economic frustration on women (Martin, Vieraitis, & Britto, 2006). Martin, K., Vieraitis, L. M., & Britto, S. (2006). Gender equality and women’s absolute status: A test of the feminist models of rape. *Violence Against Women*, 12(4), 321–339.

Reducing Rape

In sum, a sociological perspective tells us that cultural myths and economic and gender inequality help lead to rape, and that the rape problem goes far beyond a few psychopathic men who rape women. A sociological perspective thus tells us that our society cannot just stop at doing something about these men. Instead it must make more far-reaching changes by changing people’s beliefs about rape and by making every effort to reduce poverty and to empower women. This last task is especially important, for, as Randall and Haskell (1995, p. 22), Randall, M., & Haskell, L. (1995). Sexual violence in women’s lives: Findings from the Women’s Safety Project, a community-based survey. *Violence Against Women*, 1, 6–31. the authors of the Toronto study cited earlier, observed, a sociological perspective on rape “means calling into question the organization of sexual inequality in our society.”

Aside from this fundamental change, other remedies such as additional and better funded rape-crisis centers would help women who experience rape and sexual assault. Yet even here women of color face an additional barrier. Because the anti-rape movement was begun by white, middle-class feminists, the rape-crisis centers they founded tended to be near where they live, such as college campuses, and not in the areas where women of color live, such as inner cities and Native American reservations. This meant that women of color who experienced sexual violence lacked the kinds of help available to their white, middle-class counterparts (Matthews, 1989). Matthews, N. A. (1989). Surmounting a legacy: The expansion of racial diversity in a local anti-rape movement. *Gender & Society*, 3, 518–532. and, despite some progress, this is still true today.

Pornography

Back in the 1950s, young boys in the United States would page through *National Geographic* magazine to peek at photos of native women who were partially nude. Those photos, of course, were not put there to excite boys across the country; instead they were there simply to depict native people in their natural habitat. Another magazine began about the same time that also contained photos of nude women. Its name was *Playboy*, and its photos obviously had a much different purpose: to excite teenage boys and older men alike. Other, more graphic magazines grew in its wake, and today television shows and PG-13 and R-rated movies show more nudity and sex than were ever imaginable in the days when *National Geographic* was a boy’s secret pleasure. Beyond these movies and television shows, a powerful pornography industry now exists on the Internet, in porn stores, and elsewhere. Although *Playboy* quickly became very controversial, it is now considered tame compared to what else is available.

If things as different as *National Geographic*, *Playboy*, R-rated movies, and hard-core pornography show nudity and can be sexually arousing, what, then, should be considered pornography? Are at least some of the tamer pictures in *Playboy* really that different from the great paintings in art history that depict nude women? This question is not necessarily meant to defend *Playboy*; rather it is meant to stimulate your thinking over what exactly is and is not pornography and over what, if anything, our society can and should do about it.

Many people obviously oppose pornography, but two very different groups have been especially outspoken over the years. One of these groups, religious moralists, condemns pornography as a violation of religious values and as an offense to society’s moral

order. The other group, feminists, condemn pornography for its sexual objectification of women and especially condemns the hard-core pornography that glorifies horrible sexual violence against women. Many feminists also charge that pornography promotes rape by reinforcing the cultural myths discussed earlier. As one writer put it in a famous phrase some 30 years ago, “Pornography is the theory, and rape the practice” (Morgan, 1980, p. 139). Morgan, R. (1980). Theory and practice: Pornography and rape. In L. Lederer (Ed.), *Take back the night* (pp. 134–140). New York, NY: William Morrow.

This charge raises an important question: to what extent does pornography cause rape or other violence against women? The fairest answer might be that we do not really know. Many studies do conclude that pornography indeed causes rape. For example, male students who watch violent pornography in experiments later exhibit more hostile attitudes toward women than those watching consensual sex or nonsexual interaction. However, it remains unclear whether viewing pornography has a longer-term effect that lasts beyond the laboratory setting, and scholars and other observers continue to disagree over pornography’s effects on the rape rate (Ferguson & Hartley, 2009). Ferguson, C. J., & Hartley, R. D. (2009). The pleasure is momentary...the expense damnable? The influence of pornography on rape and sexual assault. *Aggression & Violent Behavior*, 14(5), 323–329. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2009.04.008 Even if pornography does cause rape, efforts to stop it run smack into the issue of censorship. In a free society, civil liberties advocates say, we must proceed very cautiously. Once we ban some forms of pornography, they ask, where do we stop (Strossen, 2000)? Strossen, N. (2000). *Defending pornography: Free speech, sex, and the fight for women’s rights*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

This issue aside, much of what we call pornography still degrades women by depicting them as objects that exist for men’s sexual pleasure and by portraying them as legitimate targets of men’s sexual violence. These images should be troubling for any society that values gender equality. The extent of pornography in the United States may, for better or worse, reflect our historical commitment to freedom of speech, but it may also reflect our lack of commitment to full equality between women and men. Even if, as we have seen, the survey evidence shows growing disapproval of traditional gender roles, the persistence of pornography shows that our society has a long way to go toward viewing women as equally human as men.

Conclusion

- Rape and sexual assault result from a combination of structural and cultural factors. Up to one-third of U.S. women experience a rape or sexual assault, including attempts, in their lifetime.
- Pornography is another form of violence against women. Important questions remain regarding whether pornography leads to further violence against women and whether freedom of speech standards protect the production and distribution of pornography.

For Your Review

1. What evidence and reasoning indicate that rape and sexual assault are not just the result of psychological problems affecting the men who engage in these crimes?
2. Is pornography protected by freedom of speech? Write an essay in which you answer this question and explain the reasoning behind your answer.

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