

# INTRODUCTION TO GENDER STUDIES



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# Introduction to Women's Studies Projects (Coleman)

Katy Coleman

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## Licensing

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# CHAPTER OVERVIEW

## 1: Introduction

### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

1. Define sociological theory.
2. Differentiate between various theoretical frameworks.
3. Describe the three waves of feminism.

[1.1: What is Sociology?](#)

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## 1.1: What is Sociology?

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Sociology's roots are in Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, from where founding fathers Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Georg Simmel hail. Sociology waxed and waned in popularity outside of the U.S. over its short history. Today, sociology has become a United States-centered scientific discipline with most sociologists living in the U.S.. There is significant sociological work being done in various countries of the world, but most of the 14,000 members of the American Sociological Association (the world's largest professional sociology organization) live in the U.S

Sociology is a relatively new discipline in comparison to chemistry, math, biology, philosophy and other disciplines that trace back thousands of years. Sociology began as an intellectual/philosophical effort by a French man named Auguste Comte who coined the term "Sociology." **Sociology** is the science of society and of human behavior when influenced by society.

**Social integration** is the degree to which people are connected to their social groups. Emile Durkheim suggested that religion was a powerful source of **social solidarity**, or *unity in society*, because it reinforced collective bonds and shared moral values. However, since the power of the collective over the individual could also take secular forms (e.g., the workplace, family, political groups, or schools), he recognized that traditional religious beliefs were not the only source of social stability.

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## 1.2: Sociological Imagination

The sociological imagination by C. Wright Mills provides a framework for understanding our social world that far surpasses any common sense notion we might derive from our limited social experiences. Mills (1916-1962) was a contemporary sociologist who brought tremendous insight into the daily lives of society's members. Mills stated: "Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both."<sup>1</sup>

The sociological imagination allows one to make the connection between personal challenges and larger social issues. Mills identified "troubles" (personal challenges) and "issues" (larger social challenges), also known as biography, and history, respectively. Mills' conceptualization of the sociological imagination allows individuals to see the relationships between events in their personal lives, biography, and events in their society, history. In other words, this mindset provides the ability for individuals to realize the relationship between personal experiences and the larger society.

Mills taught we live much of our lives on the personal level, while much of society happens at the larger social level. Without a knowledge of the larger social and personal levels of social experience, we live in what Mills called a **false social consciousness** which is *an ignorance of social facts and the larger social picture*.

**Personal troubles** are *private problems experienced within the character of the individual and the range of their immediate relation to others*. Mills identified the fact that we function in our personal lives as actors and actresses who make choices about our friends, family, groups, work, school, and other issues within our control. We have a degree of influence in the outcome of matters within the personal level. A college student who parties 4 nights out of 7, who rarely attends class, and who never does his homework has a personal trouble that interferes with his odds of success in college. However, when 50% of all college students in the United States never graduate, we label it as being a larger social issue.

Larger **social issues** are *those that lie beyond one's personal control and the range of one's inner life*. These pertain to society's organizations and processes; further, these are rooted in society rather than in the individual. Nationwide students come to college as freshmen ill-prepared to understand the rigors of college life. They haven't often been challenged enough in high school to make the necessary adjustments required to succeed as college students. Nationwide, the average teenager text messages, surfs the Net, plays video or online games, hangs out at the mall, watches TV and movies, spends hours each day with friends, and works at least part-time. Where and when would he or she get experience focusing attention on college studies and the rigorous self-discipline required to transition into college credits, a quarter or a semester, study, papers, projects, field trips, group work, or test taking?

The real power of the sociological imagination is found in how we learn to distinguish between the personal and social levels in our own lives. Once we do, we can make personal choices that serve us best, given the larger social forces that we face.

<sup>1</sup> Mills, C. W. 1959. The Sociological Imagination page ii; Oxford U. Press.

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## 1.3: Sociological Theory

A **sociological theory** is a set of interrelated concepts used to describe, explain, and predict how society and its parts are related to each other. Let's use eyeglasses as a metaphor to illustrate the usefulness of a theory. Glasses can serve to magnify, enlarge, clarify, or expand our view of the thing we are looking at. You can even have multiple pairs of glasses to help you see near or far or in sunlight or darkness. Unlike eyeglasses, you can't see or touch a theory, but it is a framework to help you "see" the world sociologically. And we can use and change our "theory lenses" depending on what we're trying to clarify, describe, or predict. "Some things need the lens of Conflict Theory, while others need a Structural Functionalist or Symbolic Interactionist lenses. Some social phenomena can be viewed using each of the three frameworks, although each will give you a slightly different view of the topic under investigation."<sup>2</sup>

### Conflict Theory

Conflict theory is a macro-level theory founded by Karl Marx. Marx was a witness to oppression perpetrated by society's elite members against the masses of poor during the industrial revolution. Conflict Theory describes society as being defined by a struggle for dominance among social groups competing for scarce or valuable resources. Valuable resources in contemporary U.S. society include things like jobs, housing, safety, education, and health care. According to Conflict Theory, social actors are in a state of perpetual conflict competing for these valuable resources. Conflict Theory seeks to explain who might be benefitting and who might be exploited in a given social situation. Conflict Theory assumes that those who "have", perpetually try to increase their wealth at the expense and suffering of those who "have-not." It is a power struggle that is most often won by the wealthy elite.

In the context of *gender*, some conflict theorists argue that gender is best understood as men (as a large group) attempting to maintain (masculine) power and privilege to the detriment of women (femininity). How might Conflict Theory help us describe or explain sex inequality? The traditional gendered division of labor and the social inequality it produces contributes to unnecessary social conflict and can be seen in wage disparity, the metaphorical "glass ceiling," and the bread-winner still being traditionally thought of as being male.

### Functionalism

Functionalists focus on questions related to order and stability in society. According to functionalists, society is a system of interrelated, interdependent parts. The **Functionalist Theory** perspective *claims that society is in a state of balance and kept that way through the function of society's component parts*. Society can be studied the same way that the human body can be studied: analyzing what specific systems are working or not working, diagnosing problems, and devising solutions to restore balance. The economy, religious involvement, friendship, schools, health care, peace, war, justice and injustice, population growth or decline, community, sexuality, marriage, and divorce are just a few of the evidences of functional processes in our society. To be clear, the functionalist approach does not condone functions or inequalities; rather the perspective identifies functions of such? For example, crime is considered to be a social problem, right? What are some functions of crime in contemporary society? Well, crime creates jobs. Police officers, detectives, social workers, judges, lawyers, insurance companies, self-defense companies, support groups, prison guards and staff, therapists, and burglar alarm manufacturers have jobs because we have crime. This is not a comprehensive list, of course, but it should serve as an example of the function crime is serving to create or maintain jobs.

Arguing that all parts (even the undesirable parts) contribute in some way the overall stability of the larger system has become the most controversial part of functionalist theory. Herbert Gans argued this point in a functionalist analysis of poverty. He asked, "Why does poverty exist?" in other words, he was attempting to explain the *functions* of poverty. He concluded poverty had at least fifteen functions. A few of those functions included:

1. Occupations (such as social workers or police officers) exist to serve the needs or to monitor the behavior of poor people. Therefore, poverty creates jobs.
2. Affluent people hire poor people for many time-consuming activities such as house cleaning, child care, and yard work and pay them lower wages to give them more time for more "important" things.
3. The poor buy goods others do not want, thereby prolonging their economic usefulness.

Gans concluded that poverty—even though it is perceived as problematic—remains in tact because it contributes to the stability of the overall system.

Functionalists maintain that for much of human history women's reproductive role has dictated that their gender role be a domestic one. Given that women bear and nurse children, it makes sense for them to remain at home to rear them. Then, if women are

already at home taking care of children, they will assume other domestic duties. Functionalist also argue women's work is functional. Women reproduce society: by giving birth, socializing kids to accept traditional gender roles, and by providing others with affection and physical sustenance.

A Structural Functionalist view of gender inequality applies the division of labor to view predefined gender roles as complementary: women take care of the home while men provide for the family. Thus gender, like other social institutions, contributes to the stability of society as a whole. While functionalist theory was the dominant theory used to describe gender roles and gender inequality in the early to mid-1900s, the theory falls short in explaining why or how gender roles and inequality are maintained. With widespread social protest and activism in the 1960s (Civil Rights, campus unrest, women's movements) functionalism was unable to explain or keep up with the progressive, unfolding events.

## Symbolic Interactionism

In contrast to Functionalists (who ask how parts of society contribute to the overall stability of the larger system) and conflict theorists (who ask who is benefitting from a particular social arrangement) symbolic interactionists focus on how people make sense of the world, how people interpret what they and others are doing, and how they influence and are influenced by others. A **symbol** is *any kind of physical phenomenon—such as a word, an object, or a feeling—to which people assign a label, a name, a meaning, or a value*. According to symbolic interactionists, these symbols play a central role in our ability to interact with one another. Think about it: Have you ever tried communicating with someone who does not speak the same language as you? What do we (almost instinctively) do? That's right, we almost always begin relying on non-verbal communication such as hand gestures, body language, etc. It becomes an impromptu game of charades! Consider some other non-verbal ways we communicate: A ring is just a ring, but if one wears a ring on the left "ring finger" we interpret that person is married. And usually we assume that person is married to someone of the opposite sex. That means that ring that was "just a ring" became a symbol of marital status and sexual orientation based on where it is worn. That's a lot of information gathered from one little piece of jewelry.

**Symbolic Interactionism** claims that society is composed of ever-present interactions among individuals who share symbols and their meanings. Symbolic interactionists argue people must share a symbol system if they are to communicate with one another (verbally or non-verbally). Without mutual understanding, interactions would be confusing. This is a very useful theory for understanding other people, improving communication, and in understanding cross-cultural relations. Symbolic interactionist theories of gender focus on gender roles, gender expectations, and gender values. Symbolic interactionist theories of gender inequality focus on how inequality is perpetuated by the transmission of traditional cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity from generation to generation. Learning these definitions influences people's expectations about the statuses that women and men are capable of occupying and the roles they are capable of performing.

## Feminist Theory

Feminist theory acknowledges the significance of both nature and nurture in the attainment of gender. However, because gender socialization begins even before birth (choosing names, buying baby clothes, decorating the nursery) drawing a line between the two can be difficult. While gender is socially constructed and learned and produced through social learning, the fact remains that gender is largely assigned to people based on their biological sex category and often justified using biological components like hormones.

**Feminist theory** is a theoretical perspective that is couched primarily in Conflict Theory assumptions, but has added the dimension of sex or gender to the study of society. Feminist theorists are interested in the inequalities in opportunities between men and women. To be clear, males are not always the beneficiaries of gender inequality. For example, think for a moment about how females might benefit from current gender roles in the form of gender expression, itself. Women are socially permitted to wear just about anything with very little to no social repercussions. Tube tops, crop tops, spaghetti tops, tank tops, t-shirts (form-fitting or loose), sweaters, sweatshirts, v-necks, scoop necks, turtle necks, booty shorts, low-rise shorts, high-waist shorts, short shorts, Bermuda shorts, mid-length shorts, coolotts, skirts (short, midi, long), gowns, dresses (form-fitting, smock, shift), high-heels, sandals, sneakers, slip-ons, wedges, knee-high boots, booties, whatever we want! And let's not get started on the possibilities for self-expression through make-up, hair, or nails. Now, think for a moment what males are expected to wear to represent their masculinity in society. Masculinity has become a much more confining, restricting gender representation than femininity. Not to say the feminine ideal is easier to achieve, but there is much more room for self-expression within the structure of femininity than in the structure of masculinity. Unless a couple of gals want to play a game of shirts v. skins, that would still be a masculine form of expression and gender representation.

Before the feminist perspective and through the mid 1900s, sociology was largely the male study of male society. Most sociological studies had been conducted by men and used male subjects, even though findings were generalized to all people. When women were studied, their behaviors and attitudes were analyzed in terms of a male standard of normalcy.

## Intersectional Theory

Intersectional approaches arose from feminist scholarship, which recognized that there were important differences *among* women and men rather than simply *between* them. One critique intersectional theory offers of others theories is that others typically only explore one variable at a time. Feminist scholars argued that gender, race and class are interconnected as “intersecting oppressions.”<sup>3</sup> Race, class and gender, have been the traditional triumvirate of intersectional studies, but we took a broad approach and also included studies that examine the intersections of any social statuses including sexuality, religion, ethnicity, and age. Intersectionality is practiced in a variety of ways by sociologists, but Patricia Hill Collins is largely considered the foremost theorist of intersectionality within sociology.

Collins’ intersectional work begins with her own experiences as an African American female. Collins argues Black Feminism creates and validates knowledge in ways that are very different from the American educational system, which has been historically dominated by elite White men. Because Black women were long denied access to formal academic pursuits, their collective knowledge is less likely to be found in scholarly texts. Collins encourages us to find this knowledge elsewhere: poetry, music, oral histories, etc. Collins states, and this may be obvious for some readers, that in order to *produce* Black feminist theory, one would have to be a Black feminist. But she also stresses that does not mean that those of us who are not Black feminists cannot learn from these ideas. While the study of Black feminist thought puts Black women at the center of analysis of study, intersectionality is a broader and more general theoretical approach that can be used to examine any group or community by placing them at the center of study.

<sup>2</sup> Hammond, R. and Cheney, P, et all. Introduction to Sociology. 2012. *Social Theories*. Page 1.

<sup>3</sup>

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## 1.4: Waves of Feminism

The *first wave of feminism* took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, emerging out of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. While the major goal of this movement was to win women the right to vote, these women (and men) were addressing numerous dimensions of gender inequality, it just became popularized when these activists fought the right to vote. By gaining political power with the right to vote, the leaders of this movement realized they could then gain political momentum concerning issues such as sexual, reproductive, and economic matters. Women had been systematically excluded from history-making because men had the power to define what history was and what (and whom) was important. While often taken for granted, this first wave is largely credited for fueling the feminist fire.<sup>4</sup> The first wave of feminism is credited with the development of the **feminist consciousness**: a recognition by women that they were treated unequally as a group and that their subordination is socially created and maintained by a system that can be replaced through collective action.

In 1920 women won the right to vote. However, once the vote was won, women did not turn out to the polls as often as men, and when they went, they often voted similarly to men (maybe as they had been told to by men). Many women withdrew from the movement, believing that once the vote was won, there was no more work to do. Young women especially neglected to see the necessity of the movement by depicting feminists as lonely, unmarried women who unnecessarily antagonized and provoked men.

Coming off the heels of World War II, the *second wave of feminism* focused on the workplace, sexuality, family, and reproductive rights.<sup>5</sup> Betty Freidan's book The Feminine Mystique is credited with stoking the fire for the second wave. Freidan exposed a voice of unhappiness and boredom of white, educated, middle-class housewives. She even referred to the suburbs as "comfortable concentration camps." She named the depression, loneliness, and empty feeling experienced by so many housewives as "the problem that has no name." Freidan revealed that this was not an individual problem, but rather it was a social problem. Freidan and 27 others founded the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. It has since become the largest feminist grassroots organization in the U.S., with hundreds of chapters in all 50 states and hundreds of thousands of contributing members and supporters, focusing on a broad range of women's rights issues, including economic justice, pay equity, racial discrimination, women's health and body image, women with disabilities, reproductive rights and justice, family law, marriage and family formation rights of same-sex couples, representation of women in the media, and global feminist issues.

The second wave began in the 1960s and continued into the 90s. Prior to the spark of the second wave of feminism, it was largely perceived that women had met their equality goals. This wave unfolded in the context of the anti-war and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups. Much of the movement was focused on passing the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing social equality regardless of sex. While the first wave of feminism was largely driven by middle class, Western, cisgender, white women, the second wave of feminism drew in women of color and developing nations, seeking solidarity, claiming, "Women's struggle is class struggle." However, the feminists group at that time attracted mainly women who felt a personal sting of gender discrimination, including many lesbians. An eventual split between homo- and heterosexual activists resulted after the heterosexual feminists largely felt the lesbian presence would hurt the movement by devaluing or delegitimizing it.

The *third wave of feminism* began in the mid-90's, and in this phase many constructs were destabilized, including the notions of body, gender, sexuality, and heteronormativity.<sup>6</sup> There are three major themes in the third wave of feminism:

1. there is a greater focus on women's issues in less developed nations;
2. criticizing values that dominate work and society, such as challenging competition, toughness, and independence as ideal qualities (traditionally thought of as "male" qualities) and arguing to replace them with cooperation, connection, and interdependence as being ideal qualities; and
3. there has been an emphasis placed on women's sexual pleasure.

There has been debate whether or not we are experiencing a fourth wave of feminism. Some contest the fourth wave can be seen in terms of participants' rising concern with intersectionality, whereby women's suppression can only fully be understood in a context of the marginalization of other groups and genders. In other words, feminism is part of a larger consciousness of oppression along with racism, ageism, classism, ableism, and sexual orientation.

<sup>4</sup> Bailey, C. (1997). Making waves and drawing lines: The politics of defining the vicissitudes of feminism. *Hypatia*, 12(3), 17-28.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Snyder, R. (2008). What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay. *Signs*, 34(1), 175-196. doi:10.1086/588436

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 2: Sex and Gender- What's the Difference?

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

4. Define sex and gender.
5. Differentiate between sex and gender.
6. Explore cultural variations of sex and gender.

[2.1: Let's talk about sex!](#)

[2.2: Gender Views Revisited](#)

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

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## 2.1: Let's talk about sex!

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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*.<sup>9</sup> 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**.<sup>10</sup> **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.<sup>11</sup> **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.<sup>12</sup> **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.<sup>13</sup>

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*.<sup>14</sup> *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.

<sup>7</sup> 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>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

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

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

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> 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>

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

<sup>14</sup> 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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## 2.2: Gender Views Revisited

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In the mid-1900s anthropologist Margaret Mead observed gender in three tribes uninfluenced by Westernized culture and tradition: Arapesh, Mundugamor, and Tchambuli. Her observations of gender behaviors in these tribes created a national discussion which lead many to reconsider the traditional and established sex=gender assumption. In these tribes she found the following:

- Arapesh: both men and women displayed what we typically call the feminine traits of sensitivity, cooperation, and low levels of aggression.
- Mundugamor: both men and women were insensitive, uncooperative, and very aggressive. These were typical masculine traits at the time.
- Tchambuli: women were aggressive, rational, and capable and were also socially dominant. Men were passive, assuming artistic and leisure roles.

In her observations, gender definitions were varied and unique among peoples less influenced by Westernized cultures. She reached the conclusion that tradition (culture) was the stronger social force over biology in determining one's gendered behavioral output, as well as their interpretations and valuing of gender. Mead's work and her public influence helped to establish the belief that biology is only a part of the sex and gender question. Therefore, Mead established that  $\text{sex} \neq \text{gender}$ . She discovered gender and social constructs of gender were really very plastic. Not too shabby for a woman in the mid-1900s who began her research merely trying to explore and question traditional gender roles!

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## 2.3: 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

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.<sup>17</sup> 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.”<sup>18</sup>

## 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.<sup>19</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup>

## 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*.<sup>21</sup>

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.<sup>22</sup> 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 firsthand 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.

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

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

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

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

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

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

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

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 3: Know your Role! An Exploration into Gender Roles

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

7. Define gender roles.
8. Compare and contrast traditional and contemporary gender roles.
9. Examine some effects of traditional and contemporary gender roles.

[3.1: Gender Socialization](#)

[3.2: Gender Differences and Theories of Development](#)

[3.3: Piaget's and Kohlberg's Cognitive Developmental Theory \(Psychology\)](#)

[3.4: Social Learning Theory \(Sociology\)](#)

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

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## 3.1: 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*.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>25</sup> 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.

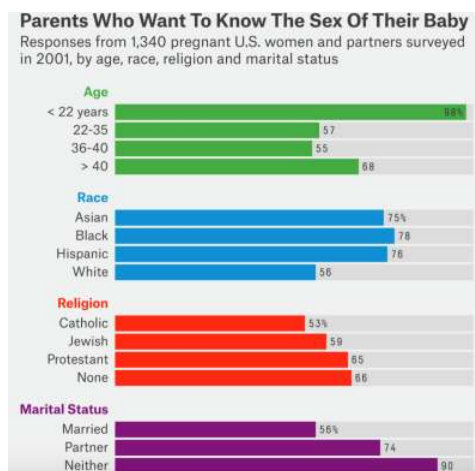


Figure 3.1.1. Bar Graph of “Parents Who Want to Know the Sex of Their Baby”

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.<sup>26</sup> 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**.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup> 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)."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Hammond, Ron, Cheney, Paul. *Introduction to Sociology*.

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

<sup>25</sup> 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

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

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

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

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

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## 3.2: Gender Differences and Theories of Development

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Of the many presumed differences between the behaviors of males and females, some are real, some are found only inconsistently, and some are wholly mythical. Girls are more physically and neurologically advanced at birth. Boys have more mature muscular development but are more vulnerable to disease and hereditary anomalies. Girls excel early in verbal skills, but boys excel in visual-spatial and math skills. Boys' superior mathematic abilities, however, reflect only a better grasp of geometry, which depends on visual-spatial abilities. In the early years, there are no major gender differences in sociability, conformity, achievement, self-esteem, or verbal hostility.

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### 3.3: Piaget's and Kohlberg's Cognitive Developmental Theory (Psychology)

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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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

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

<sup>31</sup> 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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### 3.4: Social Learning Theory (Sociology)

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Social Learning Theory regards gender identity and roles as a set of behaviors that are learned from the environment. Environmental influences include parents, peers, images in the media, toys, books, etc. The main way that gender behaviors are learned is through the process of observational learning wherein children observe the people (or images of people) around them behaving in various ways. During these observations of behaviors, they're internalizing what it means (culturally) to be a female or male in society. They observe these people and mimic their behaviors. As their skills for parroting behavior increase, so does their ability to imitate behavior at times later than when they first observed it. They are also able to observe sanctions assigned to those for acting out unexpected behaviors, and, in an attempt to avoid those same sanctions, will interpret some of those behaviors as being more or less appropriate for females or for males. **Reinforcement** is the process of encouraging or establishing a belief or pattern of behavior, especially by encouragement or reward. **Punishment** is the infliction or imposition of a penalty as retribution for an offense. A behavior followed by a reward will likely reoccur, whereas a behavior followed by a punishment will less likely reoccur. Reinforcement can come in many forms: smiles, verbal praise, gifts, etc. And Punishments also come in many forms, such as displeased looks, frowns, verbal sanctions, etc. Children who *do* gender "appropriately" often receive rewards in the forms of praise and are more likely to act it out again.

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### 3.5: 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.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup>

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.”<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

#### 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?”<sup>36</sup> Children start watching television from a very early age, about 18 months.<sup>37</sup> And television is perhaps the most influential form of media.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> “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.”<sup>42</sup>

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.<sup>43</sup> 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.

<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>36</sup> 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>43</sup> 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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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 4: Gender Inequality

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

1. Define women as a minority.
2. Explore violent traditions disproportionately affecting women globally.
3. Explore forms of oppression affecting women in the United States.

[4.1: Females as a Minority](#)

[4.2: How did females become a Minority](#)

[4.3: Traditional and Contemporary Violence against Women](#)

[4.4: Gender Inequality in the United States](#)

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## 4.1: Females as a Minority

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Gender can be a primary division for different groups around the world. Societies often separate people by sex category and prescribe behaviors for them based on those sex categories; however, those behaviors (considered masculine or feminine) change depending on the culture in which they are practiced. No matter how gendered behaviors are labeled and assigned, the outcome remains the same: Women and men will have different access to power, prestige, and life chances. These divisions typically favor males, as most societies still assign males to be the standard and females to be a deviation from that standard. Consequently, sociologists identify females as being a **minority group**. This might seem odd, since women outnumber men. But a minority group is not determined by numbers of people making up a group. Rather, a minority group is a term referring to a category of people differentiated from the *social majority*; i.e., those who hold the majority of positions of social power in a society. A minority group is a group discriminated against based on characteristics such as sex, race, age, class, religion, sexual orientation, etc., regardless of their numbers. In this chapter, we're going to focus on gender discrimination, and women's struggle against gender discrimination around the world.

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## 4.2: How did females become a Minority

Some studies indicate that in hunting and gathering societies, females and males were seen as equal.<sup>44</sup> In addition, horticultural societies are thought to have had more egalitarian roles in their social structures.<sup>45</sup> In these groups, women may have contributed to as much as 60 percent of the food supply. Yet today, sex and gender have become a basis for discrimination.

So, how did women become a minority? The main theory proposed to explain the origin of patriarchy— male dominated society— centers on human reproduction.<sup>46</sup> In early human history, life was short. Among traditional hunter-gatherers, the average life expectancy at birth varied from 21 to 37 years, but longer than their “cavemen” ancestors who lived to about 25 years of age in the Paleolithic Era. Because life was short, if groups were to survive, women needed to give birth...a lot! An infant needed a nursing mother; without one it would die. This brought about severe social consequences for women. With children to carry, birth, nurse, and care for, women were not able to stay away from camp as long as men. When they did leave camp, they often had to move slower to accommodate the infants and children. When hunting large animals, men were able to leave for longer periods and move faster. Women around the world began taking on roles and tasks associates with the home and childcare.

This led to men being seen as dominant in tribes and groups around the world. While they were hunting and leaving their camps, they were also meeting people from other tribes. They communicated with them, traded with them, and waged war with them. Women’s work began to be devalued, as they were keeping fires going and caring for the home and children. They were not seen as risking their lives for the group. They were not bringing food for the tribe. Rather, they were preparing it. Their work was often dull, routine, and taken for granted. But without their work, their giving and sustaining the lives of the children, the groups would have died out.

These gender roles allowed for men to take control of society. Their sources of power included their items from trade, their triumphs in war, and the knowledge they gained from interacting with other groups. Women become second-class citizens, subject to men’s control and decisions.

<sup>44</sup> Leacock, Eleanor. *Myths of Male Dominance*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1981

<sup>45</sup> Collins, Randall, et all. “Toward an integrated Theory of Gender Stratification.” *Sociological Perspectives*, 36, 3, 1993:185-216.

<sup>46</sup> Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. New York: Oxford. 1986.

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## 4.3: Traditional and Contemporary Violence against Women

### Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the traditional cutting, circumcision, and removal of most or all external genitalia from women with the end result of closing off some or part of the vagina until such time as the woman is married and cut open. Female genital mutilation is often performed in order to preserve the purity of females before marriage—a cultural ideal in some societies. In some traditions, there are religious underpinnings. In others, there are customs and rituals that have been passed down. In no way does the main body of any world religion condone or mandate this practice. Many countries where this takes place are predominantly Muslim; yet local traditions have corrupted the purer form of the religion and its beliefs. Female genital mutilation predates Islam.<sup>47</sup>

There are no medical or therapeutic benefits from female genital mutilation. Quite the contrary, there are many adverse medical consequences that result from it, ranging from pain, difficulty in childbirth, illness, and even death. Many human rights groups, the United Nations, scientists, advocates, the United States, the World Health Organization, and others have made aggressive efforts to effect the cessation of this practice worldwide, but progress has come very slowly. Part of the problem is that women often perform the ritual and carry on the tradition as it was perpetrated upon them.

### Foot Binding

A small foot in China, no different from a tiny waist in Victorian England, once represented the height of female refinement. For families with marriageable daughters, foot size translated into its own form of currency and a means of achieving upward mobility. Tiny feet were a symbol of wealth, as women whose feet were bound were unable to work in the fields or on their feet for a long period of time. This economic symbol eventually translated into a sexually desirable symbol for possible suitors. The most desirable bride possessed a three-inch foot, known as a “golden lotus.” It was respectable to have four-inch feet—a silver lotus—but feet five inches or longer were seen as too large and named “iron lotuses.” The marriage prospects for a girl with feet five inches or larger were slim.

Do you have an iPhone? If so, hold it up. Your iPhone (doesn’t matter the model) is close to five inches long. So feet the size of your iPhone were seen as unattractive, minimizing a women’s opportunity for marriage to someone with high social worth. In fact, women with feet one inch shorter than that iPhone were still not allotted the same worth as women whose feet were two inches shorter than that phone.

#### How does foot binding work?

*First, beginning at the age of two or three, her feet were plunged into hot water and her toenails clipped short. Then the feet were massaged and oiled before all the toes, except the big toe, were broken and bound flat against the sole, making a triangle shape. Next, her arch was strained as the foot was bent double. Finally, the feet were bound in place using a silk strip measuring ten feet long and two inches wide. These wrappings were briefly removed every two days to prevent blood and pus from infecting the foot. Sometimes “excess” flesh was cut away or encouraged to rot. The girls were forced to walk long distances in order to hasten the breaking of their arches. Over time the wrappings became tighter and the shoes smaller as the heel and sole were crushed together. After two years the process was complete, creating a deep cleft that could hold a coin in place. Once a foot had been crushed and bound, the shape could not be reversed without a woman undergoing the same pain all over again.*<sup>48</sup>

The truth, no matter how unbelievable, is foot-binding was experienced and enforced by women. Though the practice is rejected in China today—the last shoe factory making lotus shoes did not close until 1999—it survived for a thousand years in part because of women’s social investment in the practice.

### Child Marriage

Child marriage, defined as a formal marriage or informal union before age 18, is a reality for both boys and girls, although girls are disproportionately affected. Today, about a third of women aged 20–24 years old in the developing world are married as children. Children who are married before the age of 18 are more at risk for domestic violence, rape from their husbands, and even murder. Some 10 million girls a year are married off before the age of 18 across the world, according to a UNICEF report released this year. While the majority of child marriages in any singular region are performed in Sub-Saharan Africa, India is responsible for a disproportionate amount of these underage unions, as well.

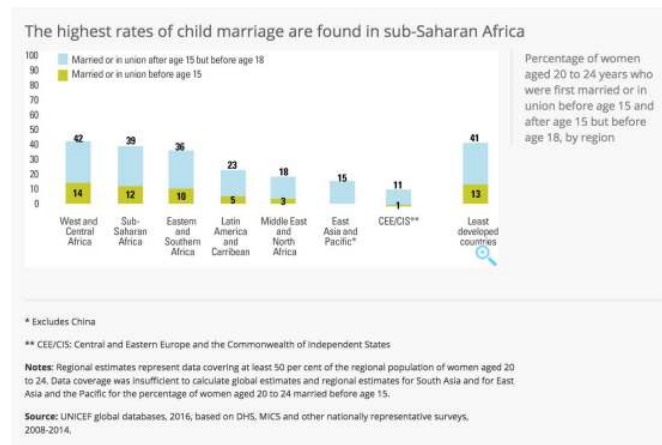


Figure 4.3.1 Chart of “The Highest Rates of Child Marriage are Found in sub-Saharan Africa” graph depicting the highest rates of child marriage are found in sub-Saharan Africa.

Child marriages are illegal in India, and are punishable with a fine and two years in prison for anyone who performs, conducts, or negligently fails to prevent a child marriage. But this tradition is so ingrained in Indian culture that, especially in remote villages, child marriage is usually fully supported by the entire community, and it is rare for someone to inform the police so these marriages can be stopped.

In many communities girls are seen as an economic burden, and marriage transfers the responsibility to a girl’s new husband. Poverty and marriage expenses such as the dowry may lead a family to marry off a daughter at a young age to reduce these expenses.

Patriarchy, class, and caste also influence the norms and expectations around the role of women and girls in India. In many communities restrictive norms limit girls to the roles of daughter, wife, and mother. Girls are seen as the property of their father and then of their husband. Poor educational opportunities for girls, especially in rural areas, also increase girls’ vulnerability to child marriage.

## Rape

Rape is another violent act of oppression disproportionately geared toward women. Rape is not the same as sex. Rape is violence, motivated primarily by men and primarily for power. Rape is dangerous and destructive and more likely to happen in the United States than in most other countries of the world. There are 195 countries in the world today. The U.S. typically is among the top five percent in terms of rape. Consecutive studies performed by the United Nations Surveys on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems confirm that South Africa is the most dangerous, crime-ridden nation on the planet in all crimes including rape.<sup>49</sup>

The United Nations reported, according to World Bank data, women aged 15 to 44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, motor accidents, war, or malaria.<sup>50</sup>

A 1997 study on the non-institutionalized, non-military population by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, which defines rape as forced penetration by the offender,<sup>51</sup> found that 91% of reported rape victims are female and 9% are male.<sup>52</sup>

The majority of rapes in the United States go unreported.<sup>53</sup> According to the American Medical Association (1995), sexual violence, and rape in particular, is considered the most under-reported violent crime.<sup>54</sup> Some of the most common reasons given by victims for not reporting rape are fear of retaliation, shame, and blaming themselves for the occurrence of the act itself. Under-reporting affects the accuracy of this data.

## Other Forms of Oppressions

### Veiling

The mandatory covering of females’ bodies from head to toe has been opposed by some and applauded by others. Christians, Hindus, and many other religious groups have the practice of covering or veiling in their histories. Yet, over the last 30 years, fundamentalist Muslim nations and cultures have returned to their much more traditional way of life. Hijab is the Arabic word that means to cover or veil and has become more common in recent years (hijāb or حجاب). Often Hijab means modest and private in

the day-to-day interpretations of the practice. For some countries it is a personal choice, while for others it becomes a crime not to comply. The former Taliban punished such a crime with death (they also punished formal schooling of females and the use of makeup by death). Many women's rights groups have brought public attention to this trend, not so much because the mandated covering of females is that oppressive, but because the veiling and covering is symbolic of the religious, traditional, and labor-forced patterns of oppression that have caused so many problems for women and continue to do so today.

### Misogynistic Language

The public demeaning of women has been acceptable throughout various cultures because publicly demeaning members of society who are privately devalued and or considered flawed, fits the reality of most day-to-day interactions. **Misogyny** is the hatred of women often manifested as physical or verbal abuse and oppressive mistreatment of women. Verbal misogyny is unacceptable in public in most Western Nations today. With the ever-present technology found in cell phones, video cameras, and security devices, a person's private and public misogynistic language can be easily recorded and shared. Can you think of any examples of public figures privately demeaning women, only to be shared in a public forum later?

Perhaps this fear of being found out as a woman-hater is not the ideal motivation for creating cultural values of respect and even admiration of women and men. As was mentioned above, most of the world historical leaders assumed that women were not as valuable as men. Women were treated as the totality of their reproductive role, as breeders of the species, rather than the valued human beings they are throughout the world today.

<sup>47</sup> See Obermeyer, C.M. March 1999, Female Genital Surgeries: The Known and the Unknowable. Medical Anthropology Quarterly 13, pages 79-106; retrieved 5 December from <http://www.anthrosource.net/doi/abs/...q.1999.13.1.79>

<sup>48</sup> Read more: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/histor...na-millennium->

<sup>49</sup> See <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-a...me-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html>

<sup>50</sup> Retrieved 5 December, 2008 from <http://www.un.org/women/endviolence/docs/VAW.pdf>, Unite To End Violence Against Women, Feb. 2008

<sup>51</sup> Retrieved 2016-11-19 from [http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=317#terms\\_def](http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=317#terms_def)

<sup>52</sup> Retrieved 2016-11-19 from <http://www.bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov>. Pages 5 and 8.

<sup>53</sup> "Reporting of Sexual Violence Incidents". National Institute of Justice. Retrieved June 7, 2016.

<sup>54</sup> American Medical Association (1995) Sexual Assault in America. AMA.

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## 4.4: Gender Inequality in the United States

### Wage Disparity

Wage disparities between males and females are often justified as labor-based economic supply and demand. Statistics show past and current discrepancies in lower pay for women. Diane White, during a 1997 presentation to the United Nations General Assembly, stated that, “Today the wage disparity gap cost American women \$250,000 over the course of their lives.”<sup>55</sup>



Figure 4.4.1 Graph of "The Gender Pay Gap: Annual Earnings"

Nationally, the median annual pay for a woman who holds a full-time, year-round job is \$40,742 while the median annual pay for a man who holds a full-time, year-round job is \$51,212. This means that, overall, women in the United States are paid 80 cents for every dollar paid to men, amounting to an annual gender wage gap of \$10,470.<sup>56</sup>

The wage gap can be even larger for women of color. For example, among women who hold full-time, year-round jobs in the United States, African American women are typically paid 63 cents and Latinas are paid just 54 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men.<sup>57</sup> Asian women are paid 85 cents for every dollar paid to white, non-Hispanic men, although some ethnic subgroups of Asian women fare much worse.

Why the lower wages for women? The traditional definition of the reproductive roles of women as being “broken, diseased, or flawed” is part of the answer of wage disparity. The idea that reproductive roles interfere with the continuity of the workplace play heavily into wage disparity. The argument can be made that (outdated) traditional and economic factors have led to the existing patterns of paying women less for work requiring their same education, experience, and efforts compared to men.

Wage disparity will be discussed further in the *Women and Work* chapter.

### Politics

Women have had to fight for equal treatment in American politics, from fighting for the right to vote to fighting for a seat at the political table. Women are still fighting to break the highest political glass ceiling of all—the presidency. While the United States has legislation mandating gender equality, gender discrimination occurs regularly in politics. It wasn't until 1981 that the first female Supreme Court Justice (Sandra Day O'Connor) was appointed. She was later joined by Ruth Bader Ginsburg and has been succeeded by Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. Currently, three of the nine sitting justices are women. In 1996, President Bill Clinton appointed Madeline Albright to be the first female Secretary of State, a post later given to Condoleezza Rice by President George W. Bush in 2005, and later held by Hillary Clinton under President Obama.

Women in politics took center stage in the 2008 election. In the primary season, New York Senator Hillary Clinton ran against future President Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination. Although Clinton was the twenty-fifth woman to run for U.S. President, she was the first female candidate to have a significant chance of winning the nomination of a major party and the general election. Comments about Clinton's body, cleavage, choice of pantsuit, and speculation about cosmetic surgery popped up over airwaves. Many wondered if the same fixation on a candidate's body and style would happen to a male candidate. Clinton would later become the first woman to win the nomination of a major party in 2016. Good news for women, right? Well, it wasn't until 2016, and only one woman has accomplished this feat, making Hillary Clinton an exception rather than indicative of the bigger gender picture in American politics.

Despite the increasing presence of women in American politics, gender stereotypes still exist. Data from the 2006 American National Election Studies Pilot Study confirmed that both male and female voters, regardless of their political persuasions, expected men to perform better as politicians than women.

Out of the 100 senate seat positions, women occupy only 20. Making only 20% of the senate female. Women occupy only 104 of the 535 Congress seats. And women hold only 24% of statewide executive positions.

## Education

In the United States most females and males complete some form of formal education. After high school, many go to college. Even though the U.S. population of 18 to 24-year-old males is higher than that of women, women are more likely to attend college based on percentages (57%).<sup>58</sup>

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in fall 2016, some 20.5 million students are expected to attend American colleges and universities, constituting an increase of about 5.2 million since fall 2000.<sup>59</sup> Females are expected to account for the majority of college students. About 11.7 million females will attend in Fall, 2016, compared with 8.8 million males. Also, more students are expected to attend full-time than part-time (an estimated 12.7 million, compared with about 7.9 million).<sup>60</sup>

About 7.2 million students will attend two-year institutions, and 13.3 million will attend four-year institutions in Fall, 2016. Some 17.5 million students are expected to enroll in undergraduate programs, and about 3.0 million will enroll in post-baccalaureate programs.

However, even while making the gains women have by entering college at higher rates than men, they have not achieved equality in the classroom. Today's college classrooms still contain subtle, and not so subtle, gender biases. A large body of research shows that instructors.

1. Call on male students more frequently than female students;
2. are more likely to use male students' names when calling upon students and in attributing ideas advanced in discussion;
3. ask male students more abstract questions and female students more factual questions; and
4. are less likely to elaborate upon points made by female students.<sup>61</sup>

There is, however, a notable gender segregation in degree choice, correlated with lower incomes for graduates with "feminine" degrees, such as education or nursing, and higher incomes for those with "masculine" degrees, such as engineering.<sup>62</sup> The STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—have traditionally had more males than females. For example, men dominate the tech industry, and for women, the numbers aren't growing. A 2011 report by the U.S. Department of Commerce found only one in seven engineers is female. Additionally, women have seen no employment growth in STEM jobs since 2000. The problem starts as early as grade school. Young girls are rarely encouraged to pursue math and science, which is problematic considering studies show a lack of belief in intellectual growth can actually inhibit it. In addition, there exists an unconscious bias that science and math are typically "male" fields, while humanities and arts are primarily "female" fields. These stereotypes further inhibit girls' likelihood of cultivating an interest in math and science.

## Transphobia

Between 0.3% and 0.5% of Americans— nearly 1 million people — identify as transgender, according to a recent report, *Understanding Issues Facing Transgender Americans*, written by the Movement Advancement Project (MAP), the Transgender Law Center (TLC), NCTE and GLAAD (formerly the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation). Another widely cited study, from the Williams Institute of the University of California, Los Angeles, estimated the number at about 700,000 Americans.

Transgender women of color are the most common targets of transphobic hate crimes. During the first two months of 2015, a transgender woman of color was murdered almost once a week, according to the Southern Policy Law Center.<sup>63</sup> One man charged with attempted murder of a trans woman said the woman and her friend were deceiving him by dressing as women, even though they weren't even talking to him. Perhaps this reflects one reason trans women tend to be targeted: In addition to hating trans people in general, some men behave as if women are property. Transphobia and misogyny are a deadly combination.

## Violence

On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men. Overall data suggests 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been victims of (some form of) physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime. Further, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men have been victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. 1 in 7 women and 1 in 18 men have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime to the point in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed.



Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime. Physical, mental, and sexual and reproductive health effects have been linked with intimate partner violence including adolescent pregnancy, unintended pregnancy in general, miscarriage, stillbirth, intrauterine hemorrhage, nutritional deficiency, abdominal pain and other gastrointestinal problems, neurological disorders, chronic pain, disability, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, cancer and cardiovascular diseases. Victims of domestic violence are also at higher risk for developing addictions to alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.<sup>64</sup>

## Rape and Sexual Assault

The United States Justice Bureau defines rape as “forced sexual intercourse including both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means penetration by the offender(s). Includes attempted rapes, male as well as female victims, and both heterosexual and same sex rape. Attempted rape includes verbal threats of rape.”<sup>65</sup> One in five women and one in 71 men in the United States has been raped in their lifetime. Almost half of female (46.7%) and male (44.9%) victims of rape in the United States were raped by an acquaintance. Of these, 45.4% of female rape victims and 29% of male rape victims were raped by an intimate partner. From 1995 to 2010, the estimated annual rate of female rape or sexual assault victimizations declined 58%, from five victimizations per 1,000 females age 12 or older to 2.1 per 1,000. In 2005-10, females who were age 34 or younger, who lived in lower income households, and who lived in rural areas experienced some of the highest rates of sexual violence. In 2005-10, 78% of sexual violence involved an offender who was a family member, intimate partner, friend, or acquaintance.

The United States Justice Bureau defines sexual assault as a “wide range of victimizations, separate from rape or attempted rape. These crimes include attacks or attempted attacks generally involving unwanted sexual contact between victim and offender. Sexual assaults may or may not involve force and include such things as grabbing or fondling. It also includes verbal threats.”<sup>66</sup> One in 5 women and one in 16 men are sexually assaulted while in college. While rape remains the most under-reported crime; 63% of sexual assaults are not reported to police. 46.4% lesbians, 74.9% bisexual women and 43.3% heterosexual women reported sexual violence other than rape during their lifetimes, while 40.2% gay men, 47.4% bisexual men and 20.8% heterosexual men reported sexual violence other than rape during their lifetimes.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Retrieved 5 December from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/s...ne%20White.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic (ASEC) Supplement: Table PINC- 05: Work Experience in 2015 –People 15 Years Old and Over by Total Money Earnings in 2015, Age, Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Disability Status. Retrieved 12 October 2016, from <http://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/cps-pinc/pinc-05.html> (Unpublished calculation based on the median annual pay for all women and men who worked full time, year-round in 2015)

<sup>57</sup> Ibid

<sup>58</sup> USA Today 19 October, 2005, College Gender Gap Widens: 57% are Women, retrieved 8 December 2008 from [http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/college-cover\\_xhtm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/college-cover_xhtm)

<sup>59</sup> [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15\\_105.20.asp?current=yes](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d15/tables/dt15_105.20.asp?current=yes)

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Gender Issues in the College Classroom. Graduate School of Arts & Sciences Teaching Center. Columbia University. New York.

<sup>62</sup> Jacobs, Jerry A. (1996). "Gender inequality and higher education". *Annual Review of Sociology*. 22: 153–185

<sup>63</sup> Retrieved on 18 November, 2016 from <https://medium.com/hatewatch-blog/in-the-crosshairs-3700fbf2203d#v67ddiplq>

<sup>64</sup> World Health Organization. 2013. Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/1...5\\_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/1...5_eng.pdf?ua=1).

<sup>65</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. Rape and Sexual Assaults. <http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=317>

<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Walters, M.L., Chen J., & Breiding, M.J. (2013). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation. Retrieved from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control: [http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS\\_SOFindings.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_SOFindings.pdf)

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 5: Gender, Language, and Media

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

1. Define linguistic sexism.
2. Describe examples of linguistic sexism.
3. Examine some effects of gender-stereotyping in media.

[5.1: Gender Socialization](#)

[5.2: What the English Language is Made Of](#)

[5.3: Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis](#)

[5.4: Media](#)

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## 5.1: Gender Socialization

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In previous chapters, we've explored the differences between sex and gender as well as the importance of socialization in our prescribed gender roles. In this chapter, we'll be exploring how language and the media often reinforce or exacerbate the gap in the United States. For example, one could ask, "What are gender differences?" But consider for a moment the question, "What differences does gender make?" While the questions might seem very similar to one another, the first question is evoking a description of the concept of *gender*, while the second question is evoking an exploratory descriptive of inequality resulting from gender construction.

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## 5.2: 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.<sup>68</sup> 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.”<sup>69</sup> 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
<b>The generic 'he'</b>	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.
<b>Man as a verb</b>	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.
<b>Man used to mean humankind</b>	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.
<b>Gendered words in titles and work positions</b>	Chairman Freshman Fireman Policeman Postman	Assumes male dominance in these fields.	Chair or Chairperson First Year Firefighter Police officer Postal worker
<b>Stereotyping</b>	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.
<b>Referring to a married woman through her husband's name.</b>	Mrs. John Smith	Defines a woman in terms of a man.	Jane Smith or with the appropriate honorific (such as doctor or captian)

<sup>68</sup> 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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### 5.3: 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*.<sup>70</sup> 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.)

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

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## 5.4: 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.”<sup>71</sup> 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!)<sup>72</sup>. 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 white<sup>73</sup>. 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.<sup>74</sup>

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).<sup>75</sup> 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.

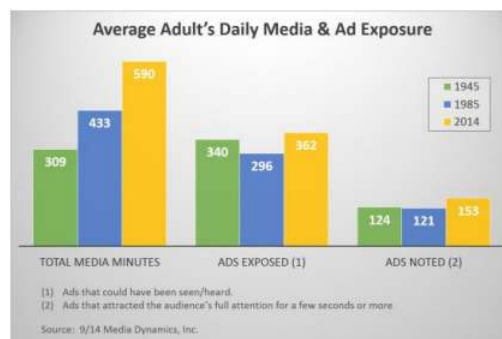




Figure 5.4.1 Bar Graph of "Average Adult's Daily Media & Ad Exposure"<sup>76</sup>

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-vie 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"<sup>77</sup>). 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.<sup>78</sup>

## Plastic Surgery Timelines

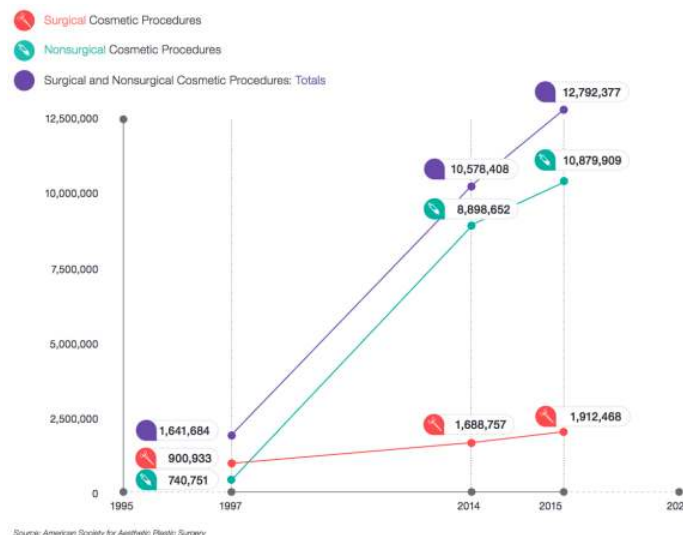


Figure 5.4.2 Numbers in Millions of Plastic Surgery Procedures between 1997-2015.

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.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

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.”<sup>81</sup> 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 fairly 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.

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/1...n\\_2121979.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/1...n_2121979.html)

<sup>72</sup> [www.now.org/issues/media/women\\_in\\_media\\_facts.html](http://www.now.org/issues/media/women_in_media_facts.html)

<sup>73</sup> [www.now.org/issues/media/women\\_in\\_media\\_facts.html](http://www.now.org/issues/media/women_in_media_facts.html)

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

<sup>75</sup> 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>

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

<sup>77</sup> <http://womenlaughinalonewithsalad.tumblr.com/>

<sup>78</sup> 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.

<sup>79</sup> Jennifer Abbasi. 2012. Why 6-Year-Old Girls Want To Be Sexy. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/17/6-year-old-girls-sexy\\_n\\_1679088.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/17/6-year-old-girls-sexy_n_1679088.html). Retrieved 30 November 2016.

<sup>80</sup> American Psychological Association, Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. (2007). Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/program/sexualization-report-full.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> Pryor, Debra; Knupfer, Nancy Nelson, 1997 Gender Stereotypes and Selling Techniques in Television Advertising: Effects on Society.[http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content\\_storage\\_01/0000019b/80/16/c4/8c.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/16/c4/8c.pdf), retrieved 10 November 2016.

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 6: Gender, Emotions, and Relationships

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

1. Describe gender trends as they relate to emotions.
2. Identify trends pertaining to gender and friendships.
3. Identify gender trends in dating.
4. Apply theories to the study of families and intimate relationships.

[6.1: Sex, Gender, and Emotions](#)

[6.2: Sex, Gender, and Friendship](#)

[6.3: Sex, Gender, and Dating](#)

[6.4: Same-sex Dating Trends](#)

[6.5: Cohabitation](#)

[6.6: Sociology of the Family](#)

[6.7: Sex, Gender and Marital Trends](#)

[6.8: Disruption in Marriage](#)

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## 6.1: 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."<sup>82</sup> (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*.<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

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## 6.2: 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.<sup>86</sup> 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 this<sup>87</sup>:

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.<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> Cross-sex friendships are often more emotionally satisfying for men than for women.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> 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

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

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

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

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

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

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## 6.3: 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.<sup>92</sup>

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 having 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.<sup>93</sup>

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!<sup>94</sup> 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!<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> United States Census Bureau. Age and Sex Composition in the United States: 2012

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

<sup>93</sup> Hammon and Cheney. *Intimate Relationship and Family*. "Love and Intimacy." 2012. Creative Commons License.

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

<sup>95</sup> Christian Rudder, *Dataclysm*, 2014

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

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## 6.4: 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.<sup>97</sup> 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.”<sup>98</sup>

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.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> 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

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

<sup>99</sup> 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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## 6.5: Cohabitation

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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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## 6.6: 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).<sup>100</sup>

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.

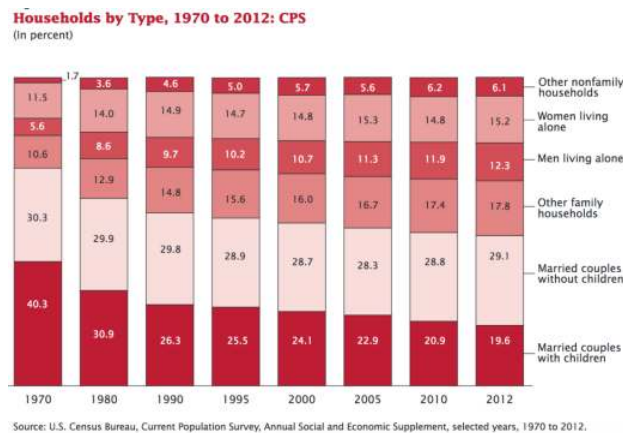


Figure 6.6.1 Households by Type, 1970-2012

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.<sup>101</sup>

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.

<sup>100</sup> Hammond, R & Cheney, P. (2011). Introduction to Sociology.

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

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## 6.7: 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."<sup>102</sup>

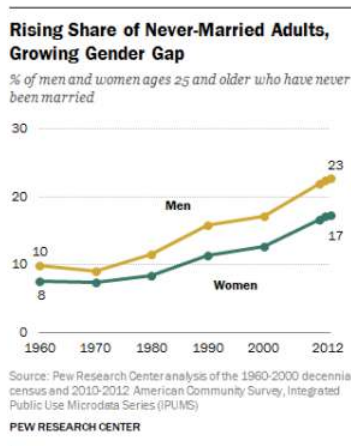


Figure 6.7.1 Rising Share of never-married adults, growing gender gap.

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.<sup>103</sup> 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.<sup>104</sup> 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."<sup>105</sup> 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

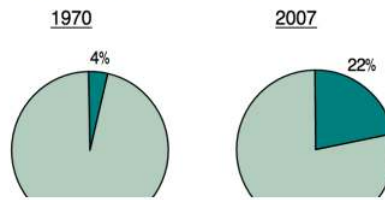


Figure 6.7.2 The Rise of Wives, 1970 to 2007

<sup>102</sup> Pew Research Report. 2014. Record Share of Americans Have Never Married.

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

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

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

<sup>105</sup> 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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## 6.8: 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.”<sup>106</sup>

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.<sup>107</sup> 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.”<sup>108</sup>

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.<sup>109</sup> 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.<sup>110</sup>

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.<sup>111</sup>

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.<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup>

106 The Huffington Post. “The 10 Most Common Reasons People Get Divorced.” [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/yourta...b\\_8086312.html](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](http://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

<sup>111</sup> Sherman, Jennifer. 2009. "Bend to Avoid Breaking: Job Loss, Gender Norms, and Family Stability in rural America."

*Social Problems* 56 (November): 599-620.

<sup>112</sup> 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>

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 7: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

10. Define the double standard.
11. Describe the double bind.
12. Describe the binary model for sexuality and its shortcomings.

[7.1: The Social Construction of Sexuality](#)

[7.2: Binaries? More Like BYE-naries](#)

[7.3: LGBTQ+ Identities](#)

[7.4: Problems with Heterosexual Focus](#)

[7.5: Gender and Sexuality](#)

[7.6: Reproductive Freedom](#)

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## 7.1: 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,<sup>114</sup> 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.”<sup>115</sup>

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.<sup>116</sup>

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.<sup>117</sup> 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.

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

<sup>115</sup> Ibid

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

<sup>117</sup> 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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## 7.2: 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.<sup>118</sup> 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.<sup>119</sup> So the binary exploration of sexuality doesn't make sense socially, biologically, or politically.

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

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

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## 7.3: 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.<sup>120</sup>

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.<sup>121</sup> 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.

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

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

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## 7.4: 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.<sup>122</sup>

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."<sup>123</sup>

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.

<sup>122</sup> 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>

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

## 7.5: 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."<sup>124</sup>

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!*<sup>125</sup> and *Fast Girls*<sup>126</sup>. 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."<sup>127</sup> 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.<sup>128 129</sup> 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."<sup>130</sup> 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.<sup>131</sup>

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 prevention<sup>132</sup> 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.

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

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

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

<sup>127</sup> Kilbourne, J. 2012. *Killing Us Softly* 4.

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

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

<sup>130</sup> 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.

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

<sup>132</sup> 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.

## 7.6: 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."<sup>212</sup> 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.<sup>213</sup>

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.<sup>214</sup> 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."<sup>215</sup> 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:<sup>216</sup>

- 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.<sup>217</sup> 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.<sup>218</sup>

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.<sup>219</sup> 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.<sup>220</sup> 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.<sup>221</sup> 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."<sup>222</sup> 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."<sup>223</sup>

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

<sup>213</sup> 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](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinion...9-431_5i36.pdf)

<sup>214</sup> 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>

<sup>215</sup> "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/>

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

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

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

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

<sup>220</sup> 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>

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

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

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

## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 8: Gender and Education

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Define gender roles.
- Compare and contrast traditional and contemporary gender roles.
- Examine some effects of traditional and contemporary gender roles.

Decades of sociological research has been dedicated to educational attainment and differences in educational attainment. With the believed correlation between educational attainment and occupational attainment (and with it, so many other opportunities for social mobility), connections between other statuses that produce differential social capital, like sex and race, and education have inspired sociological research. The spread of mass education in the 19th and 20th centuries offered opportunities for social mobility that were previously unavailable to many groups. However, especially in its earliest years, the spread of mass education also presented the spread of unequal access to adequate education. Historically and today, race, class, and gender remain influential factors on access to education and educational attainment.

[8.1: A Very Brief History of Education in the United States](#)

[8.2: Contemporary Education](#)

[8.3: Positive Progress](#)

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## 8.1: 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.<sup>224</sup> 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."<sup>225</sup> 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.<sup>226</sup>



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.<sup>227</sup>

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.

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.

The government funded schools available to White children had to 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 woman 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 (18902-1930s) 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.<sup>228</sup> 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.<sup>229</sup>

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.<sup>230</sup>

Although full equity in education has still yet to be achieved, technical equality in education had been achieved by the early 1970s.

<sup>224</sup> U.S. Department of Education. The Federal Role in Education. Revised 6/2021. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/f...hool%20systems>.

<sup>225</sup> Churchill, W. (2004). Kill the Indian, save the man: The genocidal impact of American Indian residential schools. San Francisco: City Lights.

<sup>226</sup> Photo by John N. Choate is in the public domain

<sup>227</sup> Photo by John N. Choate is in the public domain

<sup>228</sup> US Census Bureau. (2017). High School Completion Rate Is Highest in U.S. History. Revised October 2021. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/pres...ics%20division>.

<sup>229</sup> 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>.

<sup>230</sup> 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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## 8.2: 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.<sup>231 232</sup> 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.<sup>233</sup>

#### 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.<sup>234</sup> 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.<sup>235</sup> 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.<sup>236</sup> 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.<sup>237</sup> 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.<sup>238</sup>

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.”<sup>239</sup> 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.<sup>240</sup>

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.<sup>241</sup> 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%.<sup>242</sup> 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.

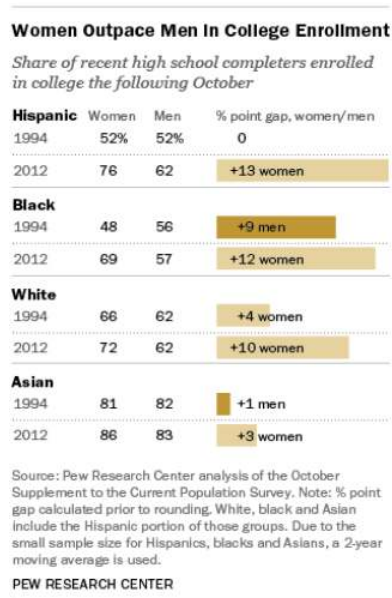


Figure 8.2.2: Diagram of "Women Outpace Men in College Enrollment"<sup>243</sup>

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:<sup>244</sup>

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.

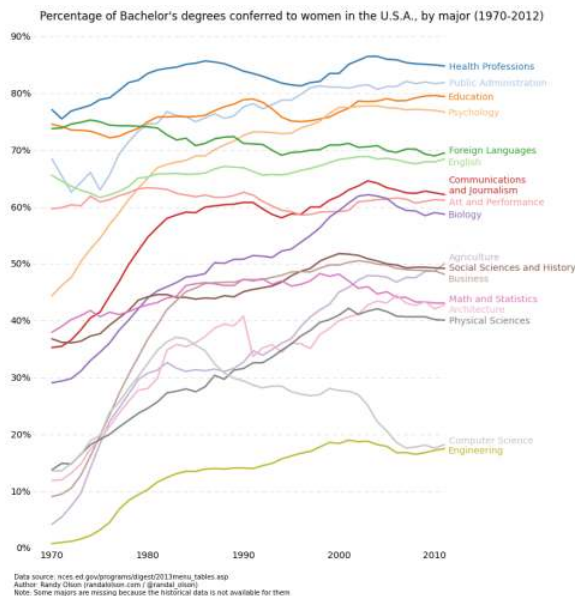


Figure 8.2.3: Graph of Percentage of Bachelor's degrees conferred to women in the U.S.A., by major (1970-2012)"<sup>245</sup>

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,<sup>246</sup> and women were more likely to be found in lower- ranking academic positions.<sup>247</sup>

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."<sup>248</sup>

In 2018-19, women made up just 43% full-time professor positions,<sup>249</sup> but also held 55.7% of all instructor positions, among the lowest ranking positions in academia.<sup>250</sup>

In addition, raising a family more negatively impacts women's academic career than men's.<sup>251</sup> Among tenured faculty, only 44% of women were married with children, compared to 70% of men.<sup>252</sup>

Further, an analysis of 106 tenure-track positions at the University of Southern California revealed a promotion gap.<sup>253</sup> 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.<sup>254</sup>

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.<sup>255</sup>

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%.<sup>256</sup> 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.<sup>257</sup> During the academic year 2013-2014, 42% of new deans were women.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>231</sup> Golombok, S. & Fivush, R. (1994). *Gender development*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>232</sup> Delamont, S. (1996). *Women's place in education*. Brookfield, MA: Avebury Publishers

<sup>233</sup> Golombok, S. & Fivush, R. (1994). *Gender development*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>234</sup> US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor. 2019. "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey." <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>.

<sup>235</sup> Taie, S., and Goldring, R. (2020). Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2017–18 National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look (NCES 2020- 142rev). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [date] from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsin...bid=2020142rev>.

<sup>236</sup> Thomas, A. (2019). The Sexualized Messages Dress Codes are Sending to Students. *The Pudding*.

<sup>237</sup> Pearson, Jennifer. "Gender, Education and." *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*. Ritzer, George (ed). Blackwell Publishing, 2007. Blackwell Reference Online. 31 March 200

<sup>238</sup> Kahle, J. B., Parker, L. H., Rennie, L. J., & Riley, D. (1993). Gender differences in science education: Building a model. *Educational Psychologist*, 28(4), 379–404.

<sup>239</sup> Kimmel, Michael. "Solving the 'Boy Crisis' in Schools." *Huffington Post*, 30 April 2013. [www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-kimmel/solving-the-boy-crisis-in\\_b\\_3126379.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michael-kimmel/solving-the-boy-crisis-in_b_3126379.html)

<sup>240</sup> Wong, A. (2015). Where Girls Are Missing Out on High-School Sports. *The Atlantic*. June 26. <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/396782/>

<sup>241</sup> YouTube. (2014). John Olive explains how boys raise money. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YPdxnHitAcA>

<sup>242</sup> Lopez, M and Gonzalez-Barrera, A. (2014). Women's college enrollment gains leave men behind. PEW Research Report. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tan...ins-leave-men-behind/>

<sup>243</sup> Lopez, Mark Hugo and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera. (2014). Women's college enrollment gains leave men behind. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tan...t-gains-leave-men-behind/>

<sup>244</sup> 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/>

<sup>245</sup> Graph by Randy Olson is in the public domain

<sup>246</sup> 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](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/...t19_315.20.asp)

<sup>247</sup> Ibid

<sup>248</sup> Society for Women in Engineering. "Tenure/Tenure-Track Faculty Levels." <https://research.swe.org/2016/08/ten...aculty-levels/>.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid

<sup>250</sup> 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](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/...t19_315.20.asp)

<sup>251</sup> Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2012). *Academic Motherhood: How Faculty Manage Work and Family*. Rutgers University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5hjfs>

<sup>252</sup> Ibid

<sup>253</sup> Jane Junn, "Analysis of Data on Tenure at USC Dornsife" (October 19, 2012).

<sup>254</sup> Ibid

<sup>255</sup> 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](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/...t19_315.20.asp)

<sup>256</sup> Bryan J. Cook, "The American College President Study: Key Findings and Takeaways," *American Council on Education*, Spring Supplement 2012.

<sup>257</sup> Audrey Williams June, "Despite Progress, Only 1 in 4 College Presidents Are Women," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 16, 2015.

<sup>258</sup> "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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## 8.3: 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.<sup>259</sup>

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.<sup>260</sup>

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)."<sup>261</sup>

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.<sup>262</sup>

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'.<sup>263</sup> "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."<sup>264</sup> 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."<sup>265</sup>

- <sup>259</sup> U.S. Department of Education. 2022 Agency Equity Plan related to Executive Order 13985. <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/equity...quity-plan.pdf>
- <sup>260</sup> McCombs, E. (2017). Sexist School Dress Codes Are A Problem, And Oregon May Have The Answer. *Huffington post*. Sep 6, 2017
- <sup>261</sup> McCombs, E. (2017). Sexist School Dress Codes Are A Problem, And Oregon May Have The Answer. *Huffington post*. Sep 6, 2017
- <sup>262</sup> UNESCO and UN Women (2016). Global guidance on addressing school-related gender-based violence (PDF). [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/4822...0000246651\\_eng](https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/4822...0000246651_eng)
- <sup>263</sup> Victor Lavy & Edith Sand, 2018. "On the origins of gender gaps in human capital: Short- and long-term consequences of teachers' biases," *Journal of Public Economics*, vol 167, pages 263-279.
- <sup>264</sup> Chemaly, S. (2015). All Teachers Should Be Trained To Overcome Their Hidden Biases. *Time Magazine*.
- <sup>265</sup> Sadker, D., Sadker, M. (1994) *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*. Toronto, ON: Simon & Schuster Inc.

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 9: Gender and Work

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Define "productive" and "unproductive" work.
- Identify discriminatory practices specific to gender often face in the workforce.
- Define sexual harassment
- Describe inequalities between people in the workforce.

[9.1: Segregation in the Workplace](#)

[9.2: Work](#)

[9.3: Gender, Work and Wages in the U.S.](#)

[9.4: Structural Forces](#)

[9.5: Discrimination in the Workforce](#)

[9.6: U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau](#)

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## 9.1: Segregation in the Workplace

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**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).<sup>266</sup>

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 at 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.<sup>267</sup>

Women in professional jobs tend to dominate occupations like teaching (76%),<sup>268</sup> social work (83%),<sup>269</sup> and nursing (89%).<sup>270</sup> 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.”<sup>271</sup>

<sup>266</sup> 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>

<sup>267</sup> Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. (2007). *Doméstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*. University of California Press. Pg 11-12.

<sup>268</sup> 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>.

<sup>269</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey. <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

<sup>270</sup> Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Cheridan Christnacht, “Your Health Care is in Women’s Hands,” *US Census Bureau*, August 14, 2019.

<sup>271</sup> 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.<sup>272</sup> 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%.<sup>273</sup>

In 2021 the 20 occupations with the highest median weekly earnings among women who were full-time wage and salary workers were:<sup>274</sup>

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.

<sup>272</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2021). Employment characteristics of families. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/famee.pdf>

<sup>273</sup> Ibid

<sup>274</sup> 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.<sup>275</sup>

### 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."<sup>276</sup>

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."<sup>277</sup>

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.<sup>278</sup>

### 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.<sup>279</sup> 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.<sup>280</sup> 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."<sup>281</sup> 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.<sup>282</sup> Mothers of every race are typically paid less than white, non-Hispanic fathers.<sup>283</sup>

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.<sup>284</sup>

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.<sup>285</sup> 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.<sup>286</sup> 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.<sup>287</sup>

<sup>285</sup> Coontz, Stephanie. "Why Gender Equality Stalled." New York Times, 16 February 2013.

<sup>286</sup> Payscale. 2022 State of the Gender Pay Gap Report. <https://www.payscale.com/research-an...ender-pay-gap/>

<sup>287</sup> Ibid

<sup>288</sup> 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>

<sup>289</sup> 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>

<sup>280</sup> 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>

<sup>281</sup> 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].

<sup>282</sup> NWLC. (2020). Motherhood Wage gap for mothers overall. <https://nwlc.org/resources/motherhood-wage-gap-for-mothers-overall/>.

<sup>283</sup> 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/>.

<sup>284</sup> Shelley J. Correll, Stephan Benard, & In Paik. (2007). Getting a Job: Is There a Motherhood Penalty. *American Journal of Sociology*.

<sup>285</sup> 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/>

<sup>286</sup> 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>.

<sup>287</sup> 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.<sup>288</sup>

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.<sup>289</sup>

### LGBTQ+ Employees, Workplace Discrimination and Harassment

8.1 million LGBTQ+ workers (16 and over) live in the U.S.<sup>290</sup> 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.<sup>291</sup> 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%).<sup>292</sup>

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.<sup>293</sup>

### Age Discrimination

61% of U.S. workers at or over the age of 45 reported witnessing or experiencing ageism in the workplace.<sup>294</sup> 72% of women say they have experienced age discrimination in the workplace, compared to 57% of men.<sup>295</sup> 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.<sup>296</sup>

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%.<sup>297</sup> 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.<sup>298</sup> 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).<sup>299</sup>

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.

<sup>288</sup> United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. <https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>

<sup>289</sup> McLaughlin, H., Uggen, C., & Blackstone, A. (2017). The Economic and Career Effects of Sexual Harassment on Working Women. *Gender & Society*, 31(3), 333–358.

<sup>290</sup> Kerith J. Conron & Shoshana K. Goldberg, Williams Inst. (2020). LGBT People in the US Not Protected by State Non-Discrimination Statutes.

<sup>291</sup> Sears, B., Mallory, C., Flores, A. R., & Conron, K. J. (2021). LGBT People's Experiences of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment. *UCLA: The Williams Institute*.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid

<sup>293</sup> Baboolall, D., Sarah Greenberg, Maurice Obeid, and Jill Zucker. (2021). Being Transgender at Work. McKinsey Quarterly, McKinsey & Company.

<sup>294</sup> Rebecca Perron, The Value of Experience: Age Discrimination Against Older Workers Persist (AARP, 2018).

<sup>295</sup> (2017). 10 Things You Should Know About Age Discrimination. AARP. <https://www.aarp.org/work/age-discrimination/facts-in-the-workplace/>

<sup>296</sup> Sophie Beaton, Gendered Ageism in the Canadian Workforce (Samuel Center for Social Connectedness, 2019).

<sup>297</sup> 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.”

<sup>298</sup> Noah Higgins-Dunn, “Older Workers Are America’s Fastest-growing Labor Pool—And the Least Protected from Workplace Discrimination,” *CNBC*, April 13, 2019

<sup>299</sup> 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

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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.<sup>300</sup>

<sup>300</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. Updated 2016. [https://www.dol.gov/wb/overview\\_14.htm](https://www.dol.gov/wb/overview_14.htm). Retrieved 10 October 2016.

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## CHAPTER OVERVIEW

### 10: Gender, Deviance, Crime, and Punishment

#### Learning Objectives

At the end of this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Define deviance and crime.
- Describe various theories pertaining to criminal behavior
- Describe how crime and punishment are gendered.

[10.1: Deviance and Crime](#)

[10.2: Biological Theories of Criminality](#)

[10.3: Sociological Theories of Criminality](#)

[10.4: Sex, Gender, and Crime](#)

[10.5: United States Prison Population](#)

[10.6: Gendered Prison Experience](#)

[10.7: Suggestions for Positive Social Change](#)

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## 10.1: Deviance and Crime

In sum, **deviance** is a violation of a norm. Any unexpected behavior or behavior that violates social norms can be seen as deviant. A social actor exercising deviant behaviors runs the risk of being labeled a deviant. But what is the difference in conformity, deviance, and crime? Is all crime *deviant*? Is all deviance *criminal*? In Table 10.1.1, Robert K. Merton's matrix combining group norms and legal code behaviors illustrates how deviant and criminal behaviors differ.

Table 10.1.1: Robert Merton's Deviant and Criminal Behaviors<sup>301</sup>

	Actor complies with legal code	Actor violates legal code
Actor complies with group norms	Conforming behaviors	Criminal behaviors
Actor violates group norms	Deviant behaviors	Deviant and criminal behaviors

When an actor complies with group norms and the law it's called *conformity*, or an adherence to the normative and legal standards of a group in society. An example might be the clothes you wore to class today, assuming you wore clothes to class and they are normative. When an actor violates group norms but complies with the law, it is *deviance*. An example might be if you wore your Halloween costume to class in July. If an actor complies with group norms yet breaks violates legal code, it's called *criminal*. Crime is behavior which violates laws and to which governments can apply negative sanctions. An example of this might be when one drives 10 miles over the speed limit on the freeway. In this case, while speeding is against the law, if everybody is speeding and you do too, it could be seen as normative crime (although you may still receive a negative formal sanction in the form of a speeding ticket). Over-reporting deductions and under-reporting income on your income tax return can be seen as a normative crime (but, again, negative formal sanctions may still be applied in the form of an audit or paying penalties, etc.). When an actor violates group norms and legal codes, these are *deviant* and *criminal behaviors*.

<sup>301</sup> Merton, Robert K. 1938. "Social Structure and Anomie." *American Sociological Review* 3:672–82.

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## 10.2: Biological Theories of Criminality

Biological theories of crime, which date back to the 19th century, argue that whether or not people commit crimes depends on their biological nature. In other words, some individuals would be predisposed to crime because of genetic, hormonal or neurological factors which are inherited (present at birth) or acquired (through accident or illness). Most criminal biologists have abandoned the idea that delinquency can be explained only by biological deviations in the "offender", preferring approaches that combine biology and sociology.

### Lombroso's Atavism

In the 1800s, an Italian criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, published *L'Uomo delinquente* ("Criminal Man"). In it, he described criminals as atavistic beings, or people who were less developed as humans. While examining the skulls of criminals, he noticed a series of features that were common. For example, Lombroso found similarities in the sizes and shapes of jaws, ears, and chins. Lombroso referred to criminally-labeled people as "evolutionary throwbacks" whose behaviors were more "ape-like" than human and this imputed inferiority of the criminal permits treating them without moral or ethical considerations.<sup>302</sup> Lombroso's criminal anthropology presumed you could identify a member of the criminal race by certain visual signs or stigmas (like the visual physical characteristics listed above).

However, the studies carried out by Lombroso lacked the scientific rigor expected today, and, more importantly, some of the features described by Lombroso are linked to skin color and other traits often associated with the concept of race. Lombroso's theories provided a significant ideological basis for systemic and institutionalized racism. In sum, Lombroso's biological theory of criminality was full of biased ideology and has since been largely dismissed by most of the scientific community and is often referred to as "scientific racism".<sup>303</sup> In fact, "throughout his writings are clear and appalling passages with overt racist and sexist overtones that are consistent with a eugenics perspective of the human population."<sup>304</sup> However, even while much of the scientific world has discounted Lombroso's findings, his findings have had lasting impacts on social views and consequences of crime and "the criminal."

### XXY "Supermale" Syndrome

Another biological theory attempting to explain sex and gender differentials in criminal behavior was known as the XYY Syndrome theory. XYY syndrome is a genetic condition in which a human male has an extra male (Y) chromosome, giving a total of 47 chromosomes instead of the more usual 46. This produces a 47,XYY karyotype, which occurs every 1 in 1,000 male births. The presence of the extra Y chromosome in XYY males does not in and of itself produce aggressive behavior in those affected; dealing with aspects of the condition during adolescence is a more likely explanation for any delinquency or criminal behavior exercised by XYY males.

As early as 1974, prominent geneticists Jon Beckwith and Jonathan King called the notion of a dangerous XYY "Supermale" Syndrome a dangerous myth. This idea was primarily based on assumptions about the tendency of males to be more aggressive than females and early studies of XYY males in prisons.<sup>305</sup> However, while males with an extra Y chromosome are still widely believed to show more signs of aggression, not all aggression is dangerous or violent. Meaning, aggression can be demonstrated on the soccer field or in the classroom or boardroom. Thus the theory of the extra Y chromosome creating a predisposition for violent or criminal behavior has fallen short.

<sup>302</sup> Lombroso, Cesare. 2006a. "Criminal man: Edition 1." In *Criminal man*. Edited and translated by Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter, 39–96. Durham, NC: Duke Univ. Press.

<sup>303</sup> Regoli, R. M., Hewitt, J. D., & Delisi, M. (2010). *Delinquency in society* (8th ed.), Boston: Jones and Bartlett.

<sup>304</sup> DeLisi, Matt (2013). Cesare Lombroso. obo in *Criminology*. doi: 10.1093/obo/9780195396607-0165

<sup>305</sup> Gotz, M. J., et al. "Criminality and Antisocial Behavior in Unselected Men with Sex Chromosome Abnormalities." *Psychological Medicine* 29 (July 1999): 953-62.

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## 10.3: Sociological Theories of Criminality

### Cultural Deviance Theory

In the early 20th century Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay investigated the migration of southern African Americans and eastern European Americans to Chicago and other cities. Most of these immigrants were poorly educated and many did not speak English. Then cities expanded to accommodate this influx of people and many of the more affluent citizens moved out to the suburbs. The poor citizens were left in the run-down cities. Shaw and McKay thought *that social conditions in neighborhoods caused delinquency* (**Cultural Deviance Theory**). They found that in Chicago crime was at its worst in the center of the city and the area immediately surrounding it. It decreased as they looked further away from the city center. Thirty years later, the same findings occurred even though most of the residents from 30 years ago had moved, but the poverty remained.

Based on their findings, Shaw and McKay made four assumptions:

1. Run down areas create social disorganization. The diversity of cultures and languages fosters frictions based on these differences;
2. Social disorganization fosters cultural conflict. Rapid social change creates normative ambiguity (anomie);
3. Cultural conflict allows delinquency to flourish; children observe both conventional and criminal values. Criminals who are successful pass their knowledge on to their children, who then pass it along to others;
4. Allowed to flourish, delinquency becomes a career.

When social disorganization manifests, communities deteriorate, and residents become frightened to leave their homes in fear of potential victimization. This trepidation advances the cycle of crime as the “eyes on the street” (Jacobs 1961:44), so central to the informal social control present in urban areas, disappear and residents become afraid to involve themselves in their communities for fear of victimization.<sup>306</sup>

### Differential Association Theory

Differential Association Theory looks at the process of learning deviance from others with whom they have close relationships, who provide role models of and opportunities for deviance.

Edwin Sutherland conducted his work during the 1930s to the 1970s. His assumptions are:

1. Delinquent behavior is learned, and biology has no role in this behavior
2. Delinquent behavior is learned through verbal and non-verbal communication (watching your dad steal a TV, your peers congratulating you on stealing a bicycle)
3. Children learn these behaviors in small groups (primary social groups)
4. Learning involves techniques to commit crime, as well as attitudes about crime
5. Learning also involves attitudes about the targets of crime
6. If definitions that favor criminal behavior outnumber definitions that favor conforming to laws, children will learn to be deviant
7. The frequency, duration, and intensity of the learning experiences determines the learning. Children who are exposed frequently, at a young age, and by someone they respect, are more likely to learn delinquent behavior
8. Learning criminal behavior occurs in the same way as learning other behaviors
9. The goals of criminals and non-criminals are the same; the means to achieving those goals are what is different.<sup>307</sup>

### Feminist Theory

**Feminist theories** maintain that gender is a central organizing component of social life, including criminal offending, victimization, and criminal justice processing. This theoretical framework holds that because of patriarchal sexism women and girls have been systematically excluded or marginalized in criminology, both as professionals and as subjects of study.

Feminist theories, though, do not treat women or men as homogenous groups but rather recognize that gender privilege varies across different groups of women and men. Therefore, a fundamental principle of feminist theory is to examine criminal offending, victimization, and criminal justice processing in the context of multiple intersecting social factors, including gender, race, and ethnicity, social class, age, ability, and sexual orientation.

**Liberal feminists** contend that women are discriminated against on the basis of their sex, so that they are denied access to the same political, financial, career and personal opportunities as men. This can be eliminated by removing all obstacles to women’s access to education, paid employment and political activity, by enabling women to participate equally with men in the public sphere and



by enacting legal change. There is a strong relationship between women's emancipation and the increase in female crime rates. As women become more liberated and gain more experiences outside of the home, they have more opportunities to engage in criminal behaviors. See? Give us the chance and we'll always catch up!

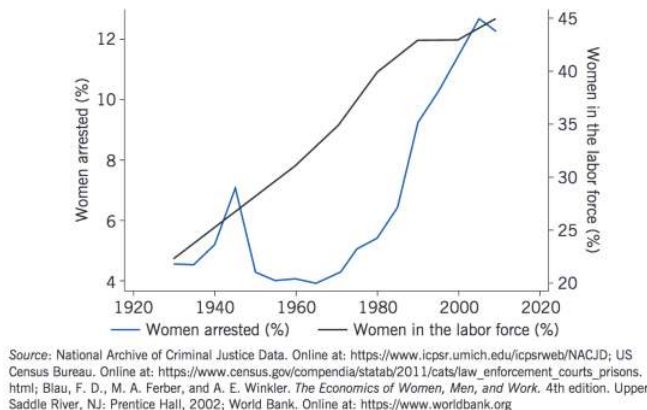


Figure 10.3.1: Graph of Women Arrested vs. Women in the labor force.<sup>308</sup>

Marxist theory argues that a society's economic structure is the primary determinant of other social relations, such as gender. Marxist feminism emerged in the late 1960's in response to the masculine bias in the Marxist social theory. Marxist feminism aligns with liberal feminism in that women are prevented from full participation in all aspects of society with men remaining dominant. The gender division of labor is viewed as the product of the class division of labor. Because women are seen as being primarily dominated by capital and secondarily by men, the main strategy for change is the transformation from a capitalist to a democratic socialist society.

Radical feminism has dominated feminist perspectives on gender violence and abuse. Radical feminist theory describes male power and privilege as the root cause of all social relations, inequality and crime. The main causes of gender inequality are

1. the needs of men to control women's sexuality and reproductive potential; and
2. patriarchy.

This theoretical lens often focuses on female victims/survivors of male violence. Radical feminist theory contends that the motive for men to physically, sexually, and/or psychologically victimize women is mainly due to their need or desire to control them.

**Socialist feminism** views class and gender relations as equally important. To understand class, we must recognize how it is structured by gender, conversely to understand gender requires an examination of how it is structured by class. In sum, socialist feminists argue that we are influenced by both gender and class relations. Crime is mainly seen as the product of patriarchal capitalism.

## Sex Role Theory

Sex role theory (this is an early sociological theory which attempts to explain gender differences in crime – it's not a feminist theory) argues that because boys and girls are socialized differently boys are more likely to become criminal than girls. Sociologist Edwin Sutherland identifies how girls are socialized in a manner, which is far more supervisory and controlled; this limits the number of opportunities to be deviant. In contrast boys are socialized to be rougher, tougher and aggressive which makes deviance more likely. And if deviance is permitted to flourish, criminal behavior will be a likely result.<sup>309</sup>

Sociologist Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales argued that because females carry out the "expressive role" in the family which involved them caring for their children and looking after the emotional needs of their husbands, that girls grew up to internalize such values as caring and empathy, both of which reduce the likelihood of someone committing crime simply because a caring and empathetic attitude towards others means you are less likely to harm others.<sup>310</sup>

<sup>306</sup> Wonser, R. and Boyns, D. (2016). The Caped Crusader What Batman Films Tell Us about Crime and Deviance. *Cinematic Sociology: Social Life in Film*, 214-27

<sup>307</sup> Sutherland, E. H., Cressey, D. R., & Luckenbill, D. F. (1992). *Principles of criminology*. Philadelphia: Lippincott

<sup>308</sup> Graph by the US Census Bureau is in the public domain

<sup>309</sup> Sutherland, E. H., & Cressey, D. R. (1960). *Principles of criminology*. Chicago: Lippincott.

<sup>310</sup> Bales, R.F., & Parsons, T. (1956). *Family: Socialization and Interaction Process* (1st ed.). *Routledge*.

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## 10.4: Sex, Gender, and Crime

Female criminal behavior has been commonly perceived as a less serious problem than male criminal behavior. This is largely due to crime itself being characterized as a “masculine behavior,” making it more likely to be acted out by a male. Historically, women have been more likely to commit minor offenses while men are more likely to commit serious or violent offenses. Although women remain a relatively small number of the United States inmate population, they have become the fastest growing population in our jails and prisons. Since 1990 the number of female defendants convicted of felonies in State courts has grown at more than two times the rate of increase in male defendants. While men still commit more felonies and violent crimes than women, women’s rates are rising faster than men’s. The number of incarcerated women was nearly five times higher in 2020 than in 1980.<sup>311</sup>

There is a sex gap in types of crimes committed. The percentage of women in prison for drug and property crimes is considerably higher than for men in prison. However, it is important to mention that these figures demonstrate incarceration rates for offenses rather than arrest rates for the same offenses. For all persons arrested for property crime in 2019, 62.3 were men.<sup>312</sup> So while more men committed (or were arrested for) property offenses more often than women, the percentage of women incarcerated for this offense outweighs the percentage of men incarcerated for the offense.

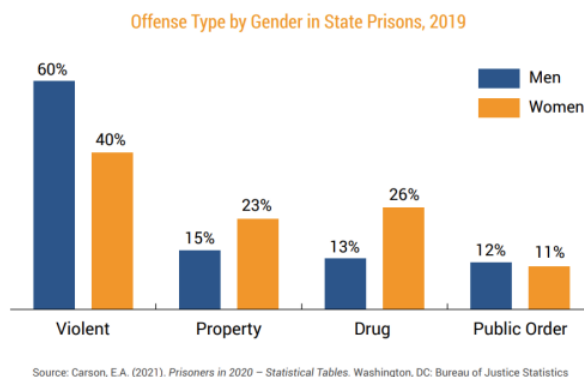


Figure 10.4.1: Graph of Offense Type by Gender in State Prisons, 2019<sup>313</sup>

Women primarily commit petty property crimes, such as shoplifting, fraudulent checks, and welfare fraud. The sex gap in these types of offenses are often explained through the increasing feminization of poverty. The feminization of poverty refers to the sex gap in living standards due to the gender gap in poverty.<sup>314</sup> Women and children are disproportionately represented within the lower socioeconomic status community in comparison to men.<sup>315</sup> It's interesting to point out here that women's crime trends tend to follow the traditional feminine roles in society as shoppers, consumers, and health care providers within the family. So, what does this mean? Are women just naturally more prone to steal? Do their biological make-up, evolutionary process, and hormone levels preprogram them for theft? No. Remember from previous chapters:

- Femininity, like masculinity, is socially constructed and not simply ‘natural.’
- Femininity is a product of socialization, not estrogen.
- Femininity, like masculinity, is a series of learned behaviors.
  - There are systemic factors contributing to the sex gap in larceny offenses, such as the feminization of poverty, wage gap, gender imbalance in parental duties affecting schooling and jobs, etc.

Women are consistently less likely commit violent offenses. In 2019, about 17% people arrests for a violent offense was a woman. In addition, women accounted for 12% of arrests in murder in anon-negligent manslaughter, 3.4% in arrests for rape, 16% in arrests for robbery, 23.5% for arrests in aggravated assault, 21% in arrests for violent arson, and 29% in arrests for "other assaults".<sup>316</sup> Here we can see the disproportionate amount of men committing violent crimes in each of the typologies. So, what does this mean? Are men just naturally more violent? Do their biological make-up, evolutionary process, and hormone levels preprogram them for violence? No. Remember from previous chapters:

- Masculinity, like femininity, is socially constructed and not simply ‘natural.’
- Masculinity is a product of socialization, not testosterone.

- Masculinity, like femininity, is a series of learned behaviors.
  - There are systemic factors contributing to the sex gap in violent offenses such as Western masculine ideals requiring boys and men to confront violence and be skilled in the use of violence in those confrontations.
  - Most boys and men who are not accomplished fighters are often viewed as being more vulnerable by those who are.
  - Masculinity is a performance. One aspect of the performance of masculinity is being tough and/or violent (or at least willing to be).<sup>317</sup>

More than half of female violent offenders were white, and just over a third were black. About 1 in 10 were described as belonging to another race (Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, American Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo). Black and white offenders accounted for nearly equal proportions of women committing robbery and aggravated assault; however, simple assault offenders were more likely to be white.

<sup>311</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2021). Prisoners Series (1980-2020). Washington, DC.

<sup>312</sup> FBI: UCR. 2019 Crime in the United States. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s...rsons-arrested>

<sup>313</sup> [Graph](#) by E. Ann Carson, BJS, is in the public domain

<sup>314</sup> Schaffner Goldberg, G. (2009). *'Feminization of Poverty in The United States: Any Surprises?'*, *Poor Women in Rich Countries: The Feminization of Poverty Over the Life Course* (New York; online edn, Oxford Academic).

<sup>315</sup> Christensen, M., et. al. (2019). "Feminization of Poverty: Causes and Implications", *Gender Equality, Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–10.

<sup>316</sup> FBI: UCR. (2019). Table 42: Arrests by Sex, 2019. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s...e-in-the-u.s.-2019/topic-pages/tables/table-42>

<sup>317</sup> Earp, J., Katz, J., Young, J. T., Jhally, S., Rabinovitz, D., & Media Education Foundation. (2013). *Tough guise 2: Violence, manhood & American culture*.

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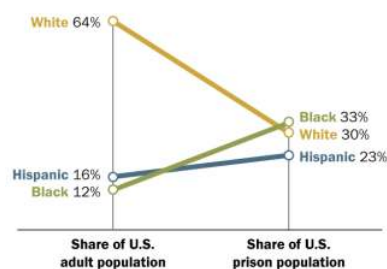
## 10.5: United States Prison Population

The United States is home to about five percent of the world's total population and twenty-five percent of the world's prison population.<sup>318</sup> An increasing use of prisons to control crime and a vast rate of prison growth has occurred in the past thirty years. During this time, the U.S. population rose 40 percent while the U.S. prison population rose 400 percent. This issue is urgent to study since more than two million people are currently incarcerated in over 5,000 facilities in the U.S.; these facilities include prisons, jails, youth centers, and immigrant detention centers.

- 99% of prisoners are poor (financial ghosts)
- Between 72 and 75% of prisoners did not complete high school
- 2/3 of people in prison are people of color
- Close to 80% of people in prison are convicted of nonviolent crimes
- 51.8% of prisoners are incarcerated for nonviolent drug offenses
- Men make up about 95% of the overall prisoner population
- Women represent the fastest growth rate in prison
- 40% of women in prison earn less than \$600/month prior to incarceration

### Blacks, Hispanics make up larger shares of prisoners than of U.S. population

*U.S. adult population and U.S. prison population by race and Hispanic origin, 2017*



Note: Whites and blacks include those who report being only one race and are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Prison population is defined as inmates sentenced to more than a year in federal or state prison.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

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Figure 10.5.1: Graph of US and Prison Populations by race, 2017<sup>319</sup>

The number of incarcerated women increased from 26,326 to 152,854 from 1980 to 2020, according to the Justice Department. That is an increase of 475% percent, compared with a 140 percent rise in the male prison population.<sup>320</sup> What on Earth could have happened in only 40 years that we'd see 475 percent increase in women in prison? Maybe more women started committing more crimes? Not enough to explain a 475 percent increase. Maybe the divorce rate increase caused more women to commit crimes? Nope. Maybe a bunch more women went out while they were PMSing and had finally had enough and started committing crimes in unprecedented numbers? No way (and the PMS defense doesn't make sense, so don't use it). The main contributing factor to the increase in female inmates is the war on drugs. Even the second wave of feminism (which fizzled out in the early 70s) couldn't explain that kind of inmate increase. Drug laws in the 80s (which were simultaneously passed when the market became saturated with crack cocaine) made it easier for masses to be incarcerated for non-violent drug offenses. The proportion of imprisoned women convicted of a drug offense, alone, has increased from 12% in 1986 to 26% in 2019.<sup>321</sup>

## Inmate Gender

Statistics based on prior month's data — Last Updated: Saturday, 13 August 2022

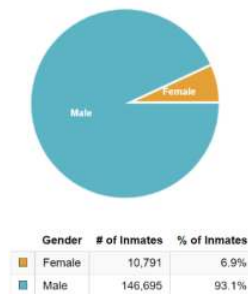


Figure 10.5.2 Pie Chart of numbers and percentages of inmates by gender<sup>322</sup>

In 2020, the imprisonment rate for Black women (65 per 100,000) was 1.7 times the rate of imprisonment for White women (38 per 100,000), and the rate for Hispanic/Latinx women were imprisoned at 1.3 times the rate of White women (48 vs. 38 per 100,000).

Imprisonment Rates by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity per 100,000: 2000 vs. 2020

		2000	2020	% Change
White	Women	34	38	12% increase
	Men	449	332	26% decrease
Black	Women	205	65	68% decrease
	Men	3,457	1,890	45% decrease
Latinx	Women	60	48	20% decrease
	Men	1,220	837	31% decrease

Source: Prisoners Series. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Figure 10.5.3 Inmates Rates by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity per 100,000: 2000 vs. 2020<sup>323</sup>

And while the growing number of women who work helps to explain why they are committing more forgery and embezzlement, the great majority of women in prison are poor and unemployed and not models of newly empowered, liberated women. While the fact that people released from prison have difficulties finding employment is well-documented, there is much less information on the role that poverty and opportunity play in who ends up behind bars in the first place. However, this table from the United States Justice Bureau shows the inequality between men and women's earnings as well as the lower income incarcerated people were earning prior to their incarceration. Pie Chart of numbers and percentages of inmates by gender.

	Incarcerated people (prior to incarceration)		Non-incarcerated people	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
All	\$19,650	\$13,890	\$41,250	\$23,745
Black	\$17,625	\$12,735	\$31,245	\$24,255
Hispanic	\$19,740	\$11,820	\$30,000	\$15,000
White	\$21,975	\$15,480	\$47,505	\$26,130

Figure 10.5.4 Median annual incomes for incarcerated people prior to incarceration and non-incarcerated people, 2014, by race, ethnicity, and gender<sup>324</sup>

As discussed in previous chapters, there is a wage gap between men and women and between racial and ethnic groups. While the gap in income is most dramatic for White men, as White men already have the highest incomes outside of the incarcerated population. By contrast, the income gap is smallest for Hispanic women, but Hispanic women have the lowest incomes to begin with. Both the cycles of poverty and incarceration are racialized and gendered.

<sup>319</sup> Gramlich, John. (2019). The gap between the number of blacks and whites in prison is shrinking. *Pew Research Center*. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/30/shrinking-gap-between-number-of-blacks-and-whites-in-prison/>

<sup>320</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics: Historical Corrections Statistics in the United States 1850-1984 (1986); Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear Series (1997-2020), Prisoners Series (1980-2020). Washington, DC

<sup>321</sup> Carson, E.A. (2021). Prisoners in 2020 – Statistical Tables. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics

<sup>322</sup> [Graph](#) by the Federal Bureau of Prisons is in the public domain

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## 10.6: Gendered Prison Experience

Prisons are not fun. People do not want to be in prison (despite what some few and far between news stories might claim). The free meals, health care, and rooms are not luxurious; in fact, in most institutions human rights are violated with spoiled food, lack of yard time, deprivation of family visitations or phone calls, lack of safety or privacy, medical experimentation, deprivation of rehabilitative services, and outright abuse and sexual assault.

Sociologist Gresham Sykes (1958) noted that prison inmates suffer through a variety of serious hardships, which he referred to as the “pains of imprisonment.”<sup>325</sup> Pains of imprisonment include loss of freedom and independence, loss of important familial, personal, romantic, and/or sexual relationships, inability to access normal goods or services, and loss of personal security. Collectively, these hardships can lead inmates into depression and may make them more susceptible to what sociologist Erving Goffman called “mortification.”

One example of deprivation of protection within prison can be seen in the habitual occurrence of rape—including prison staff as well as inmates—within the confines of prison. Prison staff includes security staff, teachers and counselors, medical workers, contractors and even religious volunteers. Struckman-Johnson conducted the most comprehensive research to date on prisoner rape.<sup>326</sup> After surveying 1,800 inmates in Midwestern prisons, they found that one in five male prisoners have been coerced or pressured into sex, and one in ten has been raped. In one women's prison, more than a quarter of the inmates said they had been pressured into sex by guards.

Political activist, professor, academic, and author Angela Davis argues that while men constitute the vast majority of prisoners in the world, important aspects of the state punishment system are missed if it is assumed that women are marginal and thus undeserving of attention.<sup>327</sup> Further, according to Davis, because women make up a relatively small proportion of the whole prison population, the inattention given to female prisoners is frequently justified. Due to the late twentieth-century reforms which relied on a “separate but equal” model, demands for more repressive conditions in order to render women’s facilities “equal” to men’s resulted in harsher punishments and disciplinary actions in women’s prisons than were previously implemented. Women of color in particular are subject to regimes of punishment that differ significantly from those experiences by white women, including assigned chores, manual labor, and frequent unnecessary strip searches. “Sexual abuse, especially among women of color, has become an institutionalized component of punishment behind prison walls.”<sup>328</sup>

Conditions of improper touching by persons of authority, sanctioned sexual harassment, and unnecessary strip searches exist in numerous women’s prisons across the country. In addition, psychological coercion and/or threats of sexual assault by persons in authority create a constant, unending and intense pressure on many incarcerated women. Human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, as well as formerly incarcerated, have documented these abuses.<sup>329</sup> As part of a 2004 civil rights case brought against the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) alleging a guard’s rape of a female inmate, two Chicago attorneys sent surveys about sexual assault and harassment to women incarcerated in Illinois.<sup>330</sup> Almost 15% of the survey’s respondents said that IDOC staff had forced sexual activities on them—that is, they were raped or sexually assaulted. Two noted that IDOC staff had sexually assaulted them more than ten times. About 23% of the respondents stated that IDOC staff had offered money, food or privileges in exchange for sexual favors, and almost 10% noted that staff had done this to them on more than three occasions. About one in seven reported that IDOC staff had threatened loss of privileges, physical attack, or placement in isolation if the woman refused sex with the staff.

The violent sexualization of prison life within women’s institutions exposes ideologies of sexuality—and the intersection of race and sexuality—which have had a profound effect on the representations of and treatment received by women of color both within and upon release from prison.<sup>331</sup> Men of color experience a perilous continuity in the way they are treated in prison, where they are more likely to experience harsher forms of punishment such as solitary confinement whereas women of color are more likely than white women to experience sexual abuse within prison.<sup>332</sup>

The state itself is directly implicated in the routinization of sexual abuse in women’s prisons and other forms of physical and mental abuse such as solitary confinement in men’s prisons, both in permitting such conditions that render individuals (especially those of color) vulnerable to explicit abuse carried out by guards and other prison staff and by incorporating into routine policy such practices as the strip search and solitary confinement. Being victimized will likely result in further social-psychological damage for the inhabitants experiencing the institutionalized racism and sexism. This results in their adjustment to society upon release being even further hindered, with one likely consequence being a return to crime and recidivating back into the prison structure.<sup>333 334 335</sup>



While nearly 5,000 transgender people are incarcerated in state prisons, it's estimated only 15 cases (people) in which these prisoners were housed according to their lived gender.<sup>336</sup> Based on the available records (many records remain sealed depending on states' privacy laws) obtained from 45 states, just 13 transgender women are housed with women and two transgender men are housed with men. Thirty-five percent of transgender people who had spent time in prison in the previous year reported being sexually assaulted by staff or other inmates, according to a 2015 report by the Department of Justice.<sup>337</sup> When asked about the experiences surrounding their victimization by other inmates, 72% said they experienced force or threat of force and 29% said they were physically injured.

325 Sykes, G.M. 1958. *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

326 Struckman-Johnson, Cindy. 2006. *National Prison Rape Elimination*. University Press. South Dakota.

327 Davis, Angela Y. 2003. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Page 77. New York: Seven Stories Press.

328 Ibid.

329 Human Rights Watch Report. 2001. "No Escape: Male Rape in U.S. Prisons." Retrieved October 2, 2008 (<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/2001/prison/>)

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## 10.7: Suggestions for Positive Social Change

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Economic, social, and cultural factors likely contribute to this crime gap. Women have been shown to participate less in the crime market than men because they face different benefits and costs from committing crimes. They face different incentives: overall, women are found to be less able to commit crimes than men are and to be more risk-averse.

Policymakers should consider the possibility that positive changes that narrow gender gaps in the labor market and positive changes in social roles might result in less women participating in crime. Policies that help reduce wage disparity across skilled and unskilled female workers, such as incentivizing female education, might deter disadvantaged women from engaging in criminal activities. Eliminating mandatory minimum sentences and/or cutting back on excessively lengthy sentences should be considered at every level in every state for offenses that pose little to no threat to public safety, helping not to over-criminalize certain behaviors. Shifting resources to community-based prevention and treatment for substance abuse would alleviate some of the pressure on overcrowded prisons and lessen the recidivism rate for people living with decency issues. Examining for systemic racism, sexism, and classism influence incarceration rates in the justice system and redesigning approaches with an equity-focus is also imperative in healthier and more sustainable future for social policy and procedure.

In addition, with the (few) reports and data we have on gendered abuse forms people suffer during incarceration, a gender-responsive approach to meet the needs of justice-involved people - wherein "correctional agency programming and staff training should also be 'trauma- informed', doing no harm at a minimum, and recognizing that most of the women in their care are victims as well as 'offenders'"<sup>338</sup> - would improve conditions for those who are incarcerated as well as lessen trauma for people upon release.

Decades of neglect have denied vulnerable communities access to good jobs, reliable transportation, safe housing, accessible healthcare, and adequate schools. All of these things contribute to life chances (and likelihood of incarceration). Closing the wage gap, ending occupational segregation, and centralizing equity in education, gender roles, family, will help us turn a corner in mass incarceration in the U.S.

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