

9

Gender and Sexuality



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 9-1 Differentiate between sex and gender and describe societal reactions to LGBTs.
- 9-2 Explain how gender stratification affects the family, education, workplace, and politics.
- 9-3 Describe contemporary sexual attitudes and practices, including sexual scripts and double standards.
- 9-4 Summarize abortion and same-sex marriage trends and explain why both issues are controversial.
- 9-5 Describe and illustrate gender and sexual inequality across cultures.
- 9-6 Compare and evaluate the theoretical explanations of gender and sexuality.

After finishing
this chapter go to
PAGE 180 for
STUDY TOOLS

Women pay more than men, and sometimes twice as much, for many things, including cars, mortgages, health care, high-end jeans from the same designer, and similar grooming products like moisturizers, deodorants, and even razors (Hill, 2015; Ngabirano, 2017). Why? This chapter examines how gender and sexuality affect our lives. First, however, take the True or False quiz to see how much you know about these topics.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Today, women have more employment advantages than men.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly agree			strongly disagree			

9-1

SEX, GENDER, AND CULTURE

Some differences between women and men are biological; others are social creations. Both biology and social factors shape a person's identity, but sex and gender aren't synonymous.

9-1a How Sex and Gender Differ

Many people use *sex* and *gender* interchangeably, but they're not the same. **Sex** refers to the biological characteristics with which we are born—chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, and other physical and physiological attributes. These attributes influence our behavior (e.g., shaving beards, wearing bras), but *don't determine* how we think or feel. Whether we see ourselves and others as feminine or masculine depends on gender, a more complex concept than sex.

Gender refers to learned attitudes and behaviors that characterize women and men. Gender is based on social and cultural expectations rather than on physical traits. Thus, most people are *born* either male or female, but we *learn* to be women or men because we internalize behavior patterns expected of each sex. In many societies, for example, women are expected to look young, thin, and attractive, and men are expected to amass as much wealth as possible.

True or False?

HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT GENDER AND SEXUALITY?

1. About 10 percent of the U.S. population is gay.
2. On average, Americans have sexual intercourse for the first time at about age 16.
3. Women make up about 20 percent of Congress.
4. Dating is dead on most college campuses.
5. U.S. abortion rates have declined since 1990.
6. Fathers now do almost as much child care and housework as mothers.

The answers to #3 and #5 are true; the others are false. You'll see why as you read this chapter.

9-1b Sex: Our Biological Component

Physical characteristics like breasts and beards indicate whether someone is a male or female, but sex isn't always clear-cut. Our cultural expectations dictate that we are female or male, but a number of people are "living on the boundaries of both sexes" (Lorber and Moore, 2007: 141). For example, **intersexuals** are people whose sex at birth isn't clearly either male or female. About 1 in 2,000 to 4,000 children born each year are classified as intersex because they're born with both male and female external genitals or an incomplete development of internal reproductive organs. Some parents seek surgery; others wait until a

sex the biological characteristics with which we are born.

gender learned attitudes and behaviors that characterize women and men.

intersexuals people whose sex at birth isn't clearly either male or female.

child is old enough to decide what to do (Bendavid, 2013).

SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Our **sexual identity** is an awareness of ourselves as male or female and how we express our sexual values, attitudes, and feelings. Our sexual identity incorporates a **sexual orientation**—a preference for sexual partners of the same sex, of the opposite sex, of both sexes, or neither sex:

- ▶ **Homosexuals** (from the Greek root *homo*, meaning “same”) are sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Male homosexuals prefer to be called *gay*, female homosexuals are called *lesbians*, and both gay men and lesbians are often referred to, collectively, as *gays*. *Coming out* is a person’s public announcement of a gay or lesbian sexual orientation.
- ▶ **Heterosexuals**, often called *straight*, are attracted to people of the opposite sex.
- ▶ **Bisexuals**, sometimes called *bis*, are attracted to more than one gender.
- ▶ **Asexuals** lack any interest in or desire for sex.

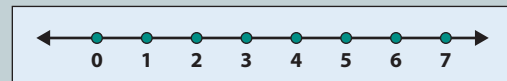
Sexual orientation, like biological sex, isn’t as clear-cut as many people believe. Alfred Kinsey (1948) and his associates’ classic study found that most people weren’t exclusively heterosexual or homosexual. Instead, they fell somewhere along a continuum in terms of sexual desire, attractions, feelings, fantasies, and experiences. Researchers have recently added *asexual* to Kinsey’s classification (Figure 9.1).

Most people’s sexual identity corresponds with their biological sex, sexual attraction, and sexual behavior, but not always. Among Americans ages 15 to 44, for example, 86 percent *identify themselves* as straight, but 23 percent have had *same-sex experiences* (Moore, 2015).

HOW MANY AMERICANS ARE LGBT?

Since 2012, the share of adults identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) has

Figure 9.1 Sexual Orientation Continuum



0 Exclusively heterosexual	4 Usually homosexual
1 Predominantly heterosexual	5 Predominantly homosexual
2 Usually heterosexual	6 Exclusively homosexual
3 Bisexual	7 Asexual

Sources: Kinsey et al., 1948, p. 638; and Kinsey Institute, 2011.

increased from 3.5 percent to 4.1 percent. Women are more likely than men to identify as LGBT. Asians and Latinos are the most numerous and account for the largest increases since 2012 (Table 9.1).

The LGBT population may have actually increased since 2012, but there are other explanations for the higher numbers. Because 63 percent of Americans (an all-time high) say that gay and lesbian relations are acceptable, people are more willing to identify as LGBT. Age is another factor: Millennials (people born between 1982 and 2004) are significantly more likely than older generations to reject traditional either/or categories (such as “man/woman” and “gay/straight”), to have LGBT friends, and to openly identify as LGBT (GLAAD, 2017; Jones, 2017; Steinmetz, 2017).

WHAT DETERMINES OUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION?

A Hong Kong billionaire offered \$65 million to any man who succeeded in marrying his daughter after she eloped with her female partner. The offer attracted 20,000 suitors, but none were successful (Nichols, 2014). Like this father, 30 percent of Americans (but down from 56 percent in 1978) believe that being gay or lesbian is a “personal choice” or due to a person’s upbringing (Jones, 2015).

Culture shapes people’s sexual attitudes and behavior, but no one knows why we’re straight, gay, bisexual, or asexual. Sexual orientation must have biological roots, according to some researchers, because homosexuality exists in all societies and, across cultures, the gay population is roughly the same—about 5 percent (Barash, 2012).

There’s also growing scientific consensus that biological factors, particularly the early influence of sex hormones after conception and around childbirth, have a strong effect on sexual orientation (see LeVay, 2011, for a comprehensive summary of the studies). Other researchers speculate that a combination of genetic and cultural factors influence our sexual orientation (Slater, 2013).

sexual identity an awareness of ourselves as male or female and how we express our sexual values, attitudes, and feelings.

sexual orientation a preference for sexual partners of the same sex, of the opposite sex, of both sexes, or neither sex.

homosexuals those who are sexually attracted to people of the same sex.

heterosexuals those who are sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

bisexuals those who are sexually attracted to more than one gender.

asexuals those who lack any interest in or desire for sex.

Table 9.1 U.S. Adults Identifying as LGBT, by Selected Characteristics, 2012 and 2016

	% LGBT	Estimated Number of LGBT	% BY GENDER AND RACE/ETHNICITY					
			Male	Female	White	Black	Latino	Asian
2012	3.5	8.3 million	3.4	3.5	3.2	4.4	4.3	3.5
2016	4.1	10.1 million	3.7	4.4	3.6	4.6	5.4	4.9

Source: Based on Gates, 2017.

9-1c Gender: Our Cultural Component

Gender doesn't occur naturally, but is socially constructed. This means that gender aspects may differ across time, cultures, and even groups within a society. Let's begin with gender identity.

GENDER IDENTITY

People develop a **gender identity**, a perception of themselves as either masculine or feminine, early in life. Many Mexican baby girls but not boys have pierced ears, for example, and hairstyles and clothing for American toddlers differ by sex. Gender identity, which typically corresponds to a person's biological sex, is part of our self-concept and usually remains relatively fixed throughout life.

Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and behavior don't correspond with their birth sex. They comprise about 0.6 percent (1.4 million) of U.S. adults (Flores et al., 2016).

Because transgender is independent of sexual orientation, people may identify as heterosexual, gay, bisexual, or asexual. Facebook users can now choose their gender identity from more than 50 possibilities, but here are

some of the most common transgender categories (American Psychological Association, 2014):

- ▶ *Transsexuals* are people whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex. Some, but not all, undergo hormone treatment or surgery to change their physical sex to resemble their gender identity.
- ▶ *Cross-dressers* wear clothing that's traditionally or stereotypically worn by another gender in their culture. People who cross-dress are usually comfortable with their assigned sex and don't wish to change it.
- ▶ *Genderqueer* are people who identify their gender as falling somewhere on a continuum between female and male, or a combination of gender identities and sexual orientations.

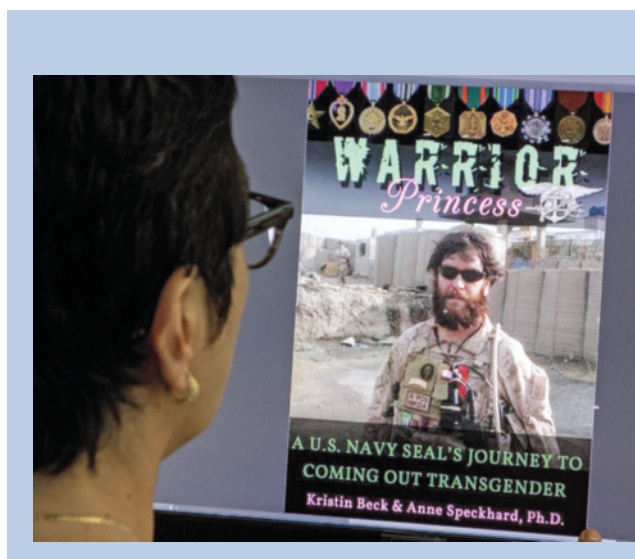
gender identity a perception of oneself as either masculine or feminine.

transgender people whose gender identity and behavior don't correspond with their birth sex.

Gender expression

is how a person communicates gender identity to others and includes

gender expression how a person communicates gender identity to others.



PAUL J. RICHARDS/Getty Images



Olivier Douliery/Abaca Press/Washington/USA/Newscom

Christopher Beck, who received multiple military awards and decorations, retired from the elite U.S. Navy SEALs in 2011. A few years later, he became openly transgender, changing his name to Kristin Beck.

How Do Gender Roles Differ? While the world scrutinized Michelle Obama's gowns, dresses, shoes, jewelry, and hairdos, President Obama wore the same tuxedo and shoes during their eight years in the White House (Feldman, 2017).



Mike Theiler/Getty Images News/Getty Images

behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, or body characteristics. Cross-dressing, girls' frilly dresses, and men's business suits are all examples of gender expression. Even if a person's gender identity is constant, gender expression can vary from situation to situation and change over time. For example, between 2010 and 2014, the number of men's eyelid, facelift, and breast reduction cosmetic surgeries increased by 33 to 44 percent; half of American men now routinely use moisturizers, facial creams, or self-tanning lotions and sprays; and some of the National Basketball Association's "toughest players" have promoted products for Dove, La Mer, and other skin-care companies (Boyle, 2013; Holmes, 2013; American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, 2015).

GENDER ROLES, GENDER STEREOTYPES, AND SEXISM

Gender roles are the characteristics, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that society expects of females and males. As you saw in Chapter 4, a major purpose of socialization, which begins at birth, is to teach people appropriate gender roles. As a result, we learn to become male or female through interactions with family members, teachers, friends, and the larger society.

gender roles the characteristics, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that society expects of females and males.

gender stereotypes expectations about how people will look, act, think, and feel based on their sex.

sexism an attitude or behavior that discriminates against one sex, usually females, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex.

Americans are more likely now than in the past to pursue jobs and other activities based on their ability and interests rather than their sex. For the most part, however, our society still has fairly rigid gender roles and widespread **gender stereotypes**—expectations about how people will look, act, think,

and feel based on their sex. We tend to associate stereotypically female characteristics with weakness and stereotypically male characteristics with strength. Consider, for example, how often we describe the same behavior differently for women and men:

- ▶ He's firm; she's stubborn.
- ▶ He's good with details; she's picky.
- ▶ He's honest; she's opinionated.
- ▶ He's raising good points; she's "bitching."
- ▶ He's experienced; she's "been around."
- ▶ He's enthusiastic; she's shouting.

Gender stereotypes fuel **sexism**, an attitude or behavior that discriminates against one sex, usually females, based on the assumed superiority of the other sex. In the late 1990s, and after receiving numerous rejections, a publisher finally accepted J. K. Rowling's manuscript of her Harry Potter book. Rowling followed the publisher's advice to sell the book under her initials, not her first name, Joanne. Even today, particularly for new science fiction and mystery authors, publishers instruct women to use male pseudonyms because "men prefer books written by men" (Cohen, 2012: D9).

A majority of women (63 percent), compared with 41 percent of men, believe that sexism makes it much harder for women to get ahead. Perhaps surprisingly, 62 percent of men aged 18 to 34, compared with 54 percent of those age 65 and older, say sexist obstacles that prevent women from succeeding "are now largely gone" (Fingerhut, 2016).

Men also experience sexism. Here's what one of my students wrote during an online discussion of gender roles:

Some parents live their dreams through their sons by forcing them to be in sports. I disagree with this but



Colin McConnell/Toronto Star/Getty Images

At an early age, sex-appropriate activities prepare girls and boys for future adult roles. As a result, there are few male ballet dancers and female auto mechanics.

want my [9-year-old] to be “all boy.” He’s the worst player on the basketball team at school and wanted to take dance lessons, including ballet. I assured him that this was not going to happen. I’m going to enroll him in soccer and see if he does better.

Is this mother suppressing her son’s natural dancing talent? We’ll never know because she, like many parents, expects her son to fulfill sexist gender roles that meet with society’s approval.

9-1d Societal Reactions to LGBTs

People’s attitudes toward LGBTs are mixed. There’s been greater acceptance in some countries, but considerable repression in others.

GREATER ACCEPTANCE, BUT ...

Australian passports and birth certificates designate male, female, and transgender. In India, the 2011 national census for the first time offered three options: male, female, or a “third sex” that includes LGBTs. In Thailand, which has the world’s biggest transsexual population, an airline recruits “third sex” flight attendants. In the United States, in 2017 Oregon was the first state to allow residents to mark their sex as “not specified” on a driver’s license.

In the United States, many jurisdictions, corporations, and small companies now extend more health care and other benefits to gay employees and their partners than to unmarried heterosexuals who live together. The U.S. Supreme Court and a growing number of states have legalized same-sex marriages, and large numbers of Americans support equal rights for LGBTs in the workplace and elsewhere (Von Drehle, 2014).

In 2012, the Army promoted the first openly gay female officer to brigadier general. In 2013, the Pentagon added benefits for same-sex partners, including services on U.S. military bases. Federal workers and Medicare recipients are now eligible for sex-change operations (Mach and Cornell, 2013; “Transgender Rights,” 2015). And, since the mid-1990s, many LGBT characters have appeared in leading and supporting roles in popular TV programs (e.g., *Transparent*, *Modern Family*, *Gotham*, *This Is Us*, *Empire*, and *Game of Thrones*).

There’s greater LGBT acceptance. However, Americans are about evenly divided on two issues: whether wedding-related businesses (like caterers and florists) should be required to serve same-sex couples and whether transgender people should be able to use public restrooms that correspond to their current gender identity rather than their birth sex (Masci, 2016; McCarthy, 2017).



Jonathan Daniels/Getty Images

In mid-2013, the Washington Wizards’ Jason Collins appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. “I’m a 34-year-old NBA center, I’m black, and I’m gay,” he announced. Collins said that his teammates were supportive, but he retired a year later. In a recent survey, just 4 percent of LGBT adults described professional sports leagues as “friendly” toward LGBTs (Lipka, 2014).

... ALSO WIDESPREAD INTOLERANCE

According to one scholar, what makes gay people different from others is that “we are discriminated against, mistreated, [and] regarded as sick or perverted” (Halperin, 2012: B17). **Heterosexism**, a belief that heterosexuality is the only legitimate sexual orientation, pervades societal practices, laws, and institutions. For example, 13 percent of Americans—including judges, religious leaders, and politicians—want to undo recently achieved rights like gay marriage (McCarthy, 2016). Heterosexism can trigger **homophobia**, a fear and hatred of lesbians and gays.

Homophobia often takes the form of *gay bashing*: threats, assaults, or acts of violence directed at LGBTs. Of the nearly 5,900 hate crimes reported to the police in 2015, 18 percent of the victims were LGBT, but much gay bashing isn’t reported (see Chapter 7).

In high school, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students are three times more likely than straight students to be raped and skip school more often because they feel unsafe. At least a third have been bullied, and they’re twice as likely as their heterosexual counterparts to be threatened or injured with a weapon while on school property. Among transgender people, 41 percent have attempted suicide sometime in their lives—nearly nine times the national average—due primarily to rejection by family and friends, and to harassment and violence at school, at work, and by police (Haas et al., 2014; Kann, Olsen et al., 2016).

Without warning, in mid-2017 President Trump

heterosexism belief that heterosexuality is the only legitimate sexual orientation.

homophobia a fear and hatred of lesbians and gays.

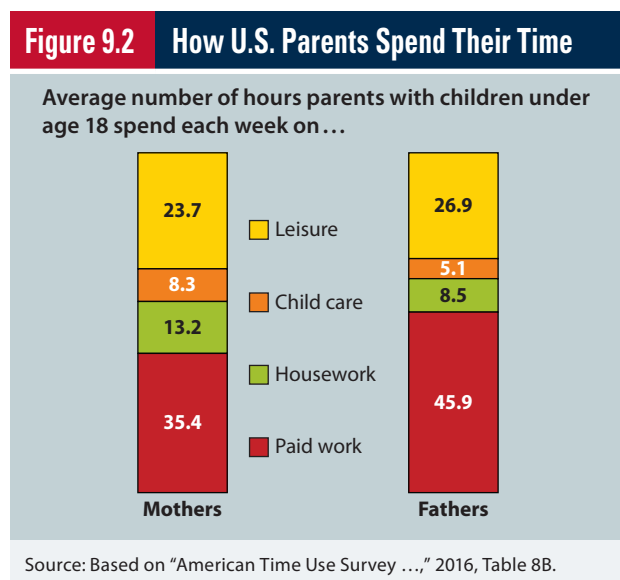
tweeted that the government “will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military.” If the president’s ban is implemented, 18 countries will still allow openly transgender individuals to be members of their armed forces (LeBlanc, 2017).

9-2 CONTEMPORARY GENDER INEQUALITY

A recent study concluded that “it will take until 2085 for women to reach parity with men in leadership roles in government/politics, business, entrepreneurship, and nonprofit organizations” (Klos, 2013). You saw in Chapter 8 that there’s still widespread gender stratification because of sex. *Gendered institutions* are social structures that enable and reinforce gender stratification. Let’s begin with the family, remembering that institutions are interrelated (see Chapter 6).

9-2a Gender and Family Life

About 56 percent of married adults—with and without children—say that sharing household chores is “very important” to a successful marriage (Geiger, 2016). Men do more at home than they used to, but not as much as they say. Fathers spend more hours each week in paid work than do mothers, do less child care and housework, and have more leisure time (*Figure 9.2*), and many household chores are still gendered. On average, men are three times more likely to do home maintenance (e.g., repairing cars, lawn care); women are three times more likely to do the cooking, cleaning, and laundry (“American Time Use Survey ...,” 2016).



For many women, there’s nothing sexier than a man who does housework.

Gang Liu/Alamy Stock Photo

About 58 percent of both mothers and fathers say that parenting is “extremely important” to their identity, but parenting tasks are also gendered. Women do less housework than they used to, but devote twice as much time as men to child care. Fathers tend to do more of the enjoyable tasks (e.g., reading to children, playing with them, taking them to games), and are much more likely to “join in” with child care than to “take over” from mothers. In contrast, mothers do most of the daily, nonstop tasks like picking children up from school or day care and feeding, bathing, and putting them to bed. Compared with fathers, mothers’ greater investments in children result in less happiness, more stress, and greater fatigue (Craig, 2015; Musick et al., 2016; Parker and Livingston, 2016).

Every year, the media feature and applaud stay-at-home dads, but their numbers are negligible. In 2016, 209,000 fathers (0.2 percent of all fathers) cared for children while their wives worked outside the home. A stay-at-home dad is usually a temporary role that’s due to unemployment or health problems. In some cases, however, white, college-educated, upper-middle class men choose to be stay-at-home dads because their partners or wives have high incomes (Kane, 2015; “Father’s Day ...,” 2017).

9-2b Gender and Education

Despite substantial progress, there are gender differences at all educational levels. In public K–12 schools, as rank and pay increase, the number of women decreases. Among all full-time teachers, 76 percent at the elementary level are women; the number falls to 58 percent in high school. Among principals, the number of women drops from

Table 9.2 As Rank Increases, the Number of Female Faculty Decreases

RANK	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE FACULTY MEMBERS
Instructor	57
Assistant Professor	50
Associate Professor	44
Professor	31

Note: Of the almost 791,400 full-time faculty in 2013, 45 percent were women.

Source: Based on Snyder et al., 2016, Table 315.20.

64 percent at elementary schools to 30 percent in high schools (Bitterman et al., 2013; Snyder et al., 2016).

Because women across all racial and ethnic groups are more likely than men to finish college, some observers have described this phenomenon as “the feminization of higher education.” Even when women earn doctoral degrees in male-dominated STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields, they’re less likely than men to be hired (see Chapter 13). Once hired, women are less likely to be promoted. Since 2000, 45 percent of all Ph.D. degree recipients have been women (Snyder and Dillow, 2013), but as the academic rank increases, the number of female faculty decreases (Table 9.2). Such data contradict the description of higher education as feminized.

9-2c Gender and the Workplace

There has been progress toward greater workplace equality, but we still have a long way to go. In the United States (as around the world), many jobs are segregated by sex, there are ongoing gender pay gaps, and numerous women experience sexual harassment.

OCCUPATIONAL SEX SEGREGATION

Occupational sex segregation (sometimes called *occupational gender segregation*) is the process of channeling women and men into different types of jobs. As a result, a number of U.S. occupations are filled almost entirely by either women or men. Between 95 and 98 percent of all child care workers, secretaries, dental hygienists, and preschool and kindergarten teachers are women. Between 96 and 99 percent of all pilots, mechanics, plumbers, and firefighters are men. Women have made progress in a number of the higher-paying occupations, but 74 percent of chief executives, 80 percent of software developers, and 90 percent of engineers are men (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).



Marmaduke St. John/Alamy Stock Photo

Of the nearly 3.1 million U.S. teachers at elementary and middle schools, only 22 percent are men. A major reason is low salaries compared with other occupations, but gender stereotypes are also a factor (Rich, 2014; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

The issue isn’t women and men working in different spaces or locations, but that male-dominated occupations usually pay higher wages. And, as in education, women are much less likely than men to move up the occupational ladder (see Chapters 8 and 11).

THE GENDER PAY GAP

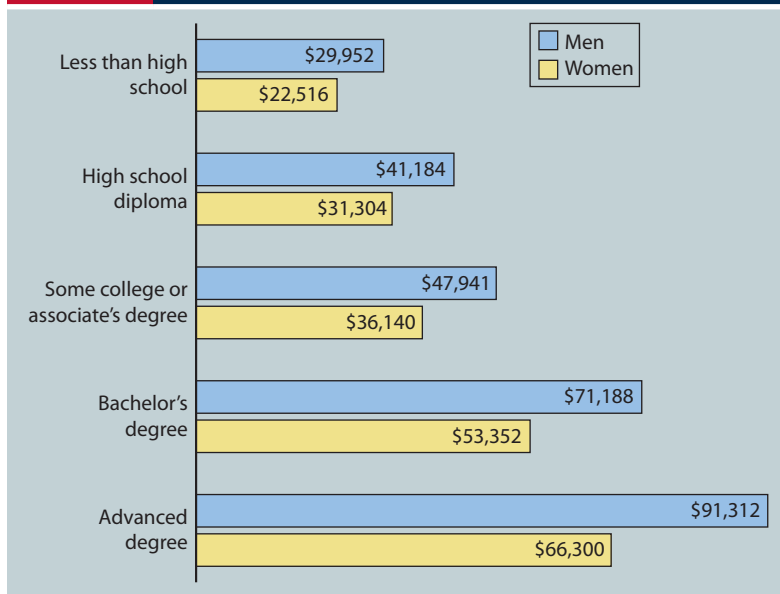
On average, full-time, year-round working women earn 80 to 81 cents for every dollar men earn (BLS News Release, 2017). To state this differently, *the average woman must work almost nine extra weeks every year to make the same wages as a man.*

This earnings difference between women and men is the **gender pay gap** (also called the *wage gap*, *pay gap*, and *gender wage gap*). Among year-round full-time workers, Asian women earn 91 percent as much as white men, white women earn 81 cents for every dollar a white man earns, and Latinas and black women earn about 63 percent as much as white men. Across occupations, the gender pay gap ranges from 59 percent for financial advisors to zero for police patrol officers. Lower wages and salaries reduce women’s savings, purchasing power, and quality of life, and they receive less income from Social Security and pensions after retirement (AAUW, 2017; BLS News Release, 2017; BLS Reports, 2017).

occupational sex segregation (sometimes called *occupational gender segregation*) the process of channeling women and men into different types of jobs.

gender pay gap the difference between men’s and women’s earnings (also called the *wage gap*, *pay gap*, and *gender wage gap*).

Figure 9.3 Gender Pay Gap, by Education, 2017



Note: These are median annual earnings of year-round full-time workers age 25 and older.

Source: Based on BLS News Release, "Usual Weekly Earnings . . ." 2017, Table 5.

Not only do women earn less than men at all educational levels, the higher the education level, the bigger the gender pay gap (Figure 9.3). Note that, as a group, women with advanced degrees earn less than men with a college degree.

Why is there a gender pay gap? Women tend to choose fields with lower earnings (e.g., health care and education), whereas men are more likely to major in higher paying fields (e.g., engineering and computer science). Women on average also work fewer hours than men, primarily to care for children or other family members. However, there's a pay gap after controlling for a number of variables—including occupation, hours worked, GPA, age, experience, and marital status. Between ages 25 and 45, the gender pay gap for college graduates, which begins close to zero, widens by 55 percentage points (AAUW, 2013; Blau and Kahn, 2016; Goldin et al., 2017).

A year after they graduate, women with Ph.D.s in science and engineering earn 31 percent less than do men. The pay gap disappears when women receive doctorates in better-paid fields (engineering versus mathematics or chemistry), and work in industry rather than government or higher education, and don't marry

(to avoid moving because of a husband's job), and don't have children (Buffington et al., 2016; Goldin et al., 2017).

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other conduct of a sexual nature that makes a person uncomfortable and interferes with her or his work. It includes *verbal behavior* (e.g., pressure for dates and the threat of rape), *nonverbal behavior* (e.g., indecent gestures, display of sexually explicit posters, photos, or drawings), and *physical contact* (e.g., pinching, touching, or rape).

Sexual harassment occurs at all occupational levels. Female employees at the National Park Service have reported being groped, propositioned, verbally abused, and threatened with retaliation if they refused or reported incidents to supervisors. Female firefighters across the country have found their shampoo bottles filled

with urine and semen on their bunks. Millions of female restaurant and home care workers and hotel room attendants are vulnerable to sexual harassment, and 60 percent of high-tech female workers in Silicon Valley have experienced unwanted sexual advances (Vassallo et al., 2015; Nguyen, 2016; Parker, 2016; Schrobsdorff, 2016).

About 25 percent of women have been sexually harassed at work, but 71 percent didn't file complaints: They feared being labeled as "difficult" or "too sensitive," and worried about retaliation and job security. Many employment contracts now have arbitration clauses that prevent workers from suing companies for sexual harassment (Ahn and Ruiz, 2015; Dias and Dockterman, 2016).

9-2d Gender and Politics

Unlike dozens of other countries, the United States has never had a woman serving as president or even vice president. In the U.S. Congress, 81 percent of the members are men. In other important elective offices (governor, mayor, state legislator), only a handful of the decision makers are women (Table 9.3). These numbers haven't changed much since the early 1990s.

Women's voting rates in the United States have been higher than men's since 1984. Why, in contrast, are there so few women in political office? There's a combination of reasons: (1) Women run for office at a far lower rate than

sexual harassment any unwanted sexual advance, request for sexual favors, or other conduct of a sexual nature that makes a person uncomfortable and interferes with her or his work.

Table 9.3 U.S. Women in Elective Offices, 2017

POLITICAL OFFICE	TOTAL NUMBER OF OFFICE HOLDERS	PERCENTAGE WHO ARE WOMEN
Senate	100	21
House of Representatives	435	19
Governor	50	10
State Legislator	7,383	25
Attorney General	50	14
Secretary of State	50	26
State Treasurer/ Chief Financial Officer	50	16
Mayor (100 largest cities)	100	20

Source: Based on Center for American Women and Politics, 2017.

men with similar credentials because women don't consider themselves qualified; (2) they have to do more than their male counterparts to prove themselves; (3) U.S. presidents appoint more men than women to important positions; and (4) there's a lingering sexism, among both men and women, that female politicians are both less feminine and compassionate than the average woman, and lack the leadership traits associated with male politicians (e.g., confident, assertive) (Schneider and Bos, 2014; Parker and Horowitz, 2015; see also Chapter 11).

9-3 SEXUALITY

In the movie *Annie Hall*, a therapist asks two lovers how often they have sex. The man rolls his eyes, and complains, "Hardly ever, maybe three times a week!" The woman exclaims, "Constantly, three times a week!" *Sexuality* is considerably more complex than just having sex, however, because it's a product of our sexual identity, sexual orientation and sexual scripts, and includes desire, expression, and behavior.

9-3a Contemporary Sexual Attitudes and Practices

Sex doesn't "just happen." It typically progresses through a series of stages such as approaching, flirting, touching, or asking directly for sex. Sexual attitudes and behavior can

vary from situation to situation and change over time, including why we have sex.

WHY WE HAVE SEX

People have sex to reproduce and to experience physical pleasure, but there are other reasons. For example, almost a third of Americans aged 15 to 24 believe it's all right for unmarried 16-year-olds to have sexual intercourse "if they have strong affection for each other." Although the message is contradictory, parents reinforce the association between attraction and sex by telling teenagers "Don't have sex, but use condoms" (Mollborn, 2015; Daugherty and Copen, 2016).

Nationwide, 3 percent of male and 10 percent of female high school students have been physically forced to have unwanted sexual intercourse. Teenagers are also more likely to engage in sex at any early age if they use alcohol or other drugs or experience domestic violence (Kann, McManus et al., 2016). A study of nearly 2,000 college students identified 237 reasons for having sex that ranged from the physical (stress reduction) to the spiritual (to get closer to God) and from the altruistic (to make the other person feel good) to the spiteful (to retaliate against a partner who had cheated) (Meston and Buss, 2007).

SEXUALITY THROUGHOUT THE LIFE COURSE

Contrary to some stereotypes, adolescents aren't sexually promiscuous and older people aren't asexual. On average, Americans have sexual intercourse for the first time at about age 17, but don't marry until their mid-20s. Just 16 percent have had sexual intercourse by age 15, 30 percent by 16, 44 percent by 17, and almost 60 percent by age 18 (Guttmacher Institute, 2016).

Among teenagers aged 15 to 19, the percentage who ever had sexual intercourse declined from 51 percent in 1988 to 45 percent in 2013. By 2008, however, almost half of teens in this age group had had oral but not vaginal sex (Chandra et al., 2011; Martinez the Abma, 2015).

Adolescents who have oral sex prior to vaginal intercourse do so because it's "not really sex." Instead, they see it as a way to delay vaginal intercourse, to maintain one's virginity (especially among those who are religious), and to avoid the risk of pregnancy and STDs (Regnerus and Uecker, 2011; Copen et al., 2012).

By age 44, 93 percent of Americans have had vaginal intercourse, 87 percent have had oral sex, and 39 percent have had anal sex with an opposite-sex partner. Fewer than 4 percent of Americans identify as LGBT, but among



"Don't you have any sexual fantasies that don't involve me cleaning?"

people aged 18 to 44, 17 percent of women and 6 percent of men have had same-sex contact (Copen et al., 2016). Thus, as noted earlier, sexual identity, attraction, and behavior overlap.

A majority of adults ages 45 and older agree that a satisfying sexual relationship is important, but it's not their top priority. Marital sexual frequency may decrease because concerns about earning a living, making a home, and raising a family become more pressing than love-making. Others may be going through a divorce, dealing with unemployment, helping to raise grandchildren, or caring for aging parents—all of which sap people's sexual interest (ConsumerReports.org, 2009; Twenge et al., 2017).

As people age, they experience lower levels of sexual desire and some sexual activities, but a third of men and women age 70 and older report having sex at least twice a month. Poor health and inability to find a partner, rather than just advancing age, are more closely linked to declining sexual activity (Lee et al., 2015). Many couples in their seventies and eighties emphasize emotional intimacy and companionship, and are satisfied with kissing, cuddling, and caressing (Heiman et al., 2011; Lodge and Umberson, 2012).

9-3b Sexual Scripts and Double Standards

sexual script specifies the formal and informal norms for acceptable or unacceptable sexual behavior.

sexual double standard a code that permits greater sexual freedom for men than women.

We like to think that our sexual behavior is spontaneous, but all of us have internalized sexual scripts. A **sexual script** specifies the formal and informal norms for acceptable or unacceptable

sexual behavior. Social scripts can change over time and across groups, but are highly gendered in two ways—women's increasing hypersexualization and a persistent sexual double standard.

THE "SEXY BABES" TREND

Sexualized social messages are reaching ever younger audiences, teaching or reinforcing the idea that girls and women should be valued for how they look rather than their personalities and abilities. For example, there are "bikini onesies" for infant girls, sexy lingerie for girls 3 months and older, and padded bras for 7- and 8-year-olds (that's right, for 7- and 8-year-olds!).

Many girls are obsessed about their looks, and from an early age, for a variety of reasons, including their mothers' role modeling. By age 9, girls start imitating the clothes, makeup, and behavior of mothers who dress and act in highly sexualized ways (Starr and Ferguson, 2012).

For many girls, constantly seeking "likes" and attention on social media is like being a contestant in a never-ending beauty pageant. The boom in selfie culture has increased girls' sexualization because validation is only a tap away, and "one of the easiest ways to get that validation is by looking hot. Sex sells, whether you're 13 or 35" (Sales, 2016: 26).

Media images also play a large role in girls' hypersexualization. Girls and boys see cheerleaders (with increasingly sexualized routines) on TV far more than they see female basketball players or other athletes. Women are now represented in more diverse TV roles—as doctors, lawyers, and criminal investigators—but they're often sexy ("hot"). Also, top female athletes regularly pose naked or semi-naked for men's magazines.

Who benefits from girls' and women's hypersexualization? Marketers who convince girls (and their parents) that being popular and "sexy" requires the right clothes, makeup, hair style, and accessories, create a young generation of shoppers and consumers who will increase business profits more than ever before (Lamb and Brown, 2007; Levin and Kilbourne, 2009).

THE SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD

Some believe that the **sexual double standard**—a code that permits greater sexual freedom for men than women—has faded. Others argue that it persists. Among U.S. adolescents, the higher the number of sexual partners, the greater the boy's popularity. In contrast, girls who have more than eight partners are far less popular than their less-experienced female peers. By age 44, many more men (21 percent) than women (8 percent)

report having had at least 15 sex partners. And, over a lifetime, men are more likely than women to have sex outside of marriage (19 percent and 14 percent, respectively) (Kreager and Staff, 2009; Chandra et al., 2011; Drexler, 2012).

Another example of the sexual double standard is *hooking up*—which can mean anything from kissing to sexual intercourse. The prevalence of hooking up has increased only slightly since the late 1980s, but is now more common than dating at many high schools and colleges (Monto and Carey, 2014; Luff et al., 2016).

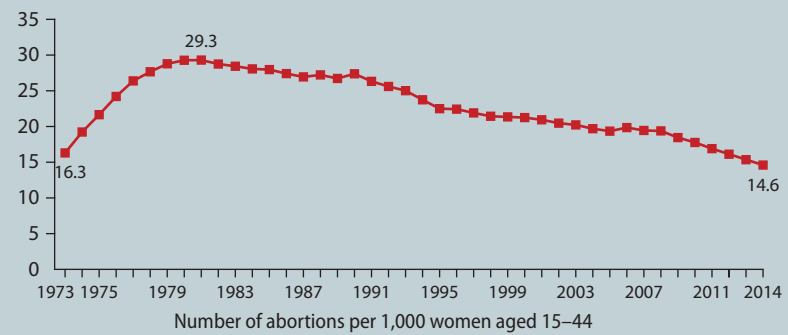
Hooking up has its advantages. Many men prefer hookups because they're inexpensive compared with dating. For women, hookups offer sex without becoming involved in time-consuming relationships that compete with schoolwork, dealing with boyfriends who become demanding or controlling, and experiencing breakups (Bogle, 2008; Rosin, 2012).

Hooking up also has disadvantages, especially for women, because it reinforces a sexual double standard. For example, men are more likely than women to perform sexual acts that a partner doesn't like; more than twice as many men as women experience an orgasm because the men typically don't satisfy a woman sexually; and women who hook up may get a reputation as "sluts" (England and Thomas, 2009; Armstrong et al., 2010, 2012). About half of women, compared with only 25 percent of men, have regretted having casual sex (Galperin et al., 2013).

Galia Slayen built a life-sized Barbie to show what she would look like if she were a real woman. (Slayen used a toy for the head because she wasn't able to create a proportional head) ("Life Size Barbie . . ." 2011).



Figure 9.4 U.S. Abortion Rates Have Decreased



Source: Based on Guttmacher Institute, 2014, and Jones and Jerman, 2017.

9-4

SOME CURRENT SOCIAL ISSUES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Most Americans see sex as a private act, but others believe that the government should control some sexual behavior and decisions. People disagree about social policies on sex-related topics such as teenagers' birth control, prostitution, reproductive technologies (see Chapter 16), and teen pregnancy (see Chapter 12). Two of the most controversial and politically contested issues continue to be abortion and same-sex marriage.

9-4a Abortion

Abortion is the expulsion of an embryo or fetus from the uterus. It can occur naturally—in *spontaneous abortion* (miscarriage)—or be induced medically. Abortion was outlawed in the nineteenth century, but has been legal since the U.S. Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* ruling in 1973.

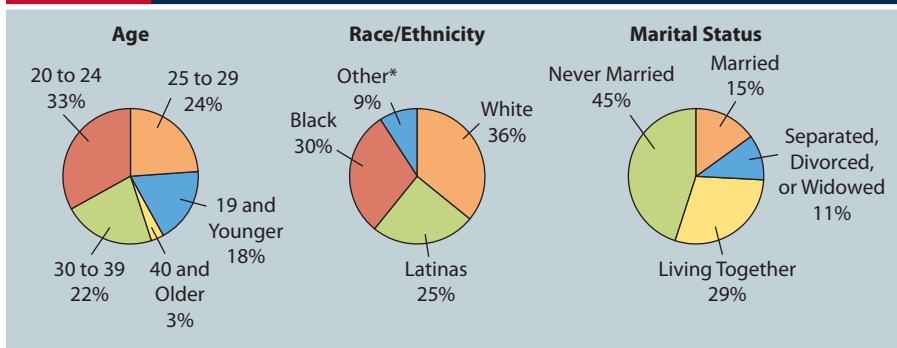
TRENDS

Every year, 40 percent of unintended pregnancies end in abortion. Over a lifetime, 33 percent of women have an abortion by age 45 (Guttmacher Institute, 2014). The *abortion rate*, or the number of abortions per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, increased during the 1970s, then decreased, and has dropped to its lowest point since 1973 (Figure 9.4).

Why have abortion rates decreased? At least half of the states have restricted access to abortion, but most of the decline has been due to

abortion expulsion of an embryo or fetus from the uterus.

Figure 9.5 Who Has Abortions?



*Other refers to Asian/Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaska Natives.

Sources: Based on Guttmacher Institute, 2013, 2014.

an overall drop in pregnancy rates, delaying child-bearing, more effective usage of contraceptives, and greater access to emergency contraception that prevents pregnancy (Finer and Zolna, 2016; Dreweke, 2017).

Abortion is most common among women who are young (in their twenties), white, and never married (Figure 9.5). About 20 percent of women who get abortions have at least a college degree, but most are poor: 69 percent have incomes below or near the poverty level, and 74 percent are financially unable to support a baby. Low-income women are also much more likely than higher-income women to have experienced intimate partner violence that included being impregnated against their will. Abortion cuts across all religious groups, but 28 percent of women are Catholic and 37 percent are Protestant (including born-again/evangelical Christians) (Jones et al., 2013; Guttmacher Institute, 2014; Reeves and Venator, 2015).

WHY IS ABORTION CONTROVERSIAL?

Since its legalization, abortion has been one of the most persistently contentious issues in U.S. politics and culture. More Americans describe themselves as “pro-choice” (50 percent) than “pro-life” (44 percent), and 6 percent aren’t sure. Both anti- and pro-abortion groups agree on some issues, such as requiring a patient’s informed consent, but 28 percent want abortion to be illegal under all circumstances (Fingerhut, 2017).

Antiabortion groups believe that the embryo or fetus isn’t just a mass of cells but a human being from the time of conception and, therefore, has a right to life. In contrast, abortion rights advocates point out

that, at the moment of conception, the organism lacks a brain and other specifically and uniquely human attributes, such as consciousness and reasoning, and that a pregnant woman—not legislators—should decide whether or not to bear children.

Antiabortion groups maintain that abortion is immoral and endangers a woman’s physical, mental, and emotional health. Whether abortion is immoral is a religious and philosophical

question. On a physical level, a legal abortion in the first trimester (up to 12 weeks) is safer than driving a car, playing football, motorcycling, getting a penicillin shot, or continuing a pregnancy. There’s also no evidence that having an abortion increases the risk of breast cancer or causes infertility (Sheppard, 2013; Pazol et al., 2014; Holloway, 2015).

What about mental and emotional health? Antiabortion activists argue that abortion leads to postabortion stress disorders, depression, and even suicide. National studies have consistently found that abortion poses no hazard to an adolescent or adult woman’s mental health, doesn’t increase emotional problems like depression or low self-esteem, and doesn’t lead to drug or alcohol abuse or suicide. An unwanted pregnancy or being denied an abortion, not abortion, increases the risk of mental health problems (Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, 2011; Steinberg and Finer, 2011; Biggs et al., 2017).

A large majority (63 percent) of Americans want to keep abortion legal, but it’s almost impossible for many women to get legal abortions in 89 percent of all U.S. counties. Since 2010, states have enacted 338 new abortion restrictions that cut public funding for low-income women, passed licensing requirements that closed abortion clinics, and limited access to medication abortion (“abortion pills”) that legally ends a pregnancy in the first nine weeks. On the other hand, federal and state funding support thousands of “crisis pregnancy centers,” usually next to abortion clinics, which distribute false medical information (e.g., abortion causes breast cancer, infertility, and suicide) and pressure women to continue an unwanted pregnancy (Daniels et al., 2016; Upadhyay, 2016; Gold and Nash, 2017; Guttmacher Institute, 2017).

Table 9.4 Why Do Americans Favor or Oppose Same-Sex Marriages?

What do you think? What other reasons can you add for each side of the debate?	
Same-sex marriage should be legal because . . .	Same-sex marriage should be illegal because . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay marriages strengthen families and long-term unions that already exist. Children are better off with parents who are legally married. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children need a mom and a dad, not two dads or two moms.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no scientific studies showing that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are worse off than those raised by heterosexual parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no scientific studies showing that children raised by gay and lesbian parents are better off than those raised by heterosexual parents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every person should be able to marry someone that she or he loves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People can love each other without getting married.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gay marriages are good for the economy because they boost businesses such as restaurants, bakeries, hotels, airlines, and florists. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What's good for the economy isn't necessarily good for society, especially its moral values and religious beliefs.

Sources: Bennett and Ellison, 2010; Olson, 2010; Sullivan, 2011; Sprigg, 2011; Whitehead, 2011; Bogage, 2015; Kaufman, 2015.

9-4b Same-Sex Marriage

Same-sex marriage (also called *gay marriage*) is a legally recognized marriage between two people of the same biological sex and/or gender identity. Although still controversial, same-sex marriage is becoming more acceptable in the United States and some other countries.

TRENDS

In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling (*Obergefell v. Hodges*) granting same-sex couples a constitutional right to marry. The 5-4 decision gave gay couples nationwide the same legal rights and benefits as heterosexual couples. With the Supreme Court's decision, the United States joined 21 other countries (so far) that allow same-sex marriage.

Prior to the ruling, gay marriage was illegal in 13 states. Some of these states' lawmakers urged their constituents to accept the new law. Others pressed their residents to "stand and fight by seeking a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage" (de Vogue and Diamond, 2015).

Opponents often invoke religion to defy gay marriage laws. For example, Roy Moore, chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, ordered the state's 68 probate judges to refuse to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. He defended his decision as "standing up for God" because "God ordained marriage as the union of one man and one woman." Alabama's judiciary suspended Judge Moore. The following year, a Democrat narrowly defeated Moore in an election for a U.S. Senate seat

(Robertson, 2016; Cason, 2017). We'll examine same-sex marriages and families in Chapter 12, but why is gay marriage such a contentious issue?

WHY IS SAME-SEX MARRIAGE CONTROVERSIAL?

A large majority (64 percent) of Americans support same-sex marriage (up from 37 percent in 2006). Most of the opposition comes from people who are Republican, white, male, regularly attend religious services, live in the South, are 55 and older, and have conservative views on family issues (McCarthy, 2017; Masci et al., 2017).

Those who favor same-sex marriage argue that people should have the same rights regardless of sexual orientation. Those who oppose same-sex marriage contend that such unions are immoral, weaken traditional notions of marriage, and are contrary to religious beliefs. *Table 9.4* summarizes some of the major pro and con arguments in this ongoing debate.

9-5

GENDER AND SEXUALITY ACROSS CULTURES

There's considerable variation worldwide regarding gender inequality and sexual oppression. Such variations show that our behavior is learned, not innate.

same-sex marriage (also called *gay marriage*) a legally recognized marriage between two people of the same biological sex and/or gender identity.

9-5a Gender Inequality

A recent United Nations (2015) report concluded that women continue to face discrimination in access to work, economic assets, and participation in private and public decision making. They're also more likely than men to live in poverty, to be illiterate, and to experience violence.

In many countries, women's progress toward equality has been mixed. For example, Saudi Arabia, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and which has some of the most educated women in the world (including STEM college and advanced degrees), ranks near the bottom in women's economic and political participation. In *all countries and regions*, the greatest gender gaps are in economic participation and political leadership (World Economic Forum, 2016).

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Worldwide, 150 countries have at least one law that treats women and men differently, and 63 countries have five or more. The laws make it difficult for women to own property, open bank accounts, start businesses, and enter certain professions (World Bank, 2017).

Globally, about 75 percent of working-age men participate in the labor force, compared with 50 percent of working-age women, and women earn 24 percent less than men. In 85 percent of countries, women with advanced degrees have higher unemployment rates than men with similar levels of education (United Nations, 2015).

Countries that have closed education gaps and have high levels of women's economic participation—the Scandinavian countries, United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia—have strong economic growth (Worley, 2014). However, gender gaps still persist in senior positions, wages, and leadership. For example, Germany is Europe's No. 1 economy, but also has one of the largest pay gaps in the European Union. Of 191 executives on the management boards of Germany's 30 biggest companies, only 12 are women, a 20 percent decrease from a year before (de Pommereau, 2013; Webb, 2013).

POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Worldwide, only 23 percent of national legislators are women. Rwanda has 64 percent, followed by nine countries where women hold 40 to 46 percent of the high-level political positions. The power is usually short-lived,



Creastia/Shutterstock.com

however. Of 146 nations, only 56 (38 percent) have had a female head of government or state for at least one year in the past half-century. In 31 of these countries, women typically led for five years or less (Geiger and Kent, 2017; World Bank, 2017).

Of the 197 world leaders who are presidents or prime ministers, only 13 percent are women. Worldwide, women occupy only 22 percent of the positions in decision-making bodies. Of 193 countries, the United States ranks

101st in women's political leadership, well below many African, European, and Asian countries, and even below most of the Arab countries that many Westerners view as repressing women (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017).

9-5b Sexual Inequality

Globally, women have fewer rights and opportunities than men. There's been more acceptance of homosexuality in some countries, but heterosexism prevails.

VIOLENCE AGAINST FEMALES

Violence against women is a persistent problem. Worldwide, 35 percent of women have endured physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or another male (World Health Organization, 2016). The rates are much higher in many countries. For example,

- ▶ In Afghanistan and some African countries, about 80 percent of girls—some as young as 8 years old—are forced into marriages; 87 percent of Afghan women have experienced physical, psychological, or sexual abuse (Peter, 2012; “Child Brides...,” 2014).
- ▶ In Pakistan, 90 percent of women undergo domestic violence in their lifetimes. As many as 5,000 females are victims of “honor killings” every year. An *honor killing* is the murder of a family member, almost always a female, who is considered to have shamed the family by being a rape victim or has been suspected of engaging in premarital or extramarital sex (Sahgal and Townsend, 2014; “Human Rights Violations,” 2015).
- ▶ In the Democratic Republic of Congo, approximately 1,100 women are raped every day by soldiers, strangers, and intimate partners (“Human Rights Violations,” 2015).
- ▶ In India, rape and gang rape are epidemic, but less than a quarter of reported crimes end in conviction. As many as 100,000 women a year are killed over

dowry disputes (the money or goods that a wife brings to her husband at marriage) (Harris, 2013; “Ending the Shame . . .,” 2013).

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is a partial or total removal of the female external genitalia. Most of the more than 200 million girls and women who have undergone FGM/C live in 29 African countries, Indonesia, and the Middle East. The mutilation occurs between 3 and 12 years old. The operator is typically an elderly village woman who uses a knife or other sharp object and doesn’t administer an anesthetic. Countries justify FGM/C on the grounds that it controls a girl’s sexual desires and preserves her virginity, a prerequisite for marriage. Although Nigeria, Egypt, and other countries have outlawed FGM/C, the practice remains widespread and widely accepted (“Female Genital Cutting,” 2016; UNICEF, 2016).

VIOLENCE AGAINST MALES

You saw earlier that Americans are more accepting of homosexuality, and that more nations are legalizing gay marriage. In contrast, many countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East don’t tolerate LGBTs. A vast majority of Africans (e.g., 98 percent in Ghana, 93 percent in Uganda, 88 percent in Kenya) say homosexuality is unacceptable. Gay sex is illegal in 78 nations, including 34 of Africa’s 54 countries. Gay men, particularly, may be legally tortured, stoned, imprisoned, or killed (“Deadly Intolerance,” 2014; “Global Views on Morality,” 2014; Pflanz, 2014; Baker, 2015).



Jean-Marc Bouju/Impact/HPF/The Image Works

Little girls like this one scream and writhe in pain during FGM/C (see text). Complications include hemorrhaging to death, a rupture that causes continual dribbling of urine or feces for the rest of the woman’s life, severe pain during sexual intercourse, and death during childbirth if the baby can’t emerge through the mutilated organs.

Russia’s parliament recently banned LGBT relationships and forbade distributing material on gay rights. Russians are more accepting of extramarital affairs, gambling, and drinking alcohol (a major cause of men’s death before age 55) than homosexuality (Council for Global Equity, 2014; Poushter, 2014).

There are about 10 million transgender people in Asia and the Pacific. Governments in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan have recognized transgender people as a legal category that has rights, but many—often labelled mentally ill by the public—experience discrimination and violence. In China, the attackers are often the victim’s relatives. In Fiji, 40 percent of *trans women* (male-to-female transsexuals) have been raped. In Australia, 60 percent of *trans men* (female-to-male transsexuals) suffer abuse from their partners (“Knife-edge Lives,” 2016).

9-6 SOCIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Gender and sexuality affect all people’s lives, but why is there so much variation over time and across cultural groups? The four sociological perspectives answer this and other questions somewhat differently (Table 9.5 summarizes these theories).

9-6a Functionalism

Functionalists view women and men as having distinct roles that ensure a family’s and society’s survival. These roles help society operate smoothly, and have an impact on the types of work that people do.

DIVISION OF GENDER ROLES AND HUMAN CAPITAL

Some of the most influential functionalist theories, developed during the 1950s, proposed that gender roles differ because women and men have distinct roles and responsibilities. A man (typically a husband and father) plays an *instrumental role* of economic provider; he’s competitive and works hard. A woman (typically a wife and mother) plays an *expressive role*; she provides the emotional nurturance that sustains the family unit and supports the father/husband (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Betcher and Pollack, 1993).

Instrumental and expressive roles are complementary, and each person knows what’s expected: If the house is clean, she’s a “good wife”; if the bills are paid, he’s a “good husband.” The duties are specialized, but

Table 9.5 Sociological Explanations of Gender and Sexuality

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS	KEY POINTS
Functionalist	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender roles are complementary, equally important for a society's survival, and affect human capital. Agreed-on sexual norms contribute to a society's order and stability.
Conflict	Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender roles give men power to control women's lives. Most societies regulate women's, but not men's, sexual behavior.
Feminist	Macro and micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's inequality reflects their historical and current domination by men, especially in the workplace. Many men use violence—including sexual harassment, rape, and global sex trafficking—to control women's sexuality.
Symbolic Interactionist	Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender is a social construction that emerges and is reinforced through everyday interactions. The social construction of sexuality varies across cultures because of societal norms and values.

both roles are equally important in meeting a family's needs and ensuring a society's survival.

Such traditional gender roles help explain occupational sex segregation because people differ in the amount of human capital that they bring to the labor market. *Human capital* is the array of competencies—including education, job training, skills, and experience—that have economic value and increase productivity.

From a functionalist perspective, what individuals earn is the result of the choices they make and, consequently, the human capital that they accumulate to meet labor market demands. Women diminish their human capital because they choose lower paying occupations (social work rather than computer science), as well as postpone or leave the workforce for childbearing and child care. When they return to work, women have lower earnings than men because, even in higher paying occupations, their human capital has deteriorated or become obsolete (Kemp, 1994).

WHY IS SEXUALITY IMPORTANT?

For functionalists, sexuality is critical for reproduction, but people should limit sex to marriage and forming families. Functionalists view sex outside of marriage as dysfunctional because most unmarried fathers don't support their children. The offspring often experience poverty and a variety of emotional, behavioral, and academic problems (Avellar and Smock, 2005).

You might be tempted to dismiss the functionalist view of limiting sex to marriage as outdated. Worldwide, however, sex outside of marriage is prohibited and *arranged marriages*—in which parents or relatives choose their children's future mates—are the norm. Most children agree to arranged marriages because of social custom and out of respect for their parents' wishes. The matches solidify relationships with other families and ensure that the woman's sexual behavior will be confined to her husband, avoiding any doubt about the offspring's parentage (see Benokraitis, 2015).



Arthur Greenberg/Alamy Stock Photo

Some functionalists encourage marrying during one's mid-to-late twenties instead of delaying marriage. The benefits include enjoying more frequent sex, having an easier time getting pregnant, and being able to have more than one child than people who marry in their thirties or later (Wilcox, 2015).

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics fault functionalist gender role perspectives on three counts. First, even during the 1950s, white middle-class male sociologists ignored almost a third of the labor force that was composed of working-class, immigrant, and minority women who played *both* instrumental and expressive roles. Second, functionalists tend to overlook the fact that many people don't have a choice of playing only instrumental or expressive roles because most families rely on two incomes for economic survival. Third, the human capital model assumes that women have lower earnings than men because they "choose" lower paying occupations. As you saw earlier, however, there's a gender pay gap across *all* occupations, even those that require advanced degrees.

Functionalists tend to reject sexual relationships outside of marriage. Compared with married couples, for example, those who cohabit have poorer quality relationships and lower happiness levels. As you'll see in Chapter 12, however, marriage doesn't guarantee long or happy relationships.

Antigay discrimination, which is legal in 28 states, is dysfunctional. Companies don't attract young and talented LGBT workers, and forbidding transgender people to use a bathroom that corresponds to their gender identity has sparked considerable interpersonal and group conflict (Green, 2016; McCarthy, 2017).

9-6b Conflict Theory

For conflict theorists, gender inequality is built into the social structure. In both developing and industrialized countries, men control most of a society's resources and dominate women. Like functionalists, conflict theorists see sexuality as a key component of a society's organization, but they view sexuality as reflecting and perpetuating sexism and discrimination.

CAPITALISM AND GENDER INEQUALITY

Conflict theorists maintain that capitalism, not complementary roles, explains gender roles and men's social and economic advantages. Women's inequality is largely due to economic exploitation—both as underpaid workers in the labor force and unpaid domestic workers who care for children and aging family members. In effect, gender

roles are profitable for business. Companies can require their male employees to work long hours or make numerous business trips and not worry about workers demanding payment for child care services that can cost up to \$63,000 a year (Carey and Trap, 2014).

Women comprise 51 percent of the U.S. population, but Congress "looks much like the face of corporate America—overwhelmingly wealthy, white, and male" (Weathers, 2015). Women's underrepresentation in political institutions can help explain why occupational sex segregation, gender pay gaps, and sexual harassment persist.

IS GENDER INEQUALITY LINKED TO SEXUAL INEQUALITY?

From a conflict perspective, gender inequality gives men economic, political, and/or interpersonal power to control or dominate women's sexual lives. Most of the domestic violence and rape victims, in the United States and around the world, are women and girls. In workplace sexual harassment cases, the offender is typically a male supervisor. For example, 40 percent of women in the fast food industry have experienced sexual harassment by a manager, owner, or supervisor at least once a month. In prostitution and sex trafficking, almost all of the victims worldwide are poor women and girls (U.S. Department of State, 2016; Restaurant Opportunities Center United, 2017).

Particularly in the Middle East and some African countries, men dictate how women should dress and whether they can travel, work, receive health care, attend school, or start a business; dismiss women's charges of sexual assaults (including gang rapes); and blame girls for child rape because they're "seducing" older men (Neelakantan, 2006). Many women have internalized such sexism. For example, 25 to 38 percent of women in some African countries, Egypt, Palestine, and Indonesia believe that wives sometimes deserve beatings (e.g., for leaving the house without a husband's permission) (Kaneda and Bietsch, 2015; "The State of Arab Men," 2017).

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Critics point out several limitations of conflict theory. First, women aren't as powerless as some conflict theorists claim. Like men, women often barter to increase their economic and political power. Second, conflict theory often ignores women's exploitation of other women. In the United States, women comprise 19 percent of those involved in the sex trafficking industry. The thriving underground sex economy relies heavily on

A group of men recently surrounded a woman at a busy bus station in Nairobi, Kenya. They violently tore off her clothes because she was wearing a miniskirt, accused her of being a jezebel, and left her naked on the street. Bystanders watched. A week later, about 1,000 women (some dressed in miniskirts) protested the rising violence against girls and women, vowing to wear whatever clothes they want. Some men joined the protestors; others threw rocks or shouted lewd comments.



AP Images/Ben Curtis

nannies, secretaries, and escort services and brothels owned or operated by females (Dank et al., 2014).

Third, capitalism can discourage sexism. For years, Fox News and Bill O'Reilly, the station's popular political commentator, paid up to \$13 million to settle several sexual harassment lawsuits. Fox fired O'Reilly only after more than 70 corporations dropped their ads—largely in response to social media campaigns—because the companies “couldn't afford to alienate women and their considerable purchasing power” (Abbey-Lambertz, 2017; Chira, 2017: B7).

9-6c Feminist Theories

Feminist scholars agree with conflict theorists that gender stratification benefits men and capitalism, but emphasize that women's subordination also includes their daily vulnerability to male violence (Katz, 2006). Feminist scholars, more than any other group of theorists, are especially concerned about men's controlling women's sexual lives.

LIVING IN A GENDERED WORLD

Men comprise 48 percent of the U.S. population age 18 and older, but they account for 98 percent of directors of the 700 top-grossing films since 2007, 97 percent of the televised news media's and ESPN's sports broadcasts, 96 percent of Fortune 500 CEOs, 83 percent of the largest private law firm partners, 81 percent of Congress, 73 percent of college/university presidents, 74 percent of federal and state judges, and 73 percent of generals and admirals (Cooky et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2015; Johnson, 2016; American Bar Association, 2017; Kidder et al., 2017; Merelli, 2017). In many of these sectors, women's representation has decreased or remained about the same for at least a decade.

Women often experience harsher sanctions than men for workplace offenses. In the financial services industry,

for instance, fraud and forgery are punished by demotion or dismissal. Compared with female advisers, males engage in almost three times more fraud and forgery, and are more likely to be repeat offenders. Nonetheless, women are 20 percent more likely to be fired, and 30 percent less likely to find new jobs (Egan et al., 2017).

Sexism is prevalent in almost all workplaces and online environments. Social media has amplified feminist voices, but also silenced them. Once a writer is singled out by an anti-feminist men's group, she's deluged with hateful and threatening messages, both public and private. Males with the fewest skills and lowest status are the most likely to be threatened by and hostile toward an influx of talented women. Regardless of the reasons, some women no longer participate online because of the harassment (Goldberg, 2015; Kasumovic and Kuznekoff, 2015).

Feminist theorists emphasize that gender, race, and social class intersect to form a hierarchical stratification system that shapes people's experiences and behavior. Privileged women have less status than privileged men, but upper-class white men *and* women subordinate lower-class women *and* minority men (Andersen and Collins, 2010). Understanding the interconnections between gender, race/ethnicity, and social class provides a more comprehensive picture of living in a gendered world than does any single variable.

SEXUALITY, SOCIAL CONTROL, AND COMMERCIALIZING SEX

Men assert their power and control—across cultures and over time—through rape, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, exploiting women through prostitution and pornography, forcing women to marry against their will, honor killings, FGM/C, and punishing women, but not men, for seeking a divorce or committing adultery (World Health Organization, 2013).

Sex is big business. Men's testosterone levels decline naturally with aging, but are also due to obesity and alcohol. Pharmaceutical companies "have seized on the decline in testosterone levels as pathological and applicable to every man." As a result, sales of testosterone-boosting drugs are surging even though they increase the risk of heart attacks (La Puma, 2014: A21; O'Connor, 2014).

In 2015, the Food and Drug Administration approved the drug flibanserin, marketed as Addyi, to increase premenopausal women's sexual desire. Some women's groups lobbied for the "female Viagra," but a recent study found that flibanserin resulted in "one-half additional satisfying sexual event per month." The medical researchers didn't define "one-half" of a "satisfying sexual event," but concluded that the drug significantly increased the risk of dizziness, sleepiness, nausea, and fatigue. They recommended an "integrative approach" that includes medical, psychiatric, psychological, and couple-relationship treatment (Jaspers et al., 2016: 457, 461).

Pornography, "sex drugs," and the earlier discussion of the "sexy babes" trend are just a few examples of the increasing *commercialization of sex*, making sexuality a commodity that can be sold for financial gain. Commercializing sex demeans both women and men, but the "products" are usually women.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Feminist explanations are limited for several reasons. First, they pay little attention to parenting problems that many men face (try to find a diaper-changing station in the men's restroom, for example, or take time off from work to care for a sick child). Second, feminist analyses are inclusive, but this strength can also be a weakness. Regarding the gender pay gap, for example, should race, ethnicity, or social class be given priority in implementing change? Third, are feminist scholars overstating women's underrepresentation in some sectors? Since 2010, for instance,



Many sexually healthy people in their 20s to 60s now take drugs like Viagra and Addyi. Are the drugs an example of commercializing sex?

both cable and network shows have featured women in strong leading roles (e.g., *Girls*, *How to Get Away with Murder*, *Scandal*, *Madam Secretary*, *Nurse Jackie*) (O'Keefe, 2014; Blay, 2015). And, like conflict theorists, feminist scholars are sometimes accused of glossing over women's exploitation of others. In Iraq, for example, sex traffickers are often women who target the youngest girls because virgins bring the highest prices (Naili, 2011).

9-6d Symbolic Interaction

Whereas functionalist, conflict, and some feminist theories are macro level, symbolic interactionists focus on the everyday processes that produce and reinforce gender roles. We "do" gender, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, by adjusting our behavior and our perceptions depending on the sex of the person with whom we're interacting (West and Zimmerman, 2009). Our sexual expression, similarly, isn't inborn but a product of socialization, and what families and other societal groups deem as appropriate and inappropriate behavior (Hubbard, 1990).

GENDER IS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

For interactionists, gender is a social creation, and we learn gender roles through everyday social interaction. For example, when teachers tell girls and boys that both are equally capable in math and science, "the difference in performance essentially disappears" (Hill et al., 2010: 2). When, on the other hand, teachers discourage girls from pursuing math and science, girls fare worse than boys on exams, enroll in fewer advanced math and science courses in high school and college, and, consequently, choose lower-paying careers (Lavy and Sand, 2015). Thus, teachers' gender bias can affect occupational choices and earnings in adulthood.

Believing in gender differences can actually *produce* differences. Because men are self-confident about their worth, they're four times more likely than women to ask for a raise. When women do ask for a raise, they ask for 30 percent less than do men. Men in higher-level positions who aren't promoted often threaten to quit and are offered retention bonuses to stay. Women typically decide to work harder and try again next year (Lipman, 2015).

SEXUALITY IS ALSO A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

For interactionists, sexuality is also socially constructed. As with gender roles, we *learn* to be sexual and to express our sexuality differently over time and across groups because the people around us affect our attitudes and behavior. For example, students who attend conservative



AP Images/Altar Qadiri

Activists supporting the “kiss of love” campaign in New Delhi, India.

religious high schools are less likely than their public school counterparts to report same-sex attraction or to identify as LGBT in adolescence or young adulthood (Wilkinson and Pearson, 2013).

In many Middle Eastern countries, men have pre-marital sex but don't marry women who aren't virgins (Fleishman and Hassan, 2009). In the United States, as you saw earlier, men who have casual sex are “studs,” whereas women are “sluts.” Thus, sexual double standards are socially constructed.

In China, a university that planned to publicly shame students who engaged in “uncivilized behavior” (e.g., hugging or kissing in public) withdrew the policy after widespread protests. In much of India, people may be beaten for kissing on the street or even holding hands. To protest such moral policing by right-wing groups,

two college students started a “Kiss of Love” campaign on Facebook. Despite arrests, hundreds of people joined the demonstration. Similar protests quickly spread to other cities (Ming, 2011; Bhardwaj, 2014).

CRITICAL EVALUATION

A common criticism is that interactionists ignore the social structures that create, maintain, or change gender roles and gender inequality. Many 18- to 32-year-olds plan to share earning and household/child care responsibilities equally with their future partners. An equal division of labor is unlikely, however, because current workplace and government policies don't support women's and men's balancing work and family life. Since 2001, more than 250,000 female soldiers have served as drivers, as pilots, and in other combat roles in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was only in 2015, however, that the Pentagon ended the formal ban on women in combat jobs, an important criterion for career advancement. Thus, people don't have as much ability to shape their lives as interactionists claim.

Interactionists emphasize that language, erotic images, and other symbols evoke sexual interest or desire, but they neglect the relationship between biological factors and sexual orientation. Thus, interactionism doesn't explain why siblings, even identical twins—who are socialized similarly—may have different sexual orientations. A third limitation is that interactionists don't explain why, historically and currently, women around the world are considerably more likely than men to be controlled and sexually exploited. Such analyses require macro-level analyses that examine religious, political, and economic institutions.

STUDY TOOLS 9

READY TO STUDY? IN THE BOOK, YOU CAN:

- Check your understanding of what you've read with the Test Your Learning Questions provided on the Chapter Review Card at the back of the book.
- Tear out the Chapter Review Card for a handy summary of the chapter and key terms.

ONLINE AT CENGAGEBRAIN.COM WITHIN MINDTAP YOU CAN:

- Explore: Develop your sociological imagination by considering the experiences of others. Make critical

decisions and evaluate the data that shape this social experience.

- Analyze: Critically examine your basic assumptions and compare your views on social phenomena to those of your classmates and other MindTap users. Assess your ability to draw connections between social data and theoretical concepts.
- Create: Produce a video demonstrating connections between your own life and larger sociological concepts.
- Collaborate: Join your classmates to create a capstone project.