GENDER

SECOND EDITION

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PREFACE

Writing a textbook is a challenge even for folks with lots of teaching experience in the subject matter. We would never have dared take on this project without Karl Bakeman's initial encouragement. His confidence in our vision was inspiring and kept us going until the project could be placed into the very capable hands of Sasha Levitt, who ushered the first edition to completion with her meticulous reading, thoughtful suggestions, and words of encouragement. Sasha has since become an invaluable part of the revision process, with a perfect mix of stewardship, cheerleading, and collaborative fact-checking. She has kept us on target conceptually as well as chronologically, challenged us to think hard about the points that first-edition readers had raised, and yet kept the revision process smoothly moving forward to meet our deadlines. Without her firm hand on the tiller, our occasional excursions into the weeds might have swamped the revision with unnecessary changes, but her attention to updating sources kept us cheerful with the new evidence we landed. The revision might have ballooned with the new material we identified, but her editorial eye has kept us in our word limits without sacrificing anything important. Sasha has become a true partner in the difficult process of adding the new without losing the old, and we could not have pulled it off without her.

Of course, Karl and Sasha are but the top of the mountain of support that Norton has offered from beginning to end. The many hands behind the scenes include project editor Diane Cipollone for keeping us on schedule and collating our changes, production manager Ashley Horna for turning a manuscript into the pages you hold now, assistant editors Erika Nakagawa and Thea Goodrich for their logistical help in preparing that manuscript, designer Jillian Burr for her keen graphic eye, and our copyeditor, Katharine Ings, for crossing our t's and dotting our i's. The many images that enrich this book are thanks to photo editors Travis Carr and Stephanie Romeo and photo researchers Elyse Rieder and Rona Tuccillo. We are also grateful to have discovered Leland Bobbé, the artist

whose half-drag portraits fascinated us. Selecting just one for the first edition was a collaborative process aided by the further creative work of Jillian Burr and Debra Morton Hoyt. Selecting a second was equally exciting and challenging. We're grateful for the result: striking covers that we hope catch the eye and spark conversation.

We would also like to thank the reviewers who commented on drafts of the book and its revision in various stages: Rachel Allison, Shayna Asher-Shapiro, Phyllis L. Baker, Kristen Barber, Miriam Barcus, Shira Barlas, Sarah Becker, Dana Berkowitz, Emily Birnbaum, Natalie Boero, Catherine Bolzendahl, Valerie Chepp, Nancy Dess, Lisa Dilks, Mischa DiBattiste, Erica Dixon, Mary Donaghy, Julia Eriksen, Angela Frederick, Jessica Greenebaum, Nona Gronert, Lee Harrington, Sarah Hayford, Penelope Herideen, Melanie Hughes, Miho Iwata, Rachel Kaplan, Madeline Kiefer, Rachel Kraus, Carrie Lacy, Thomas J. Linneman, Caitlin Maher, Gul Aldikacti Marshall, Janice McCabe, Karyn McKinney, Carly Mee, Beth Mintz, Joya Misra, Beth Montemurro, Christine Mowery, Stephanie Nawyn, Madeleine Pape, Lisa Pellerin, Megan Reid, Gwen Sharp, Mimi Schippers, Emily Fitzgibbons Shafer, Kazuko Suzuki, Jaita Talukdar, Rachel Terman, Mieke Beth Thomeer, Kristen Williams, and Kersti Alice Yllo, as well as the students at Babson College, Occidental College, Nevada State College, and the University of Wisconsin–Madison who agreed to be test subjects. Our gratitude goes also to the users of the first edition who offered us valuable feedback on what they enjoyed and what they found missing, either directly or through Norton. We've tried to take up their suggestions by not merely squeezing in occasional new material but by rethinking the perspectives and priorities that might have left such concerns on the cutting room floor the first time around. We hope the balance we have struck is satisfying but are always open to further criticism and suggestions.

Most of all, we are happy to discover that we could collaborate in being creative over the long term of this project, contributing different talents at different times, and jumping the inevitable hurdles without tripping each other up. In fact, we were each other's toughest critic and warmest supporter. Once upon a time, Lisa was Myra's student, but in finding ways to communicate our interest and enthusiasm to students, we became a team. In the course of the revision, we came to appreciate each other's strengths more than ever and rejoice in the collegial relationship we had in making the revision happen. We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we enjoyed making it.

Lisa Wade
Myra Marx Ferree

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IDEAS, INTERACTIONS, INSTITUTIONS

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Institutions

Thus far we've talked about the way that individuals look through gender binary glasses, internalize gender norms, and police their own and others' gender performances. We've also discussed how our ideas about men and women—and our expectations for our own and others' behavior—aren't just different; they're unequal. Finally, we've considered how people get away with breaking gender rules and form communities that support the gender rules they endorse. This makes it seem like, no matter how pervasive the gender binary lens and how strong the pressure to do gender, an individual *can* make the difficult decision to live a gender-neutral or gender-fluid life if he or she wants to. In other words:

Q+A **When it comes down to it, regardless of social construction and social pressure, don't we live in a society in which it's possible to just be an individual?**

The answer to this question is, in fact, no. Gender is a set of ideas and something one does when interacting with other people, but it's also an organizing principle that permeates our social institutions. Because ideas about gender shape the environments in which

we live, these ideas exert an influence on our lives independent of our own beliefs, personalities, and interactions. It's simply not true that if we reject the gender binary as individuals, and refuse to let others police us, we'll be free of gender. Gender—and gender inequality, too—is part of the fabric of our lives.

We'll start by introducing the idea of the institution, then discuss how institutions are gendered in ways that reproduce both difference and inequality.

THE ORGANIZATION OF DAILY LIFE

Most schools in the United States—from kindergarten to college—take a three-month break during the summer. Most kids enjoy the break without asking why, but there's a reason we do it this way. Not a natural reason, but a social one.

Before the late 1900s, urban schools met year-round while rural schools met for only six months, letting students off to help on their families' farms.[2] Urban schools eventually decided to break during the summer because that was when the wealthy liked to travel and also because, before the invention of air-conditioning, schools were oppressively hot and stuffy during those months. As education became more important and fewer kids were growing up on farms, rural schools increased the length of their abbreviated school year to match that of urban schools. Our precious summer vacation was born.

Summer vacation has a history, then, but today we mostly just accept that this is how things are done. It is now part of how Americans "do" school. In this sense, American education is an example of what sociologists call an **institution**, a persistent pattern of social interaction aimed at meeting a need of a society that can't easily be met by individuals alone.

The institution of education meets the needs of individuals to educate their own and others' kids. Giving the next generation the information and skills they'll need to be productive workers and responsible citizens is difficult or impossible for today's parents, who generally don't have the knowledge, the know-how, or the time to teach their kids themselves. In response, we take on education collectively, creating a systematic way to achieve the goal of an educated citizenry.

Carefully organized and controlled, the institution of education dictates the when, where, and how of teaching: the standards, curricula, and credentials students and teachers are held to; occasions for enacting them (like the first day of school, graduation, field trips, and snow days); and teachers' unions that negotiate with districts and states to determine pay. The institution of education

American high school students toss their caps to celebrate completing one stage of education as it is institutionalized in the United States.

involves organizations: primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities as well as federal and state departments of education, private and charter schools, and companies (like those offering the SAT, ACT, and other tests, as well as test prep). There are also commonly accepted routines—parents helping with homework, organizing carpools, and holding fund-raising events—and spectacles like swim meets, senior prom, and graduation.

For the most part, all these organizations and routines are taken for granted as just what school is like. In this sense, much of how we achieve institutionalized tasks is simply normative. **Norms** are beliefs and practices that are well known, widely followed, and culturally approved (like back-to-school shopping trips). Conformity with institutionalized ways of doing things is also secured with formal **policies**, which are explicit and codified expectations, often with stated consequences for deviance (like rules related to attendance). Many policies elaborate on and reinforce norms, transforming common sense into regulations (like no cheating on tests); some policies explicitly are intended to override and change beliefs and practices that have become the norm (like texting in class). Some norms and policies are strongly enforced while others are enforced only weakly.

Because institutions are about *collectively* meeting the needs of individuals, they are very different from the social forces we've discussed so far. We can try

to get cultural ideas we don't like out of our brains, surround ourselves with people who support our personal choices, and accept whatever consequences come with breaking social rules, but it is essentially impossible to avoid institutions. They impose themselves on our lives.

If you didn't have a stay-at-home parent or a parent who is a teacher, for example, your summer vacation was likely inconvenient or expensive for them. Child care during those months may have strained their budget while, depending on your age, leaving you at home to fend for yourself might have been criminal neglect. Yet the trouble it caused your parents didn't make the institution magically transform. Summer vacation is summer vacation. In this way, institutions affect our lives whether we like it or not. Our institutions are social inventions, but they are so pervasively and persistently part of our lives that they seem like concrete, unmovable, nonnegotiable facts of life.

We can't just be an individual, then, because we are part of a society that is replete with institutions. Education is but one example. We also have institutions designed to promote global peace and prosperity (involving, but not limited to, the United Nations, World Health Organization, and Doctors Without Borders); defend the country (the military, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Department of Homeland Security); keep citizens safe from violent crime (neighborhood watch programs, prisons, law enforcement, and the judiciary); enable transportation (airlines, public buses and trains, road construction, highway patrol, waterways); promote social welfare (food-stamp programs and Social Security, psychiatric institutions, child social services); raise the next generation (schools, camps, youth groups, and families); deliver and monitor health care (hospitals, insurance companies, the American Medical Association); promote the national economy (regulations on printing money, incorporating businesses, borrowing and lending, insuring property, discharging debt); entertain, inform, and make life meaningful (newspapers, organized religion, professional sports, art, the film industry); and shape the overall conditions of life and the future of our societies (advocacy organizations, labor unions, nonprofit groups, political parties, and legislative bodies).

These are all institutions. Together, they form the **social structure**: the entire set of interlocked institutions within which we live our lives. We call it a "structure" because institutions, in concert, create a relatively stable *scaffolding*. If we want to be a doctor, for instance, we know we have to go to college and then medical school. The path, or structure, already exists. We know we are expected to follow it and we trust that a medical degree will still be a requirement to begin a career in medicine when we finish our schooling eight or more years later. The stability of institutions, and the relationships between them, provide a framework that enables us to make rational decisions about our future. Structures are helpful because they help us know what we wish to accomplish, as well as how to do so.

Until quite recently, medical schools limited the number of women they allowed to enter degree programs in any given year.

And yet, the social structure is also a source of constraint. Sometimes climbing the scaffolding requires resources we don't have. If we can't afford the combination of tuition and eight years out of the workforce required to become a doctor, we probably won't become one. It wouldn't matter how much medical knowledge and experience we amassed, we'd still be criminals if we practiced without a license. Or we may not have access to the right scaffolding at the right time. In the 1960s and early 1970s, many medical schools did not accept women or they set a 5 to 10 percent cap on female admissions, so many women who were interested in medicine did not apply to medical school, thinking it unrealistic, or didn't get in if they did.

Institutions both enable and constrain our lives, but there is no opting out. We can condemn state and federal governments as incompetent and corrupt, become an anarchist, and stay home on voting day, but Congress is still going to pass legislation to which we will be held accountable. And if we break the law and get caught, we'll face legal penalties even if we personally object to the law. We could go "off the grid" to avoid capitalism, find an isolated spot in the wilderness, cut down trees, build a hut, and live off roots and berries. Then again, where did we get our ax? Will we bring a book on poisonous mushrooms? Even the hermit will buy a few things to get along and, in any case, he or she can't help but draw on knowledge acquired through institutions like schools, family, and the mass media.

We live in, through, and with institutions and, by shaping our opportunities, they shape our lives. These institutions, moreover, are gendered.

GENDERED INSTITUTIONS

A **gendered institution** is one in which gender is used as an organizing principle. In a gendered institution, men and women are channeled into different, and often differently valued, social spaces or activities and their choices have different and often unequal consequences.

Education, for example, isn't just an institution, it's a gendered institution. Education is gendered through both norms and policies. Policies like gendered honorifics for teachers ("Mr." and "Ms."), gender-specific dress codes, and gender-segregated classes, like separate sex education units for girls and boys, make gender an organizing principle of schooling. Meanwhile, informal norms further make gender part of the routine practice of school. There is no policy requiring that the girls populate the monkey bars and boys populate the sports fields at recess, for instance, but that may be how kids distribute themselves nonetheless.[3]

Many American elementary school playgrounds feature this kind of "geography of gender," but the importance of gender often fades once students return to the classroom, where students are rarely seated by gender but instead seated alphabetically or arranged in other ways conducive to an orderly classroom.[4] In education, as well as other institutions, the importance of gender varies.[5] Kindergarten play kitchens and AP math classes, for example, may be more gendered than nap time and Algebra I. **Gender salience**—the relevance of gender across contexts, activities, and spaces—rises and falls across the different parts of the institutional landscape.

Whether via policies or norms, gender is a persistent feature of elementary education, making it a gendered institution. When new students arrive, they are inserted into this already-existing system. The system is reproduced and enforced by a collection of others who assign esteem and stigma, or success and failure, according to how well new students follow or otherwise contend with the existing norms and policies. If you, an intrepid first grader, were to arrive at one of these schools, you would quickly learn when and how gender was important. You could then choose whether to conform or deviate, but you *would* contend with it one way or another.

Gendered institutions are interesting from a sociological point of view because they affirm and enforce both gender difference and inequality. In the next two sections we'll talk about why gendered institutions matter, starting with an intimate example: our plumbing.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GENDER DIFFERENCE

A Room of Her Own

In developed countries, public sanitation is an institution, and thank goodness. It would be impossible for all individuals in a complex society to build and maintain a personal toilet in every location in which they might find themselves, so providing a safe and sanitary way to eliminate personal waste is a social task. Without sanitary institutions, our daily lives would include routine exposure to both the act and product of urination and defecation. We would, in other words, have to poop in public, smelling and stepping over other people's feces, exposed to the diseases that humans harbor in bodily fluids. In fact, 14 percent of the world's population does just that.[6]

Where you live, however, you likely benefit from a sewer system that quietly and invisibly transports human waste to treatment plants where it is variably burned, hauled off to landfills, given to farmers, and released back into the water supply. Above ground, sanitation policies ensure the provision of bathroom facilities in workplaces, schools, restaurants, department stores, government buildings, airports, and elsewhere. We typically find men's and women's rooms in these locations, requiring us to pick one or the other. This makes public sanitation a gendered institution.

The idea that men and women should have separate bathroom facilities emerged during the 1800s. During that era, women and men were first brought together as workers in factories. The idea of men and women working side by side on the factory floor threatened to upset cherished Victorian beliefs about the differences between them. One such belief was that women were more fragile than men and, therefore, less suited to working for pay. Reflecting this belief, the Department of Labor reported in 1913 that a "woman's body is unable to withstand strains, fatigues, and [de]privations as well as a man's."[7] As a solution, another study recommended the provision of "rest or emergency rooms" on the assumption that women were "likely to have sudden attacks of dizziness, fainting or other symptoms of illness."[8] *Restrooms*, a word you likely recognize, were small private rooms with a bed or chair available to women workers struck by some sudden feminine malady. The provision of restrooms reasserted women's fragility, easing the threat that their presence in the workplace posed to the Victorian gender ideology.

Women's restrooms served a second purpose, too. Employers placed them between the factory floor and the women's toilets so that women had to pass through them on their way to the bathroom. Whenever a woman went into the

Nurses rest in a women's "restroom."

restroom, then, men could pretend she was just going to *rest*; they could be in happy denial that women ever went in to *poop*. In other words, sex-segregated bathrooms, with the restroom as a buffer, allowed Victorian women to carefully conceal any sign of bodily functions and allowed men to pretend that women never used the bathroom at all.

The idea caught on. In 1887, Massachusetts enacted the first law mandating sex-segregated toilets.[9] By 1920, forty-three states had followed suit. Today, every state in the United States requires the provision of separate bathrooms for men and women in every public building and private business with a minimum amount of foot traffic.[10]

Gender and Bathrooms Today

Sex-segregation of toilet facilities has become a powerful norm, if an increasingly contested one. Even if we think it's silly, most of us use the "correct" bathroom in public if at all possible. To most of us, using the other gendered bathroom seems *wrong*. This is often true even when the bathrooms in question are stand-alone rooms with a single toilet and a door that locks. Accordingly,

most of us have likely found ourselves waiting patiently in line to use the proper toilet while ones designated for the other sex sit empty.

Notably, if there *isn't* a single stick figure on the door, we'll use the same restroom as someone of the other sex without hesitation. This is true in many smaller businesses and workplaces with only one bathroom. It's also true on airplanes. The bathrooms at the back of the plane *could* be designated male- or female-only but, out of a concern that passengers get back to their seats as soon as possible, they aren't. Men and women also use the same bathrooms at home. Having men's and women's bathrooms in your house would be a novelty, a gag. Everyone knows it's completely unnecessary.

Just as in the Victorian era, then, today's sex-segregated bathrooms serve *social*, not biological functions. Most people don't think that women need a fainting couch within arm's reach, but different bathrooms continue to allow women to keep bodily functions we still define as "unladylike" away from men. Likewise, gender-specific bathrooms allow women to do body work that's supposed to remain invisible; when done in public, fixing one's hair, smoothing one's clothes, checking for blemishes, and reapplying lipstick all reveal to the viewer that appearing effortlessly feminine requires a lot of work and surveillance. Sex segregation of bathrooms gives women a sex-segregated space in which to do this. To a lesser extent, the same is true for men.

Providing different bathrooms for men and women also assumes that everyone needs to protect their private parts from the other sex, but not the same sex. In other words, the policy assumes everyone is heterosexual. That bathrooms are designed without same-sex desire in mind is obvious when we consider that bathrooms not only separate "men" from "women," but are actually designed with the expectation that male-bodied people will expose their penises to one another when urinating. This approach to bathrooms was obviously institutionalized before homosexuality became a part of popular consciousness.

And, of course, sex-segregated bathrooms uphold the gender binary itself. They don't allow for the possibility that some people don't identify as either male or female, are male but look female (or vice versa), appear altogether gender ambiguous, or are in the process of transitioning. Betsy Lucal, the gender-ambiguous sociologist we discussed earlier, described the challenge of using bathrooms in public places:

> *Encounters in public rest rooms are an adventure. I have been told countless times that "This is the ladies' room." Other women say nothing to me, but their stares and conversations with others let me know what they think. I will hear them say, for example, "There was a man in there."*[11]

In response, Lucal has to make efforts to try to reduce the chances that she'll be stared at, insulted, or even confronted by managers or police:

If I must use a public rest room, I try to make myself look as nonthreatening as possible. I do not wear a hat, and I try to rearrange my clothing to make my breasts more obvious. . . . While in the rest room, I never make eye contact, and I get in and out as quickly as possible. Going in with a woman friend also is helpful; her presence legitimizes my own. People are less likely to think I am entering a space where I do not belong when I am with someone who looks like she does.[12]

Trans, genderqueer or fluid, and ambiguous-appearing individuals like Lucal can be significantly inconvenienced by sex-segregated bathrooms, but the binary approach to sanitation can cause everyone problems from time to time, like when we really have to go and there's a long line for one bathroom but not the other, or when we're trying to help a child or elderly person of the other sex use a public toilet. Eliminating sex-segregated bathrooms, or requiring the provision of at least some gender-neutral ones, is often described as a policy that would help nonbinary people, but it would actually help cis people, too.

In the past few years, the politics of bathrooms have increasingly become a topic of public debate. Currently, U.S. federal law makes it illegal for employers to force trans employees to use the bathroom that corresponds to their sex at birth and not their gender identity, but doesn't offer trans students the same protection.[13] Nineteen states have passed laws protecting trans people's right to use the bathroom of their choice in *any* public place.[14] Many airports, sports arenas, and other large facilities have added "family bathrooms" or gender-neutral "disabled" ones, which offer a way around the gender binary for trans folks as well as for fathers with daughters and mothers with sons.

Other states, mostly in the South, have passed or considered bills restricting bathroom rights, largely based on the claim that allowing trans people access to women's bathrooms (but, notably, not men's) is dangerous. Opponents of Houston's failed anti-LGBT discrimination law, which included trans bathroom rights, made the case like this:

Any man at any time could enter a woman's bathroom simply by claiming to be a woman that day. No one is exempt. Even registered sex offenders could follow women or young girls into the bathroom and if a business tried to stop them, they'd be fined. Protect women's privacy. Prevent danger.

A supposed risk to cisgender women and girls, based on an assumption that all penis-bearing humans are potentially dangerous, is a common justification for anti-trans bathroom bills today.

Historically, the vulnerability of women and girls was also the argument made against desegregating bathrooms by race. In the 1940s, the specter of race-integrated bathrooms was used to argue against racial integration more gener-

ally.[15] Opponents of integration pointed out that it would mean the end of white-only bathrooms, falsely claiming that it would put white women in danger from diseases carried by black women. A few decades later, in the 1970s, it was the possibility of black *men* using white women's restrooms that helped sink the proposed equal rights constitutional amendment sought by feminists. So, when opponents of trans bathroom rights make references to women's safety, they are drawing on a long American tradition of portraying white women as vulnerable and white men, black men, and black women as dangerous. Today it is supposedly trans women who are the threat; the details have changed, but the strategy is the same.

The example of sex-segregated bathrooms shows how institutions can be gendered, as well as how the intersection of gender with other identities can be politicized. It also reveals how policies can enforce ideas about gender and be both introduced and changed when there is political and public will. And the politics around trans access to restrooms is a good reminder that institutional changes can often have effects well beyond the targeted constituency, giving everyone more flexibility in how they use the facilities.

Institutions, though, do more than make certain ideas about gender difference part of daily life, they also contribute to gender inequality. To understand this latter point better, let's turn to an institution many of us first encounter on the school playground: sports.

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GENDER INEQUALITY

How individuals experience sports varies tremendously. Some find it intimidating, some exhilarating; some shrink from the competition, others come alive under pressure. Some of us are blessed with strong and graceful bodies that bound, bend, and twist; others of us struggle to gain quickness, coordination, and endurance. We all have to work harder at this as we get older and our bodies become less spry.

Regardless of whether we like sports, they're part of an institution that shapes our experiences. Little Leagues and after-school programs are complex organizations that engage children in sports in prescribed ways. Once American children start school, they may be required to take physical education classes that teach certain sports and not others; schools are also sites where team play and competition are taught and encouraged. Our teams need someone with whom to have matches, bouts, or games, so other schools nearby also need to field teams for the same sports. The space and equipment requirements for various sports—tracks, courts, fields, balls, bats, mitts, and sticks—are provided by

The aerial view of a high school in Idaho is a testament to the infrastructure required to support the institutionalization of popular American sports.

schools and city and state parks departments and manufactured and sold by companies for profit.

Colleges and universities also allocate money, space, and time to athletics. They are driven not just by enjoyment but by the public exposure and potential alumni dollars that accrue to schools with successful or otherwise beloved teams. They have relationships with middle and high schools that funnel talented students into colleges offering scholarships. The mass media follow certain college sports, making games lucrative for colleges and networks alike. Companies, in turn, can count on televised or streamed sporting events to find audiences to which they can advertise their goods and services. Regulatory bodies, such as the NCAA, define the rewards that sports can offer to athletes and the standards of the competition.

In fact, the entire economy benefits from the institution of sport. In the United States, sales of sporting goods exceeded $87 billion in 2016.[16] Major League Baseball and the National Football League (the two most lucrative sports in the United States) earned $10 billion and $14 billion, respectively, in 2017.[17] The U.S. sports industry, put together, is worth nearly $500 billion. Individuals who profit—a list too vast to compile here, but one that includes not just owners, athletes, sports journalists, merchandisers, and marketing executives, but also cashiers, janitors, vendors, ticket takers, and owners and employees of nearby souvenir shops, hotels, bars, and restaurants—are all invested in the industry. Meanwhile, there

is a vast infrastructure (stadiums, arenas, tracks) and media empire (an ever-multiplying number of ESPN channels along with at least seventeen other sports networks).

Sports are an impressive behemoth of institutionalization. And they are also strongly gendered, making them an institution that, despite having changed dramatically in the past several decades, continues to work to establish a hierarchy among men and demonstrate women's supposed inferiority.

Separating the Men from the Boys

One of the first recreational physical activities taken up by women was bicycling. It was the 1890s, and it changed women's lives.[18] Bicycles made women mobile. They allowed women to travel miles from their homes. Bicycles required lighter garments with fewer restrictions of movement, inspiring changes in the norms of women's dress. "Let me tell you what I think of bicycling," said the women's rights activist Susan B. Anthony. "I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel."[19] Bicycles gave women *freedom*.

People didn't like it.

Doctors warned that women were unfit for exertion and that bike riding would cause headaches, heart trouble, depression, insomnia, and exhaustion.[20] They told women that riding bikes was to risk getting "bicycle face," a possibly permanent clenching of the jaw and bulging of the eyes caused by strain. Bicycling caused women to be flushed, or pale, and grimacing, but weary. It should be reserved, the doctors insisted, for men.

Women didn't listen. They rode bikes and, in the next one hundred years, would progressively risk their faces and put their bodies to the test, integrating sport after sport. Today, millions of women play sports around the world. In fact, almost as many high school and college women play sports as do men.[21]

Despite the ordinariness of the female athlete today, though, sports are still considered masculine.[22] Sports are part of a boy's basic "manhood training."[23] They are "[t]he epitome of what a man's supposed to be."[24] Playing sports—and thinking, watching, and talking about sports—is "astonishingly important" for young men.[25] Not surprisingly, then, most boys get involved with sports at some level. Their first plush toy may be a soccer ball; their first T-shirt may feature a baseball and bat. A boy's first memories of bonding with his father may involve watching football on TV or playing T-ball in the backyard. Informal games in the neighborhood may transition into Little League and then participation on school-based teams.

Because sports are so strongly associated with masculinity, excelling in sports is one way for young boys to show they're "real boys" and, later, "real men."

Sports, though, don't simply offer boys and men an avenue through which to claim esteem; they place individual boys and men into the hierarchy of masculinity. Recall that sociologist Michael Messner described his decision to embrace sports as his first "engagement with hegemonic masculinity," a moment in which he accepted that he would have to belittle other men if he was to ascend the hierarchy.[26] Importantly, he notes that sports aren't just about individual accomplishment; they are also about competition: "It is being better than the other guys—*beating them*—that is the key to acceptance."[27] As Messner argues, sport "serves partly to socialize boys and young men to hierarchical, competitive, and aggressive values."[28] While some men excel, others fail. Picking teams may be one of the most formative experiences of hierarchy in kids' lives, one that can be traumatic for those boys picked last—or exhilarating for a girl chosen to be "one of the guys." In this sense, sports, especially the most masculinized sports, is one way that we affirm the value of masculinity for everyone.

Most men, of course, eventually focus their energies elsewhere. As men recognize that it's unlikely that they'll become professional athletes, many turn their attention to their educations, careers outside of athletics, or the daily rhythms of raising a family. But the institution of sport will likely continue to play a symbolic role in their lives. Some men trade the physical competition for a more passive consumption of televised sports and sports news. Men cheer for their respective teams on big flat-screen TVs, engaging in friendly trash-talking of opposing teams and their fans. They jostle for relative position by owning better paraphernalia, holding season tickets with better seats, knowing sports history and statistics more thoroughly and, of course, bragging when their team wins. It's a culture-wide, feel-good, male-bonding extravaganza, one that retains a competitive aspect as fans jostle for dominance. Men who aren't interested in sports suffer many of the same disadvantages as men who don't play well.

No matter that most men aren't especially impressive athletes themselves. Because they're men, even couch potatoes can point to the game and claim they share something important and meaningful with LeBron James, Aaron Rodgers, or Cristiano Ronaldo.[29] As one male fan said: "A woman can do the same job I can do—maybe even be my boss. But I'll be damned if she can go on the football field and take a hit!"[30] Of course, the vast majority of men couldn't "take a hit" either, but this is beside the point. Instead, sports like football serve as a *cultural* testament to the idea that, no matter what happens, men are men and women are women.

A Team of Her Own

Most Americans will agree that men are naturally better athletes by virtue of their size and strength. But the truth is that our culture has selected for sports

that emphasize the few physical advantages men have over women, even going so far as to define physical activities in which women outperform men as not sports at all. In an alternative reality in which this didn't happen, we can imagine a different world of sports, one that worshipped and rewarded the physical skills in which the average woman excels more than the average man. The philosopher Jane English tried such a thought experiment. She pondered:

> *Speed, size, and strength seem to be the essence of sports. Women are naturally inferior at "sports" so conceived. But if women had been the historically dominant sex, our concept of sport would no doubt have evolved differently. Competitions emphasizing flexibility, balance, strength, timing, and small size might dominate Sunday afternoon television and offer salaries in [the] six figures.*[31]

In English's thought experiment, basketball and football are replaced by gymnastics and horseback riding, with nonstop coverage of long-distance marksmanship and billions of dollars spent on dance competitions.

Rhythmic gymnastics is exceptionally athletic and offers feats of strength and skill to admire, but it is not a prized and well-rewarded part of U.S. sports culture.

This is not our world. Instead, media coverage of sports keeps a raw, grimacing, bulging, powerful male body front and center in our culture.[32] It's no accident, argues Messner, that the most popular sports in America are also ones based on what he terms "the most extreme possibilities of the male body."[33] Using American football as an example, he explains:

> *Football . . . is clearly a world apart from women. . . . In contrast to the bare and vulnerable bodies of the cheerleaders, the armored male bodies of the football players are elevated to mythical status, and as such, give testimony to the undeniable "fact" that there is at least one place where men are clearly superior to women.*[34]

The bodies of these professional athletes serve as icons of masculine physical achievement. Their extraordinary feats of athleticism tell a story about men and male bodies. In this way, the symbolic link between the male spectator and the male athlete establishes men's supposed superiority over women.

On the assumption that women are lesser athletes than men, the institution of sport segregates women and men in almost all cases. There are some exceptions—equestrianism and synchronized swimming are sex integrated (though we see few men in the latter)—but, in general, sex segregation in sports is the rule. Almost all team sports feature sex-segregated teams, leagues, meets, and games that ensure men and women never compete with or against one another. Likewise, individual sports like long-distance running, swimming, and ski jumping usually do not put men and women in direct competition. They even rank records separately.

Both those on the political left and political right tend to think this is a good way to organize sports, given the assumption that men are stronger, faster, and bigger than women. If women played with or against men, it is argued, they'd get hurt; if they competed against men, they'd lose; and if they went out for the same team, they wouldn't get on. Accordingly, sex-segregated teams are supported by both conservatives who think women are more fragile than men and liberals who want women to have the same opportunities.

Sorting by sex, however, also organizes sports in ways that affirm cultural beliefs in gender difference and inequality. We will explore two different ways that sex segregation is used to affirm a hierarchical gender binary.

Different but Equal?

First, sorting allows us to require—with both policies and norms—that men and women play the same sports in different ways. Both women and men play hockey, for instance, but whereas men are allowed to "check" (body slam) one another, it is against the rules for women to do so and punishable with penalties. Likewise, tackle football is the province of "real men"; women (and "lesser men") are allowed to play "flag" (also sometimes called "powder puff") football. At the Olympics, female competitors in BMX, or bicycle motocross, ride a shorter course with less difficult obstacles than their male counterparts; so do the women who compete in slalom, downhill, and cross-country skiing.[35] In the case of baseball, women are sorted into a related but different game, softball, with its own equipment and rules. These differing policies—especially those that forbid women to be as physically aggressive or take on the same challenges—mean that women and men are required to do sports both differently and unequally, with women doing a lesser version. Whether women and girls *could* play or ride the way men and boys do remains an open question this way; the rules ensure that we'll never know.

The different aesthetic expectations for male and female athletes, sometimes encoded in judging guidelines, also create sports that reinforce beliefs about men's and women's talents and abilities. Writing about the feminine apol-

ogetic in figure skating, sociologist Abigail Feder keenly observed that one of a female skater's most useful talents is the ability to disguise the incredible athleticism required and, instead, make it look effortless.[36] Whereas male figure skaters have been valued for appearing powerful and aggressive on the ice, the judging norms for female figure skaters frown upon this. Instead of athleticism, an ability to look beautiful and graceful is valued in women. She is supposed to look serene and at rest, no matter that she is launching herself into the air at twenty miles an hour or rotating so quickly through a flying sit-spin that she might give herself a nosebleed.

Bodybuilding is on the flip side of the gender binary but has the same gendered expectations. Judges are instructed to evaluate men only on how muscular they are, but to judge women on both their muscle development and their femininity.[37] The International Federation of Bodybuilding and Fitness, the organization that sets the rules for judging competitions and serves as the gateway to the Mr. and Ms. Olympia competitions, slots women into divisions that limit accumulation of muscle mass: "bikini fitness," "fit model," and "wellness fitness" (some of which have parallel men's divisions and some of which do not).[38]

In these competitions, women can be penalized for being "too big." One judge confessed to a bodybuilder who had taken a disappointing eighth place:

In bodybuilding competitions, rules constrain women's muscular development, rewarding women who display sculpted but not overly muscled bodies. Long hair, heavy makeup, and sparkly bikinis act as a further feminine apologetic.

"As a bodybuilder you were the best, but in a *women's* bodybuilding competition I just felt that I couldn't vote for you."[39] In 2005, the federation officially requested that female bodybuilders reduce their muscle mass by 20 percent and in 2015, the federation ended the Ms. Olympia competition altogether.

The examples of figure skating and bodybuilding show that separating women and men allows us to require that even the most elite of athletic performances conform to gendered expectations. It's circular logic: The idea that men and women have fundamentally different physical abilities is used to institutionalize policies that ensure women and men don't participate in the same sports in the same way. And because they don't, we can easily go on believing that men and women have fundamentally different physical abilities.

Who Loses if Women Compete with Men?

A second way sex segregation in sports protects a belief in the hierarchical gender binary is by ensuring that men and women never compete against one another. But whom does this protect? On the assumption that women would always come in second to men, it might seem like sex segregation protects women, giving them a "chance." And maybe that's true for individual women. But if we zoom out, it becomes clear that it's men as a group, not women as a group, who benefit from sex-segregated sports.

Segregation allows the assumption that men outperform women to go untested. If we integrated sports, this would be put to the test, repeatedly. In those tests, if women always lost, women as a group would lose nothing; we already think they're inferior athletes. But if men lost, they would lose much more than the match; they would lose the presumption of male superiority.

This was Messner's argument. Reflecting on his own experience in elementary school, he wrote:

> *The best athlete in my classes never got to play with us. She was a girl. Somehow we boys all knew that she was the fastest runner, could hit a baseball further than any of us, yet we never had to confront that reality directly. Our teachers, by enforcing strict sex segregation on the playground, protected our fragile male egos from the humiliation that presumably would result from losing to a girl.*[40]

Many young boys and their parents intuit this. In 2011 a high school threatened to forfeit a junior varsity football game unless a girl on the opposing team sat out.[41] Mina Johnson, a five-foot-two-inch 172-pound linebacker, had "gain[ed] a reputation in the league as a standout junior varsity player"; she sacked a six-foot quarterback in her very first game. Nevertheless, not wanting to be the cause of a lost opportunity for her team, she agreed not to play. The opposing

team still lost—60 to 0, in fact—but apparently that was less humiliating than losing to a girl.

In 2017, high school golfer Emily Nash competed alongside her male peers in the Central Massachusetts Division III Boys Tournament.[42] She was allowed to play as a member of the team because her school didn't have a girls' golf team. Because it was otherwise a boys-only tournament, however, her individual scores didn't count. So even though she had the best tournament-wide score, beating every other boy on every team, the first-place trophy went to the male runner-up. Still, by virtue of being able to play at all, the message came through loud and clear: *sometimes girls beat boys at their own game*.

What does sex segregation in sports do? It protects boys and men. As one mother of a boy wrestler put it: It's "unfair for girls to compete against boys. . . . [It puts boys] in a no-win situation. . . . If he wins, it's just a girl, and if he loses, his life is over."[43] It's important to be empathetic to the experiences of men in a world characterized by sexism and androcentrism, but unfair to boys? Hardly. It's extra humiliating to lose to a girl only because we've already decided that women *should* lose.

Still, we might object, doesn't segregating sports by sex give women an opportunity to play that they might otherwise not have? Not really. Gender is neither a necessary nor logical way to organize sports and make competitions fair.[44] Any justification for this criterion is based on using gender as an imprecise substitute for other, better variables: height, weight, or athletic ability.

Consider wrestling, the sport causing the mother quoted earlier such angst. Wrestling matches have traditionally been organized by weight class. People in the same weight class, considered equally paired, wrestle each other. The relevant characteristic here isn't gender at all; it's weight. So men and women of the same weight class should be considered good competitors. Using this logic, girls and women have been pressing coaches to allow them to wrestle and have been joining previously all-male high school wrestling teams since the 1990s. Today, there are thousands of female wrestlers on teams. In fact, in 2006 Michaela Hutchison from Alaska became the first girl to win a state high school mixed-sex wrestling championship.[45] She wasn't the last.

Basketball could also be organized according to size and skill instead of sex. Instead of sex-segregated teams, it might make more sense to separate teams into taller and shorter players. Tall women could play with tall men and shorter men and women could play together. Or, alternately, we could set up mixed-gender teams and then sort them into "fair play" leagues by average height and relative successes. Then agility, speed, and shooting skill could be more directly compared, with all teams competing for the players who have what they need.

The same logic applies to American football, where being big and heavy is an advantage in several positions. Women are almost entirely excluded from football on the logic that they're too small to play. But most men are also too

Proving that wrestling is not just for men, Sara Dosho of Japan and Aline Focken of Germany compete in a bronze-medal match.

small to play football. Having two or more teams organized by size would give everyone a chance to play: men, women, and other folks, too. It would reduce the incentives for teams to strive universally to get ever bigger and would also make hits less dangerous for those who enjoy the game but worry about the physical toll on the body and brain.

Or, if the issue is ability, why not divide up competition that way? Foot races are already organized according to qualifying times, so why is it necessary to further break it down by gender? If a woman *can* lift as much weight or run as fast as a man, why stop her from competing against him? If we desegregated sexed sports, the top ranks of many might be disproportionately populated by cis men, but they would also likely be disproportionately populated by the young, people with resources and leisure time, and other variables that predict talent and the ability to develop skills. We let the chips fall where they may. We could do the same with gender. Lindsey Vonn, for example, one of the most decorated skiers of all time, whose times very often best those of her male peers, has asked to be allowed to enter men's races. International racing officials have thus far said no.

She acknowledges that this will likely harm her chances of coming in first. "But," she has said, "I would like to at least have the opportunity to try."[46]

If we did this—if we organized sports by weight, height, skill, or qualifying times—women might be less likely than men to rise to the top of some sports, but it'd be much more difficult to claim that women are too small, weak, slow, or fragile to compete with men at all. There'd always be some women who would outperform even some of the best men, as there already are. If we allowed this fact to become clear, the belief that women are lesser athletes than men would be much more difficult to justify. Meanwhile, we'd open sports to everyone: men and women of all shapes and sizes, along with people who have historically been excluded from gender-binary sports almost entirely—trans men, trans women, and people who are known to be intersex.

We might even come to question whether the "top" leagues with competitors with the most extreme body types are actually the most interesting ones to watch. Football played without a premium on huge bodies or basketball played by teams of people with average heights might look more exciting than the leagues that are valued merely because they are "men's" and thus presumed to be "the best." Hockey fans often speak admiringly of the excellent stick work of the women's teams and, with more assists and fewer dunks, women's basketball showcases an impressive cooperation that better reflects the sport's roots. Some men might fit in better in these leagues, and more fans might turn to them, if only they were not disparaged by being classified as "women's."

Sex-integrated sports would also ensure that women got paid what they are worth. Segregated sports make it possible to justify paying female athletes less than male ones. The assumption is that women are inferior athletes and less interesting and impressive to watch, so fans don't support them and media companies don't feature them or put much effort or money into broadcasts. As a result, prize monies and salaries for male athletes far exceed those for female athletes. The *minimum* salary for players in the National Basketball Association, for example, is about $560,000 a season. In contrast, the *average* salary for the Women's National Basketball Association is less than 10 percent of that, at $50,000.[47] The highest-paid professional male basketball player earned over $34 million for the 2017–2018 season. The highest-paid female players made just over $100,000—less than one-fifth of the minimum salary for a male player. In 2017, only one woman made the *Forbes* list of the top one hundred highest-paid athletes: Serena Williams.[48]

These disparities in income are pervasive throughout the sports world, even once we account for gender differences in performances. Concluding a study of pay in professional golfing, professor of sport management Todd Crosset acknowledged that male golfers outperform female golfers on average, but these differences are, all things considered, very small.[49] Both sets of golfers are

remarkably dedicated, skilled, and talented. To Crosset, the vast differences in prize money—regularly over $300 million for the men's Professional Golf Association Tour, compared to less than $70 million for the Ladies Professional Golf Association Tour—largely reflect the "social significance" of male versus female athletics, not their respective athleticism.[50] Sports fans, he explained, often argue that men's sports get more support and attention because male athletes are better. But, he countered:

> *If it was truly skill that fans were going to see, how can we explain the lack of fan support for women's college teams that could easily handle boys' high school teams, which draw more fans. Quite simply, sports have more significance for men regardless of skill level.*[51]

It's sexism that drives the unequal attention and rewards that accrue to male and female athletes; institutionalized sex segregation is the foundation on which unequal attention and rewards rest.

The policy and norms of sex segregating sports make sports an institutional arena in which beliefs in gender difference and inequality are routinely and ritualistically rehearsed. This is part of the institution of sport, one we can opt into or out of but can't ignore or overrule. If we want to be athletes, we have to play by these rules. If we're a girl and we want to play baseball, we're up against more than the discomfort that sometimes comes with breaking gender rules and the policing that follows; we're also confronted by the fact that there isn't a girls' baseball team at our school. Even if there *were* a girls' baseball team, though, who would we play? Girls' baseball teams haven't been institutionalized and, since it takes a community to field an entire league, changing this is very difficult.

We discuss the difficulty of changing institutionalized ways of doing things in the final section of this chapter.

INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA AND CHANGE

As individuals we may wish to change or ignore the institutions we confront, but this is far more difficult with institutions than it is with ideas or social interactions. Institutions are more resistant to change and more difficult to ignore because institutional patterns reflect widespread norms and are often encoded in formal policy. A return trip to the restroom offers a case study.

Sociologist Harvey Molotch was part of a failed effort to install a gender-neutral bathroom during the renovation of a space designed for the edgy New

York University Department of Social and Cultural Analysis.[52] While the department included trans faculty members who would clearly benefit from a gender-neutral bathroom and other faculty members were intrigued by the opportunity to push gender boundaries, they nevertheless ended up with conventional sex-segregated toilets. Why?

The first reason was related to inconvenience and expense. Contractors and designers are intimately familiar with the design requirements of sex-segregated bathrooms, making the installation of sex-integrated ones a new challenge. Sitting down to design a new kind of bathroom takes time and this is expensive. The administration was reluctant to draw out the process and spend extra money on a brand new restroom design. It was cheaper and faster to rely on the tried-and-true approach. Molotch wrote:

> Everyone "knows" what a building restroom should be like, that it will involve toilets and sinks, signs and separations, some spaces with urinals and some not.... To innovate means going back to the drawing boards, rethinking architectural opportunities and constraints, and checking continuously to make sure everyone is aware of the plan now being implemented. This is a hassle, one with financial implications and new potentials for error.... Working through details of restroom innovation was an extra, one that burdened an already crowded agenda.[53]

The second reason the initiative failed had to do with discomfort with the very idea. The NYC Department of Buildings requires all large new buildings to install sex-segregated facilities, so the university had to submit a petition for an exemption. The city turned them down. The university appealed, but lost. The building commissioner expressed "concerns about security and liability."[54]

This result suited many of the future inhabitants of the building just fine, it turned out. Not everyone actually liked the idea of gender-neutral restrooms. Some of the female faculty cited the belief that men were messy, a discomfort with potential for male nudity, and a fear of meeting strange men in close quarters during off-hours. Meanwhile, the non-faculty staff generally was not on board with radically rethinking gender. They weren't gender radicals; they just wanted to pee in peace. Molotch's hopes for change were crushed.

As this example shows, doing things differently can be challenging on multiple fronts. This isn't to say that institutions can't be changed, but changing them requires a *collective* shift in norms and routines. Sometimes this simply means a slow but steady disinvestment in the old ways, like when school and workplace dress codes began to allow girls and women to wear pants. Other times, institutions change in response to shifts in the broader social structure, like when women entered the workforce during World War II.

Sometimes change is a result of the collective work of activists and politicians. It was this kind of work that resulted in the passage of Title IX, an amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."[55] Passed in 1972, Title IX meant that schools and colleges receiving federal funding could not legally give preference to men. Instead, they had to allocate their resources to men and women in proportion to their interest and enrollment.

Here is where sports come back in. The intention of Title IX was to change the norms that gave preference to men in all sorts of fields, from medical schools to sports teams. Because most schools and colleges have extensive athletics departments, sports were included among the resources that schools were required to dole out fairly. Eventually, even grudging and partial compliance with the requirements of Title IX dramatically increased the opportunity for women to play sports (Figure 8.1). In the forty-five years since the passage of Title IX, the number of female athletes climbed more than tenfold among high school girls and more than threefold among college women. Today, 42 percent of high school athletes and 44 percent of college athletes are female.[56]

The changes in the institution of sport are visible in baseball. When Kay Johnston wanted to play Little League in 1950, she cut off her braids, put on her

FIGURE 8.1 | PARTICIPATION IN NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP SPORTS
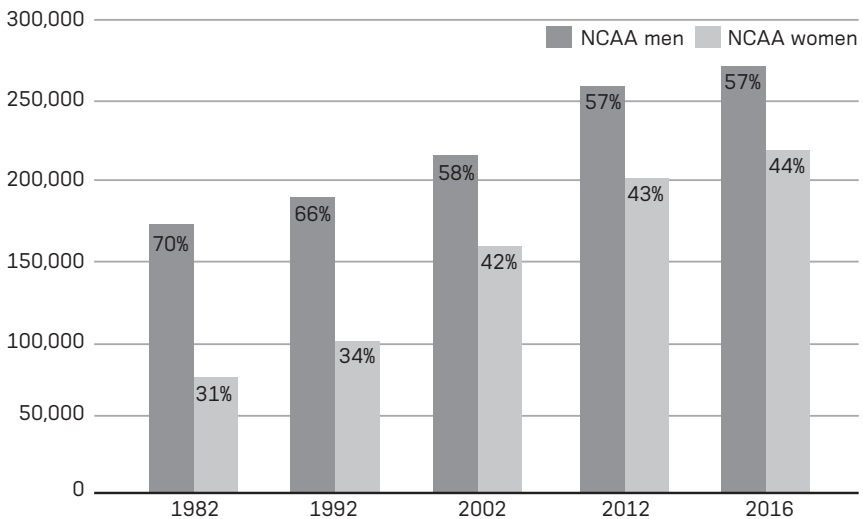
Source: NCAA, "45 Years of Title IX: The Status of Women in Intercollegiate Athletics," www.ncaa.org/sites/default/files/TitleIX45-295-FINAL_WEB.pdf.

Mo'ne Davis made the cover of *Sports Illustrated* for her Little League World Series shutout. Seen in the middle of what might be a 70 mph pitch, Davis is an example of what girls and women can do when they are given the opportunity.

brother's clothes, and signed up under the name "Tubby." She made the team, but when she was found out, the national organization instituted a formal policy forbidding girls from playing.[57] After Maria Pepe challenged this exclusion in 1972, the court decided in 1974 that antidiscrimination law demanded opportunities for girls to play Little League ball. Some of them have proved spectacularly good. Ten girls have played on boys' teams that made the Little League World Series, and Mo'ne Davis, a thirteen-year-old with a 70 mph fastball, pitched a shutout there in 2014.

Although most girls who play are still funneled into softball, athletes like Davis aren't taking no for an answer. And the people in charge of baseball are starting to notice. As a result, the idea of integrating baseball seems more possible than ever before. In 2016, another woman pitcher, Sarah Hudek, was awarded the first college baseball scholarship. In 2017, Major League Baseball invited one hundred girls to a "Trailblazer" weekend of competitive baseball, following up in 2018 with a "Breakthrough" series of invitational games to offer girls major league coaching and scouting.[58] Who knows what will happen next.

The remarkable increase in the number of women playing sports—from Little Leagues to the pros—reveals the power of institutions to shape the experience of individuals and change social ideas. New policies allowing women to

play will shift norms, making the idea that women are biologically fated to lose to men seem less and less reasonable. Though we've got a long way to go, we've also come quite a long way from the Victorian idea that women are so weak they need a room to rest.

Institutions often resist change, but they are not unchangeable. When even a minority of people recognizes that institutionalized practices are cultural, not natural and inevitable, they open opportunities for themselves and others who want to do things differently. This isn't always easy, but it's always possible. And institutions never change unless people—like you—begin to question them. Taking chances and bucking expectations may not lead anywhere in your lifetime—both Kay "Tubby" Johnston and Maria Pepe were booted out of Little League—but, over time, a few rocks can become a landslide. In the moment, one never knows what small acts of defiance are making history, but one thing is for sure: history will be made.

Revisiting the Question

Q+A   **When it comes down to it, regardless of social construction and social pressure, don't we live in a society in which it's possible to just be an individual?**

When someone is so focused on the details that they miss the big picture, they are sometimes told they can't see the forest for the trees. Each tree is a unique individual well worth understanding, but together they form a landscape and an ecosystem that is equally important to understand. Thinking in terms of institutions reminds us to zoom out and look at the forest in which we live.

To understand gender, we need to examine the institutional structures and persistent patterns of interaction that are *our* landscape and ecosystem. Because these sometimes present men and women with different opportunities and obstacles, they produce gender difference and inequality regardless of the inclinations or attitudes of the people who move through them. It's not possible, then, to be just an individual. Some things simply resist our personal beliefs and desires about the way the world could or should be.

Once we recognize that some of the institutions central to our daily lives are strongly gendered, it becomes clear that, as sociologist Raewyn Connell once argued, there are "gender phenomena of major importance which simply cannot be grasped as properties of individuals."[59] Societies are bigger than the sum of their parts. Gender isn't just an individual phenomenon; it's an institutional one. These institutions present *real* opportunities and obstacles. Because institutions are designed to last, they prove hard to change. Policies will be stubbornly defended by those who benefit from them, and norms create habits and taken-for-granted expectations that are inherently sticky. Even when we can't

just step out of line and change society to fit our own preferences, individuals working together absolutely can—and always have.

Next . . .

The end of this chapter marks the halfway point of this book. By now you have a strong understanding of how sociologists theorize gender as a set of ideas, a relationship between our bodies and our societies, a series of ongoing actions and interactions, and multiple interconnected institutions. Together they form the **gender order**, the social organization of gender relations in a society. The gender order is pervasive, expanding horizontally to affect all dimensions of a society and vertically to shape everything from the individual to the whole society. It intersects with other social hierarchies, establishing a matrix of domination that includes other inequalities, as well as gendered ones.

You've gained a set of theoretical tools to help you better understand what is going on around you and how your participation both affirms and disrupts gendered ideas, interactions, and institutions. The second half of this book takes a different approach. Using the theory you now know, it takes a closer look at some important parts of life: sexuality, family, the workplace, and politics. Before talking about where we are, however, it's helpful to talk about how we got here. The next chapter picks up where this one left off, with the process and politics of social change.

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66

THE ONLY LASTING TRUTH
IS CHANGE.

—OCTAVIA BUTLER

99

9

Change

We all know the scene. He gets down on one knee in a restaurant that is a tad above his price range. The ladies at the next table, spying him kneeling, clasp their hands to their chests and inhale. The room is suddenly hushed. All eyes turn toward the couple. Out pops the box. Her eyes widen; the bottom lashes moisten with the first sign of tears. He pushes out his arms, meaningfully pressing the box upward in her direction, imploring as he pulls back the velvety lid to reveal a glimmering dia . . . No, not a diamond. The ladies lean in. A thimble!

A small metal cap worn over the tip of one's finger to protect it from needle points was the engagement item of choice for early Americans.[1] It is just one of many items that have served as a symbol of a commitment to marry. Rings didn't become the standard sign of betrothal until the late 1800s and diamond rings only became standard later still, in the 1930s. Despite the hype about how "diamonds are forever," the diamond engagement ring is less than one hundred years old, with no guarantee of lasting into the next millennia.

Marriage is an institution, and a socially constructed one. Today we think about marriage as a source of love, care, and commitment, but it was and continues to also be governed by informal norms and formal laws that determine the rights and responsibilities of spouses. Marriage is also a gendered institution. It used to be much

more so, with substantially fewer rights for women. Diamonds, it turns out, haven't always been a girl's best friend.

Marriage has changed and is changing still. The same can be said for the other institutions we address in this chapter: sexuality, family, and work. Like diamond rings, things that seem timeless are often recent and fragile inventions, including many of the things we take for granted as natural, normal, or inevitable today. This chapter offers a dynamic historical view of what often feel like static traditions. To begin, let's start with one undeniably transformative moment: the arrival of the Puritans on the rocky East Coast of the North American continent.

THE EVOLUTION OF SEX

The notion of the puritanical—zealous adherence to extraordinarily strict religious or moral rules—was named after the Puritans, and rightly so. They believed that sex should be restricted to intercourse in heterosexual marriage with the aim of reproduction. All nonmarital and nonreproductive sexual activities were forbidden, including pre- and extramarital sex, homosexual sex, masturbation, and oral or anal sex, even if married. Violations of the rules were punished by fines, whipping, public shaming, ostracism, or even death.

Women were thought to be especially vulnerable to sexual sin because they were believed to be more sexual than men. Men were socially constructed as stalwart, strong, stoic; women, in contrast, as unstable, indulgent, and emotional. The Puritans considered women to be a "weaker vessel" and, consequently, to have "less mastery over [their] passions."[2] In their reading of the Bible, Eve succumbed to the forbidden fruit not because she was curious, but because she couldn't restrain her desire. Men were supposedly more self-disciplined and concerned with more important things than sex.

The Puritans were downright scandalized by the sexual lives of North America's native residents.[3] They were organized into several hundred ethnolinguistic groups, so their practices and norms varied, but they were consistently more permissive than the Europeans. As we've previously discussed, many tribes accepted intercourse outside of committed relationships, both monogamy and polygamy were practiced, unions were formed and dissolved at will, and same-sex sex and gender nonconformity were accepted. Native Americans also often cared very little about whose child was whose. After the arrival of the French in the early 1600s, one Naskapi man was warned by a missionary that his failure to police his wife's sexual activity might result in her being impregnated by another man. He responded: "You French people love only your own children, but we all love all the children of our tribe."[4]

This Naskapi man could be rather nonchalant about both sexual behavior and parentage, in part because his tribe didn't subscribe to the idea of private property. His attitude is typical of **forager societies** that migrate seasonally, following crops and game across the landscape. Anthropologists and archaeologists have shown that both private property and patriarchy consistently emerge together as societies transition from foraging to settled **agrarian** societies, ones that cultivate domesticated crops.

Since for most of human history the only way to prove paternity was to control women, female sexual freedom is often curtailed when societies transition from forager to agrarian economies. Once communities put down roots, both literally and figuratively, there can be ownership of land. Once there is ownership of land, there can be the consolidation of wealth. Once wealth is consolidated, people become concerned with passing it down to heirs. And once people become concerned with passing down wealth, it becomes important to make sure wives don't become pregnant with other men's babies. The immigrants who came from Europe in the 1600s had already undergone this transition and, accordingly, they had very different ideas about the function of sex than the millions of American Indians who populated North America at the time.

PURITAN MORALITY ENFORCED.

Adherence to the Puritan moral code was often enforced by stringent punishments, such as being locked in stocks for the purpose of public humiliation.

Sex for Babies

Differences like those between American Indian tribes and the Puritan settlers are often described in cultural or religious terms, but there were concrete reasons, too, why the Puritans were so darn puritanical. The colonizers lived a fragile existence: Many people were dying from exposure, starvation, illness, and war. They were threatened with extinction, so reproduction was essential to the group's survival. This motivated the Puritans to channel their sex drive toward the one sexual activity that made babies: penile-vaginal intercourse. It was against the rules to do anything else and also against the rules to not do it. Having intercourse with your spouse was required; women who weren't getting pregnant were encouraged to divorce their husbands and marry new ones.[5]

Population concerns also led the Puritans to be quite forgiving when people broke the rules they held so dear. When there was survival in numbers, both ostracism and punishment by death harmed the community as well as the individual. So even though both men and women broke sexual rules routinely, the harsher penalties were rarely imposed. Instead, fines and public shaming served as a mechanism by which the Puritans could forgive sexual deviations. In other instances, settlers bent the rules for reasons related to the sex ratio. In the Chesapeake-area colonies, for example, men outnumbered women four to one.[6] Women were sparse, so even a "disgraced" woman could count on a man being happy to have her.

Like the rules that guide doing gender, the Puritans' sexual rules were designed to be broken, with exceptions made when it was for the colonists' greater good. They weren't so devoted to their moral principles, it turns out, that they weren't willing to break them for their own benefit. In addition to forgiving their own sins, including killing and raping Native peoples, they made it impossible for the African women and men they enslaved to follow their rules. Slaves were legally denied the right to marry, making nonmarital sex and childbearing inevitable.[7] In a cruel twist, white elites would claim that black "immorality" was "a natural inclination of the African race" in order to defend forced breeding and their rape of female slaves.[8] The colonists extolled godliness, but didn't extend to everyone the opportunity to be godly.

The colonists' sexual values and behaviors were shaped not by religion alone, but also by the rigors and culture of colonization and an economy based on the exploitation and dehumanization of Africans and Native peoples. Their belief in restricting sex to intercourse was compatible with their need to reproduce themselves. When it wasn't—when their population sustainability or economic viability was at stake—they were happy to look the other way, forgive misdeeds, or even make following the rules impossible. The Puritans surely earned their reputation, but beneath the strict rules were human beings who were fallible, rebellious, and brutally strategic.

Eventually the Puritans' approach to sexuality would fall victim to new and different institutional demands and opportunities: economic change, technological innovations, medical advances, and political upsets. One of those was the Industrial Revolution.

Sex for Love

Beginning in the 1700s and advancing through 1900, the Industrial Revolution first brought metal tools and steam-powered manufacturing, then factories, mechanization, and assembly lines. The need for labor drew many people out of

small communities and into cities, where people were more densely packed and more anonymous.

This was a dramatic change. In pre-industrial agrarian societies, the majority of men and women both lived and worked at home, whether on their own farms or those of feudal lords. Together, moms, dads, daughters, and sons grew crops and tended orchards, fed and slaughtered pigs and chickens, milked cows and churned butter, pickled vegetables and salted meat, and made things like soap, candles, and clothes from scratch. Everyone needed to work together to make what they needed to survive. At this time, children were still a necessity. Babies quickly grew up to be helpers and then farmhands.

Industrialization undid all of this. First, it separated work from home. No longer sitting on fertile land, people increasingly had to leave the house to "go to work" in factories, mines, and shops that belonged to others. In return, they received money, their **wage**, with which they would go out and buy the things they once made. The process by which goods transition from something a family provided for itself into something bought with a wage is called **commodification**: the making of something into a **commodity**, a thing that can be bought and sold.

In the era of tenement housing, large families in cramped quarters often necessitated the storage of toddlers in wire cages attached to the windows.

The new industrial economy would dramatically change how people thought about reproduction. Though useful on farms, kids became a burden in cities, where lodging was expensive and overcrowded. This gave couples an incentive to have fewer children, and because industrial production had made condoms increasingly cheap and effective, they had the capacity to limit family size.[9] Marital fertility rates dropped dramatically between 1800 and 1900: from 6 or more children per woman to 3.5 in the United States, England, and Wales.[10]

In this context, a sexual ethic that restricted sex to efforts to make babies didn't make sense. People needed a new logic to guide sexual activity.[11] In response, over the course of the 1800s, Victorians slowly abandoned the idea that sex was only for reproduction, embracing the now familiar idea that sex could be an expression of love.[12] The Romantic Era had arrived.

The Victorians also introduced the **gendered love/sex binary**, a projection of the gender binary onto the ideas of love and sex, such that women are believed to be motivated by love and men by sex.[13] Dualistic thinking about the

opposition of body and soul meant that if women were more romantic than men, they were also less carnal.[14] Reversing Puritan beliefs about women's voracious sexuality, the Victorians feminized love and masculinized sex.

Early feminists were among those who embraced these ideas. They advocated the idea that women took more naturally to both sexual moderation and romantic love. They thought they could convince their contemporaries that women were men's equals if they could persuade them that women were more spiritual. In an effort to attract and support female members, Protestant churches repeated these notions. As this idea spread throughout Victorian society, women were re-imagined as *naturally* chaste, innocent of the vulgar sexual desires felt by men, and motivated by love instead of lust.[15] Men, in contrast, were believed to be more deeply tied to their bodies, constantly torn between the carnal and the celestial. This is when the idea of "opposite sexes" really took hold, as did the **sexual double standard**, different rules for the sexual behavior of men and women.

The Victorians sustained the notion that women were free of sexual thoughts and men were dens of sexual depravity by giving men an outlet for their more perverse inclinations: prostitution. Early capitalism had worsened life for those at the very bottom.[16] Prostitution was a way for poor women to support themselves and their families. At the same time, it functioned to protect "the virgin of the wealthier classes and shield their married women from the grosser passions of their husbands."[17] By one estimate, London alone was home to 8,600 prostitutes in the mid-1800s. Manhattan had one prostitute for every sixty-four men, and there was one for every thirty-nine and twenty-six men in Savannah, Georgia, and Norfolk, Virginia, respectively.[18]

Just as Puritans had used the (impossible to avoid) sexual transgressions of enslaved Africans as proof of their inferiority, Victorian intellectuals would champion the purity of middle- and upper-class women and scorn the "uncivilized" sexual behavior of poor women.[19] Today we know this as the **good girl/ bad girl dichotomy**, the idea that women who behave themselves sexually are worthy of respect and women who don't are not.

At the time, all these ideas were radically new, and they would continue to evolve as American society entered the 1920s.

Sex for Pleasure

The 1920s was a period of economic prosperity, technological innovation, and artistic experimentation. Americans call this decade the Roaring Twenties; in France it is called the *Années Folles*, or the "Crazy Years."[20] This era saw the invention of "sexy," literally; the word was first recorded to mean "sexually attractive" in 1923.[21] The '20s were sexy because, unlike the countryside, the

The Charleston, a jaunty dance invented during the 1920s, allowed men and women to dance side by side as equals instead of together as a lead and follow.

city offered unsupervised mixed-sex mingling that lent itself easily to flirtation and romance.

Concentrations of people with money, free time, and the opportunity to socialize inspired the birth of mass entertainment. Amusement parks catered to flirtatious young people, "nickelodeons" showed newly invented moving pictures with larger-than-life seductions, and burlesque clubs kept the morality police at bay with pasties and G-strings. In Harlem and other centers of African American life, high-end clubs featuring black musicians attracted white patrons, encouraging racial integration and introducing them to a new form of music: jazz. Revelers danced the "hug me close" and the "hump-back rag" in dimly lit ballrooms where singers mastered the art of innuendo, singing "keep on churnin' till the butter come" and "it ain't the meat, it's the motion" (*not* songs about food). As historians John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman wrote, "More and more of life, it seemed, was intent on keeping Americans in a state of constant sexual excitement."[22]

People in small communities, as well as in the upper classes, continued the Victorian tradition of "calling" in which young men were invited to the homes of young women for chaperoned visits. In cities, though, young working people invented "dating."[23] This wasn't dating as we know it today (an effort to find a romantic partner); it was a social strategy. In the interest of being seen and

having fun, a successful dater would "go out" with a different person, preferably an attractive and well-regarded one, every night of the week.

Dating shifted the balance of power. Because it took place in the home, calling was an activity over which women had substantial control. Women decided who came over and when, how they socialized, and provided snacks or entertainments of their choice. As historian Beth Bailey writes, dating "moved courtship out of the home and into the man's sphere."[24] Whereas advice books during the Victorian era strongly discouraged men from calling without being invited, advice books on dating scolded women who would dare "usurp the right of boys to choose their own dates."[25]

Part of the reason men were accorded such an exclusive right involved the expense. Unlike calling, dating required that someone pay for the transportation, food, drink, and entertainment that the couple enjoyed. With no equal-pay laws protecting women's wages, working women could barely afford rent; entertainment was an impossible luxury.[26] This was the basis for **treating**, a practice through which a man funds a woman's night on the town. One government vice investigator, horrified by this new development, reported, "Most of the girls quite frankly admit making 'dates' with strange men. . . . These 'dates' are made with no thought on the part of the girl beyond getting the good time which she cannot afford herself."[27] The owners of establishments, hoping to keep the customers coming, worked hard to convince the public that "treating" was not tantamount to prostitution.

The inequitable responsibility for the cost of dating was not lost on men. Some were resentful of the fact that women now expected to go out on expensive dates. Men were nostalgic for the good old days of calling, which cost them nothing. For their part, women tried to make themselves, literally, worth it. This meant being an attractive and pleasing companion. Whereas for most of American history a plump and voluptuous body had been conflated with health and fertility, "reducing diets" suddenly became all the rage.[28]

Likewise, women began wearing makeup and nail polish, previously used only by sex workers. During the '20s an attractive face and body, as well as a certain degree of sexual accessibility, became more central to a woman's value. Claimed one ad:

> *The first duty of woman is to attract. It does not matter how clever or independent you may be, if you fail to influence the men you meet, consciously or unconsciously, you are not fulfilling your fundamental duty as a woman.*[29]

Cosmetics industry profits increased more than eightfold in just ten years, from $17 million in sales to $141 million.[30]

There were ways in which the '20s created new potential for gender equality, too. Women's growing freedom meant that men and women could mix socially

A lipstick advertisement from the 1930s emphasizes women's efforts to "fascinate" men while also stressing how "natural" rather than "theatrical" or "painted" she would appear.

and hold intimate conversations. Half of all women coming of age during the Roaring Twenties had premarital intercourse, and being a virgin at marriage was beginning to seem quaint. For middle-class men, this freedom meant that they could have sex with female peers instead of with poor women, women they enslaved, sex workers, and each other. These changes brought both men and women pleasure and paved the way for more gender-egalitarian relationships. Many young people were excited by this development and liked the idea of finding a partner who would be a "soul mate," someone who brought them joy and happiness.

Still, sex remained dangerous for women. With birth control information limited by law and still condemned by most churches, 28 percent of women became pregnant before marriage, up from 10 percent in 1850, a rise seen disproportionately among the urban working class.[31] Without a community in place to force men to "do the right thing," and with abortion newly illegal (in all states but one by 1910), women were more likely than those of earlier eras to have a child outside of marriage.[32] Since women were still paid wages much below men's, raising a child alone could lead to a lifetime of poverty, assuming the mother was not forced to hand over the child to an orphanage. In other words, while the 1920s was a time

The Roaring Twenties provided ample opportunity for working-class men and women to mingle and play out from under the watchful eyes of their parents.

of rising heterosexual opportunities, these opportunities came with huge costs to women.

The same was true for individuals who experimented with gender fluidity or experienced same-sex desire. Simply by virtue of crowding, cities made it possible for queer communities to emerge.[33] Meanwhile, the development of mass entertainment, and the sheer range of opportunities a large city could support, allowed sexual and romantic subcultures to thrive. As early as 1908 it was reported that "certain smart clubs [we]re well known for their homosexual atmosphere."[34] No longer tied as tightly to family farms on which biological reproduction—that is, heterosexuality—was a survival strategy, young people could consider putting their personal passions ahead of family responsibilities.[35]

The combination of industrialization, urbanization, the commercialization of leisure, and new freedoms for women all increased the ability of unmarried men and women to congregate without supervision. This freedom altered the environment in which sexuality was experienced, as well as the norms for sexual behavior. Eventually the lifestyle first enjoyed by working-class youth in cities would become "mainstream" and the expression of same-sex desire would become increasingly "normal." With the exception of a short-lived detour in the 1950s, the sexual attitudes and behaviors of young people have become increasingly permissive ever since.[36] Marital practices have changed just as dramatically.

THE EVOLUTION OF MARRIAGE

For thousands of years, marriage served economic and political functions unrelated to love, happiness, or personal fulfillment.[37] Prior to the Victorian era, love was considered a trivial basis for marriage and a bad reason to marry. There were much bigger concerns afoot: gaining money and resources, building alliances between families, organizing the division of labor, and producing legitimate male heirs. For the wealthy and, to some extent, the middle classes, marriage was important for maintaining and increasing the power of families. The concerns of the working classes were similar, if less grand: "Do I marry someone with fields near my fields?" "Will my prospective mate be approved by the neighbors and relatives on whom I depend?" "Would these in-laws be a help to our family or a hindrance?"[38] Marriages were typically arranged by older family members. They thought it foolish to leave something that important to the whims of young people.

These marriages were patriarchal in the original sense of the term. Men were heads of households and women were human property, equivalent to children, enslaved peoples, and servants. A woman was entered into a marriage by her father, who owned her until he "gave her away" at the wedding. We call these

patriarch/property marriages. The husband was the patriarch and his wife was his property.

This logic—that marriage is a form of property ownership—led to many laws that seem outrageous today. If an unmarried woman was raped, for instance, the main concern was the harm to her father's property. She became less valuable when she lost her virginity, so the rapist could make amends for the bad deed by marrying her. It was a "you break it, you buy it" rule. A wife who was believed to be infertile could be discarded, like a broken TV, as she was useless if she couldn't produce sons to pass on her husband's wealth, power, and legacy. If her husband died, she could be inherited like livestock. In many cultures, she was passed on to her husband's brother; the important thing was that her future children still carried her husband's last name.

Feminist activists of the 1800s and early 1900s fought to end patriarch/property marriages. One of the earliest feminist demands was for women to have the legal right to *own* property rather than *be* property. This right would eventually make many other rights possible: the right to vote and decide one's own citizenship; the right to work, keep one's own wages, and build financial credit; the right to have a voice in family decisions; and, if divorced, the right to ask for custody of one's children. All of these issues were part of early feminist struggles.

In response to feminist activism, as well as other forces, marriage would change. By the 1950s, on the heels of industrialization, a new kind of marriage would be institutionalized, the one that we typically and misleadingly call "traditional" today.

The Breadwinner/Housewife Marriage

Industrialization broke up the then-traditional family. As Americans were increasingly pulled into the workplace, husbands and fathers were replaced by employers. Capitalism valued cheap labor regardless of the costs to the family. Since the subordinate status of women and children made their labor especially cheap, capitalists were happy to employ them and pay them less. This drove men's wages down, leading them to fear the end of their authority over their wives and children. Now that even men had bosses, and economic survival depended on an entire family's income, a patriarch's role as head of household could be called into question. If he was no more valuable at work than she was, then gender would no longer organize day-to-day life and patriarchy would vanish.

Intellectuals of the time worried that capitalism would destroy the family completely, but instead of abandoning patriarchal marriage altogether—an option advocated by some at the time—men organized to modify and modernize patriarchy. They did so, in part, through unionization. Pushing back against capitalism, labor unions argued that working men had the right to be able to support

a "home and family" on their wages alone.[39] Through protests, strikes, and boy-cotts, unions carved out a new way of life for adult white men. They instituted laws meant to reduce competition among workers (restrictions on child labor and legislation that barred women and men of color from well-paying jobs) and enable men's wives to stay at home (child-rearing allowances and maternity leaves).

They eventually succeeded in institutionalizing a **family wage**: an income paid to one male earner that was large enough to support a home, a wife, and children. Built upon the family wage, a new kind of marriage emerged, the **breadwinner/housewife marriage**: a separate but equal model of marriage that defined men's and women's contributions as different but complementary. Unlike patriarch/property marriage, breadwinner/housewife marriage did not legally subordinate wives to husbands (that is, she was no longer his property), but it did rigidly define roles: Women owed men domestic services (cleaning, cooking, child care, and sex); in return, men were legally required to support their wives financially. If either failed to play their part, they could sue for breach of contract.

Some societies had stronger unions and, therefore, stronger breadwinner/housewife policies than others. Europe went much further than the United States. West Germany and the Netherlands, for example, paid women a wage for rais-ing their children during the early months (and sometimes years), gave big tax breaks to married couples with only one earner, and offered cash bonuses for each child. Weaker "breadwinner policies" (in the United States) and stronger ones (in much of Europe) made it more or less possible for men to support a housewife, while pushing women out of the workforce with more or less force.

Policies put in place in the aftermath of World War II further changed how Americans organized families. Most notably, during the '40s and '50s the U.S. government collaborated with private investors to build suburbs and facilitate homeownership. This was the birth of the "American dream." The G.I. Bill—designed to reward soldiers and help them reintegrate into society—offered only white male veterans college scholarships and cheap mortgages. Meanwhile, the government funded the building of an interstate highway system that con-nected the cities to the countryside much more efficiently. This led to a boom in housing developments, to which cities strung power lines and dug sewer tunnels. These government investments transformed America into a land of homeowners for the first time in history.

Home, though, was farther from work than ever and the growing distance between the two cemented the idea of **separate spheres**, a masculinized work world and a feminized home life. At work, male employees engaged in **production**, the making of goods for sale. Since capitalism is a competitive sys-tem, factory owners pushed workers to be as efficient as possible. Men, then, were pressed to become the kind of people capitalism found most useful: more inter-ested in work than family and concerned with maximizing economic success.

After World War II, the U.S. government subsidized the building of the first suburbs, where normative ideas of the family came to be signified by a married man and woman with two to three fresh-faced, smiling children.

Living in such a world required that men master the qualities of competitiveness, aggression, and ruthlessness. "'It's a jungle out there,' says the stereotypical male provider when his wife and kids meet him at the door."[40]

Inside that door, he was supposed to find not just a house, but a home: a warm, comfortable space filled with people who cared for him. There would be his loving children, doting wife, and devoted dog. Under the glow of their admiration, he could recharge to fight another day. At home there was supposedly no production, only **reproduction**, the making and nurturing of human beings.

In creating this environment, women were expected to specialize in a particular kind of supportive and loving emotional work that society needed. The notion that women could and should wholeheartedly embrace this work is called the **cult of domesticity**.[41] It emerged as an idea during the Victorian era—at the same time that we feminized the idea of love—and spread downward through the social classes along with homeownership and the family wage. Together with the ideology of separate spheres, the cult of domesticity protected at least one part of life from the harsh capitalist values of rationality and cost-benefit analysis.

This was an entirely different kind of family. In the mixed-sex environments innovated in the 1920s and mainstreamed over the next several decades, men and

women met and got to like one another. They married by choice and were expected to find comfort in their relationship. But becoming whole in the process of marriage meant joining the feminine and the masculine together into one household. Doing this required strict enforcement of gender roles, heterosexuality, and monogamy, leading to a short-lived and uneasy experiment: 1950s America.

THE FUNNY '50S

The icon of Rosie the Riveter signifies the work opportunities offered to women during World War II. In fact, women did enter many occupations previously dominated by men. After the war ended in 1945, however, they were subject to a countercampaign designed to push them back into the home. Marketers, columnists, scientists, public intellectuals, and the U.S. government all decried the undoing of the new breadwinner/housewife family, defending its gender-specific family roles as natural. This resulted in a concerted entrenchment of the nuclear family. As the historian Stephanie Coontz explains:

> *At the end of the 1940s, all the trends characterizing the rest of the twentieth century suddenly reversed themselves. For the first time in more than one hundred years, the [average] age for marriage and motherhood fell, fertility increased, divorce rates declined, and women's degree of educational parity with men dropped sharply. In a period of less than ten years, the proportion of never-married persons declined by as much as it had during the entire previous half century.*[42]

All of these trends would reverse within a few decades. Historically speaking, then, middle-class marriages in the 1950s were *weirdly* family oriented.

The era was unusually conservative in other ways, too. If city life in the 1920s was high energy, sexy, and fun, the 1950s was relatively prudish. The government passed decency standards for Hollywood movies, ensuring that sex was kept off the screen and bad things always happened to "bad" girls. In 1952, books and magazines with sexual content were banned. Comic books were considered especially corrupting. In an official report, Congress argued that comic books gave "short courses in . . . rape, cannibalism, carnage, necrophilia, sex, sadism, masochism, and virtually every other form of crime, degeneracy, bestiality, and horror."[43]

Likewise, the idea that women were uninterested in sexual pleasure made it inconceivable that women felt for women what men felt for them. No matter how close women were, or what they did together, no one imagined it to be *sexual*. Out from under any suspicion of lesbianism, women formed intimate

and romantic relationships with each other. Correspondence between women during this time is full of language like the one found in this letter that Jeannie wrote to Sarah in 1864:

> *Dear darling Sarah! How I love you & how happy I have been! You are the joy of my life. . . . I cannot tell you how much happiness you gave me, nor how constantly it is all in my thoughts. . . . My darling how I long for the time when I shall see you. . . . Goodbye my dearest, dearest lover . . . A thousand kisses . . . I love you with my whole soul.*[44]

It sounded like friendship at the time. Maybe it was, but maybe not.

In the 1920s, college girls breathlessly described girls on whom they were **smashing**, a term they used to describe a same-sex crush.[45] These crushes weren't all platonic. In a survey of 1,200 female college graduates from the 1920s, 28 percent of women enrolled in single-sex schools reported that they had been in a sexual relationship with another woman, along with 20 percent of women at mixed-sex schools.[46] They would write letters to their mothers about it. No one thought it odd. Instead, it was believed to be a normal developmental phase. So long as young women eventually married men, sexual and romantic relationships with other girls were considered harmless.

Americans in the '50s felt quite differently, though, about intimate relationships between men.[47] In the United States, the idea of a homosexual *person*, as opposed to a person who engages in homosexual *practices*, was new. The Puritans were familiar with homosexual behavior, but it had never occurred to them that particular people were distinctively homosexual. In their view, all humans were brimming with the potential for sin. Variation in how likely a person was to have sex with someone of the same sex was considered a measure of how godly they were, not an innate preference for one sex or the other.[48] While Puritans who felt same-sex desire may have experienced guilt and shame, they would not have paused to wonder if they were different kinds of people than anyone else.

The idea that a person could be a homosexual didn't become a part of the collective consciousness until World War II. One out of every eight American males—almost every young, fit man between eighteen and twenty-six years old—served in the war.[49] As a result, unmarried people on both the front lines and the home front found themselves largely in the company of the same sex. Indulging in homoerotic encounters became easier and more tempting. Wrote one young man: "The war is a tragedy to my mind and soul . . . but to my physical being, it is a memorable experience."[50] World War II was so conducive to exploring same-sex attraction that it's been called "a nationwide 'coming out' experience."[51]

With this newly imagined possibility, some soldiers rejected conventional heterosexuality and, after the war, instead pursued a gay "lifestyle."[52] The first gay bars in the United States opened in the 1940s and the first gay advocacy

A housewife stops to feed her son while in the midst of ironing, as the Army–McCarthy hearings of 1954 play on television. The politics of the 1950s were aimed at rooting out "communist" ideas like child care and gender equality.

organization would be founded in 1951.[53] Notably, these new communities were mostly for men. Gay women would remain less visible to the public and each other, at least for a while. Women in same-sex relationships were still often read by others as "celibate" spinsters.[54] Alongside poor mothers, many of these pioneered the field of social work; they were allowed to take such a public role specifically because they had no husbands or children.

Growing awareness and more community among men who identified as gay invoked a backlash. Cities passed laws saying alcohol couldn't be sold to gays and lesbians and they outlawed same-sex dancing and cross-dressing.[55] In response to the so-called homosexual menace, the U.S. government sought to purge men who had sex with men from public jobs on the assumption that they were "by definition morally bankrupt and, as such, politically suspect."[56] Much of the private sector followed suit. We often discuss this as a time when the government was focused on identifying and expelling Communists, but it was more common for people to lose their jobs for suspicion of homosexuality. Senator Joe McCarthy, famous for these efforts, said that anyone who opposed him was "either a Communist or a cocksucker."[57] "Mannish" unmarried women

were also often fired or forced to quit. Refusing to perform a feminine apologetic at work, they were suspected of gender deviance and considered a threat to "normal" families.

The politics of the 1950s were unique. They were unusually family focused, conformist, pro-censorship, and gender policing. We know from the Puritans, though, and from the burgeoning queer communities at the time, that communities don't always behave in ways that live up to mainstream values. What was happening behind the closed doors of so-called traditional marriage?

Sex and Marriage in the '50s

A young woman in the 1950s might have been seriously concerned about her marriage prospects. Hundreds of thousands of men had been killed in the war and tens of thousands of soldiers married foreign women while abroad.[58] *The New York Times* reported that 750,000 young women would likely never marry. The process of securing a husband, then, became serious business. So while it may have made sense to go out with a different guy each night in the 1920s, flitting from guy to guy didn't seem so smart when there weren't enough guys to go around. Accordingly, during the 1950s dating was being edged out by a new practice, **going steady**, an often short-lived, but still exclusive, public pairing off. Going steady was "social security"; it ensured that a girl would always have a date on important nights and lessened the chances that she would end up an "old maid."[59]

Ironically, this interest in marriage accelerated premarital sexual experimentation in exactly the decade known most for its conservatism.[60] Compared to couples who might enjoy just one night together, couples that went steady were more likely to "neck" (kissing on the neck and mouth), "pet" (touching below the neck), or "go all the way." Adults objected to these new trends but couldn't stop them. Necking and petting, if not intercourse, were becoming expected parts of any youthful romantic relationship. According to one 1952 advice man-

In the 1950s, the custom of going steady among teenagers guaranteed that girls would have companions to institutionally organized events, such as the senior prom, and facilitated both romantic and sexual experimentation.

ual, if a girl "wishes to be a member of the dating group," then "mild sexual contact" is "one of the requirements."[61]

Despite the conservative overtones, the undercurrent of the 1950s—represented by the swinging hips of Elvis and the flamboyance of Little Richard—was a sexy one. Meanwhile, the new ubiquity of the automobile did for suburban youth of the '50s what living in cities had done for the working-class youth of the '20s: It provided the opportunity to socialize without parental supervision. Hence the invention of "parking," driving off to a remote location, pulling off the road, and necking, petting, or more in the backseat.

Emotionally intense relationships led to sex and the highest rate of teen pregnancy in American history. At its peak in 1957, one out of every ten women aged fifteen to nineteen gave birth.[62] But there was no teen pregnancy crisis. Instead of a rash of single teen mothers, the age of marriage dropped to a one-hundred-year low and babies born "premature" (healthy-weight babies that arrived less than nine months after the wedding) reached a one-hundred-year high. At the end of the Victorian era, the median age at first marriage was twenty-six for men, twenty-two for women, and rising. By 1950, it had dropped to twenty-three for men and twenty for women, and it would remain this way throughout the decade (Figure 9.1).[63]

Eventually it would be impossible to pretend that either the youth or the adults in the 1950s were sexual goody-goodies. The fable was dealt a heavy blow with the publication of sexologist Alfred Kinsey's elaborate and extensive reports on the sexual behavior of 18,000 men and women.[64] Published in 1948 and 1953, his books sold a quarter of a million copies. They roundly discredited the idea that it was only teenagers who were breaking the sexual

FIGURE 9.1 | MEDIAN AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE, 1900–2017
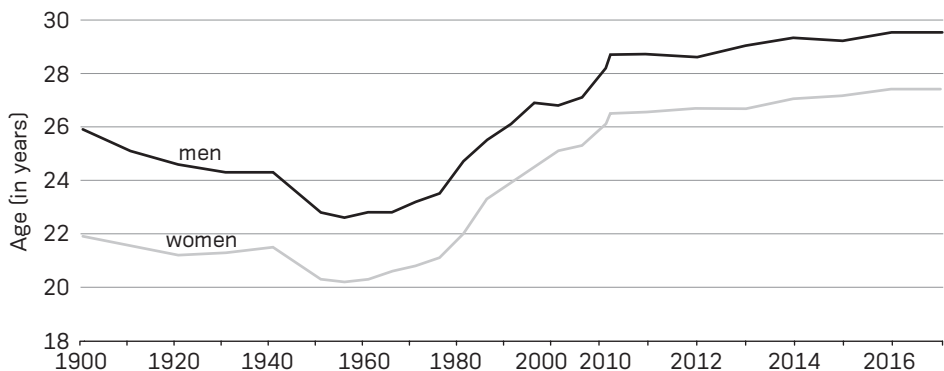
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplements, 2017 and earlier.

rules, revealing that premarital "petting" was nearly universal, 90 percent of men and 50 percent of women had premarital sex, 90 percent of men and 60 percent of women masturbated, and 50 percent of men and 25 percent of women had had extramarital sex. A third of men and 13 percent of women reported having homosexual sex, while a full 50 percent of men and 37 percent of women reported same-sex attraction. The cat was out of the bag.

If sex was hiding behind the happy innocence of poodle skirts and saddle shoes, unhappy marriages were disguised by the flower beds and fresh lawns of suburban homes. By 1963, the game was up. A book called *The Feminine Mystique* forever changed the way America thought of housewives. The title referred to a mythology—the idea that women were gleefully happy as wives and mothers—that strongly contrasted with reality. Written by feminist Betty Friedan, it documented widespread unhappiness among middle-class married women in the 1950s and 1960s. Writes Friedan:

> *Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made the beds, shopped for groceries, matched slipcover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches with her children, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night—she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question—"Is this all?"*[65]

The book spent six weeks on *The New York Times* best seller list; its first printing sold 1.4 million copies.[66] Women wept with recognition, claiming that it was a "bolt of lightning," a "revelation," a "bombshell."[67] Friedan's book revealed the cracks in the breadwinner/housewife model, fault lines that would contribute to its demise.

STRAINED BY SEPARATE SPHERES While people were now marrying for love, the separate roles of breadwinner and housewife—with the husband working overtime and the wife busy with children and housework—drained the life out of the friendships that couples had built before marrying. The differences in their daily lives left them strangers to one another. Less than a third of spouses described their marriages as "happy" or "very happy."[68]

Stranded in the suburbs and with few other adults to talk to, privileged wives living the American dream often felt isolated, lonely, and bored. Many had earned college degrees and resented being pushed out of the workforce at the end of World War II.[69] Instead of finding housework and child care endlessly stimulating and enjoyable, many chafed under the expectation that they would find fulfillment this way.[70] Gleaming linoleum could only bring so much joy. Child care was tedious and tiring. They worried that their brains were wasting away while they did endless rounds of shopping, cooking, and cleaning. When *Redbook* asked readers to send letters about "Why Young Mothers Feel

Trapped," 24,000 women responded.[71] One 1950s housewife described her life as nothing but "booze, bowling, bridge, and boredom."[72]

There was, indeed, lots of drinking. Behind the flirty cocktails of the 1950s—the Pink Squirrel and the Singapore Sling—were women drinking just to get through the day. Drugs, too. Pharmaceutical companies developed "daytime sedatives for everyday" in response to housewives' complaints.[73] Unheard of in the mid-fifties, in 1958 doctors prescribed 462,000 pounds of tranquilizers; that number more than doubled the next year.[74] White middle-class women—the group most likely to be in a breadwinner/housewife marriage—were four times as likely to take them as any other type of person.[75] "Many suburban housewives were taking tranquilizers like cough drops," wrote Friedan.[76] The pills were known, colloquially, as "mother's little helpers."

Wives weren't the only ones unhappy, though. Marriage was essentially compulsory for men; often jobs and promotions depended on their ability to show that they were good family men. Bachelors were considered immature ("Why can't he settle down?") or deviant ("Is he a homosexual?"). Meanwhile, men were wary of women who saw them only as a "meal ticket," or felt overwhelmed by being the only person on whom their wives could rely for emotional support, not to mention adult conversation. A whole genre of humor emerged, designed to resonate with men's own sense of being trapped (hence the idea of the wife as a "ball and chain").

Tapping into this sentiment, Hugh Hefner launched *Playboy* magazine in 1953. Hefner changed ideas about masculinity.[77] Encouraging men to stay single and avoid commitment, he mainstreamed the notion of a man who didn't marry but was anything but gay. As the writer Barbara Ehrenreich explained, "The playboy didn't avoid marriage because he was a little bit 'queer,' but, on the contrary, because he was so ebulliently, even compulsively heterosexual."[78] Hefner introduced a new set of gender rules for men that rewarded men's resistance to marriage and monogamy, leading to the still-present myth that men must be dragged, kicking and screaming, to the altar.[79]

Both men and women, then, enjoyed fantasizing about a life without a spouse, kids, and a mortgage, but it was women who were truly vulnerable in marriage.

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL While both men and women had their dissatisfactions, women carried virtually all the risks of a breadwinner/housewife marriage. These marriages weren't overtly patriarchal—just as the Victorian ladies had hoped, women were now seen as men's equals: different and complementary instead of better and worse—but women were still financially dependent on men. In classic androcentric fashion, the masculine sphere of work was evaluated as important and admirable, while the feminine sphere of the home was seen as somehow less so.

Hugh Hefner, the founder of *Playboy*, exemplifies a new ideal of masculinity that was becoming hegemonic in the supposedly staid 1950s.

The imbalance in the value attributed to work and home was literal. Men's work was *worth* something; they received a wage in exchange for it. In contrast, women were working in and around the home just as they'd been doing since agrarian times but getting less credit for it than ever. Capitalist rationality and the new golden rule—he who has the gold makes the rules—replaced explicit patriarchy. It wasn't his penis anymore that made him the "head of household"; it was his paycheck.

Prior to industrialization, women's labor—both the work of maintaining a household and the birthing and rearing of children—was understood to be *work*. After industrialization, however, with the separation of work from home, women's labor seemed to disappear; it was men who "went to work," while women just "stayed home." Because women's work was newly invisible, housewives seemed dependent on men, but not vice versa. Her dependence on his wage was obvious to everyone, but his dependence on her cooking, cleaning, shopping, and child care often was not.

To be fair, a housewife would be in big trouble if she lost her breadwinner, but a breadwinner needed his housewife, too. Without her, he had hungry, dirty, misbehaving children he couldn't leave alone, plus no clean clothes to wear, an empty belly, nothing in the fridge, and a filthy house. He either had to stay home himself or hire someone to replace his wife. Even a family wage wasn't designed to support a house, children, *and* a full-time, paid babysitter and housekeeper,

though; it relied on him getting the domestic work for free. So, the degree to which wives supported husbands' breadwinning activities was swept under the rug, so to speak.

Middle- and upper-class women didn't just become unpaid and unrecognized housewives, they also gave up incomes of their own, the likelihood of having a successful career in the future, and the status that comes with doing work deemed important. All this was theoretically fine *if* the marriage lasted, her husband valued her contribution, and he consistently earned a good income. If the marriage fell apart—if the husband couldn't hold up his end of the bargain or traded her in for a younger, more attractive, or more submissive woman—wives could end up divorced and destitute, often with children. This was not an unlikely scenario; between a quarter and a third of marriages in the 1950s ended in divorce.

The government tried to protect "displaced homemakers," as they were called, by requiring alimony (monthly cash payments to ex-wives from their former husbands) and making divorce legally difficult (by requiring proof that a spouse had broken the marriage contract, for example), but marriage remained an intrinsically risky bet for women. Pretty soon the idea that they needed to secure their own future incomes and opportunities "just in case" carried quite a bit of weight.

Women looked to the workplace for answers.

GOING TO WORK

At the same time that the breadwinner/housewife model was emerging as the societal ideal, women were leaving the home to go to work. Even at its height, the 1950s version of the traditional marriage was more myth than reality. Due to legal discrimination, the family wage was elusive for most men of color and immigrant men. Black soldiers were excluded from the G.I. Bill that made the American dream a reality for white soldiers. They didn't get the college loans and mortgages that launched white families into the middle class and, even if they could afford to move into the suburbs without government help, most of these communities explicitly barred black people. As a result, many black families were left behind in cities that governments neglected. Even among native-born, white families, only a third could survive on a single wage. Poor women and women of color entered the wage economy from the beginning and stayed there.

Soon middle-class white women were joining them. Before 1940, more than 80 percent of women who married left the labor force on their wedding day and never came back.[80] In the next twenty years, the proportion of married women who worked doubled.[81] Most of these were "returning workers," mothers of somewhat older children who were willing to give up sewing their children's clothes

FIGURE 9.2 | COMPOSITION OF FEMALE LABOR FORCE BY MARITAL STATUS, 1890–1980
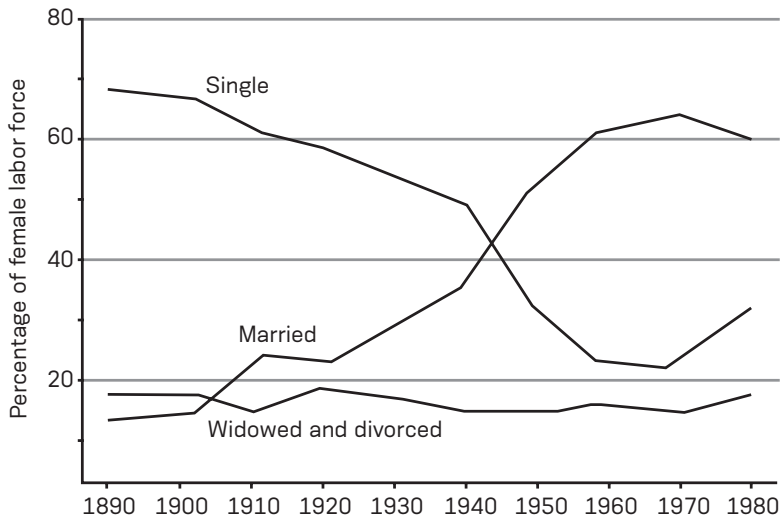
Source: Lynn Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

and baking bread and cookies in exchange for the money to buy these products. Buying rather than making was a sign of status, a boon to the economy, and something the kids wanted because they now saw these products on TV.

These women filled the offices of the growing corporate class, often serving as secretaries to white-collar men, whose managerial jobs were also becoming more common.[82] Mirroring the breadwinner/housewife at home, "office wives" filled an important role in the expanding economy. The newly visible "middle class"—sitting between manual workers and corporate bosses—opened doors for more and more women to work for pay. By the 1960s, when Betty Friedan challenged the "feminine mystique," women were already deciding they wanted a public as well as a domestic life.

The economy also needed more workers.[83] Between the loss of more than a quarter million men in World War II and a low birthrate during the 1920s and 1930s, America had lost a substantial stock of the working population.[84] In order to keep churning, the economy had to incorporate all kinds of women, not just poor women (who had always worked) and young women (who often worked between high school graduation and marriage).[85] To do so, rules that limited women's working were often discarded.

Beginning in the late 1800s, for example, **marriage bans**—policies against employing married women—were common in banking, teaching, office work, and government jobs. A majority of U.S. school districts had bans against hiring married women, as did over half of all firms employing office workers.[86] Bans were expanded to manufacturing work during the 1930s in an effort to save jobs for men during the turmoil of the Great Depression. After the war, however, these bans began to seem harmful to the economy and bad for employers, who wanted all their options. By 1951, the percent of school districts that had a marriage ban had dropped from 87 to 18 percent, though pregnancy bans were often put in their place.

Even as marriage bans were being discarded by most industries, many other policies were more resistant to change. These included **protective legislation**, policies designed to protect women and children from exploitation by restricting their workplace participation. Beginning in the mid-1800s, almost every American state passed some protectionist laws.[87] These became national in the 1920s, and banned women from working long hours, doing night work, lifting even moderate weights, or taking dangerous jobs (though exceptions were made for jobs like waitressing, housekeeping, and nursing that were "for women" regardless of these demands).

Protectionist laws were rationalized on the belief that all women were or would be mothers, and that the state needed to protect their reproductive capacities.[88] While some feminists objected and resisted these laws, poorer women were glad to have them. Women who were more concerned with being able to get promotions or enter jobs that these laws kept out of reach were ready to see them go, along with the barriers that schools and employers created to keep women from getting degrees in law, medicine, and aviation.[89]

They recognized protective legislation as benevolent sexism; the laws used the language of protection to slot young women into largely dead-end jobs. The assumption that women were unsuited for certain kinds of work, or that they would quit or be fired upon pregnancy, was a disincentive to both women and employers in the 1950s and 1960s.[90] For women, extended schooling and training might make it more likely that they would marry a man with a promising career (get an "MRS degree," as it's jokingly called), but it was unlikely to have any payoff in the workplace. Employers were loath to put any time into on-the-job training for women on the assumption that they'd work five to seven years and then quit upon marriage and not come back. Training them for professions was pretty much out of the question. Instead, women were largely hired into jobs that offered them little or no chance of building skills or moving up a promotion ladder.

In 1964 this type of discrimination against women became illegal in the United States. In a last-ditch effort to ensure that a bill mandating equal treatment

of African Americans would fail, Virginia Democrat Howard Smith added "sex" to the Civil Rights Act, thus including sex in the list of characteristics against which workplace discrimination would be illegal: race, color, religion, and national origin.[91] He thought the idea of equal treatment for men and women was so preposterous that it would surely kill the bill. Much to his chagrin and surprise, it passed anyway. Only in part an accident (there were women in Congress who worked to make Smith's joke a reality), the Civil Rights Act made it illegal to discriminate against women in the workplace.[92]

The enforcement of this law, however, was not automatic. Women had to fight to make it happen. The National Organization for Women, for example, stepped up to challenge the then-prevalent practice of segregating all job advertisements by sex category. They argued that advertising job opportunities with "help wanted—female" or "help wanted—male" was discriminatory. When the courts agreed, it meant that women were no longer just pulled into the labor force where employers wanted them but could at least try to choose their work-life plans for themselves.

As the economy grew and demographics changed through the 1950s and 1960s, married women and mothers of older children increasingly entered the workforce. As their numbers climbed but their opportunities were blocked, women's discontent grew—both with the current system of employment and with the breadwinner/housewife marriage as a system. By the end of the 1960s, quite a few women were angry about the mix of devaluation and restricted choices that they faced in trying to create a life strategy that would combine work and family.[93]

They set out to change that. By 1980, 51 percent of all women were employed, and married and single women were employed at equal rates. Even 40 percent of mothers with children under eighteen had at least a part-time job.[94]

WORK AND FAMILY TODAY

In 2003, James Dobson Jr., founder of Focus on the Family, wrote: "Unless we act quickly, the family as it has been known for 5,000 years will be gone."[95] The truth is, the patriarch/property marriage was already gone and the breadwinner/housewife marriage was fading fast. Even in the 1950s, the strength of the family wage on which the breadwinner/housewife model depended was waning. The economy was changing in ways that made marriage less essential. It was becoming increasingly easy for a man of means to buy a housewife's services in the market. Dinner could be eaten at restaurants; maids could clean his house and wash his laundry; and female companionship (both free and paid) was a cocktail lounge away. If many of the services of a housewife could be obtained in the marketplace, why should men marry at all?

For women, too, marriage was slowly becoming less essential. The Civil Rights Act, alongside later antidiscrimination laws, began to be enforced in the 1970s. The 1972 law against discrimination in schooling opened up a number of professional doors that had been firmly bolted. Women began to look at college degrees as more than just a good way to find a husband. They began streaming into professional education just as the United States was transitioning from an industrial economy founded on production to a **service and information economy**, one dependent on jobs focused on providing services for others (such as waiting tables, working in nail salons, or providing administrative assistance) or working with ideas (like engineers, computer programmers, and college professors).

If a woman could earn a wage herself, a state of financial dependence was less attractive. Since men created more housework than they contributed, even though she couldn't afford outside help, she had fewer chores to do without a husband around.[96] Given how risky marriage was for women, and its questionable benefits, holding out until she could find a husband with whom she could innovate a new model of marriage, or not marrying at all, seemed like a fine idea to some women.

Divorce laws changed, allowing both men and women to initiate proceedings without proving infidelity, physical abuse, or failure to provide economic support.[97] More women were deciding that an uncooperative husband—one who kept them from returning to school or work when the children were older or who failed to do his share of the housework—was something they could do without. Women themselves began some divorce proceedings, even though their living standards fell much more than men's did.[98]

Just like when gay-identified men began building lives outside of the breadwinner/housewife marriage, women's attempts to do so invoked a backlash. Phyllis Schlafly, a vocal anti-feminist campaigner of the 1970s, denounced such women as "runaway wives" and fought the emergence of new feminist social services like shelters for women fleeing domestic violence or hotlines offering support to rape victims.[99] The long-running "mommy wars" were stoked by the media, pitting mothers excited by new employment opportunities against those who feared that these new options for women would further devalue the work they did at home.[100]

Most women, though, wanted both: to achieve what came to be called "work-life balance." This was something, in fact, that almost all women wanted: poor women in bad working conditions were more likely to want better jobs than no job at all, while even women with great professional opportunities struggled with the responsibilities at home.[101] To strike a work-life balance, women needed more than nondiscrimination laws. They needed pro-family policies that acknowledged that some workers didn't have wives at home taking care of all their domestic needs. Pretty soon men would want and need this, too.

Balancing Work and Family

The breadwinner/housewife model of marriage makes even less sense now than it did in the 1950s. Both men and women are now increasingly educated and employed for longer periods of their lives. Age at first marriage and first birth has bounced back up. The expectation that women will leave the labor force permanently when they have their first child, let alone at marriage, has vanished, as has the idea that a man becomes a good father merely by dropping his paycheck on the table. Fathers who are engaged with their wives in the day-to-day work of parenting and mothers who work are the norm rather than the exception. If they need to, both men and women can do without marriage. And, if they do marry, they will need a model of marriage that fits with the more gender-egalitarian demands of the new economy.

In response, the breadwinner/housewife ideal has been replaced by an idealized **partnership marriage**, a model of marriage based on love and companionship between two equals who negotiate a division of labor unique to each couple. The law has cleared the way for such marriages. In response to over a century of feminist activism and demands, the marriage contract today is almost entirely gender neutral, providing the same rights and responsibilities to men and women. Both men and women are now responsible for paying alimony to a spouse who spent time out of the workforce to take care of the family. A male widower can now collect his wife's Social Security check instead of his own (in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, only bereaved wives could do this). Men no longer have special rights to manage the family money. Nearly all states now confer equal standing to both spouses in issues of child custody.

Because partnership marriage involves a gender-neutral contract, married couples are free to organize their lives however they wish. And they do. Coontz writes:

> *Almost any separate way of organizing caregiving, childrearing, residential arrangements, sexual interactions, or interpersonal redistribution of resources has been tried by some society at some point in time. But the coexistence in one society of so many alternative ways of doing all of these different things—and the comparative legitimacy accorded to many of them—has never been seen before.*[102]

Today we see family-focused dual-earner couples (working part-time and taking turns caring for kids) and work-focused dual-earner couples (working overtime and hiring gardeners, maids, and nannies). We see male breadwinners married to housewives and, in small but growing numbers, female breadwinners married to househusbands, too. Gay couples adopt all these family forms as well. Grandparents are stepping back in to offer child care and income support in a way that had become rare in the 1950s nuclear family model of the suburbs.[103]

Increasingly, the idea of nonmonogamous, polyamorous unions of more than two people and open relationships in which couples negotiate extra-pair sex are part of the conversation about what relationships can look like.

Marriage no longer determines one's living arrangements. While it remains the norm that couples will live together once married, some don't. Some live in separate cities either by choice or circumstance while others live in the same town but choose to live apart, a phenomenon referred to as "living apart together."[104]

While marriage is still normative, it is not so surprising anymore when people reach their thirties, forties, or fifties without marrying.[105] Just half of U.S. adults today are married and about one in seven lives alone.[106] It's totally normal to be single, even as a "grown-up." While it may be preferable to some, marriage is no longer necessary for entrance to adulthood, nor is it a prerequisite for having a child. It is certainly no longer a job requirement. It's rarely used, at least explicitly, to cement political alliances or hoard wealth.

For these reasons, marriage itself is less necessary than it was in the past, so much so that we might ask whether it is still a major institution. Some people choose to live together without being married, others neither marry nor cohabit. Nearly half of Americans (44 percent) have lived with someone without being married.[107] Fully 41 percent of nonmarried people say they don't want to marry or are not sure.[108] Parenting now occurs in the absence of marriage. Today 40 percent of children are born to unmarried parents.[109] A majority of Americans (86 percent) say that a single parent and a child "count" as a family. Meanwhile, about one in five Americans is freely choosing not to have children.

Since the primary reason to marry in Western cultures today is still love, marriages are both more voluntary and less stable. As Stephanie Coontz explains, the "same things that made marriage become such a unique and treasured personal relationship during the last two hundred years, paved the way for it to become an optional and fragile one."[110] People divorce. When they do, they often take children with them, sometimes into new marriages, creating "blended families." A third of Americans have a step- or half-sibling and 13 percent are raising stepchildren.[111] The high rate of divorce does not signal a decline in the value of marriage. Instead, Americans engage in what sociologist Andrew Cherlin calls the "marriage-go-round": they both marry *and* divorce more frequently than people in other countries.

Since marriage is more about choice and pleasure than ever, it makes sense to some to reduce further the rules about who can marry whom.[112] In 1967 the United States Supreme Court struck down laws against interracial marriage and, in 2015, the Court made same-sex marriage legal in all fifty U.S. states. A majority of Americans believe that sexual minorities deserve the same rights as heterosexuals.[113] Citizens of many other countries agree: Same-sex marriage rights are now the law in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Denmark, England and Wales, Finland, France, Germany, Greenland,

Since the Supreme Court made same-sex marriage legal in 2015, same-sex couples in many states have exercised their right to marry.

Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Uruguay. These decisions are increasingly paving the way for trans men and women to be able to marry whomever they choose without scrutiny.

Despite the ascendance of this new partnership model, the degendering of marriage law, and the legalization of same-sex marriage, the breadwinner/housewife model still echoes through our personal lives and political debates. It competes with and sometimes lives quietly alongside the partnership model, producing the types of trouble that contradictions cause. Still, despite the trouble, and despite the clamor to return to the breadwinner/housewife model of marriage, partnership marriage is here . . . maybe not to stay, but for now.

CONCLUSION

When you hear people defend the idea of "traditional marriage," you would be smart to ask which one they mean. The patriarch/property model of marriage reigned supreme for thousands of years, while the breadwinner/housewife model was but a blip on the historical timeline. Today's marriage contract reflects a partnership model that facilitates personalization. The unprecedented diversity in family forms found in Western societies today reflects the choices we are now able to make.

The institution of marriage has changed not only because feminists insisted that it was unfair to women, but also because of shifts in the institutions with which marriage intersects: industrialization, the rise of cities and then suburbs, the demands of capitalism, global competition, technological innovation, and more. Political activism and changing socioeconomic relations have changed marriage as well as other institutions, warping and tweaking all of them separately and together.

All the other institutions we discussed in this chapter are also changing. Even sexual practices aren't simply driven by values or nature but reflect shifts in oppor-

tunity provided by technological, economic, political, and demographic change. Likewise, the workplace has evolved, pushing and pulling men and women into different kinds of work and changing and being changed by their relationships in the home. When we take the long view, we see tumultuous upheaval of social norms and institutions, making any natural and universal idea of gender relations—based on biology or religion or anything else—seem increasingly implausible.

Next . . .

In the next four chapters, we explore the on-the-ground realities that people face today. We start with sexuality. It is difficult to imagine, perhaps, that social forces shape this most intimate part of our personal selves. Desire for sexual and romantic connection is felt so deeply that it seems impervious to "outside" influences. We imagine you might ask, in a hopeful tone:

Q+A   **Gendered ideas, interactions, and institutions may affect almost every part of my life, but some things are personal and my sexuality is mine and mine alone. Isn't it?**

Alas, dear reader, alas.

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SEX IS NOT A NATURAL ACT.

—LEONORE TIEFER[1]

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10

Sexualities

Part of the "whole college experience," many students say, involves going to parties, getting drunk, meeting someone new, making out, and maybe having sex.[2] These are **hookups**, one-time nonromantic sexual encounters. As one student describes it: "There's this system that's like, you're gonna get drunk, randomly meet randoms, and just, like, whatever happens."[3] Scholars call this system **hookup culture**, a norm on many American residential colleges in which casual sexual contact is held up as ideal, encouraged with rules for interaction, and institutionalized in much of higher education. All told, 70 percent of students will hook up at least once before graduation.[4]

For *American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus*, your first author asked 101 students to share their experiences with hookup culture. And they did, submitting over a million words of gossip, theories, rants, celebrations, and stories. The resulting book, together with lots of other excellent research, has given scholars a pretty good idea of what sex looks like on campuses today.[5]

To begin, most students report being eager to experiment with their sexuality, at least a little. They also report feeling pressure to do college "right," which seems to require a casual attitude toward sex. Many students believe, or think that their peers believe, that

college is a time to go wild and have fun. They may even believe that separating sex from emotions is what sexual liberation looks like.

For students who are enthusiastic about casual sex—up to 25 percent—this works out well.[6] Casual sex raises their self-esteem and lowers rates of anxiety and depression. Students who don't take well to hookup culture, though, often struggle. About a third abstain from hooking up altogether, leaving many feeling isolated from their peers. The remainder of students, just under half, participate with mixed feelings and mixed experiences.

There are reasons why casual sex has so captured college life. Understanding hookup culture's history helps us see that sexualities, though deeply personal, are also expressed in a context.[7] This chapter builds on the last, exploring how gendered ideas, interactions, and institutions shape our sexual experiences. It also considers who benefits most from the social organization of sexuality: the distribution of pleasure, violence, and power. Throughout, it will become clear that the answer to the following question is no:

> **Q+A** Gendered ideas, interactions, and institutions may affect almost every part of my life, but some things are personal and my sexuality is mine and mine alone, isn't it?

You probably suspected it. We've already encountered the sexual regimes of the Puritans, the romantic Victorians, the revelers of the 1920s, and the experimental teenagers of the 1950s. In all cases, sexual attitudes and behaviors were strongly influenced by the cities, circumstances, and societies in which these individuals lived. The same is true now. To understand how, we'll learn about the rebels of the sexual revolution, see what followed, take a closer look at sexuality today, and end somewhere that might be familiar.

SEX: THE NEAR HISTORY OF NOW

After World War II ended in 1945, birth rates increased in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and most European countries. In the United States, they rose from just over two children per woman to a high of nearly four.[8] By 1970 the number of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds had increased by over 50 percent.[9] We call this generation the "baby boomers."

Youth often push boundaries set by adults and the boomers were no exception. Members of this generation protested the intractable Vietnam War and fought for African Americans' civil rights. Violent attacks by American government authorities—both on the Vietnamese and on American anti-war and civil

rights protesters—stirred a more general resistance to authority. Boomers' desire to find their own way rather than conform to dominant norms of sex and gender fed into the growth of the women's movement, gay liberation, and the sexual revolution.[10]

These movements reinforced permissive rather than punitive attitudes about sex, including rising approval of nonmarital sex and sex between teenagers.[11] The timing was perfect. The first birth control pill went on the market in 1960, and by 1965, it had been prescribed to six million women.[12] That year, the U.S. Supreme Court granted married people the unrestricted right to use birth control. It extended that same right to single people in 1972 and legalized abortion in the first and second trimesters in 1973. Suddenly men and women could have sex together for fun with substantially less fear of an unintended pregnancy or pregnancy-induced marriage.

Life was changing for sexual minorities and trans men and women, too. In the summer of 1969, a group of trans, gay, and nonbinary folks changed history when they revolted against police harassment in New York's Greenwich Village,

kicking off several nights of protest that would be dubbed the "Stonewall Riots."[13] The Gay Liberation Front, one of the first gay rights organizations, was founded a week later. On the anniversary of the riots, the first gay pride parades were held in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and San Francisco.

By 1973 "homosexuality" would be removed from the American Psychiatric Association's list of mental disorders.[14] In 1977, San Francisco would elect the first openly gay person to public office. Inspired by "black is beautiful," "gay is good" became a rallying cry, and Americans began coming out in record numbers. Four years after Stonewall, there were almost 800 gay and lesbian organizations in the United States. Sexual minority men and women weren't just out of the closet, they were out and proud.

In the next decade, gay men's communities would be devastated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.[15] In the United States, though not in other countries, HIV

If you *really* love him...

Rubbers – Every Time!
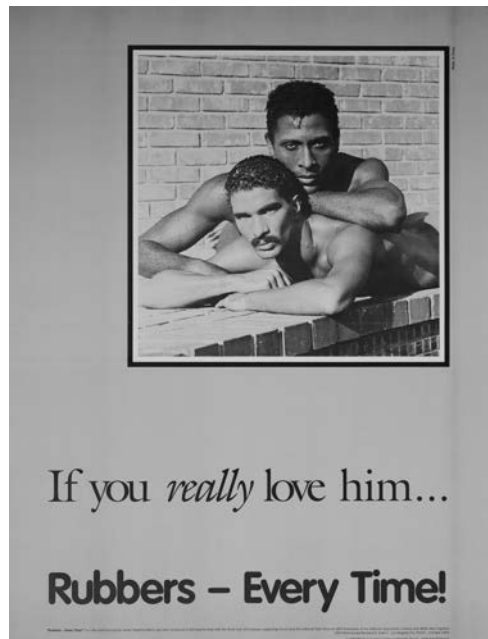
Facing a hostile federal government, gay men in the early HIV era organized their own safer sex campaigns. Love for each other, and for their community, was one basis on which they mainstreamed the use of "rubbers," or condoms.

affected gay men early, alongside injection drug users and other vulnerable populations. The first reports were in 1981. Within ten years, 8 to 10 million people were infected.[16] A diagnosis was a death sentence.

Because gay men were a disparaged population, politicians were slow to support research, prevention, and treatment. Gay men responded by protesting government inaction and exploitation by pharmaceutical companies. They also turned to their own communities, organizing the most effective safer sex campaign the world has ever seen. Way ahead of the medical community, light years ahead of heterosexuals, and unsupported by the federal government (which banned AIDS prevention materials that acknowledged homosexual sex), gay men became the first people in history to normalize condom use.

Out of fear of HIV, many children in the 1980s and 1990s received at least some comprehensive sex education, the kind that encourages abstinence but also teaches young people how to engage in sexual activity more safely. This education delayed the onset of intercourse and increased the chances of contraceptive use, without increasing the frequency of sex or number of acquired partners.[17] But there was swift backlash.[18] The federal government refused to offer funding for anything other than abstinence-only sex education, the kind that instructs students to refrain from sex until marriage and provides no practical information beyond strategies for saying no. Beginning in the mid-1990s, millions of federal dollars would be spent on these programs, which studies have shown to have no effect at all, not even on rates of abstinence.[19]

Just as comprehensive sex education was becoming more rare, the internet arrived, changing the media landscape. Among other things, the internet raised the level of competition between media producers exponentially. In 1955, the "Golden Age" of television, there were four channels. That's one for every 41.5 million Americans. By 1994, there was one for every 1.7 million Americans.[20] As of this writing, in addition to hundreds of cable channels, there are 170 million active webpages on the internet. That's one website for every 45 people on the planet.

With so much competition for attention, people making media content learned that more was more.[21] More fighting, more explosions, faster cars, scarier monsters, bloodier gore, cruder humor, and bigger and badder disasters. And more sex, too. So much sex that some have argued that media has become "pornified," with only a thin line between so-called pornographic and so-called non-pornographic media.[22] Most young people aren't receiving comprehensive sex education at school, but they're getting quite an education online.

Harkening back to the 1920s, when women had to be "sexy" to get treated to a night on the town, women's bodies have borne more of this pornification than men's. Women in media, particularly conventionally attractive and feminine white women, are often portrayed as sexual objects. **Sexual objectification** is the reduction of a person to his or her sex appeal. To be clear, it's not the

same thing as finding someone's body desirable; it's attraction to a body in the *absence* of an acknowledgement of the internal life of the person desired. Both men and women are objectified in popular culture, and gay men more than heterosexual men, but women overall are objectified much more.[23]

Pornography itself has become more extreme, too. Today the pornography industry makes billions of dollars a year producing material that is substantially more exploitative and violent than in earlier eras, involving more physically punishing sex acts and degrading language.[24] At the same time as there is more pornography than ever, it is accessed more easily, and a record number of Americans agree that it is morally acceptable.[25] PornHub, one of the industry's largest websites, reported 28.5 billion visits in 2017; that's 81 million visitors a day.[26]

Why have so many young people embraced pornography? Maybe because they think that to disapprove of it would be to disapprove of sex itself. Despite the efforts of abstinence-only educators and against the wishes of many conservative-leaning Americans, the core tenets of the sexual revolution—that we should embrace and explore our sexualities—have become powerful ideas in the United States.

SEX AND "LIBERATION" TODAY

In the decades since the 1960s, the longstanding pressure to say no to sex has been replaced by a different pressure. Many young people in the United States, though by no means all, have come to feel that grasping their sexual freedom, enacting their sexual liberation, and empowering themselves require them to say yes.[27] Yes to learning about sexuality; to talking about it, brashly; to feeling comfortable seeing it, in all its explicitness; and to displaying one's body sexily. Yes to kink, also, and other marginalized forms of sexual expression and whatever activities promise pleasure or discovery. And yes to doing it casually, just for fun. To say no to any of these things, the logic goes—to be conservative about sex, take sex seriously, or simply be uninterested in sex—is to deprive oneself of freedom, liberation, and empowerment. Saying no is now considered old-fashioned, even regressive.

Consider that today many people believe that being a virgin is a liability after a certain age.[28] About a third of fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds say that they feel pressure to be sexually active, and half of women and a third of men report losing their virginity before they're ready.[29] "I thought that only nerds, religious nuts, and momma's boys were untouched when they started college," asserted a white heterosexual woman (in reality, half of traditional-age students are virgins when they start college).[30] On college campuses, some young people

choose to lose their virginity in a one-time hookup just so they can say they did.[31] Only about 5 percent of Americans are now virgins on their (first) wedding night.[32]

The conflation of sexual liberation with saying yes comes out of the intersection of the women's movement and the sexual revolution. Feminists at the time were fighting the Victorian ideas of separate spheres and opposite sexes. These were behind the gendered love/sex binary, that idea that women are primarily interested in love and men primarily in sex, and the sexual double standard, judging women harshly for their sexual behavior and lauding men for theirs. To dismantle these ideas, feminists needed to do two things: (1) undo the sexist idea that women didn't "belong" on the masculine side of the binary, which included the right to have and enjoy sex without criticism, and (2) undo the androcentric idea that things on the feminine side of the binary weren't valuable and good, which included a desire for love and commitment.

As we've seen, they got half of what they wanted. Women can now enter male-dominated arenas and embrace at least some masculine qualities and interests, including being sexual and having sex for sex's sake, like a stereotypical man. But the androcentric devaluation of femininity is stronger than ever, leading some to think that desiring love and commitment is sweet but a little pathetic. This was based on the idea that the cavalier approach to sex characterized as masculine was what a natural, freely expressed sexuality would look like, whereas a more careful approach to sex, especially one that emphasized the context of loving care, was overly cautious and even repressed. A feminine approach to sex, in other words, was framed as "repressed" and a masculine approach to sex as "free."[33] The very definition of sexual liberation came to be modeled on a male stereotype of sexuality.

Many women today take this definition for granted, leading them to believe that adopting a masculine approach to sex is a way of grasping their liberation and gaining equality with men. This is especially true among white, heterosexual women raised in middle- and upper-class families. One woman fitting this description explained her approach to sex: "I railed against the idea that women were needy, dependent, easily heartsick, easily made hysterical by men, attention-obsessed, and primarily fixated on finding romance," she said insistently.[34] "I did this by proving how very like a boy I could behave." She engaged in what she called "sexual tomboyery":

> *I figured the best way for a girl to reject oppressive sexism would be to act in exact opposition of what our sexist society expects of a decent woman; to get exactly what she wants from men, whenever she wants it. In essence, objectify them back.*

Many young women feel the same. And many young men accept this definition of liberation, too.

Granted, there are many good things about this. The imperative to say yes means greater tolerance for other peoples' choices. This opens up possibilities for new identities and practices, from pansexuality to roleplay.[35] Once considered a sin akin to bestiality, for example, oral sex is now widely accepted. We no longer fear that masturbation causes blindness. Over a third of women and almost half of men have engaged in anal sex. Nine out of ten Americans report that they would accept a lesbian, gay, or bisexual family member or friend. People of all sexual orientations are increasingly interested in exploring forms of consensual nonmonogamy like **polyamory** (the open practice and encouragement of long-term intimate relationships with more than one partner at a time) and **open relationships** (in which committed partners agree that each can have sexual encounters outside the relationship). On many other measures as well, Americans are not as puritanical as they once were.

The new imperative to say yes to sex, though, isn't merely a lifting of old rules, it's a new set. Real sexual freedom would be the right to have sex or not, however one likes, and for any reason, without social consequences. It's not really freedom if you *have* to say yes. In fact, it can feel quite oppressive for people who don't want to say yes, don't want to say yes right now, or don't want to say yes to just anything or anyone. Many people who identify as asexual, alongside immigrants from more conservative countries and people who hold tightly to their faith, do not feel free in this context at all.[36]

But a person doesn't have to be religious or conservative to feel pressured by these new sexual norms. After voluntarily turning down a hookup with a friend of a friend, for example, a student who considered herself quite radical worried that she was being a prude:

> I'm so embarrassed by that, and so I want to distance myself from it. I "know" that I should want to have sex all the time, and should take advantage of it when I get the chance; especially when it's a girl who's showing interest in me. But I didn't. . . . [P]ressure to be sexual was and has been SO CONSTANT for so long. . . . I feel as if by not voluntarily taking part in it, I am weird, abnormal, and a prude.[37]

Young people today often feel like having sex is more of an expectation than an opportunity.

Moreover, the sexual playground promised by this new set of rules is not necessarily equally fun for everyone. Even if we are more sexually free now than we have been in the past, freedom is not the same thing as equality. To what, exactly, are we saying yes? Like the women of the 1970s, today's young women want to say "yes to sex and no to sexism."[38] But that's easier said than done.

Similarly, coming out of the closet is now an unquestioned destination for anyone who has even an inkling of same-sex sexual desire. Accordingly, men and women with these desires often feel compelled to be "out," lest they be

seen by others as repressed, cowardly, or ashamed. Recall, though, that the idea that homosexuality is an identity is rather new; both in the United States and elsewhere, the notion that homosexuality can be merely a behavior persists. In China, for instance, most men over the age of forty don't recognize a gay identity, even those who have frequent sexual liaisons with other men.[39] Younger Chinese men are more likely to adopt a Western-style gay identity, but they do not necessarily value coming out to everyone. Some Americans think similarly.[40] A national survey asked self-identified heterosexuals if they'd ever had a sexual encounter with someone of the same sex: Ten percent of women and 2 percent of men said they had.[41] Researchers studying sexually transmitted infections have found this to be frequent enough that they define the population as "men who have sex with men" (MSM) and "women who have sex with women" (WSW) rather than queer-identified.

Being out is considered psychologically healthy in many parts of the West today and many people proudly identify as a sexual minority. But some don't. Research on voluntarily closeted men and women shows that some people happily "decenter" their same-sex desires, opting not to act on them, without suffering from shame or a sense of repression.[42] To insist that everyone who feels such desire *must* identify as a sexual minority and live openly as such is no less coercive than insisting that people *may not* do these things. Being out is good and fine, but true freedom would mean embracing the choices people make, regardless of whether they match one's personal model of liberation.

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the way that heterocentrism and gender inequality shape how we think about and engage in sexual activity. It will look at how we define sex, divide up desire, and array ourselves in a hierarchy of attractiveness. It will also discuss how we "do" sex and the relationship between our sexual scripts and sexual violence.

GENDERED SEXUALITIES

Sex Defined

Most Americans continue to assume, absent clear signs otherwise, that new people they meet are heterosexual and committed to **monogamy**, the open practice and encouragement of long-term intimate relationships with only one person. Accordingly, our institutions are still organized around the assumption that every sexual or romantic couple involves one man and one woman, as indicated by things like "his" and "hers" embroidered towels and wedding ring sets. This is especially obvious around Valentine's Day, when companies offer hotel rooms fit for a "king and queen," spa packages for "beauty and her beast," and

romantic dinners for "Romeo and his Juliet."

Reflecting this hetero- and **mononormativity**—the normalizing of monogamy—the word "sex" is generally used to refer to one sexual activity in particular: penile-vaginal intercourse. Euphemisms like "home base" and "all the way" are widely understood to refer to that specific activity. It's the "it" in "Did you do it?" This is the **coital imperative**, the idea that any fully sexually active couple must be having penile-vaginal intercourse (also known as "coitus") and any fully completed sexual activity will include it.[43] When we ask young people directly what they think "counts" as sex, essentially 100 percent will say intercourse, but there's plenty of disagreement about everything else.[44]

"Mr." and "Mrs." decorative pillows and other his and her sets highlight how our institutions still assume that all sexual couples include a man and a woman.

Especially in certain circumstances, like virginity loss, the imperative has substantial power. Many young people don't think they've truly lost their virginity until a penis goes into a vagina, no matter how many genitals they've encountered or sexual acts they've performed.[45] This includes some gay men and lesbians. And though nonheterosexuals generally have more expansive definitions of sex, the penis is still often centered. About 90 percent think penile-anal intercourse counts as sex, for example, but there's more confusion about what counts as sex between women.[46]

By unnecessarily constraining sexual options, the coital imperative creates potential problems for men and women having sex together, too. When penile-vaginal intercourse is defined as "real sex," and everything else is just "foreplay," having penile-vaginal intercourse can feel compulsory. If intercourse is undesired, difficult, or impossible—when women experience pain when penetrated or when men struggle to maintain erections—the coital imperative defines their sexuality as dysfunctional.[47]

Since men reliably have orgasms during intercourse, but women do not, the coital imperative also prioritizes an activity that privileges his orgasm at the expense of hers.[48] So does the practice of women performing oral sex upon men sooner in a relationship than men perform it on women, as well as more often and with more intent to produce orgasm.[49] These two facts result in an **orgasm gap** in mixed-sex pairings, a phenomenon in which women report fewer orgasms than men. Women having sex with men enjoy, on average, only one orgasm for every three of their partners'.[50]

FIGURE 10.1 | PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN HAVING AN ORGASM IN
FOUR SEXUAL CONTEXTS, BY OCCURRENCE OF
SELECTED SEXUAL BEHAVIORS
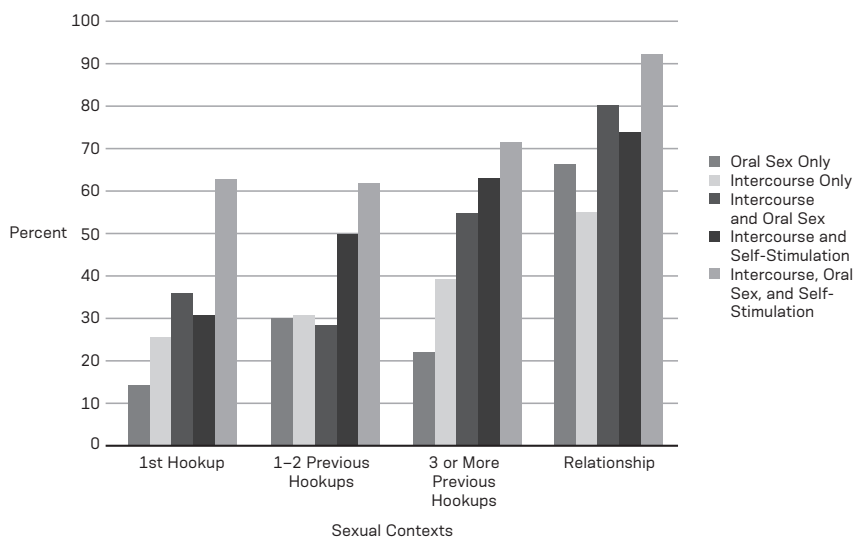
Note: Oral sex refers to receiving oral sex.
Source: E. A. Armstrong, P. England, and A. C. K. Fogarty, "Orgasm in College Hook-ups and Relationships," in *Families as They Really Are*, ed. Barbara Risman (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2009).

Myths about men's and women's bodies suggest that this gap is inevitable, with the female orgasm finicky and the male orgasm, if anything, too eager.[51] But this isn't the case. Some countries have larger orgasm gaps than others: the one in the United States, for example, is twice as large as the ones in Brazil and Japan.[52] When women have sex with women, they have two to three times as many orgasms as women who have sex with men.[53] As the far right column in Figure 10.1 shows, when college women are in relationships with men and a variety of forms of stimulation is used, they have orgasms 92 percent of the time.[54] And, when women are alone, their rate of orgasm is as high as 96 percent.[55] Even women who never have orgasms with male partners often do regularly when they masturbate.[56] Women could have just as many orgasms as men if participants decided to prioritize it.

We naturalize the orgasm gap, though, treating it as inevitable, because we tend to believe that women are genuinely less sexual than men.[57] But that isn't true either. Instead, we've divided up desire, taking from women the pleasure of lust and taking from men the pleasure of being lusted after.

Divided Desire

To be *sexy* is to be an object of desire for others; to be *sexual* is to have the capacity to experience sexual desire.[58] Most of us want to both feel sexual and be sexy but, thanks to the gendered love/sex binary, we learn to divide these phenomena by gender.[59] Men are sexual, we are told, and women are sexy. Men desire and women are desirable. Men want women. And what do women want? Women want to be wanted.

In sex education, for example, boys' sexuality is overtly linked with pleasure, if only because his orgasm is mentioned in the context of reproduction.[60] Girls are more likely to get warnings about pregnancy and sexual coercion. The clitoris, the organ responsible for female orgasm, is almost never mentioned. Parents, likewise, rarely discuss the pleasurable aspects of sex, especially with their daughters.[61] Teenage girls are taught to think of their sexuality as something that can "get them into trouble" and are more likely than teenage boys to associate sex with violence, disease, pregnancy, and "bad reputations."[62]

Media echoes this privileging of male desire. Much of it assumes a **heterosexual male gaze**, meaning that content is designed to appeal to a hypothetical heterosexual man.[63] Plotlines and visuals intended to incite men's desire draw our attention to men's **subjectivity**, their internal thoughts and feelings. This is an acknowledgment that they are sexual, which is good, but it's also a prescription. A particular kind of woman is consistently portrayed as sexually desirable, repetitively implying that she is the only proper object of their sexual attraction. In this way, men undergo a process of **sexual subjectification**: they are told what their internal thoughts and feelings should be. For men attracted to women, this prescription may limit their

Real women and girls are seen through lenses formed by omnipresent sexually explicit images of women's bodies presented as desirable objects for the gaze of the presumptively heterosexual male consumer.

ability to recognize when they're attracted to women outside the very narrow ideal; for men attracted to men, it may limit their ability to recognize attraction at all.

For women, the heterosexual male gaze means being regularly exposed to idealized images of female bodies. As a result, many women internalize the idea that their value is heavily dependent on their ability to conform to a narrow and largely unattainable definition of attractiveness, whereas men's value is somewhat less so.[64] In one survey, people were three times as likely to say that women, compared to men, face "a lot of pressure" to be physically attractive.[65] Research on lesbians is mixed. Some hints that they may be protected because they are uninterested in male sexual attention, but other research suggests that the idealized images still take a toll.[66]

We see this outsized emphasis on women's versus men's attractiveness in data collected from online dating sites and apps. Data from OkCupid, for example, the third most popular platform, reveals that both men and women value attractiveness in each other, but men much more so (see Figure 10.2).[67] The most attractive men receive ten times the average number of messages; the most attractive women receive twenty-five times the average.

This asymmetric emphasis on women's appearance suggests that, at least in the abstract, women's value is less tied to who they are and what they do, and

FIGURE 10.2 | NUMBER OF MESSAGES RECEIVED VS. RECIPIENT'S ATTRACTIVENESS
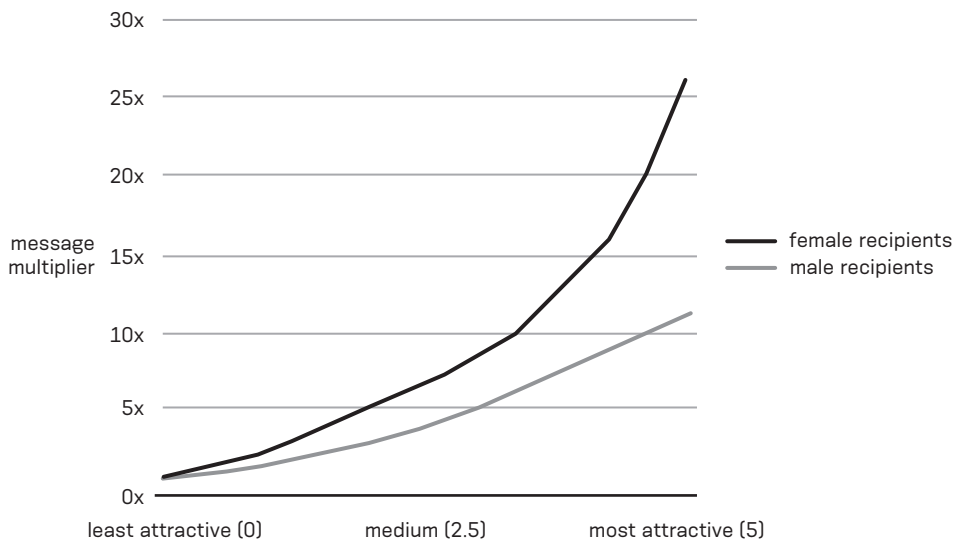
more tied to how they look. Understanding this, many women **self-objectify**, internalizing the idea that their physical attractiveness determines their worth. During sex, worrying about how they look may translate into a process called **spectating**, watching one's sexual performance from the outside.[68] Spectating women might try to stay in sexual positions they think are flattering, arrange their body to make themselves look thinner or curvier, try to keep their face looking pretty, and ensure they don't make embarrassing noises. They may even avoid orgasm because doing so means losing control of these things. Because of spectating, some women have "out-of-body sexual experiences" in which they don't focus much on how sex *feels*. And, sure enough, research has shown that the more a woman worries about how she looks, the less likely she'll experience sexual desire, pleasure, and orgasm.[69]

While heterosexual men are less likely to be sexually objectified, gay and bisexual men in same-sex encounters can be positioned as the objectifier, the objectified, or both. Standards of fitness and attractiveness among queer men, and in media content aimed at them, can be as unrealistic as those aimed at women. In response, sexual minority men report higher levels of self-objectification than heterosexual men and a sense of being under an objectifying gay male gaze.[70] One man interviewed about his experiences, for example, complained that sex often left him feeling "used" by men:

> *You get tired of being used.... [I] was just nothing but this little receptacle.... It wasn't reciprocal.... I need to feel like some attention is to me and I'm not just this machine.... It makes me one dimensional. It just makes me an object.*[71]

It may be that the objectifying gaze isn't so much heterosexual as it is masculine, reflecting a stereotypically male orientation toward sex that emphasizes "scoring" over connection and (as the black, lesbian, feminist writer Audre Lorde describes it) "sensation without feeling."[72]

The discomfort of being sexually objectified may also help explain why so many heterosexual men are uncomfortable among gay and bisexual men. Used to being the subject, suddenly they may be an object. Many women and queer men have grown accustomed to this feeling, whether they enjoy it or not. For the heterosexual man who has generally been spared an objectifying gaze, it might be quite disconcerting to suddenly be on the other side of such a one-sided relationship.

The Erotic Marketplace

Not everyone is considered worthy of an objectifying gaze. The phrase **erotic marketplace** refers to the ways in which people are organized and ordered according to their perceived sexual desirability. The term *market* is typically

used to describe the abstract space in which goods and services are attributed economic value. In the erotic marketplace, some people have more erotic "capital" than others.[73] Data from OkCupid is useful here, too.

RACE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY As the chapter on intersectionality showed, race is gendered.[74] Racism and colorism play a role in the erotic marketplace, then, as does the socially constructed gender of race. Racial stereotypes about black and Latino men—epitomized in the "black buck" and "Latin lover" archetypes—portray them as especially sexual and sexually skilled compared to white men.[75] This is a double-edged sword, and a sharp one. By virtue of these stereotypes, they may be desired as sexual partners—"I think when a white guy approaches you he just wants a trophy. That's how it always comes off," said one African American man about his experience in gay bars—but being fetishized doesn't necessarily feel good.[76] It's just another type of sexual objectification.

There's also the possibility that black and Latino men may be perceived as *too* masculine and, therefore, sexually dangerous. Representations of Latino men in media often portray them idling on the street, oozing a vaguely threatening sexuality, and harassing women who nervously walk by; the stereotype of black men as sexually dangerous to white women has its roots in the white supremacist need to demonize black men after the end of slavery.[77] Based on these notions, some potential partners may avoid black and Latino men.

Consequently, black and Latino men may police their own behavior, knowing that racism means that their acts will be judged more harshly than those of white men.[78] This kind of decision has been described as a **politics of respectability**, a form of resistance to negative racial stereotypes that involves being "good" and following conservative norms of appearance and behavior.[79] Because people of color are marked categories in the United States, anything they do may be read by others as reflecting not individual choice but group characteristics. Thus, they face an additional layer of concern when making sexual choices: the possibility of affirming harmful beliefs about their racial group. This includes a heightened risk of being prosecuted or suffering violence.

For Asian men, stereotypes based on race are straightforwardly negative. When asked to describe how Asian Americans were stereotyped, Michael, a Chinese American, responded that it "blends in with Asian-women-in-America stereotypes."[80] He elaborated: "Asian men are smooth. Expected to be submissive. Expected to be quiet and not speak up and express their feelings. And they're supposed to be small-dicked." Asian men are seen by some as unmasculine and, therefore, sexually deficient.[81] Research shows that even some Asian women may think so.[82] This led one man of Japanese and Mexican descent to say: "Even the Asian girls that I liked, they would always like White guys."[83]

We see these gendered racial patterns in the OkCupid data. In terms of compatibility, as measured by an algorithm, all races match with all other races

TABLE 10.1 | PERCENT CHANCE THAT A MAN IN EACH RACIAL
GROUP WILL RECEIVE A RESPONSE FROM AN INQUIRY

Racial Group	Men Messaging Women	Men Messaging Men
White	29%	45%
Native American	28%	44%
Middle Eastern	26%	48%
Pacific Islander	25%	38%
Latino	23%	42%
Asian	22%	38%
Black	22%	35%
South Asian	21%	38%
Average	**28%**	**43%**

Source: Christian Rudder, "How Your Race Affects the Messages You Get," *OkTrends* (blog), October 5, 2009. Retrieved from https://web.archive.org/web/20111008215612/http://blog.okcupid.com/index.php/your-race-affects-whether -people-write-you-back/.

rather equally.[84] But all races aren't equally valued in the erotic marketplace. Table 10.1 lists how often men receive replies. In a society that centers and elevates whiteness, we would expect that white men would have an advantage, and they do. White men are more likely than men of any other race to get a response from women and the second most likely, after Middle Eastern men, to get a response from men. In both cases, Native American men follow close behind these men in popularity.

Conversely, black and Latino men are among the least likely to get a response from either women or men, with Latino men doing somewhat better among men messaging men. This suggests that the stereotype of hypermasculinity hurts more than helps black and Latino men in the erotic marketplace. Asian men, too, are among the groups that get the least frequent responses. In one study of online dating behavior, college-educated white women were actually more likely to respond to a white man without a college degree than an Asian man with one.[85]

Racism—both the kind that fetishizes and the kind that denigrates—also affects the desirability of women. Asian women, by virtue of being seen as extra-feminine, are viewed by some as more sexually malleable than white women; this may make them appealing to men who are looking for subservient partners. One white American man who prefers Asian women explained: "I'm kind of a soft guy. I really find [white] American women overly aggressive."[86] There is some evidence that this dynamic plays out among sexual minority men, too, with Asian men being seen as sexual partners who will play a feminized role.[87]

TABLE 10.2 | PERCENT CHANCE THAT A WOMAN IN EACH RACIAL GROUP WILL RECEIVE A RESPONSE FROM AN INQUIRY

Racial Group	Women Messaging Women	Women Messaging Men
Middle Eastern	50%	52%
Pacific Islander	46%	49%
Asian	44%	53%
Latina	43%	50%
South Asian	43%	63%
White	42%	51%
Native American	42%	49%
Black	34%	47%
Average	**42%**	**51%**

Source: Christian Rudder, "How Your Race Affects the Messages You Get" and "Same-Sex Data for Race vs. Reply Rates," *OkTrends* (blog). Retrieved from http://blog.okcupid.com/index.php/your-race-affects-whether-people-write-you-back/ and https://web.archive.org/web/20110116062331/http://blog.okcupid.com/index.php/same-sex-data-race-reply/.

Table 10.2 shows that Asian, Pacific Islander, South Asian, and Middle Eastern women do very well in the erotic market. These are the four groups most likely to receive a response from women messaging men, and three of the top four from women messaging women. In contrast, black women face a situation similar to that of Asian men. Racial stereotypes that masculinize African Americans relative to whites undermine a black woman's value in the erotic marketplace. Black women—whether they are college educated or not—are least likely to receive a response.[88] Latina women fall somewhere in between.

Actual dating and marriage patterns reflect what we see online.[89] White people are more likely to marry Latinos, Native Americans, or Asians than they are to marry black people. Perhaps the stereotype of the "feisty Latina" or "hot Latin lover" is less costly to Latinas and Latinos than the stereotype of the "angry black woman" or "scary black man" is to African Americans. Here the intersection of gender and race matters, too. White men are more likely to marry Asian than black women, and white women are more likely to marry black men than Asian men.[90] Reflecting colorism, lighter-skinned racial minorities are more likely to intermarry with whites than darker-skinned minorities.

Evidence further suggests that people are more comfortable experimenting with interracial relationships than they are committing to them.[91] When white teenagers date white peers, they introduce them to their parents 71 percent of the time, but nonwhite girlfriends or boyfriends get to meet parents only 57 percent of the time. Black teenagers are also reluctant to introduce their white boyfriends or girlfriends, though the difference is smaller. In general, the rate of interracial dating tends to decrease as levels of commitment increase. People are more likely to date partners of a different race than they are to live with them

and they're even less likely to marry them. Sexual minorities of both sexes are more likely to date interracially, but race clearly still plays an erotic role.[92]

EROTICIZED INEQUALITY Gender also straightforwardly shapes ideas about how men and women should couple. Because of sexism, for example, couples in which the man appears to have more power than the woman seem most natural and desirable. Cultural norms dictate that men be taller, stronger, bigger, older, and more educated than their female partners, and have a higher-status job that brings in more income. It doesn't have to be a Cinderella story, but we've learned to feel attracted to a gentle asymmetry.

The data on age puts this in stark relief. Age is an imperfect measure of both attractiveness and accomplishment: personal maturity, career success, and financial security. As we've already seen, men seeking women put a premium on attractiveness (which for women is conflated with youth) and a younger woman's lesser accomplishment is no drawback (and may even be desirable). Men seeking women on OkCupid report that they'll consider dating women who are quite a lot younger, but only a bit older.[93] As they age, men's lower bracket stays low. The average thirty-year-old man, for instance, says he's interested in dating a woman as old as thirty-five and as young as twenty-two. A man at forty will date a woman as old as forty-five but as young as twenty-seven.

This is what men *say*, anyway. In practice, men mostly seek contact with the youngest women in their reported age bracket and women who fall *below* it.[94] Their willingness to date "down" suggests that they prefer or will accept a mate whose career is "behind" their own. The average woman, conversely, prefers to date a man who is her age or older. As women age, they will accept about five years on either side. In actual messaging, they tend to focus on men their own age. At some point in this skewed erotic market, the oldest and most accomplished women and the youngest and least accomplished men are boxed out.

For men, then, being bigger, stronger, and older, having advanced degrees, and enjoying a high-prestige, well-paid occupation are always advantages. For women, all these things carry both advantages and disadvantages. Gains may help her catch an accomplished man, but she might reasonably worry that too many gains could knock her out of the competition altogether. Meanwhile, her ability to attract men may decrease as she ages, while the men in her same age cohort become relatively *more* attractive. His achievements count more toward his attractiveness than hers do, and fading looks harm her more than him.

Many women understand this. In a study of newly admitted MBA students, respondents were asked to indicate their expected future salaries. Half were told that their peers would see their answers and half were told they'd be confidential. There were no differences in the salaries reported by men and women in the latter group, but single women who thought their peers would see their answers reported salary goals $18,000 lower than single women promised

confidentiality.[95] They also reported lower ambitions, less interest in leadership, and less willingness to travel. Men and non-single women didn't show this difference. Concerned that seeming too ambitious or being too successful might make them unattractive to men, women sometimes moderate their career goals. They're not delusional if they do. Women who make more money than the men they're dating are less likely to get married and, if they are married, more likely to get divorced.[96]

Discrimination based on conformity to gender expectations isn't limited, of course, to mixed-sex matches. The very limited research on women seeking women suggests that they have a slight preference for feminine women.[97] A wider literature on men seeking men has found preferences for "straight-acting" men, reflecting the hegemony of masculinity and androcentric bias against femininity.[98] On Grindr and other apps, some men try to enhance their erotic capital by advertising their masculine qualities and concealing their feminine ones, a practice described as **mascing** (a portmanteau of "masculine" and "masking").[99]

Mascing may include expressing an interest in sports, emphasizing one's interest in the outdoors, or growing a hearty beard. It may even include identifying as heterosexual. "[T]here are a lot of guys out there that are like me," said one heterosexual-identified man who regularly sought out other men for sex.[100] Many of these men actually avoided gay-identified men, preferring other heterosexual-identified men or ones who identify as bisexual. One explained that he liked "straight guys" because "I identify with them more because that's kinda, like [how] I feel myself. And bi guys, the same way. We can talk about women [and watch] hetero porn."[101] It's probably not necessary for every stirring of one's loins to prompt an identity crisis, but prejudice against femininity—whether in oneself or in others—is still androcentrism, even when men who have sex with men are doing it.

While our individual preferences seem very personal, the data from OkCupid and other research into sexual preferences reveal that our aggregated choices conform to social hierarchies.[102] Gender and race hierarchies clearly shape our ideas about who is an appealing and appropriate sexual and romantic partner. And, as the next section will show, when two people are in the position of acting on their sexual attraction to one another, gendered dynamics persist.

Gendered Scripts

When sexual interactions unfold in real time, they are guided by information we've gleaned about what sex is, how it works, who does what, and what it means. This knowledge, or set of instructions, is called a **sexual script**, the social rules

that guide sexual interaction.[103] Because of sexual scripts, people with a shared culture usually engage sexually in similar ways. Generally, sexual scripts assume sex occurs between two people. They kiss first (closed mouth), then have close body contact with more kissing (open mouth), and only then move to grabbing and squeezing. Once this all has occurred, the couple gets horizontal. Then there's more kissing and groping, including the touching of genitals through clothes. Clothes start coming off; usually tops before bottoms. If it's a mixed-sex couple, her clothes usually come off first (her shirt, his shirt, her pants, his pants, etc.); it's a toss-up if it's a same-sex couple, but their sexual interactions may be guided by differences in gender performance rather than their identity. The scripts of both mixed-sex and same-sex couples may still have a somewhat rigid ascending order of intimacy: fellatio before cunnilingus, oral before penile-vaginal, penile-vaginal before anal, and oral before anal, all depending on what body parts are involved.

We tend to be especially careful to follow sexual scripts when we are first becoming sexually active, or first becoming active with a new partner. Scripts are particularly helpful when we're concerned about doing sex "right." They create predictability and ease social interaction: *Did they kiss me back? Aha, now I have clearance to try for second base*. We police one another around these sexual rules. In some cases, they're even enforced with laws. The rule that French kissing comes before fondling, for instance, isn't just a guideline; someone who moves straight to second base could be charged with sexual battery, a legal term for unwanted but nonviolent sexual touching.

The sexual script is also gendered, featuring more masculine and more feminine roles. The masculine role in sex is an assertive one involving making the first move, touching first, pushing the interaction along, and removing a partner's clothes. The feminine role in sex is responsive. A feminine sexuality is one which waits, never acts or initiates. The feminine partner is put into sexual positions by the masculine partner. The masculine partner penetrates; the feminine partner is penetrated.

In practice, of course, people rarely behave in purely feminine and masculine ways, but men who have sex with women and women who have sex with men will probably recognize these dynamics. People who have sex with people of the same sex may recognize them, too, as masculinity and femininity are not features of male-bodied and female-bodied people, respectively, but can be "done" by anyone of any body and identity. Some gay and bisexual men may be in the habit of playing more of a responsive than assertive role in sex. And gay and bisexual women are quite obviously capable of playing an assertive role with one another, otherwise they would never have sex at all.

Because the script puts women in the position of enacting a feminine version of sexuality that is responsive to sexual activity but doesn't initiate it, women might not ask their male partners for orgasms or tell them how to give them

one.[104] Because of the coital imperative and a gendered love/sex binary that prioritizes his sexualness and her sexiness, orgasmic equality would require quite a bit of reimagining of what is sexually possible. The script adds one more layer of difficulty, because now she doesn't just have to *feel* differently (not just sexy, but sexual), she has to *act* differently (not just receptive, but assertive). Likewise, men enacting a masculine version of sexuality have to do the same: see themselves as sexy, not just sexual; learn to prioritize her orgasm as well as their own; and find a way to be responsive in bed alongside being assertive. All of this is a lot to overcome, especially the first few times two people are in bed together.

The same masculine imperative to have sex, and the defining of reluctance as feminine, is also behind the **push-and-resist dynamic**, a situation in which it's normal for men to press sexual activity consistently in the direction of increasing sexual intimacy (whether he wants to or not) and for women to stop or slow down the accelerating intimacy when he's going "too far" (whether she wants to or not).[105] This interferes with people's ability to enjoy what they're experiencing. Men may be thinking about what they *aren't yet doing*. Women, in turn, can't get too swept away because they can't necessarily count on men to pace intimacy comfortably. They, for their part, are left thinking about what they *might do*. In neither case are men and women actually thinking about what they *are doing*, making it difficult for either partner to be in the moment, simply experiencing pleasure.

The push-and-resist dynamic also, predictably, contributes to sexual violence.

Sexual Violence

In the United States, one in three women and one in six men have experienced sexual violence; young people, the working class and poor, racial minorities, people with disabilities, people who are imprisoned, and gender-nonconforming people are at highest risk.[106] Men are the vast majority of perpetrators, representing 97 percent of people arrested for sexual assault.[107] These men often don't believe their behavior constitutes sexual assault, even when it matches legal definitions.[108] Men who rape are more likely than other men to have been sexually or physically abused themselves.[109]

THE POLITICS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE That we even identify sexual assault as a crime and collect these statistics is rather new. Among the English who colonized the United States, women were property.[110] Men could do whatever they wanted with their property, including rape it. If you raped someone else's property, though, you damaged the goods. So rape was a crime, but it was a property crime; more like theft than assault. Enslaved people were also

defined as property, so the men given legal right to own them could violate them with impunity.[111] The colonists denied Native American men property rights, so unless Native women were owned by or married to white men, raping them wasn't a crime at all.[112] Much of this was true until about 150 years ago.

Even then, things didn't change right away. Well into the 1970s, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault went largely unregulated by the government. Violence between intimate partners was seen as part of men's legitimate right to "govern" their own homes. Sexual harassment was so normalized that there was no name for it.[113] And rape—especially when perpetrated by a friend or acquaintance—was often dismissed as an occupational hazard of being female. Until 2014, the United States government defined rape as a crime against women; raping men was not a crime, leaving male victims invisible and with no legal remedies.[114]

To change this, activists raised money, recruited volunteers, opened domestic violence shelters, and staffed rape crisis lines.[115] They redefined sexual violence as a crime, collected data to demonstrate its prevalence, and argued that state involvement was essential to protecting victims' rights.[116] Rates of rape began to decline.[117] In 1986, the Supreme Court criminalized sexual harassment. In 1993, marital rape became illegal in all fifty states. In 1994, Congress increased criminal penalties for sexual violence and began funding special sexual assault units in police departments. In 2013, this was extended to include protections for immigrant and Native American women.

These are impressive accomplishments, but there is a lot of work left to be done. It's still hard for victims to get justice. Commonly, they are unsure whether what happened to them was a crime or worry they won't be believed.[118] **Victim blaming**, identifying something done by victims as a cause of their victimization, is common, and many victims fear that they will face more trouble than the person who assaulted them.[119] Only one out of every three sexual assaults is reported to the police.[120] Of those that are reported, only 2 percent will lead to a conviction. In comparison, twice as many robberies are reported to police, with nearly three times as many convictions.

Even in best-case scenarios, convictions can be cold comfort. In 2015, Stanford swimmer Brock Turner was discovered behind a dumpster with his hands inside an unconscious woman. He was convicted, in part thanks to a medical exam and two eye witnesses, and was sentenced to six months in jail for assault with intent to rape and sexual penetration with a foreign object. Turner's father objected to any sentence at all, saying that it was a "steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action."

But it wasn't just his father who minimized Brock Turner's criminal behavior. The judge, too, expressed concern for Turner's future and stated that he didn't believe that Turner would be "a danger to others." Imagine being the victim in that courtroom. After being sexually assaulted, she submitted to a legal

medical exam, reported to police, and suffered through a criminal trial, only to hear the judge say that he worried that prison time "would have a severe impact" on her assailant. It turns out Turner only served half his sentence anyway. Three months—a summer vacation's worth of punishment.

Rape myths frequently underlie the decisions and judgments of police officers, medical examiners, lawyers, judges, jurors, and the victims themselves, including the persistent belief that sexual crimes are falsely reported more often than other crimes (they're not).[121] For male victims, women of color, and anyone who carries socially stigmatized characteristics, it's even harder to get justice; police officers sometimes decide whether to investigate reports of sexual assault based on the victim's race, age, sexual orientation, or income level.[122] Men of color are more likely than white men to be put on trial and be convicted and, when they are, they receive harsher sentences.[123] Black men are three and a half times more likely to be wrongly convicted of sexual assault than white men, and especially likely to be wrongly convicted if the victim is a white woman.[124] Continuing, and increasingly intersectional, work on this issue is critical.[125]

RAPE AND CULTURE We have a long way to go before sexual violence becomes rare, but it could be. In fact, it's extraordinarily rare in some societies.[126] Instead of an inevitability, sexual violence is a cultural artifact. Some environments make it more likely than others. Environments that facilitate sexual assault—ones that justify, naturalize, and even glorify sexual pressure, coercion, and violence—are called **rape cultures**.

The idea that men are naturally sexually aggressive is part of rape culture, as is the idea that women are inherently vulnerable to men.[127] Vulvas and vaginas are socially constructed as passive and physically delicate (flower-like, easily crushed or bruised) or simply thought of as a vulnerable space (a "hole").[128] Penises, in contrast, are symbolically active and strong; they become "rock hard" and are used to "hammer" and "pound," while men's highly sensitive testicles are usually left out of this equation altogether.[129] All of this contributes to our tendency to believe that men can effectively use their penises as weapons, their bodies are otherwise invulnerable, and women are helpless to defend themselves. In cultures where rape is rare, the social construction of men's and women's body parts emphasizes the vulnerability of the penis and testicles (sensitive, floppy, fleshy structures exposed on the outside of the body), the power of the muscles surrounding the entrance to the vagina, and the mysterious depths into which penises must blindly go.[130]

Alongside this social construction of the body are media reflections of rape culture.[131] Routine in regular programming are images that glamorize scenes of sexual force, sex scenes in which women say no and then change their minds, and jokes that trivialize sexual assault, especially of men. Rape scenes in movies and on television are common plot twists or character devices and often are

Images courtesy of Safer Watford

This British police campaign that intends to reduce the incidence of rape does so by putting the onus of preventative action on the woman, as do campaigns on many U.S. college campuses.

purposefully designed to be sexually titillating to male viewers. Fictional perpetrators are disproportionately men of color and, since 9/11, Muslim.

When news media covers sex crimes, they often focus on the victim's behavior, reporting on whether she was drinking alcohol, flirting prior to the assault, wearing sexually provocative clothes, or making risky choices.[132] White women get more sympathetic coverage. Perpetrators who seem "respectable"—wealthy, white, men, for instance—are most often given the benefit of the doubt. Not uncommonly, stories about rape are described as "sex scandals," as if they are equivalent to a story about a celebrity's kinky fetish.

Rape culture also encourages and can even compel men to enact the push-and-resist dynamic, sometimes aggressively. As a result, many people who have sex with men experience a range of sexual pressure, manipulation, coercion, and force throughout their lives. It starts in elementary school.[133] Much of this isn't criminal, just cruel and dehumanizing. Altogether it reveals what feminist writer Robert Jensen calls a "continuum of sexual intrusion."[134] Many sexualized interactions, as a result, end up being coercive and manipulative, even when not criminal.

Americans' confusion about this was on full display in 2017, when a story about a first date with the comedian Aziz Ansari was published.[135] According to his date, after a dinner over a bottle of wine, they went to his apartment and he quickly initiated sexual activity. Without ascertaining her comfort level or consent, Ansari undressed them both and began kissing and touching her breasts, pulling her hands toward his penis, and putting his fingers in her mouth and vagina. When she asked him to "slow down" or mentioned that she felt "forced," which she did repeatedly, he would stop momentarily and then start again. Nothing she said or did persuaded him to stop trying to push her into sexual activity.

The public reaction to this story, mixed between people who saw his behavior as exploitative and those who saw it as entirely routine, reveals considerable disagreement about how hard men are allowed to push, how much pushing women are expected to tolerate, and how hard women should have to try to get men to listen to them. The fact that many or even most women have multiple experiences like these is part of why the revelation of movie producer Harvey Weinstein's decades of abuse of women in the entertainment industry, alongside dozens of other men outed for similar behavior around the same time, snowballed into a hashtag. By saying #metoo, millions of women confirmed the sheer ubiquity of coercive behavior, from merely selfish to truly egregious.[136]

The preponderance of this push-and-resist dynamic doesn't make just for confusing and uncomfortable sexual interactions, it also gives camouflage to people who are intent on exploiting their peers, making aggressive sexual behavior seem normal or, at least, not so far from the norm. When men behave this way, it is often brushed aside as "boys will be boys." This is exculpatory chauvinism: giving men a pass for their exploitative, cruel, and otherwise thoughtless and dehumanizing behavior. The dynamic is also a catalyst for sexual assault.

We teach men, and even women, that being sexually aggressive is good, then expect them to parse the difference between pushy and criminal. It can be a thin line, and sometimes people cross it.

We see all of these dynamics, and more, on many college campuses today.

COLLEGE HOOKUP CULTURE

The prototypical American college party today is a drunken mix of elation and recklessness. "Things get out of hand," sociologist Thomas Vander Ven observes, "but in an entertaining sort of way."[137] Indeed, the party is euphoric in part because it's just a little dangerous. At its climax, it's a world apart—Vander Ven calls it "drunkworld"—a place where it's normal for people to "fall down, slur their words, break things, laugh uncontrollably, act crazy, flirt, hook up, get sick, pass out, fight, dance, sing, and get overly emotional."[138] Casual sex, by virtue of being slightly reckless but oh-so-exhilarating, fits right in.

This kind of party is most often associated with fraternities, and rightly so. Fraternity men invented this party in the 1800s and began sharing it with wider and wider circles of peers beginning in the 1920s.[139] At the time, and well into the 1970s, colleges acted like substitute parents, treating students like children by imposing curfews, censorship, and punishments for drinking and sexual activity.[140] The boomers successfully pushed back against these practices, and that's when things really got wild. The minimum drinking age was eighteen, so students could party pretty much as hard as they wanted, and they did.[141] By 1978, when the movie *Animal House* cemented the relationship among college, alcohol, and sex, it was routine to have all-out parties in residence halls. The alcohol industry took notice, spending millions of dollars in the 1980s to convince college students to drink.[142]

Then, in 1987, the balance of power on campus shifted. The federal government convinced all fifty states to raise their drinking age to twenty-one. Now students who wanted to party had a problem. Campus authorities were policing residence halls, bars and clubs required an ID, and most sororities weren't allowed to throw parties with alcohol. First-year students, especially, were unlikely to have upper-class friends living in private apartments and houses. On many college campuses, then, a fraternity house was the only place students knew to go to party like they thought they should. The men who belonged to fraternities wealthy enough to have private houses happily filled that void, claiming a role at the center of college life.[143] This gave a small group of students—ones who were disproportionately wealthy, white, and heterosexual, and almost exclusively men—a lot of power to shape their peers' social and sexual lives.

Thirty-eight fraternity members attempt to squeeze into a Volkswagen Bug in 1959.
Shenanigans have been a part of fraternity life for more than 200 years.

This is the background to life on many residential college campuses today.
The men of wealthy, historically white fraternities—or, on some campuses, men
in other formal or informal fraternity-like brotherhoods—still have an oversized
influence on the college party scene. Members of this segment of the male col-
lege population also tend to be especially enthusiastic about hooking up, so
they throw parties that facilitate nonromantic one-time sexual encounters.[144]
Worrisomely, fraternity men are also more likely, on average, to report rape-
supportive attitudes and admit to having committed acts of sexual aggression.[145]

Students attend these parties for myriad reasons, but one reason is because
the fraternity party has become *the* college party: the way all students are sup-
posed to want to have fun.[146] The mass media reflects this, socializing young
people into believing that college life is really as crazy as it looks on TV.[147]
These sexy, raucous parties resonate, too, with the current definition of sexual
liberation: saying yes instead of no and, for women, grasping one's "liberation"
by acting like a stereotypical guy.

This is why hookup culture dominates most college campuses. It's not
because everyone is doing it, and it's certainly not because everyone likes it.
A third of students say that their intimate relationships on campus have been
"traumatic" or "very difficult to handle."[148] Between two-thirds and three-
quarters wish they had more opportunities to find a long-term romantic part-

ner.[149] Instead, hookup culture dominates campuses because the students who *do* like it have a great deal of power, and the cultural messaging students receive—both about higher education generally and the relationship among sex, fun, and liberation—all conspire to make hookup culture seem "right." This suits some students better than others.

Who Hooks Up?

Most students overestimate how often their peers are hooking up, as well as how "far" they go and how much they enjoy it.[150] According to a survey of over 24,000 students at twenty-one different colleges and universities, the average number of hookups reported by seniors is eight.[151] A third of students won't hook up at all and 20 percent of seniors report that they have yet to lose their virginity. Only 14 percent of students hook up more than ten times in four years.[152] Almost half of first-time hookups include just kissing; fewer than a third include intercourse.[153]

Fraternity and sorority members hook up almost twice as much as everyone else, while students who are nonwhite, poor or working class, and nonheterosexual hook up with their peers less often than their counterparts.[154] For sexual minorities, for example, college parties are not always safe or friendly. Though girl-on-girl kissing is common, it's generally assumed to be for male attention. Some women use this activity to explore their attraction to other women, but others report only doing it if they're confident that the other woman is heterosexual.[155] These latter women are actually *more* homophobic than women who don't kiss other women at parties.[156] The irony is not lost on gay, bisexual, and questioning women, who often feel not only invisible but taunted by the practice. While gay and bisexual men report higher rates of hooking up than average, they generally don't find the hookup scene welcoming; they're more likely than any other group to go off campus to hook up.[157]

While black men hook up somewhat more than average, black women, Latino and Latina students, and Asian men and women are less likely than white students to hook up.[158] This is in part because when students of color hook up, they risk affirming harmful beliefs about their racial group, so some embrace a politics of respectability. Some may explicitly define hooking up as something typical of white students and choose to distance themselves from the behavior.[159] "We don't sleep around like white girls do," said a Filipina American expressing this view.[160] "If I started hooking up," said an African American man, "my friends would be saying I'm, like, 'acting white.'"[161] Some men of color further assume they can't get away with the same level of sexual aggressiveness as white men.[162] And they're probably not wrong. The erotic marketplace plays

a role here, too, racializing desirability. Just like in the wider culture, black women and Asian men tend to rank low in the erotic hierarchy on campus, while Asian and white women and white men tend to rank high.

Research also suggests that class-privileged students hook up more often than other students.[163] Among women, this may be because peers are much quicker to ascribe the "slut" label to working-class women, even when they are less sexually active than their richer peers.[164] Working-class students may also be more focused on getting through school and may not think they can afford to focus on their social lives. One Latina and white woman observed:

> Some of these girls don't even go to class. It's like they just live here. They stay up until 4 in the morning. [I want to ask,] "Do you guys go to class? Like what's your deal? . . . You're paying a lot of money for this. . . . If you want to be here, then why aren't you trying harder?"[165]

Students from families with tight budgets are also likely to have a job outside of school and may live at home to save money. These students have less time to spend partying and less opportunity to do so. Sharing a small house with one's parents—often a car or bus ride from the party—isn't conducive to casual sex or heavy drinking.[166] Students who live at home, especially young women, are subject to surveillance from parents who may have rules against drinking, drug use, sexual activity, and staying out late. Lydia, for example, a Latina student who lived at home, imagined that dorm life was more autonomous: "They don't have parents worrying about when they get home or calling them. . . . They do as they please."[167]

Men and women hook up at similar rates, but women report higher rates of regret, distress, and lowered self-esteem.[168] The gendered love/sex binary introduced by the Victorians would suggest that this is because women are more interested in love than sex and men are more interested in sex than love. In fact, men are slightly more likely than women to say that they'd be interested in a committed relationship.[169] Women's greater dissatisfaction is probably not due to an aversion to casual sex not shared by men, but to their greater exposure to sexist and subordinating experiences.

Gendered Power

Exactly because of the gendered love/sex binary, it's assumed that men want casual sex and women don't, thus all women are presumed to be hooking up with the hope that a committed relationship will evolve. This logic tells men that every woman they hook up with wants a boyfriend, so they should act aloof after a hookup to ensure the women don't get the "wrong idea." Women, for their part, may act aloof, too. They understand that some people don't believe women

are capable of being casual about sexual activity, so they go to extra lengths to prove they can be. Whether either of the partners actually *is* romantically interested in the other is beside the point; in hookup culture, revealing a desire for connection is pathetically feminine, and nobody wants to be that.[170]

A majority of college students do form romantic relationships, but these relationships tend to emerge out of a series of hookups, during which both students may act as if they're not interested in each other.[171] In the meantime, because women are stereotyped as less capable than men of controlling their emotions, men have more power in these interactions. Women may enthusiastically participate in hookup culture, then, expecting to experiment sexually with men who see them as equals, but they may discover that many men don't see them that way.

Deanna reflected on just such an experience for *American Hookup*. A guy she had previously been with pulled her aside to glumly tell her that he wasn't interested in a relationship. She told him she was fine with that (and she was), but he pressed on apologetically. "He more and more drastically emphasized asking if I was OK," she recounted, "as if he had somehow damaged me, seeming to expect a flood of tears."[172] His behavior was revealing. She thought they were *both* having fun, but he hadn't seen it that way. Reflecting on their encounters, she wrote:

> The stigma attached to women being the emotional creatures in the relationship and the men being the physical ones had never been so apparent to me. . . . He clearly thought that he was the one with the power to hurt and I was the one that was expected to cry with anguish.

Some men hooking up with women do not see or treat them as equals, and one in three men report respecting their female partners less after hooking up with them.[173] This is a good recipe for creating feelings of regret, distress, and lower self-esteem among the women who participate.

Notably, we only think that men are better at hooking up because hookup culture is premised on a stereotypically masculine version of sexuality, which is not the only way to experiment with or commit to multiple sexual partners. Consensually nonmonogamous practices, for example, are based on the idea that people can be loving toward multiple partners (in the case of polyamory) or committed to someone emotionally without sexual exclusivity (in the case of open relationships). In neither case does sexual nonexclusivity involve a denigration of commitment or connection, nor require being callous or cold in order stave off such things.

Hookup culture falsely conflates caring with committed, monogamous relationships because it's based on a gender binary: monogamous, caring sex with just one person (the supposedly feminine kind of sex) and nonmonogamous,

casual sex with multiple partners (the supposedly masculine kind of sex).[174] If we collapse the gender binary, we can imagine many other possibilities, including sex that is casual and caring and nonmonogamous. What would a hookup culture that embraced the feminine look like?

Pleasure and Danger

Sexual pleasure is also unevenly distributed. In first-time hookups, women hooking up with men report 35 percent as many orgasms as their partners.[175] This is the same orgasm gap we see off campus: about one for every three. In this case, though, we know for sure that at least some college men are perfectly capable of giving women orgasms. The orgasm gap in hookup culture appears to be a measure of a couple's interest in each other, with concern for women's orgasms increasing as two people hook up together repeatedly and then enter a relationship. When men and women are in committed relationships with each other, the orgasm gap shrinks from 65 to 20 percentage points, with women having 80 percent as many orgasms as their boyfriends.

Both men and women are likely culprits. For their part, some men appear to value their girlfriends' pleasure, but not that of women with whom they only hook up. One male college student, for example, insisted that he always cared about "her" orgasm.[176] However, when asked if he meant "the general her or the specific," he replied, "Girlfriend her. In a hookup her, I don't give a shit." Other men take a similar approach:

> If it's just a random hookup, I don't think [her orgasm] matters as much to the guy. . . . But if you're with somebody for more than just that one night . . . I know I feel personally responsible. I think it's essential that she has an orgasm during sexual activity.[177]

To be fair, women often don't put their own pleasure first either: "I will do everything in my power to, like whoever I'm with, to get [him] off," said one woman about her priorities during a hookup.[178] Both men and women tend to believe that men are more entitled to orgasms. This is illustrated most strikingly by a bisexual student who realized, upon putting some thought into it, that he concentrated on giving his partner an orgasm when he hooked up with men, but getting one when he hooked up with women.[179]

If women experience less pleasure in hookup culture than men, they also face more danger. One in four senior women report being sexually assaulted in college, with 10 percent reporting that someone tried to physically force them to have sex; 5 percent reporting that someone tried but did not succeed; and 11 percent reporting that someone had sex with them while they were unconscious or otherwise incapacitated.[180]

Emma Sulkowicz, a visual arts student at Columbia, made national headlines when she began carrying her mattress around campus to dramatize the inaction of university officials after she reported being sexually assaulted by a fellow student.

Heterosexual women are not alone in being at high risk of victimization. They are joined by gay men and bisexual women, who are more likely than heterosexual women to report being assaulted, and bisexual men, who are almost as likely. Trans and nonbinary students almost certainly suffer high rates of sexual assault on campus, though we don't have good research on these populations yet.[181] Heterosexual men and lesbian women have the lowest rates, with 3 percent of both groups reporting rape by physical force and 3 and 5 percent reporting rape by incapacitation, respectively. These numbers are not trivial either. As with the national statistics, the vast majority of perpetrators of sexual assault are male, regardless of the sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation of the victim, with 8 percent of college men reporting behavior matching the definition of sexual assault.[182]

Rates are high on campus in part because hookup culture is a rape culture.[183] Its sexual scripts make coercive behaviors look and feel normal (plying people with alcohol or pulling them into secluded parts of a party), while making a feminized interest in and concern for one's partner off-script (including care about their pleasure and consent). This camouflages the behavior of students who are intent on raping their peers, but it also puts all students at risk of perpetrating rape. If students carelessly and assertively seek sex with strangers and acquaintances, and do so regularly under drunken conditions, with little concern for their sexual partners' well-being, then we might expect high rates of coercion.

And if men are put in the "push" role in the push-and-resist dynamic, then we might expect men in particular to be perpetrators. Serial perpetrators are a problem on college campuses, but a longitudinal study of rape perpetration found that four out of five college men who commit rape before graduating are not serial perpetrators.[184] They rape only once. It may not be the content of one's character but the context of hookup culture—the risk-loving parties, the pressure to "get" sex, and the normalization of aggressive sexual behavior—that leads some students to commit sexual crimes.

Rape culture also makes it difficult for campus activists fighting sexual violence to hold colleges accountable for effective prevention and fair adjudication, though much progress has been made on this front. In 2011, the Office for Civil Rights released a statement explaining that Title IX, a law that prohibits sex-based discrimination in education, requires colleges to be proactive in reducing rates of sexual violence.[185] Responding to this clarified mandate, students at hundreds of colleges submitted complaints to the Department of Education, arguing that their institutions were ignoring or mishandling sexual assault.[186] The results of the investigations prompted the Obama White House to develop a guide for reducing rates and responding to alleged assaults.[187] The Trump administration has since rescinded the 2011 statement, but not before student

Andrea Pino and Annie E. Clark sit against a wall documenting their efforts to organize student activists across the United States. Thanks to organizing like theirs, almost 500 colleges are or have been under investigation by the Office for Civil Rights for mishandling sexual violence.

activists raised a great deal of awareness and pushed many institutions to institute better and stronger policies.

What happens next will be up to students themselves. The victim of Brock Turner, the Stanford student who served three months in jail on three counts of felony sexual assault, bravely released the statement she made to the court on the day of his sentencing. "Hopefully this will wake people up," she said, referring to his short sentence. "If anything, this is a reason for all of us to speak even louder."[188]

Communities can come together to change norms. Bystander intervention programs—ones that educate students about sexual assault and teach them how to spot likely incidents and safely intervene—are effective in reducing rates of sexual violence, so are programs that teach students to recognize sexually coercive behavior and practice assertive and aggressive responses.[189] A next step may be thinking bigger, not only about the acute problem of sexual assault, but the many problems in the wider sexual culture. Promoting a culture that values feminine approaches to sexuality, gives equal importance to female pleasure, embraces sexual minorities and gender-nonconforming students, and addresses intersectional inequalities could be the way to make colleges safer spaces for all students.

Revisiting the Question

Q+A **Gendered ideas, interactions, and institutions may affect almost every part of my life, but some things are personal and my sexuality is mine and mine alone, isn't it?**

The women's movement, gay liberation, and the sexual revolution changed the landscape of sexual opportunity for young Americans, but it would be wrong to describe this cultural shift as a simple embrace of freedom. The movements established a new set of rules for sexuality, including a new imperative to say yes to sex. For women this presented a new set of problems. The coital imperative, gendered love/sex binary, sexual double standard, and sexual script continue to give men more power in interactions, create fertile ground for sexual violence, and contribute to the orgasm gap between men and women, while privileging an objectifying male sexual gaze. Men, conversely, are prescribed a narrow heterosexuality, policed if they step outside its boundaries, and put at risk of engaging in criminal behavior.

If the playground is uncomfortable for some heterosexual men and unsafe for many heterosexual women, then sexual minorities, nonbinary individuals, and trans men and women are at even higher risk of rejection, mistreatment, and violence. Troubled sexual dynamics play out among these populations as well. No sexual encounters, regardless of the identities and body parts of the

people involved, are automatically devoid of gendered power, sexual objectification, sexual violence, or other forms of prejudice like racism.

Sex, no less than anything else about life, reflects our cultural values and is shaped by interactional norms and institutional forces. Though it can feel deeply personal, in many ways it's not. That means that efforts to bring about freer and more equal sexual opportunities will involve changing the context in which we make our sexual choices. Since college students (who are disproportionately white and class privileged) are often agents of social change for everyone, it will be fascinating to see how their work influences the sexual opportunities of the generations both ahead and behind them, as well as people who attend college later, commute to college, or don't go to college at all (who are disproportionately nonwhite, poor, and working class).

For young people who don't have a traditional college experience, as well as people well beyond their college years, hookup culture may be just something they read about in a book. The hookup script may have escaped hookup culture, somewhat inflecting everyone's dating experiences, but the wider American culture still very much valorizes love, romance, and monogamous marriage. While some college students are struggling with the dynamics of hookup culture, then, other people are attempting to follow dating scripts that more resemble the 1950s, navigating engagements and weddings and extended families, trying to keep love (and sex) alive in marriage, adjusting to aging and increasingly devalued bodies, and managing divorce, re-entering the dating pool, and possibly remarrying. Even most college students will ultimately turn away from casual sex, and rather soon—two-thirds are married by their thirtieth birthday—and they, too, will face new and different sexual and romantic challenges.[190] What are those marriages like?

Next . . .

Hookup culture may make relationships seem passé, but nearly two-thirds of college students will be married by their thirtieth birthday.[191] These marriages have more potential to be true partnerships than any in history. For the first time in thousands of years, marriage law prescribes to men and women the same rights and responsibilities. One source of oppression for women appears to have crumbled.

And yet, despite changes aimed at giving women equal footing, over the last thirty years women who marry men have become increasingly unhappy with their marriages. The data show that women today experience significantly less wedded bliss than men married to women, women married to women, and single women.[192] In fact, despite the cultural messages that insist that women crave marriage and children more than men do, research shows us that the happiest women are single and without children. This prompts us to ask:

Q+A **If marriage is better for women than ever, why do women married to men report lower levels of happiness than men married to women, women married to women, and single women?**

An answer awaits.

FOR FURTHER READING

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66

OH, THIS WILL *REALLY*
INTEREST MY *WIFE*.

—A HUSBAND[1]

99

11

Families

Thanks to hundreds of years of legal reform and social change, individuals have substantially more freedom to arrange their relationships as they wish. This is what feminists have been fighting for and what many people want. Even marriage is no longer gendered by law, a change that also paved the way for same-sex marriage and helped give trans men and women the opportunity to partner without confronting gender-related hurdles.

Still, of all the folks who marry today, it is women in mixed-sex partnerships who have the most troubled relationship to marriage.[2] Counter to stereotypes, women are less eager than men to marry. Once married, wives are less happy than husbands. More than a third of men, but less than a quarter of women, think happiness comes more easily to married people than singles. Men are more likely to believe in the idea of a "soul mate"; women are more skeptical.

Women are as likely as men to have an affair that precedes a divorce and more likely to initiate a separation. This is in part because they're significantly less likely than men to think a child needs both a mother and a father. After divorce, women are happier than they were when married; for men, the opposite is true. Accordingly, divorced women are more likely than divorced men to say they'd prefer to never marry again.

Women in mixed-sex marriages are also less happy than women in same-sex marriages.[3] While these marriages are similar in most ways, men married to men, and especially women married to women, seem to have more satisfying unions than men and women who are married to each other. They argue less, are better at conflict resolution, and take disagreements less personally.

All this has prompted the question:

Q+A   **If marriage is better for women than ever, why do women married to men report lower levels of happiness than men married to women, women married to women, and single women?**

The reasons have to do with how people arrange their family lives, and these arrangements affect not just women married to men, but all kinds of partnerships. To understand these dynamics, this chapter explores the gendered nature of housework and childcare in culture and conversation, then looks at the surprising contrast between what people say they want and how they actually divide paid and unpaid work in practice. It will also review new and emerging family arrangements, as well as some oldies-but-goodies, with an emphasis on how gender intersects with other features of families.

Throughout, the chapter will show how woman bear disproportionate responsibility for devalued and unpaid categories of labor as a result of sexism, androcentrism, and subordination. This disadvantages women as a whole, exacerbates inequality among women, and places them at odds with one another. Unfortunately, while we think of families as places where love and care take center stage, they are also places in which both difference and inequality are reproduced.

GENDERED HOUSEWORK AND PARENTING

Today only 20 percent of all mothers are stay-at-home moms with a working husband.[4] In fact, nearly three-quarters of all moms, including almost two-thirds of moms with preschoolers, are in the workforce.[5] Accordingly, breadwinner/housewife marriages—today better described with the gender-neutral term *breadwinner/homemaker*—are outnumbered by both single-parent families and two-parent families in which both partners engage in paid work.

Families without a homemaker face a specific challenge: finding time to do the childcare, cleaning, feeding, and errand-running that housewives historically have

done for breadwinner husbands. For single parents and families with two or more working parents, that work is described as the **second shift**, the work that greets us when we come home from paid work.[6] Groceries must be bought, dinner must be cooked, messes must be cleaned, chores must be supervised, cars must be gassed, homework must be reviewed, budgets must be balanced, and kids must be bathed and put to bed. That's a lot of work!

Working two jobs—one paid at work and one unpaid at home—can be exhausting. In fact, over half of married fathers and three-quarters of both married and single mothers say they have too little time for themselves; a third of dads and over 40 percent of married and single moms say they're always rushed.[7] These trends are true in most North American and Western European countries, but they are especially extreme in the United States among the middle and upper classes.[8]

Further, the second shift isn't gender-neutral terrain. Childcare and housework still carry the gendered meanings they did when breadwinner/housewife families were considered ideal.[9] And that's a problem. Conflict over household responsibilities is among the top reasons why between a third and half of all marriages will end in divorce and why becoming a parent is notoriously hard on both mixed- and same-sex couples.[10] The remainder of this section discusses why, reviewing the social construction of childcare and housework and the actual and ideal division of labor in families today.

Childcare and Housework in Culture

Individual mothers are the primary caregivers in only 20 percent of cultures and, in most of these, children are given considerably more independence than we tend to think is wise today.[11] Indeed, according to historian Peter Stearns, for most of American history children were seen as "sturdy innocents who would grow up well unless corrupted by adult example and who were capable of considerable self-correction."[12] In other words, so long as they didn't encounter a person who set out to harm them deliberately, children could be expected to look after themselves, learn about life, and become well-adjusted adults.

In the 1800s, some experts even argued that too much attention paid by mothers to their children was harmful. Women were given strict warnings not to over-love. John Watson, who wrote one of the best-selling child advice books of all time, cautioned that "mother love is a dangerous instrument":

> *An instrument which may inflict a never-healing wound, a wound which may make infancy unhappy, adolescence a nightmare, an instrument which may wreck your adult son or daughter's vocational future and their chances for marital happiness.*

As for affection, Watson advised: "Kiss them once on the forehead when they say goodnight. Shake hands with them in the morning." But only, he said, "if you must." Parents were advised against hugging, kissing, and letting a child sit in their lap.

Responding to the Watsons of the time, wealthy white Victorian wives embarked on a deliberate and self-interested effort to preserve their social standing.[13] Recall that the gendered work/home distinction was new, emerging with the rise of cities, and so was the idea that what women did at home wasn't work. Pressing back against the devaluation of their freshly separated sphere, and adjusting to men's disengagement from the home, these women claimed that mothering was an essential, delicate, and time-consuming enterprise. This was the birth of the **ideology of intensive motherhood**, the idea that (1) child-rearing should include "copious amounts of time, energy, and material resources"; (2) giving children these things takes priority over all other interests, desires, and demands; and (3) it should be mothers who do this work.[14]

Intensive mothering is still culturally dominant in the United States today among the middle and upper classes. It appeals today especially because it intersects with the economic insecurity of the past few decades. If getting ahead matters, then there's no time to waste; intensive mothering starts the minute, or even before, the child is born. Parents also worry that if they don't take steps to ensure otherwise, their children may fall below the parents' own class position. In an effort to protect their children against this, part of intensive mothering includes **concerted cultivation**, an active and organized effort to develop in children a wide range of skills and talents.[15] This is typically aimed at fostering high self-esteem, strong academic marks, a well-rounded set of capacities and interests, and confidence interacting with adults and navigating social institutions.

When children are small, intensive parenting means avoiding the use of playpens or other restraining devices in favor of close supervision. Meanwhile, concerted cultivation means providing constant interaction and stimulation; offering brain-stimulating toys and activities; and engaging in negotiation instead of instruction. For older children, the work includes maximizing children's educational achievement (volunteering at school, meeting with teachers, helping with homework); keeping a close eye on their grades (guaranteeing they get good marks through cajoling, threatening, or helping); and organizing educational trips and buying learning games (trips to zoos and children's museums, math- and science-based video games and apps). Finally, it means enrolling them in and ferrying them to and from school, after-school, and weekend activities (piano lessons, Little League, dance classes) and giving them at least some of the material goods they want but don't necessarily need (the "right" clothes and accessories).

Attachment parenting, or intensive motherhood, involves keeping one's child close at all times—perhaps even while checking email.

Not everyone has the time to be an intensive parent or the money to engage in concerted cultivation, but because these approaches are endorsed by upper- and upper-middle-class families, they tend to dominate conversations among mommy bloggers, parenting experts, child psychologists, and advice-book authors. Americans receive daily messages affirming the idea that it is women's responsibility to care for both the home and their children. Advertisements for home décor, cleaning supplies, and food for families almost exclusively feature or target female consumers.

Even when parenting guides, magazines, and newspaper articles don't make an explicit claim that mothers should be the primary parents, most assume they are.[16] "You've undoubtedly been smooching your baby and saying things like 'Give mommy a kiss!'" reads one parenting magazine, revealing that by "you" they mean the mother.[17] Parenting websites sometimes feature a "Dad Zone," indicating that the rest of the website is *really* for moms.[18] There's even a sneaky linguistic switcheroo that reveals that mothers are considered the primary parent and fathers the secondary one. While the male version of a term usually comes before the female—for example, "men and women," "his and hers," and "boys and girls"—writing about parenting usually uses the phrase "mom and dad."

When books, magazines, and websites about parenting do address fathers, they often aim to convince men that being an active parent is fun, engaging, and important. Mothers don't receive these messages on the assumption that they're already wholly invested. To make parenting seem right for dads, marketers offer them shortcuts. Whereas commercials and advertisements for elaborate or healthy meal options typically feature moms, advertisements that feature dads are often for fast food, microwaveable meals, or pizza delivery.

If dads are not portrayed as reluctant parents, they're often portrayed as incompetent ones. Movies and television shows spanning decades, from *Mr. Mom* (1983) to *Who's the Boss?* (1984–1992) to *3 Men and a Baby* (1987) to *Married with Children* (1987–1997) to *The Simpsons* (1989–) to *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) to *Everybody Loves Raymond* (1996–2005) to *Family Guy* (1999–) to *Daddy Day Care* (2003) to *Grown Ups* (2010) to *Moms' Night Out* (2014), portray dads as bumbling and in over their head. Fathers alone with their children are often played to comic effect: He'll burn the toast, dress his daughter in summer clothes on a winter day, or mix darks with lights in the washer.[19] Exasperated women are often shown swooping in and relieving men of household duties on the understanding that it would be easier for them to just do it themselves.

The assumption that childcare is primarily for mothers shows up in advertisements for a variety of products.

The ABC comedy *Baby Daddy*, about a twentysomething who suddenly becomes a father after a one-night stand, uses the stereotype of fathers as incompetent caregivers to comedic effect.

Housework and Childcare in Practice

Exposed to these cultural messages, many people internalize the idea that housework and childcare are feminized activities. A study of men with male roommates, for example, found that many of them thought cleanliness was "girly."[20] Doing masculinity meant not caring whether the house was clean, or at least pretending not to care. "It's whatever," said Rick when asked about how he and his roommates keep the house clean. He insisted that he didn't even think about it. "It doesn't really matter. I mean, it's not like something I consider. It's not like I'm caring about it if it happens or not."[21]

Since caring about cleanliness is feminized and our society is androcentric, these men avoided doing household tasks if they could. Jeremy explained that when all the dishes were dirty, they'd eat out or order in rather than wash them. When these men did do housework, they had to come up with an account: some motivation *other* than a feminized desire for cleanliness. They would put off doing laundry until they had nothing left to wear or wait to clean the toilet until their moms were coming for a visit.

Of course, manliness, however it is socially constructed, is not a natural or universal trait in men. So, while some men were quite comfortable with this

system, it frustrated other men who preferred cleanliness. "I'm not his wife," grumbled one cleanliness-inclined roommate. If he said nothing, he ended up either living with the mess or doing the majority of the housework himself. If he complained, he faced gender policing from his housemates.

Interviews with female partners of trans men also illustrate the feminization of domestic work.[22] In a study of these partnerships, women did the majority of the housework and the trans men's identity as men made this gendered division of labor seem natural. Often this arrangement was justified by the trans men's masculinity. "He's very forgetful and he doesn't take care of himself and he's messy and all this other stuff," said one interviewee named Lilia. "I feel like he's very specifically like a boy in this way."[23] That gendered division also made the men's female partners feel more feminine. Lilia continues: "I clean up on my own free will and try and take care of him. . . . It makes me feel very female."[24]

Studies of gay fathers suggest that childcare is feminized, too. Gay dads sometimes use language associated with women to describe their desire for children and their role as a caregiver. They talk about listening to their "biological clocks," having "maternal instincts," and being "housewives" and "soccer moms."[25] An excerpt from a conversation between Nico and Drew, for example, a couple with twin toddlers, shows just how much the "mother as true nurturer" idea pervades their thinking about parenting:

> *Nico: Since I don't work as often, I am more of the mom role. I am home more with them. I'm the one who takes them to the park during the week and I usually feed them and . . .*
>
> *Drew: Wait, I am just as much a mommy as you! Just because my job is more lucrative does not automatically make me the dad, and besides, we both feed them dinner, read to them, get them to bed and I always do the dishes so that you can relax.*[26]

Nico and Drew both used language that indicated that parenting is a woman's activity: the "mom role."

Even when men are actively parenting, the feminine social construction of childcare causes others to see it as the exception rather than the rule.[27] In a study of stay-at-home fathers, a dad named Lew explained that strangers are regularly inspired to comment on what they view as an odd sight—a man alone with kids:

> *When I go out with the kids, people always say, "Oh, so you're babysitting the kids today?" Or, "Oh, it's daddy's day," or "You must have the day off from work," or something like that. They assume that I work somewhere and this is just this random day that I happen to be with the kids, which really irritates me.*[28]

Other stay-at-home dads report similar experiences. One dad was confronted by a group of police officers after they received a report that a "suspicious" man was carrying a baby. In fact, he was walking through his own neighborhood with his own child.

Studies of male roommates, gay couples, women partnered with trans men, and single dads all reveal the feminization of housework and childcare. And, if we zoom out, we find that family life is, in fact, strongly gendered.[29] In America today, both men and women in mixed-sex relationships are working hard, spending about the same amount of time on paid and unpaid work combined, but the proportion of time men and women spend in paid and unpaid work differs in gender-stereotypical ways. On average, mothers spend twenty-five hours per week working for pay, while fathers spend nearly forty-three hours, an eighteen-hour difference; fathers spend about eighteen hours per week on the house and kids while mothers spend thirty-two, or fourteen more. To put it more simply, fathers do about two-thirds of the paid work and one-third of the unpaid work, and mothers do the inverse.[30] This disparity grows larger as relationships become more serious: from boyfriend/girlfriend to a couple that lives together, from cohabitation to marriage, and from married to married with kids.[31]

BREADWINNERS, HOMEMAKERS, AND SUPERSPOUSES As the averages suggest, the most common type of family is one that involves **specialization** (splitting unpaid and paid work so that each partner does more of one than the other) instead of **sharing** (doing more or less symmetrical amounts of paid and unpaid work). Some of these families resemble the idealized 1950s bread-winner/homemaker model. Advocates of this model are called **traditionalists**: they believe men should be responsible for earning income and women should be responsible for housework and childcare. Frank, for instance, explains: "I look at myself as pretty much a traditionalist. It's the way I am inside. I feel that the man should be the head of the house. He should have the final say."[32] Carmen, Frank's wife, agrees. She just wants to be "taken care of," she says.[33]

We see traditional breadwinner/homemaker marriages mostly at the highest and lowest family income levels.[34] Highly paid men who make the elusive "family wage" can afford for one parent to stay home. Among the wealthiest 5 percent of families, 42 percent include a stay-at-home parent. These families may rely on one earner voluntarily.

Over half of families with incomes in the bottom 20 percent of households also have a person who stays home full-time.[35] Instead of being voluntary, this is often the only choice for poorer families. In America the average cost of infant care is $9,589 a year, an amount that exceeds the average in-state college tuition.[36] On average, childcare for children four and under will absorb 64 percent of a full-time minimum-wage worker's earnings; in Massachusetts, where it's the most expensive, it absorbs nearly 90 percent of the income of that same

worker.[37] If parents are low income, they may save money by leaving one or the other partner at home.

In one-earner families, whether high or low income, the full-time home-maker is usually a wife. Though there are twice as many stay-at-home dads as there were twenty years ago, they account for only 5 percent of committed stay-at-home parents.[38] Four out of five dads at home report that they're home only because they're unemployed, ill or disabled, in school, or retired. African American, Hispanic, and Asian men, and men with limited education, are more likely to stay home than white men and highly educated men.[39]

A modified version of the breadwinner/homemaker marriage is the bread-winner/*super*spouse marriage, one in which breadwinners focus on work and their spouse both works and takes care of the home. Advocates of this model are called **neo-traditionalists**: They believe that a woman should be able to work if she desires, but only if it doesn't interfere with her "real" duty to take care of her husband and children. Many neo-traditionalists are in "one-and-a-half" breadwinner marriages, where women's part-time employment is fitted around her primary obligation to be a homemaker. Sam, for example, a neo-traditionalist, explains that he would accept a working wife, but, "[i]f she wanted to work, I would assume it's her responsibility to drop the kids off at grandma's house or something. She's in charge of the kids. If she's gonna work, fine, but you still have responsibilities."[40] Unlike breadwinner/homemaker marriages, these families are usually economically secure but not wealthy: well-off enough to afford day care, but not secure enough to live on one salary alone.

Superspouses are, to put it bluntly, busy. By definition, they work full- or part-time and still take on the lion's share of the second shift: juggling work, the logistics of day care, and the needs of a spouse and children. The average employed mother spends sixty-three hours a week on paid and unpaid work.[41] She also has four fewer hours of leisure time than your average employed father and spends more time multitasking.[42]

Especially if they're women, superspouses also do the majority of the invisible work: the intellectual, mental, and emotional work of parenting and household maintenance. They do more of the learning and information processing (like researching pediatricians), more of the worrying (like wondering if their child is hitting developmental milestones), and more of the organizing and delegating (like deciding what to cook for dinner). As you can imagine, superspouses often wear themselves out and can feel like they're falling short in every part of life: as a parent, as a spouse, and as an employee.

When dads step in to do some of this work, it is often described as "giving mommy a break," "babysitting," and "pitching in."[43] Traditional and neo-traditional husbands can be good "helpers," but usually only if their partners actively give them tasks to do. Nina, for example, who is partnered with a trans man, describes her management of their household this way: "I remind him to

Superspouses like Claire Dunphy are a fixture of modern families. Men's involvement in family life often comes at the margins of their commitment to paid jobs, while women are expected to ensure that the fundamentals at home are taken care of, regardless of what jobs they hold.

do a lot, and am the planner and really sort of controlling about a lot of things. He is the one who is super flaky and forgetful. . . . So the dynamic is me trying to keep on the ball about things and him assuming that I'm going to take care of it."[44]

The constant organizing and delegating of superspouses may make it seem like they're in charge at home, and in a sense they are, but "the assumption of [largely] female responsibility [also] means that, on another level, [breadwinners] are in charge—because it is only with their permission and cooperation that women can relinquish their duties."[45] Getting breadwinners to help, in other words, can sometimes be a job all its own. Ruth, in a relationship with Cindy for nearly a decade, comments:

I have learned how to read Cindy for moods and I know when I can get her to do stuff and when I can't. It's sort of a subtle negotiation. I don't know if she realizes that I am scanning the moments waiting to ask her to clean out the fireplace or hose out the garage, but that's what I do. I sort of get in tune with the rhythm of her life now and it seems to work.[46]

Don had something similar to say about his same-sex partner, Gill:

> *I have to prod him; "bitch at him" is what he would say. I have found it difficult to figure out ways to bring up the condition of the house without creating too much of a fight. I sort of have learned that there are certain times to bring it up. I especially try to avoid bringing things up when he just gets home from work. I find he is more willing to help, or at least to hear it, later at night. Of course, he doesn't see any of this—it's annoying—nor does he recognize what an effort it is to get him to help.*[47]

Even if superspouses don't have to do it all, then, it's still up to them to keep track of what needs to be done, divvy up the work, and figure out how to cajole or entice their partners into helping.[48] This makes many superspouses into frantic taskmasters and can create ugly interpersonal dynamics. When they have to ask for help, superspouses often feel like "nags," while the breadwinner may feel "henpecked."

This isn't just exhausting and bad for happiness in marriage, though; it is objectively disempowering.

The Loss of Status and Security

Victorian women introduced the ideology of intensive motherhood as a way to resist the androcentric devaluation of the domestic sphere, but these efforts were not wholly successful. Housework and childcare are still low-status activities. When journalist Ann Crittenden had her first child, for example, she was a foreign correspondent for *Newsweek*, a financial reporter for *The New York Times*, and a Pulitzer Prize nominee. None of this seemed to matter, she said, when she became a mother. Whereas once she'd been "*The* Ann Crittenden" at fancy New York cocktail parties, now she was "just a mom." She wrote that she felt like she'd "shed status like the skin off a snake."[49] A woman she interviewed about this phenomenon explained how it felt to go from being a young professional to a young mother:

> *We are the very women who were successful in what the women's revolution was all about, which was to be able to get out there and be the equal of the guys. . . . And suddenly [you have a baby and] you're back in the female world. It's a shock. . . . Raising children is still part of a relatively low-status world. Everything was gone once I started to stay home. In my new job as a mother, I had no salary and no professional contacts. . . . No more dinners out. No work clothes. . . . It was as if everything were being taken away from me.*[50]

People sometimes say that a woman who stays at home "doesn't *do* anything." "Oh, so you don't work?" a homemaker might be asked, as she quickly mops the

kitchen floor so she can have time to run by the dry cleaner before picking up her child from preschool, feeding him a snack, and finding something for him to do so she can begin preparing dinner for her spouse and ten-year-old. Even homemakers sometimes refer to their work as "*just* staying home"; doing nothing important, in other words.

When we have asked our students what their parents would think if they decided to have a child right after graduation and become a stay-at-home caregiver, both men and women often suggest that their parents would be disappointed, even aghast. Among other possible responses, students imagine their parents would ask, "What did we spend all that money on college for!?" or exclaim, "That would be a waste of your intelligence!" It's as if people think parenting requires zero knowledge and even less brain power.

No wonder many men aren't interested in doing it. In fact, many men express just these sentiments when asked how they would feel if *they* specialized in domestic labor. Josh, for instance, explains:

> I would never stay home. I have a friend who's like that, and I strongly disapprove. The father just stays home. I think it's wrong because his wife's out there working seven days a week, and he's doing nothing except staying home.[51]

Gay men often view housework similarly. Rich, for example, asked, "What about one's self-respect?" when he contemplated being a full-time homemaker. "I don't see how one could live with oneself by not doing *something* for a living."[52] Note how Josh and Rich's language—"doing nothing" vs. "doing something"—betrays their belief that feminized household labor isn't really anything at all.

In interpersonal relationships, those who specialize in domestic work sometimes feel as though their partners don't value their contribution to the household, and they might be right. In an interview, a husband let slip how little regard he had for the last twelve years of his wife Kuae's life, during which time she'd been a stay-at-home mom:

> Being the kind of person I am, Type A . . . always going after something, I wonder what I could have done, having twelve years to sort of think about what I want to do. I sometimes think, Wow, I could have been an astronaut in twelve years, or I could have been something different that I'd really enjoy. . . . What could I have been in twelve years of self-discovery?[53]

His comments reveal indirectly that he was wondering what Kuae had been doing, as if taking care of a home and three children took no time at all. To him, she had done nothing, effectively wasting those twelve years. For her part, Kuae was well aware that her husband devalued her work at home: "I think he has struggled with assigning value," she said stonily.

People who specialize in the unpaid labor of the household might also feel they have less of a voice in their relationships. One wife who quit her job to stay home with her children gave an example of how she'd lost bargaining power:

> *It's funny now because he is the breadwinner so there have been . . . opportunities to relocate and get a better position and the money was better. You're just put in a position where you have to just follow. Before when we were both working we would talk it out. I'd say, "No, I want to stay here." And now you really can't.*[54]

Stay-at-home fathers can feel similarly. About his wife, one explained,

> *She's the one bringing home the money right now so I feel, in financial decisions, I feel a little, I don't want to use the word uncomfortable, but I mean a little bit more uncomfortable about, saying oh, we should spend, we should buy this or do this or that sort of thing. Yeah, I guess I'm a little self-conscious in a way that I'm not contributing to our financial means.*[55]

We see these status and power differences in all kinds of couples where one person specializes in domestic work: among mixed-sex neo-traditionalists, gender-swapped mixed-sex couples, same-sex relationships, and even polyamorous relationships involving three or more people.[56] In losing status, homemakers often feel at least somewhat subordinated to their breadwinners. The vulnerability that comes with taking disproportionate responsibility for domestic work, though, isn't limited to status and interpersonal power. It's also economic.

THE MOMMY TAX Taking time out of the workforce to raise small children and then reentering it with less momentum means lost wages, benefits, and Social Security contributions. A college-educated American woman, for example, is likely to sacrifice nearly $2 million over the course of her lifetime for the pleasures of having children.[57] Mothers who take three years or more off incur, on average, a 37 percent decrease in income; mothers who take less than a year off see a drop of 11 percent.[58] It's wryly called the "mommy tax."[59]

These numbers reveal that one of the functions of marriage is still to transfer economic resources from men to women, or breadwinners to caregivers. As long as homemakers or superspouses remain married to breadwinners who are willing to share their income and wealth, this may not be very noticeable, but if the breadwinners rescind their support or the family-focused spouse chooses divorce, the economic vulnerability of the latter can become painfully obvious. This asymmetric focus, then, with caregivers spending more time with the house and children and breadwinners spending more time at work, may look fair on the face of it—they both put in approximately the same number of hours on their shared lives—but because we reward only one of those jobs with

money, this asymmetry hurts caregivers (mostly women) more than breadwinners (mostly men) in the long run. In same-sex partnerships, it harms anyone who takes a feminized role.

Outsourcing Inequalities

One way to adjust this asymmetry is to hire help. Some neo-traditional families engage in extensive **domestic outsourcing**: paying nonfamily members to do family-related tasks. Such arrangements are especially common among highly educated, career-focused, professional-class couples working in fields like tech, medicine, law, or finance. If both parents want to remain on accelerated career tracks, most of these families will need to hire a substantial amount of outside help.

To a certain extent, some level of domestic outsourcing is now the rule for families. Nannies are outsourced childcare, for example, but so is in-home or institutional day care. We also outsource meals (eating in restaurants, getting take-out, ordering delivery, or buying prepared meals from the grocery store), work around the house (hiring housekeepers, gardeners, a "handyman" to fix things, a neighbor kid to shovel the sidewalk after it snows), chores and errands (accountants, tailors, dry cleaners, dog groomers, drivers, or mechanics), and

This photo features an example of the top of the care chain, in which the caregiving of middle- or upper-class children becomes the responsibility of poorer women, often women of color, whose own children receive less care as a result.

direct childcare and instruction (babysitters, of course, but also tutors, swimming instructors, and camp counselors).

Outsourcing is a way couples with class privilege can build and maintain egalitarian relationships, but it does nothing to undermine the devaluation of feminized work. Instead, it displaces the harm, pushing it off onto other, more disadvantaged women and deepening the inequality among them.[60] When families outsource childrearing and domestic work, the people they hire are almost always female and poorer than the family members who are buying their services: 95 percent of domestic workers are women, 54 percent are a racial or ethnic minority, 32 percent have less than a high school education, 46 percent are foreign born, and 35 percent are noncitizens.[61]

Domestic jobs are generally considered "bad jobs," ones with long hours, low pay, little flexibility, no security or chance for advancement, and few benefits. The average wage for a live-in nanny, for example, is $6.76 an hour.[62] Only as of 2013 were domestic workers legally entitled to pay at or above the minimum wage and to days off, overtime, and contributions to their Social Security accounts. The Supreme Court has also denied them the right to unionize.

Importantly, many of the women who perform housework and childcare for other people also have children of their own, and they usually are not allowed to bring them to work. Because their wages are low, they purchase the even lower-wage services of even poorer women. These women, in turn, leave their own children with family members or friends. Sociologist Rhacel Parreñas calls this a **care chain**, a series of nurturing relationships in which the care of children, the disabled, or the elderly is displaced onto increasingly disadvantaged paid or unpaid carers. She explains:

> An older daughter from a poor family in a third world country cares for her siblings (the first link in the chain) while her mother works as a nanny caring for the children of a nanny migrating to a first world country (the second link) who, in turn, cares for the child of a family in a rich country (the final link).[63]

Caring brings in decreasing financial returns as you go down the chain. A nanny working for a wealthy family in the United States might earn $400 a week. She, in turn, may pay a live-in domestic worker in her country of origin $40 a week. That worker may leave her children to be taken care of by their older sister or grandmother for free.

These care chains are not only economic; they displace love and its benefits by pushing it up the chain.[64] Nannies who are also parents find their love and attention displaced onto their employers' children.[65] They spend weekdays organizing and chaperoning character- and skill-building activities with the children they're paid to care for; on weekends and evenings they have to fit in their own errands,

house cleaning, and other routine activities for their own families. A nanny may enjoy this time with her children but having to fit in all the work that's part of her own second shift will substantially cut down on quality time.

This displacement is especially extreme for migrants. Vicky, a thirty-four-year-old mother who left the Philippines to work for a family in Beverly Hills, explains how she misses her five children: "[It's] very depressing," she sighed. She finds solace in loving the child for whom she nannies: "In my absence from my children, the most I could do with my situation is give all my love to that child."

So the child in Beverly Hills benefits from Vicky's love as well as the love of his or her own parents. Vicky's time and attention are diverted from her own children, whom she can love only from afar. That absence is partially filled by attention from their lower-paid nanny in the Philippines, who likely has her own child or children in an even less secure arrangement, where they are deprived of a certain amount of love and attention from their own mother. In other words, the excess love that the child in Beverly Hills receives comes at the expense of other, less fortunate children.

Class-privileged women, and others married to breadwinners, can replace themselves. In making this patriarchal bargain, they may avoid (some of) the mommy tax and excel at work, thereby dodging the consequences that come with being "just" a mom or stay-at-home dad. That's nice, but it isn't "women's liberation," even when women do it, because it depends on *another woman* coming in to do that work. Outsourcing may help individual women and other family-focused spouses, but it doesn't lift up women as a group, nor does it undermine the devaluation of femininity or avoid perpetuating gendered forms of subordination.[66]

In sum, because of androcentrism, we devalue the feminized domestic sphere relative to the masculinized work sphere. Because of sexism, we feel comfortable expecting women to bear the brunt of this trivialized, unpaid, and sometimes disparaged activity. And an intersectional lens reveals that when the harm is displaced, it is often displaced onto women of color, poor women, and migrant women. In this way, mixed-sex partnerships are a systematic form of gender subordination not unlike the relationships between doctors and nurses or bosses and secretaries: They bring men and women into different and unequal relationships. The fact that this occurs through coupling instead of occupational choices doesn't mean it's not a form of inequality; it's just a particularly intimate one.

Is this what people really want? It turns out, mostly not. When the sociologist Kathleen Gerson asked eighteen- to thirty-four-year-olds how they would ideally divide homemaking and breadwinning in a mixed-sex relationship, only a minority said they wanted to do so by gender.[67] The majority—about 80 percent of women and 70 percent of men across all races, classes, and family backgrounds—said they preferred a relationship with "flexible gender boundaries."[68] Among people under thirty, almost no one idealizes strongly gendered divisions

of labor anymore.[69] Most men and women today are neither traditionalists nor neo-traditionalists; they're **egalitarians**, preferring relationships in which both partners do their fair share of breadwinning, housekeeping, and childrearing.

This raises a question: If men and women want relationships in which they share paid and unpaid work about equally, why do studies find that both mixed- and same-sex couples specialize in practice? The answer, as you'll see in the next section, is that sharing is hard.

BARRIERS TO EQUAL SHARING

Both work and family are **greedy institutions**, ones that take up an incredible amount of time and energy.[70] High expectations for workers intersect with high expectations for parenting, making it difficult or impossible for people to be successful at work, feel good about how much time they spend at home, and attend to their personal well-being.[71] Often couples come to the conclusion that one or both partners need to spend less time at work and more time at home.

Institutional Barriers

Features of the economy make it difficult for both parents to share. Real sharing often means both spouses need to retreat into lower-paying, less demanding occupations or, alternatively, work part-time. Most families can't afford to have all their income be compromised by low wages or limited hours; they may, though, be able to afford one compromised income.

Even if a family could theoretically afford two compromised incomes, marriage and employment law can make this challenging. Most families access health insurance through a parent's employer, but this benefit typically accrues only to employees who work a forty-hour workweek. Families with no employer-provided insurance rely on the health care markets—colloquially called "Obamacare"—but these are substantially more expensive, especially for a family of three or more. If possible, the smartest financial choice for a family is to have at least one adult who can satisfy an entire family's health care needs through an employer. In other words, a breadwinner. Citizens of countries with nationalized health care don't face this problem, giving them more options for how to organize their families.

Among high-income earners, the Social Security tax further rewards breadwinner/homemaker families over those that share these duties; the income of a couple in which one earns $140,000 a year and the other earns nothing is taxed less than a couple in which both partners earn $70,000.[72] This is a tax incentive for specializing couples and a tax burden for sharing ones.

The scarcity of time also constrains families' options. The placement of homes, childcare centers, workplaces, and doctors' offices in different parts of town is an institutional barrier to sharing paid and unpaid work. Long commutes add to the workday, making it even more difficult for income earners to participate in home life. Commutes aren't inevitable but a consequence of zoning laws that separate residential and commercial districts. If we zoned differently, it might be easier for families to share housework.

When couples realize that specialization is necessary, often the smartest thing to do is rely on the career of the partner who has a higher salary and greater opportunity for advancement. But the workplace, as the next chapter will make clear, is no more gender-neutral than the family. In mixed-sex relationships, men typically earn more money than women, making it sensible for many families to choose to prioritize the man's career for purely economic reasons. But even when the woman is better paid, protecting the man's ego becomes a reason to defer to his job, and she is the one who makes amends with housework.[73]

If a child arrives, it may make sense, above and beyond any biological or ideological reasons, for the mother to take time off from work instead of the father. Many moms relish this opportunity and many dads are jealous. Still, there is a price to pay: Each month a woman stays out of the workforce is a month in which her partner is building a career. By the time she's ready to work full-time again, he's "ahead" of her. He may have gotten a promotion or a raise; in any case, his greater experience now makes him more employable.

Now it makes even *more* economic sense for the couple to prioritize his career instead of hers. Instead of deciding to let her take a turn—so she can prioritize work for a while and he can enjoy the pleasures of family life—she may get a part-time job or switch to a less demanding occupation. This may be the best option for the pair, but it also strengthens his advantage over her in the workplace and motivates continued specialization. The more a couple specializes, the more economic sense it makes to continue doing so.

As new mothers cut back on their work hours, new fathers ramp up at work.[74] As is clear in Figure 11.1, additional children accelerate this trend. As a result of their longer workdays, men often do less housework.[75] In response, wives often work even less, citing their husbands' hours and the new housework demands as a reason why.[76] Once a couple specializes, even if they imagine it is just a temporary concession to time pressures, there is a tendency for the disparity to grow and grow.

All of this helps explain, too, why three-quarters of same-sex couples also specialize.[77] Their divisions of labor are generally more equal than those of mixed-sex couples, come in more diverse forms, and follow logics other than gender difference, but they are subject to the same social forces pushing them toward specialization.[78] So, most same-sex couples specialize, especially once they have kids.

**FIGURE 11.1 | AVERAGE NUMBER OF PAID WORK HOURS
PER WEEK, BY NUMBER OF CHILDREN**
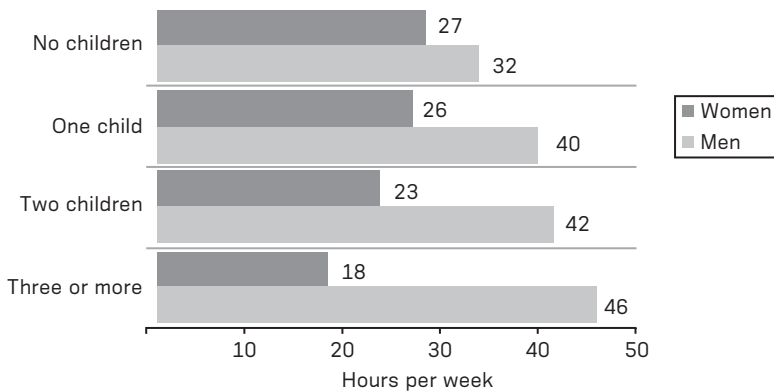
Source: Pew Research Center, "On Pay Gap, Millennial Women Near Parity—For Now," December 11, 2013,
www.pewsocialtrends.org/2013/12/11/on-pay-gap-millenial-women-near-parity-for-now/.

"The truth is," said psychologist Abbie Goldberg, "same-sex couples wrestle with the same dynamics as heterosexuals. Things are humming along and then you have a baby or adopt a child, and all of a sudden there's an uncountable amount of work." Facing that uncountable amount of work, and state and workplace policies that reward specialization, same-sex couples make many of the same choices that mixed-sex couples do. Sarah, for example, a woman raising five children with her wife, explained: "For me, the choice to stay home seems easier than us both working and both stressing about who's going to do what. That just seems impossible."

Institutional forces make sharing difficult, pushing couples of all kinds toward specialization, especially once they have children. For mixed-sex relationships, there is further ideological pressure to make that specialization gendered.

Ideological Barriers

Recall that men were pressed into wage work during the Industrial Revolution and told to be good cogs in the profit-making capitalist machine: reliable workers who would put their companies before their families. In return, they were promised wives who would make their homes a caring refuge from work. Women, for their part, were sold the cult of domesticity, an ideology that sold dependency

on men with the promise that women could avoid the dog-eat-dog world of work and be supported by adoring husbands. These ideas still have a strong purchase on American culture such that, when push comes to shove, many men have a hard time abandoning the breadwinner role and many women find themselves strongly drawn to the idea of being the warm center of family life.

When egalitarian men are asked about their "fallback plan," for example—what they would like to do if they discovered that sharing wasn't possible—70 percent choose a neo-traditional arrangement.[79] It turns out, if equal sharing proves too difficult, men overwhelmingly hope to convince their partners to de-prioritize their careers and focus on homemaking and raising children. Matthew exemplifies this plan:

> If I could have the ideal world, I'd like to have a partner who's making as much as I am—someone who's ambitious and likes to achieve. [But] if it can't be equal, I would be the breadwinner and be there for helping with homework at night.[80]

Most men value their role as workers too much—and perhaps homemaking too little—to imagine de-prioritizing their own career. "If somebody's gonna be the breadwinner," Jim said, "it's going to be me."[81]

Only a quarter of egalitarian women prefer neo-traditionalism as a fallback plan, but they may find themselves negotiating about how to divide labor with a husband who does. They may not like it, but they may also not be willing to let their *ideas* about marriage end their *actual* marriage. Simultaneously, they may find themselves the subject of a set of ideas about parenting that powerfully shapes their thinking about their role in the family.

Whatever their beliefs about marriage, many women, especially those in the middle and upper classes, ascribe to the ideology of intensive motherhood and aim, or wish, to put their children at the center of their lives. "For me," said one such mother, "I feel it is vital to be there for my children every day, to consistently tend to their needs, to grow their self-esteem, and to praise them when they're right, to guide them when they're not, and to be a loving, caring mom every minute of the day."[82]

Women who can't intensively mother will often either feel like they're failing at motherhood, or be judged by others as failing. Women who work full-time, migrate to another country to support their families, do their mothering from prison, or ascribe to a different model of motherhood, for example, are all often criticized or pitied for their failure to do mothering right. When women can, they often try their best to live up to this expectation. "I think that people don't look at you and say, 'oh, there's a good mother,'" said one such mother, "but they will look at people and say, 'oh, there's a bad mother.' Being a mother, I worry about what everyone else is going to think."[83]

In this sense, mothers face a double bind that fathers do not. On the one hand, their paid employment may be necessary for paying the bills, buying a house in a good school district, or saving for college tuition. On the other hand, intensive mothering is deemed crucial in giving their child "an edge." This escalating competition for maternal time has been called the "rug rat race."[84] Fear of falling behind drives many mothers to do as much as they can; and rich or poor, no amount is ever enough.

If they have the resources, many mothers will choose to disinvest in their careers, at least in the short term. If they have a husband, he likely agrees. Faced with these ideological and institutional pressures, many otherwise egalitarian women and men will choose a traditional or neo-traditional arrangement. This may satisfy many men. Recall that the majority of men choose neo-traditional family forms as their fallback plan, but only a quarter of women do the same. What do women overwhelmingly choose as their fallback plan? In that same study, they chose divorce.

GOING IT ALONE

As illustrated in Figure 11.2, faced with a husband who insists that they should be a homemaker or work part-time, almost three-quarters of women would rather divorce and raise their kids alone. Fifty-nine percent and 66 percent of women say that parenting and working, respectively, is "very important" or, even, "one of the most important things" in their lives.[85] Only 37 percent say the same about marriage.

What appears to be a happy convergence between men's and women's ideals—both are egalitarians—can turn into an intractable situation. When their ideals bump up against an institutional context that makes sharing difficult, and their fallback plans come to the fore, many couples feel betrayed and resentful. Some of these couples will divorce. And, when couples separate, custody is granted to the mother the majority of the time: 80 percent of custodial parents are mothers and almost half of all mothers will spend at least some time as a single parent.[86]

Other people simply won't end up with someone either to share or specialize with at all. About a third of adults—including both heterosexuals and sexual minorities—will spend their prime childbearing and rearing years without a spouse.[87] Many of these individuals will choose to have and raise children anyway.

Sociologists Kathryn Edin and Maria Kefalas, for example, spent five years getting to know 162 racially diverse low-income single mothers in Philadelphia.[88] Many of them had children while they were young and unmarried, some-

FIGURE 11.2 | MEN'S AND WOMEN'S FALLBACK PLANS
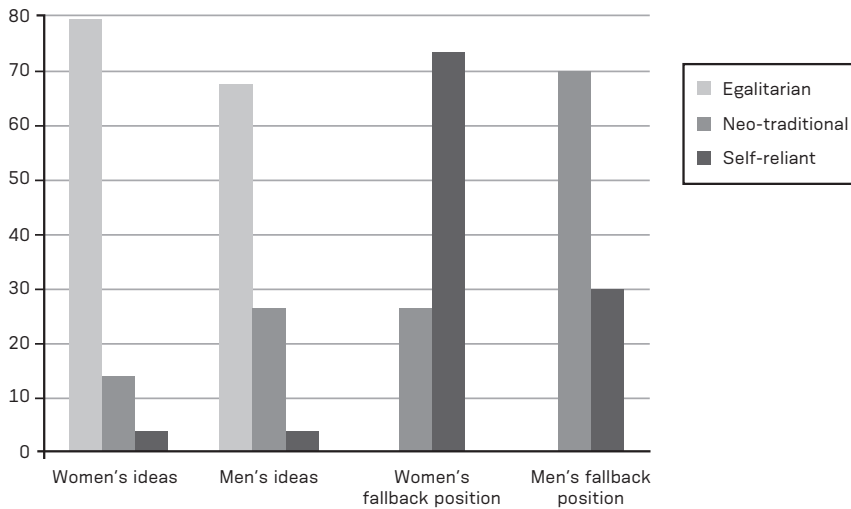
Source: Kathleen Gerson, *The Unfinished Revolution: Coming of Age in a New Era of Gender, Work, and Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 129.

thing many Americans believe to be self-defeating. Why did these women make this choice? Why didn't they work hard in school, go to college, find a job and a husband, and *then* have children?

The answer to this question is counterintuitive. While the U.S. government has argued that the answer to unmarried mothers in poverty is to convince them to value marriage, these young women *already* value marriage very much. The marriages in their neighborhoods are all too often torn apart by poverty and men's imprisonment. With these relationships in mind, young women are hopeful yet skeptical about the possibility of finding someone with whom they can build a stable relationship. If they do find someone, they often wait five or ten years before marrying the man they're dating. They want to be as sure as possible that their partnership will last. In contrast, middle-class women tend to feel confident they can make a marriage work, so they wait only one or two years. It's exactly because low-income women take marriage so seriously, and understand its fragility, that they're less likely to marry before having a child.

And when young low-income women do get pregnant, they may have more reason to have the child than not. Middle- and upper-class women in high school see a child as interfering with their plans for college and a career. Poor youth don't often imagine that these things are on the horizon for them, and they may be right. So why should they wait? They consider an early pregnancy less than ideal, but something they can embrace. Moreover, children help make a difficult

life feel meaningful.[89] Parenting is one of the few truly important and rewarding activities that isn't systematically made unavailable to them.

On the other end of the class spectrum, some middle- and upper-class women make the same choice at an older age.[90] As having a child "out of wed-lock" has become less stigmatized, voluntary unmarried motherhood has increased. Between 1994 and 2014, the number of women who reached their mid-forties as never-married mothers tripled, and an increased proportion of these were women with postgraduate degrees like JDs, MDs, and PhDs.[91] Some of these women cohabitated instead of marrying and some had children before starting or completing their education, but others simply never found a part-ner with whom to have a child. As they age, these women may perceive their "biological clock" as offering them only a choice between "settling" for a hus-band they wouldn't freely choose (which some do) or having a child on their own.[92] Anna, a forty-year-old "single mother by choice," explains how she came to her decision:

> I really believe that children are made from two people that love each other and want to create a family. But if that is not an option, you just have to draw a way around really. Because if you are running out of time, you just have to see what option you have to have a child. And then have a father [later].[93]

When women today have the economic resources, access to technology, and enough social support to make a family without a husband, increasingly, they do.

Single parenting—whether after divorce or by choice—exposes the economic vulnerability that comes with responsibility for housework and childcare. Forty-three percent of single mothers live below the poverty line, compared to 24 per-cent of single fathers.[94] Nearly a third of families led by single mothers are food insecure, with 13 percent using food pantries; a third spend more than half their income on housing.[95]

Some of these single parents are poor because they aren't working. This is partly because it's just not possible to be at work and at home at the same time. Day care is a must. But, as we've already discussed, day care costs often exceed the earnings of a person working full-time, even more than full-time, if it pays near minimum wage. Or childcare leaves so little money left over that it's impossible to afford even an austere lifestyle. For some single parents, the math just doesn't add up.

Government subsidies for low-income single parents help some out of this bind, but these programs are woefully underfunded in the United States and don't reach a large proportion of the people in need. Even if they are able to access these programs, parents are only allowed to use them for two years, after which they are ineligible. Twenty American states have children on waiting lists for subsidized childcare. In the state with the longest waiting list, Texas,

parents of 41,600 children are eligible, but the state has no money for them and nowhere to place them.[96] When single parents can't afford to work because of the cost of childcare and failing public services, it contributes to the short- and long-term financial fragility of caregivers.

Most single parents work full-time, though, and many of them are in poverty, too. Nearly three-quarters of single moms work for wages, but this doesn't guarantee financial security.[97] The U.S. federal minimum wage is $7.25 an hour. A full-time employee earning minimum wage who doesn't miss a single day of work for a year earns $290 a week before taxes; that's $15,080 a year. According to how the government measures poverty, that's enough to support a single adult but, for a single adult with a child, it's officially below the poverty line.[98] Consequently, 25 percent of single mothers and 15 percent of single fathers are **working poor**, individuals who work but still live in poverty.[99]

The economic costs and structural contradictions of single parenting apply to everyone, but women bear the brunt of the disadvantage. This is because women are more likely to specialize in domestic work, more likely to end up as single parents, and more likely to work in underpaid industries. As a result, we are seeing a **feminization of poverty**, a trend in which the poor are increasingly women and, of course, their children, too. Stunningly, becoming a mother has been identified as the single strongest predictor of bankruptcy in middle age and poverty in old age.[100]

Divorcees who are lucky enough to have a higher income, as well as the upper- and upper-middle-class women who choose to raise children on their own, may do fine financially. But doing so often means working demanding jobs that require them to engage in extensive domestic outsourcing. For high-income single mothers, this might mean hiring a nanny; for those with middle incomes, it might involve a twice-monthly housekeeper, day care, and lots of take-out dinners. In both cases, they're able to trade economic resources for goods and services that mothers have traditionally provided, at the risk of exacerbating inequality between women.

So far we've discussed how ideological and institutional forces press families to make often-gendered choices that align with a traditional or neo-traditional ideology. These forces typically reinscribe sexism, androcentrism, and subordination. Alternatively, couples try to create equity in their partnership by outsourcing, though this, in turn, reinscribes class, race, and migration-related inequalities. Not uncommonly, domestic arguments about how to divide paid and unpaid work end in divorce. Other individuals never find anyone to share or specialize with at all and choose single parenthood out of a sense of necessity. The financial struggles of single parents, especially when they're low income, signal the extent to which the system is still designed with breadwinner/housewives in mind. That is, it is still assuming and promoting women's dependence on men.

Perhaps that is why, in the past one hundred years, women in traditional household arrangements have been among the most unhappy.[101] Like the 1950s housewives who took tranquilizers to get through their days, today's stay-at-home mothers are decidedly less happy on average than moms who work. Even if they really *wanted* to be a stay-at-home wife, often they find being one less fulfilling or comfortable than they imagined. Likewise, neo-traditional households, with their overworked, "nagging" wives and entitled, "hen-pecked" husbands, are often embattled and unstable. Partly for this reason, these partnerships end in divorce more often than any other kind.[102]

What are our alternatives?

NEW, EMERGING, AND ERSTWHILE FAMILY FORMS

In this section, we review three alternative ways of arranging family life: engaging in dual-nurturing, deciding not to have children, and constructing non-nuclear families.

Dual-Nurturing

If one strategy for creating equity between two spouses is for both to orient themselves toward their careers, another is for both spouses to point their energies in the opposite direction. **Dual-nurturers** turn away from work and toward the home to focus together on the housework and childcare.[103] They make the second shift their priority. Pulling back on their career ambitions and financial goals enables couples truly to share.

Not everyone has the resources to adopt this strategy. In addition to needing to be able to tolerate lower incomes, institutional forces penalize dual-nurturers, making it expensive and increasing the family's tax burden. Adopting dual-nurturing, then, means making economic sacrifices. For some dual-nurturers, the opportunity arises because of the nature of their work: They may share farm labor, run a small business together out of their home, hold jobs with odd but complementary schedules like teachers and firefighters.[104] Some have jobs with high enough incomes that they can actually both work part-time or both forgo career investments that would cost them too much time. But dual-nurturers are generally only able to disinvest at work if they already have some financial advantage. A freelance editor and an accountant, for example, may each be able to work part-time but charge very high hourly rates for what work they do. Together, they might

make enough money to pay their bills, while taking turns being home during the day with their children.

In making these choices, dual-nurturers can challenge the sexist idea that women should be held uniquely responsible for the undervalued work of housework and childcare, the one that so often translates into gendered subordination. Partly for this reason, dual-nurturers are among the happiest of mixed-sex couples.[105] The higher likelihood of sharing among same-sex couples is one theory for why they are happier on average than mixed-sex ones.[106]

Dual-nurturing, though, doesn't undermine the androcentric devaluation of childcare and housework. Instead, both partners simply have to live with it. The low status and economic risks faced by homemakers and superspouses, in other words, accrue to *both* members of a dual-nurturer couple. It takes a real ideological commitment by both partners, along with a substantial financial advantage, to make it work.

Even in these couples, though, the ideological commitment to the male breadwinner and female homemaker lingers. Sociologists generally consider duties shared if the division of labor is between 40/60 and 60/40. It turns out that half-and-half arrangements where men and women in mixed-sex relationships split paid and unpaid work exactly 50/50 are not the happiest of sharing agreements.[107] They're the second happiest. The happiest are ones in which there is a slightly asymmetrical division of labor tilted in the stereotypical direction: a woman who does 60 percent of the domestic work and a man who does 60 percent of the breadwinning. Gender-swapped relationships—in which the man does 60 percent of the homemaking and the woman does 60 percent of the breadwinning—are the least happy of the three (though they are still happier than breadwinner/homemaker and breadwinner/superspouse marriages). This suggests that people in mixed-sex partnerships are more comfortable with *almost* sharing than with sharing, and that when the script gets flipped, it can strain relationships.

Choosing Not to Have Children

Faced with the challenge of balancing work and family life, some adults choose not to have children at all. In 2016, the U.S. birthrate was the lowest on record in the last thirty years.[108] One out of seven Americans between the ages of forty and forty-four is without children.[109] While traditionally women with higher levels of education were most likely to eschew childbearing, women with less education are increasingly following suit.

The decision to go "childfree" is partly a response to the demands of the ideology of intensive mothering and concerted cultivation. Kay, a twenty-four-year-old accountant-in-training, explained why she didn't want to become a mother:

> *To be honest, the biggest thing that comes to mind is sacrifice. And it just seems sacrifice of your own personal identity and all of your own wishes or desires, you have to give those up for someone else. It just seems a terrible, terrible burden.*[110]

Especially for middle- and upper-class women and men, opting not to have children may be attractive because it offers them the opportunity to do other interesting things. This concept is still rather new for women. Highly effective birth control options and abortion became legal and accessible only during the late '60s and '70s, and only since then have women had the opportunity to excel in challenging, respected, and high-paying careers. For women who have access to these occupations, having children is no longer the only way to feel like they're doing something valuable with their lives.

In fact, while some child-raising arrangements make for happier couples than others, it is *not* having kids that might be associated with the greatest happiness.[111] It depends on how you measure it. Parents report a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life than nonparents. They are more *satisfied* with their lives, more assured that their life has purpose. Anthony, for example, gushed about the meaning having a child gave to his life: "You have this little person who desperately needs you, and nothing in the world is more important to you."[112]

In contrast, nonparents may be less fulfilled, but they are happier day-to-day. Parents, especially women, report more frequent negative emotions than nonparents, more distressing financial problems, lower-quality marital relationships, and higher levels of depression, distress, and anxiety. This is especially true when parents have young children but is also true long after the kids have left the house.[113] Samantha, for example, a thirty-four-year-old professional, decided that she wasn't interested in the daily demands of parenting: "the little baby voices, and the screaming, and the tantrums, and the constant questions."[114] She wanted to continue to excel in her career, travel, enjoy delicious meals, and bask in quiet afternoons. And she did.

By this measure, parents are less happy than nonparents across the globe.[115] In almost all kinds of countries—developing or developed, socialist or democratic, conservative or liberal—raising kids is associated with a decline in well-being. In most cases, the more children people have, the less happy they are.

There are two clear exceptions. One is when people live in societies that offer very little or no safety net to the old. In countries in which children keep their parents out of poverty, people with kids are happier than people without, but only after their kids are grown up. The other is when countries offer generous family-friendly policies: paid time off after the birth or adoption of a child, free or affordable day care, flexible work hours, and ample vacation time and sick leave.[116] The United States is neither so harsh to its elderly nor so generous to its parents. In fact, the happiness gap between parents and nonparents in the United States is the largest in the industrialized world.[117]

Some people realize this and choose not to have children because they believe they'll be happier if they do not. For women, this choice is especially fraught. The cult of domesticity impels women to become mothers, suggesting that it is women's nature and destiny to make homes for husbands and their children. Women who do not do this are turning away from this social construction of womanhood and refusing to take on a supportive role in family life. They may not be able to perform enough feminine apologetic to satisfy some people in their lives or even the bystanders in their social environments.

This means that women who don't have children, especially those who never marry, are a kind of feminine pariah. They are the shrews, spinsters, and old maids of fairy tales. In real life, they are objects of pity, criticism, and blame. Especially if they have children and leave them, even in safe and happy circumstances, they risk condemnation. More than bad mothers, such women may be called monsters. Pariah status ensures that they serve as cautionary tales, warning young women of what will happen to them if they don't fulfill their reproductive duty.

Extending Families

As we discussed several chapters ago, our ancestors lived mostly in kinship groups and depended on a wide circle of biologically related and unrelated adults for survival. And, in fact, kinship and kinship-like family structures persist in many cultures and are emergent in others. The Mosuo in China, for example, practice what in English is referred to as "walking marriage."[118] Mothers live with their mothers and grandmothers, who head the family. They may maintain a long-term, monogamous, and romantic relationship with the father(s) of their children, but the Mosuo consider this separate from motherhood and the childrearing home. Instead of living with the mothers of their children, fathers live with their own mothers. They may provide financial support and visit their children, but neither is considered necessary. The children's primary male role models are usually their uncles, who also live with the children's grandmother, perhaps forming walking marriages with women living in other extended family homes.

From the Mosuo point of view, separating romantic and sexual relationships from the bearing and raising of children is smart. It ensures that romantic whims and sexual urges don't disrupt the happiness, health, and home life of the child. Meanwhile, because the family of origin is never eclipsed by a procreative family, the Mosuo system reduces the likelihood that elders will be abandoned by their families when they need support in old age. And if a parent dies or disappears, there is a whole family available to care for the child.

Extended families—ones in which married couples live with aunts, uncles, grandmas, grandpas, and other relatives—most resemble the oldest human family form and have persisted across the world in different ways. Today it remains

common in the Middle East, Central and South America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia.[119] Other societies have tried to develop modern kinship networks. On the Israeli kibbutz, children live in group homes and are tended to by professional caregivers.[120] Parents spend a few hours a day with their children, bonding and playing but leaving the routine care to the professionals. Particularly in Mediterranean and Eastern European countries, parents often select godparents strategically.[121] Godparents may be designated guardians in the case a child is orphaned, but they are even more likely to contribute to a child's education or employment; in turn, godchildren may owe caregiving or economic support responsibilities to elderly godparents. In the United States, too, extended family ties are crucial supports for overstretched parents.[122]

Among many African American residents of poor and low-income neighborhoods in the United States today, young mothers rely on **othermothers**, women in the neighborhood who act as substitute mothers out of inclination or kindness.[123] In turn, they are othermothers to other women's children. Fatherhood, as well, is often less closely connected to biology; men often act as **otherfathers**, taking an interest even in children who are not their own.[124] In these communities, both maternal and paternal attention comes from many different sources. Sometimes it takes a village—and the village rises up in response.

A professional caregiver gets five cute toddlers ready for lunch on this kibbutz in Western Galilee, Israel. Kibbutz life reflects the desire of Jewish immigrants to reconstruct labor and caregiving collectives in Israel after their actual extended families were killed in the Holocaust.

If low-income parents are forced to get creative out of economic need, sexual minorities have been forced to get creative due to biological and legal constraints. Especially before adoption and assisted-reproductive technologies were legally available to them, sexual minorities formed "families by choice."[125] Two men in a relationship may have recruited a close female friend to be the mother of their child or a lesbian couple may have asked a best male friend to donate sperm. These adults then sometimes collaborated as co-parents, with three or four adults collectively committed to building a family together. Even in mixed-sex couples, turning to open adoption or surrogacy often brings another biological parent into the mix of relations with children.

Moreover, because divorce and remarriage are so common, many families today are made up of not just mom and dad, dad and dad, or mom and mom, but mom, stepmom, dad, stepdad, and a whole host of nonbiologically related siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. In these cases, many adults share responsibility and, in the case of shared custody, children often live in more than one household at a time.

Increasingly, families in Western societies are starting out with a mix of biological and chosen kin. An alternative to monogamy, **polyamory** is the open practice and encouragement of long-term intimate relationships with more than one partner at a time. Children born into these partnerships may have many adults on whom they can depend, who love and care for them as families did before the nuclear family became the norm in the West.[126] They may think it odd that other children don't have so many adults around. As one three-year-old growing up in a polyamorous family exclaimed incredulously after a playdate with a child growing up in a monogamous one, "Tasha only has two parents! Just two of them!"[127]

Many hands make light work, so polyamorous and other forms of extended families have the advantage of being able to share the burden of the second shift across more than one or two adults. It's easier to get the kids picked up from school, help with homework, and make dinner when there are three or four people to do it, or when one doesn't have to do it every night of the week. Moreover, income from several adults may give the family more economic stability and each individual greater flexibility, perhaps enabling many adults to work less (not a dual- but a triple- or quadruple-nurturer arrangement) or one or more adults to carry the burden of breadwinning and domestic work (combining breadwinner/breadwinner/homemaker/superspouse into one arrangement).

In these arrangements, of course, there is a high probability that the adults who take primary responsibility for housework and childcare will be women. And furthermore, there is no guarantee that those individuals won't suffer reduced status, interpersonal power, and economic security; institutional factors all but ensure that they will. Moreover, as much as such arrangements have the potential to ease the burden of the second shift by distributing it among

many adults, there is also the potential of burdening just one family-focused adult with supporting multiple breadwinners. Bigger families do not necessarily translate into an absence of gender ideology, but they are one way that people are trying to manage balancing paid work and the second shift and may be a terrain on which gendered divisions of labor may be challenged.

Revisiting the Question

Q+A   **If marriage is better for women than ever, why do women married to men report lower levels of happiness than men married to women, women married to women, and single women?**

Marriage contracts are no longer explicitly gendered, but gender continues to organize family life. Even before a couple decides to marry, they start deciding how to deal with patriarchal traditions embedded in our culture: whether to have a gender-neutral or -specific wedding, to keep their last names or share one (and whose name remains), and to have or adopt a child—or go childfree. These and other choices become reflected in how gender infuses housework and childcare, too.[128]

In contrast to actual divisions of labor, most men and women want to build egalitarian families in which both paid and unpaid work is shared. Even when both partners want this kind of balance, however, deep-seated ideological beliefs and coercive institutional forces often make sharing difficult. Facing those difficulties, happy couples can discover that their fallback plans diverge dramatically. Relationships don't always survive the negotiations that follow.

Meanwhile, the continued feminization of housework and childcare contributes to ongoing inequality. Doing domestic work translates into a loss of status, bargaining power, and financial security. This situation harms everyone who specializes in this work: homemakers, single parents, working parents married to neo-traditionalists, dual-nurturers who turn away from work, and poorly paid domestic workers. Overwhelmingly, these people are female.

Women are less happy than men in marriage, then, because it is an institution that systematically presses them into doing the low-status domestic work of our society. This, in turn, puts them in the position of having less interpersonal power and financial security than the people (mostly men) on whom they have to depend. Same-sex couples' decisions may not be based on biological sex, but they reflect androcentrism and gendered subordination if the domestic work is undervalued and the person who does it loses status and becomes dependent on their partner for economic support.

Alternative family forms—dual-nurturing, extending families, and childfree families—are intriguing. Each represents a different way of trying to balance

paid and unpaid work. Ideological and institutional forces, however, combine to keep these arrangements in the minority in the West. Economic infeasibility and the power of policing make these choices difficult. And gender ideology can as easily warp these family forms as it does others, making developing truly egalitarian relationships elusive even in the process of innovation.

All of this is complicated—tremendously so—by that other greedy institution: work.

Next . . .

Since 1964 the federal government has strengthened gender equality in the workplace. Today women make up 47 percent of the workforce, and they can be found in every occupation.[129] Still, men reap more rewards at work. Women are less likely than men to be in well-paid, high-prestige jobs that are considered skilled and involve managing employees. Our question for the next chapter is:

Q+A **If women now have equal rights in the workplace, why aren't they as successful as men at work?**

Let's find out.

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"

WE'RE HERE TO SAVE YOUR
ASS, NOT KISS IT!

—YOUR FRIENDLY FLIGHT ATTENDANT[1]

"

12

Work

Today's women are giving men a run for their money. Two-thirds say a high-paying job is important to them, compared with 56 percent of men.[2] And yet, in early 2018, the median weekly income for women with college degrees was $1,022; for comparable men, it was $1,353.[3] Even among the most high-achieving young people, men's pay outpaces women's. A study of Harvard grads, for example, found that men entering the finance industry were four times more likely than women to report a starting salary of more than $110,000.[4] Likewise, among Harvard grads going into technology and engineering jobs, 79 percent of men reported a salary of more than $90,000, compared with 44 percent of women. This gap in pay only gets wider over time: women in their early twenties earn $0.96 for every dollar earned by men, but by the time they're in their fifties and sixties, they're earning just $0.74.[5]

This difference in male and female earnings persists despite women's eagerness to earn and federal laws designed to guarantee equality, which led us to ask:

Q+A   **If women now have equal rights in the workplace, why aren't they as successful as men at work?**

I'm Cheryl. Fly me to the Sunshine States of America.

You think I'm just another pretty face? I'm not.

I'm a fresh attitude towards air travel to the States. A refreshingly honest definition of who we are, why we're special, and what we're doing to be even better.

Here's who we are: We're Cheryl (me), and Margie and Linda and Laura and Jo. And a lot of people behind the scenes, like Bob and Tom and Ron and Lee. (They're not just pretty faces either.)

And here's what we're doing (and why we're special): We're helping nice people (hopefully you) go to nice places in the Sunshine States of America, like Miami and other warm places in Florida and the Caribbean and Latin America, plus New Orleans and Houston and Los Angeles and San Francisco. We're helping nice people have fun en route, too: with movies* and stereo* and delicious meals, and just being left alone, if that's what you want.

The way we figure it: the more we like you, the more you'll like us. It's that simple.

So we're not just a bunch of people. We're an airline. And you can call us by our first name: National.
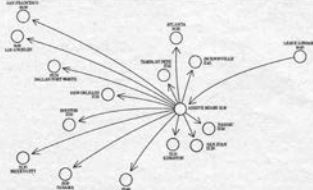
Fly Cheryl. ☀ Fly National Airlines.

For reservations call your travel agent or National Airlines, 81 Piccadilly, London, W.1. (01 629 8272).

*Movies and stereo by In-Flight Motion Pictures, Inc. Available at nominal charge. National honours American Express, Barclaycard, Carte Blanche, Diners Club, UATP, our own card and cash.

This ad for National Airlines of London from the 1960s invites readers to "fly Cheryl."

This chapter gets up close and personal with occupations and earnings. Drawing on data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, it explains how paid work is gendered in ways that affirm difference and entrench inequality. It considers how the U.S. economy is specifically structured to produce big winners and big losers, and how this model hurts people of all genders, but carries an extra punch for women. Some of the disadvantage, we'll see, is due to simple discrimination against women, but it also involves the tendency for jobs to be predominantly male or female, the different value attributed to men's and women's work, the challenge of being both a good parent and a good worker, and employers' beliefs about mothers and fathers.

So buckle up, put your seatbacks and tray tables in their full upright and locked position, and direct your attention to the flight attendant.

THE CHANGING WORKPLACE

"Next to being a Hollywood movie star, nothing was more glamorous," said a starry-eyed stewardess in 1945.[6] World War II was over and women were being pushed out of the workforce, but flight attendants were embarking on a new adventure. Only about 10 percent of Americans had ever flown and most were afraid to do so.[7] Stewardesses were certifiably adventurous. They took risks, saw the world, and rubbed elbows with the elite: their passengers. As historian Kathleen Barry contends: "Few women journeyed as regularly or as far from home, or came into contact with the rich and famous as often, as a typical stewardess did."[8]

Airlines hired women whom they believed represented ideal femininity. Chosen for their beauty and poise, and almost exclusively from among the white, educated, and slender, they were as much of an icon as Miss America.

The promise of a fresh-faced, kind, and accommodating stewardess was a staple of airline advertising. As one of America's sweethearts, she also appeared in commercials for products from soft drinks to cigarettes.

By the 1960s, airlines were in the "business of female spectacle," unabashedly selling women's attractiveness to customers.[9] Perhaps most famous was the National Airlines campaign in which stewardesses saucily invited passengers to "Fly Me."[10] Their advertising included the guarantee "We'll Fly You Like You've Never Been Flown Before." Feminists later replied, "Go Fly Yourself, National!"

The strategy of sexual objectification was industrywide: Continental stewardesses pledged, "We Really Move Our Tails for You"; Air Jamaica promised, "We Make You Feel Good All Over"; Air France replied, "Have You Ever Done It the French Way?"; Braniff Airlines asked their male passengers, "Does Your Wife Know You're Flying with Us?"; TWA offered flights with stewardesses of exotic nationalities; and Pacific Southwest Airlines riffed on their acronym, having flight attendants wear buttons that said "Pure, Sober, and Available."[11] Uniforms followed suit: mini-skirts, short shorts, and go-go boots.

In the 1960s and 1970s, airlines sexualized their stewardesses to attract a mostly male customer base. As part of this effort, Southwest Airlines flight attendants were required to wear hot pants and leather go-go boots.

Still, it wasn't all fun and hot pants. Standards of appearance were strict.[12] Disqualifications and dismissals were issued for big feet, chubby legs, poor posture, the wrong haircut, glasses, acne, short nails, imperfect teeth, not wearing makeup, or any supposed flaw the recruiters identified. They claimed their objections to broad noses, coarse hair, and full lips were race-neutral, but, of course, they were not.[13] When first hired in the 1970s after multiple court battles, African American flight attendants were expected to straighten their hair. A ban on "hook noses" was used to exclude Jewish women.

Women were required to wear girdles and submit to routine weigh-ins and measurement of their busts, waists, hips, and thighs. They were fired if they gained weight. "You run a $1.5 billion business," said a United Airlines official, "and it boils down to whether some chicks look good in their uniforms. If you have fat stewardesses, people aren't going to fly with you."[14] Airlines also terminated the employment of women who got married, became pregnant, or reached

their early thirties. A manager once told a group of flight attendants: "If you haven't found a man to keep you by the time you're twenty-eight, then TWA won't want you either."[15]

Stewardesses also faced routine sexual harassment. Airlines marketed them as available sex partners and then instructed them that the customer was always right.[16] African American flight attendants faced their own unique version; some of the overwhelmingly white customers were hostile racists, but others would proposition them for a "black experience."[17]

Meanwhile, female flight attendants were among the most poorly paid employees in the airline industry. They were paid a third of what pilots earned and two-thirds the wages of the mostly male ground workers. They were also paid significantly less than the few male flight attendants; at Pan Am, for example, men earned 140 percent of a female flight attendant's salary. Men also enjoyed promotions, more responsibility, nicer accommodations on layovers, larger pensions, greater scheduling flexibility, and more sick leave. Plus, they didn't face weigh-ins, girdles, or forced retirements.

Then 1964 happened. Stewardesses filed a case against the airline industry on the first day the government began considering violations of the new Civil Rights Act.[18] Flight attendants would initiate one hundred lawsuits in eighteen months. Over the next sixty years, women across the occupational spectrum would follow suit, aiming to gain access to essentially all occupations. Companies no longer had the right to pay women less, deny them promotion, or otherwise discriminate based on gender. As companies faced potential lawsuits, their overtly discriminatory practices slowly eroded.

Yet, men—especially class-privileged white men—continue to have substantial advantages in the workplace today. Men are more likely to engage in paid work than women and work more hours per week and more weeks per year. They get better benefits (like health insurance, unemployment coverage, vacation and sick days, and retirement plans) and are more likely to get on-the-job training. They are more likely to have jobs considered "skilled" and to be in management. They unquestionably dominate the highest rungs of corporate ladders: 75 percent of executive and senior-level managers, 80 percent of board members, and 95 percent of the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies are men.[19] Men outnumber women so overwhelmingly that there are more CEOs named James than there are women CEOs.[20]

Perhaps the most succinct measure of men's advantage in the workplace is the **gender pay gap**, the difference between the incomes of the average man and woman who work full time. In 2017, the median earnings of American men working full time were $941 per week.[21] Comparably, full-time working women earned $770, or 82 percent of men's wages. To put it another way, among workers employed full time, women earned $0.82 for every dollar a man made.

As revealed in Figure 12.1, the gap has been steadily shrinking for nearly 200 years. Much of this is due to women's rising wages, but about a quarter of

FIGURE 12.1 | VARIATION IN WOMEN'S EARNINGS FOR EVERY DOLLAR OF MEN'S FOR FULL-TIME WORKERS

Comparison	Cents/Dollar	Comparison	Cents/Dollar
By state in the United States		*By education (United States)*	
California	$0.88	Less than high school	$0.77
Florida	$0.87	High school graduate	$0.78
New Jersey	$0.80	Some college or associate's degree	$0.77
Texas	$0.82	Bachelor's degree and higher	$0.75
Washington, D.C.	$0.88		
Wyoming	$0.72		
By country		*By race or ethnicity (United States)*	
Germany	$0.79	Black women, men	$0.93
Ireland	$0.86	Black women, white men	$0.68
Italy	$0.95	Asian women, men	$0.75
Poland	$0.93	Asian women, white men	$0.93
Sweden	$0.87	Hispanic women, men	$0.87
United Kingdom	$0.79	Hispanic women, white men	$0.62
		White women, men	$0.82
By year (United States)			
1820	$0.35	*By age (United States)*	
1890	$0.46		
1930	$0.56	16–24	$0.95
1960	$0.61	25–34	$0.89
1970	$0.60	35–44	$0.83
1990	$0.72	45–54	$0.78
2000	$0.74	55–64	$0.74
2010	$0.81	65+	$0.76

Sources: European Commission, "Gender Pay Gap Statistics," March 2018. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics#Gender_pay_gap_levels_vary_significantly_across_EU; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Highlights of Women's Earnings in 2016," August 2017. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-earnings/2016/home.htm; Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Table 37: Median Weekly Earnings of Full-Time Wage and Salary Workers by Selected Characteristics," January 2018. Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat37.htm.

the narrowing since 2000 represents declining wages for working-class men, which have fallen by almost 7 percent.[22] Women's wages have similarly been harmed by the overall economy, but women have also been increasing their education, shifting into better-paying jobs, and working more. Conversely, the things that used to protect men's wages, like labor unions and manufacturing jobs, have been on the decline.[23]

Women of all races make less money than their male counterparts, but the size of the gap differs. It's smaller among groups that have overall lower wages, mostly because racial minority men, with the exception of some Asian groups, earn especially low incomes. Notice that the gap varies both among American states and among different countries. Governments that keep most women out of the labor force typically show smaller wage gaps, since the women who do work full time are more educated and less representative of the population. This

is why the wage gap in Italy, where women are less often employed, is so much smaller than in Sweden, where nearly all women are working. The wage gap also increases, if unevenly, across the life cycle.

Perhaps surprisingly, the gap is largest among men and women who earn professional degrees in fields such as law and medicine.[24] Mean earnings of women and men managers with MBAs, for example, are fairly close directly after graduation, but nine years later the gap has grown (from $15,000 to $150,000).[25] At the very top, the wage disparities just get bigger. Among mid-career MBAs in the top 10 percent of earners, men earn over $1 million and women earn less than half that.

All told, because of the gender wage gap, the average American woman will earn $439,958 less in her lifetime than the average man.[26] Compared to white non-Hispanic men, African American and Native American women will be out almost $900,000 and Latinas almost $1.1 million. This harms women's economic stability in old age directly (it helps to have an extra half-million or more upon retirement) and also indirectly (women's average Social Security retirement benefit is about 75 percent that of men's, mostly thanks to the wage gap).[27] Not only do women have less than men when they retire, they need more because they tend to live longer. As a result of these disparities, retired women are twice as likely as retired men to be living in poverty.[28]

This chapter explores the gendered forces behind this inequality: job segregation, gender discrimination, and the practice and ideology of parenting. It'll also look at how work experiences are shaped by class, race, gender, sexuality, and age. It concludes with some observations about the current economy and both men's and women's opportunities within it.

JOB SEGREGATION

A licensed pilot, Ellen Church could have been the first female commercial pilot when she was hired by Boeing in 1930, but the company didn't allow women in the cockpit.[29] So, she became the first female flight attendant instead. A different woman would be hired as a pilot a few years later, but she would be the exception that proved the rule.[30] It would be four decades before we would see another. In 1978, when the International Society of Women Airline Pilots was founded, it boasted only twenty-one members.[31]

Women and men attracted to the excitement of air travel have pursued their dreams largely through two very different avenues. Men have become pilots and women have become flight attendants. Today, 73 percent of flight attendants are female and 94 percent of pilots are male.[32] This is **gendered job**

segregation, the practice of filling occupations with mostly male or mostly female workers. Just as we gender all kinds of things, we gender jobs. Collectively, we understand certain jobs as somehow for women (like nursing and teaching) and others as for men (construction work and computer programming).

Gendered job segregation doesn't reflect inherent masculine or feminine qualities of a job; instead, occupations are socially constructed to suggest they're best suited for stereotypical women or men, while features that would undermine the idea are ignored.[33] For example, male insurance agents describe successful colleagues as men who love competition and possess a "killer instinct."[34] In reality, an insurance salesperson also needs to be able to communicate trustworthiness, quickly forge bonds with strangers, and read emotions. If the job were gendered female, we would probably see more emphasis on interpersonal skills.

Because jobs are not naturally gendered, we find great variation across cultures. Medicine is a female job in Russia and Finland, as is dentistry in Latvia and Lithuania.[35] In Iran, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Saudi Arabia, women earn the majority of science degrees.[36] In Armenia, half of computer science college professors are women.[37] Women dominate computer science in Malaysia, too, where abstract thinking and office work are seen as feminine compared to more "physical" labor.[38] Likewise, Malaysians see chemical engineering as feminine

A female laborer in the Indian state of Gujarat carries bricks needed for a construction site. Construction is gendered female in India and male in the United States.

because it involves working in a lab, but civil engineering as masculine because it involves going to worksites and overseeing construction. In contrast, in India, women make up a large share of the construction industry; it makes sense to them because Indian society holds women responsible for the home.[39] We make work meaningful in gendered ways and slot men and women into occupations accordingly.

How Much Job Segregation Is There?

Figure 12.2 presents data for some of the most gender-segregated occupations in the United States. Overall, about four in ten American women work in jobs that are at least 75 percent female and men work in even more gender-segregated environments.[40] To achieve perfect integration in the United States, 34 percent of workers would have to switch to a differently gendered job. Internationally, the amount of gender segregation in jobs varies; the United States is in the middle of the pack.[41] Among developed countries, the percentage of people who would have to switch jobs varies from 23 percent in Japan to 45 percent in Luxembourg.

We see gender segregation not just between occupations—between nursing and car repair, for example—but within them. Consider that there are lots of both waitresses and waiters, but servers at very expensive restaurants tend to be both male and female, while lower-priced restaurants tend to employ women.[42] Among doctors, gender correlates with specialty: Women make up 62 percent of pediatricians but only 5 percent of orthopedic surgeons.[43] The skills and responsibilities of barbers and hairdressers, for instance, are more alike than different, but men and women tend to get different job titles and work in different establishments serving different customers.

Gender intersects with other characteristics to stratify the workforce. Depending on what part of the United States we're in, the (likely female) housekeeper at our local motel will be white, Latina, or African American.[44] The janitor or maintenance worker will probably be the same race but the other gender. African American women make up only 6 percent of the general population but represent nearly a third of active-duty enlisted women in the military.[45] Fully 99 percent of New York City's nearly 40,000 taxi drivers are male and 96 percent are immigrants; 24 percent are from Bangladesh alone.[46] Jobs are segregated by sexual orientation, too. Lesbian and bisexual women are ten times more likely than heterosexual women to work as police officers.[47] And, while not all male flight attendants are gay, gay and bisexual men are overrepresented compared to the overall population.[48]

What causes this divvying up of men and women into different kinds of jobs?

FIGURE 12.2 | SOME OF THE MOST GENDER-SEGREGATED OCCUPATIONS

Female-dominated occupations	How female is it?
Speech-language pathologist	98%
Preschool and kindergarten teacher	98%
Dental hygienist	95%
Secretary and administrative assistant	95%
Dietician and nutritionist	94%
Childcare worker	94%
Hairdresser, hairstylist, and cosmetologist	93%
Medical record and health information technician	92%
Medical assistant	92%
Receptionist and information clerk	91%
Registered nurse	90%
Nursing, psychiatric, and home-health aide	89%

Male-dominated occupations	How male is it?
Roofer	99%
Automotive service technician and mechanic	98%
Carpenter	98%
Firefighter	97%
Construction laborer	97%
Crane/tower operator	96%
Maintenance and repair worker	96%
Welder	96%
Truck driver	94%
Grounds maintenance worker	94%
Pest control worker	94%
Mechanical engineer	91%

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Table 11: Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.pdf.

Causes of Job Segregation

Men and women usually end up in gender-stereotypical jobs through a complicated congruence of socialization, employer selection, and selective exit. The **socialization hypothesis** suggests that men and women respond to gender stereotypes when planning, training, and applying for jobs.[49] We are socialized to be interested in and prepare for different kinds of jobs, while also reading the signals sent by occupations and the people in them. In one study, for example, psychologists invited students into a classroom and asked them to fill out a questionnaire regarding their interest and perceived ability in computer science.[50] One set of people entered a room covered in "computer geeky" things: a *Star Trek* poster, comic books, video game boxes, empty soda cans and junk food, and technical

magazines. The other group entered a room without these objects. Men were unfazed by the geekery, but women who encountered the geeked-up room were significantly less likely to say they were considering a computer science major. Whether it's the "macho" image of the construction worker or the "bro" image of the tech guy, the message to women is "no girls allowed."[51]

The **employer selection hypothesis** proposes that employers tend to prefer men for masculine jobs and women for feminine jobs, slotting applicants into gender-consistent roles during hiring and promotion. Certain kinds of factory work, for example, are heavily female because employers prefer to hire women. As one manager at a high-tech manufacturing company told a researcher: "Just three things I look for in hiring: small, foreign, and female."[52] Hiring in Silicon Valley in the 1960s and 1970s, by contrast, was driven by employers' belief that nerdy male misfits made the best computer programmers.[53] Once a job is dominated by men or women, employers assume that it's for a good reason and select new employees accordingly.[54]

The **selective exit hypothesis** highlights workers' abandonment of counter-stereotypical occupations. One study found that 61 percent of women in male-dominated occupations leave their job within ten years, compared with less than 30 percent of their male colleagues; half of these women switched to a female-dominated occupation.[55] In engineering, for example, 35 percent of women, but only 10 percent of men, either never enter the field after getting their degree, or leave it sometime after they do.[56] Among those female engineers who leave, a majority blamed its hypermasculine work culture.[57] Sometimes women enter male-dominated occupations but have negative experiences that push them to leave.

All three of these factors—socialization, employer selection, and selective exit—are sources of job segregation, with socialization and selective exit likely the most substantial contributors. Gendered job segregation in itself, however, isn't sufficient to explain the pay gap. It's only the start.

Different and Unequal

A Floridian Cuban named Celio Diaz was the first man to use the Civil Rights Act to sue for gender discrimination.[58] In the 1960s, only 4 percent of flight attendants were men and most airlines refused to hire them. Pan Am, for example, who rejected Diaz's application, argued that men simply couldn't "convey the charm, the tact, the grace, the liveliness that young girls can."[59] Or, if they could, Pan Am claimed, it might "arouse feelings" in a male passenger "that he would rather not have aroused."[60]

Pan Am appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, but they lost. Beginning in 1971, airlines were forced to begin hiring men alongside women. The

media had a field day. The *Miami Herald* ran a story with a picture of a stocky, hairy-legged man in a miniskirt and knee-high socks, a purse hanging from his cocked arm. It read: "Here's the worst thing that could happen to commercial airlines."[61]

It's funny that the American media thought the idea of a "he-stewardess" was absurd because the word "stewardess" is a feminized version of the word "steward." In fact, early stewardesses *were* stewards and the job was almost exclusively male for some time.[62] Pan Am, the airline Diaz sued, had itself maintained an all-male steward workforce for sixteen years. It integrated in 1944, as did many other airlines, because of the shortage of men on the home front during World War II. By 1958, Pan Am had entirely reversed its policy. Soon American flight attendants were almost all female. One advertising executive in 1967 explained: "When a tired businessman gets on an airplane, we think he ought to be allowed to look at a pretty girl."[63]

The occupation's "sex change" is a great example of the gendered social construction of jobs; it also reveals how prestige and pay tend to follow sex. Early airlines hired white male flight attendants in order to assure passengers that they would be safe.[64] Ocean liners and train cars, the models on which airlines built their businesses, largely employed black men, but airlines believed their overwhelmingly white passengers wouldn't feel comfortable placing their lives in the hands of a black person. So they hired white men to ensure that the occupation carried a degree of gravitas. Stewards embodied professionalism and dignity, wearing military-inspired uniforms and changing into white sport coats and gloves to serve dinner. They were chaperones of the sky but also capable crew.

When the aisle was turned over to women, the role was reimagined. As the occupation was feminized, the seriousness of the job was downplayed and the subordinate role of supportive and sometimes sexually playful service was emphasized. As one flight attendant described it, the job

Although the text of this ad for American Airlines presents its flight attendants as both motherly and professional, the picture tells a very different story of women's service work.

became "part mother, part servant, and part tart."[65] Just like with cheerleading, there was a decline in status.

We have seen such changes in response to the feminization or masculinization of many different occupations. Clerical work in the United States, for example, was almost exclusively male until the late 1800s. Typing was considered "too strenuous for women."[66] Later, as it became associated with women, the necessary qualification would be shifted from "arduous labor" to "dexterity."[67] Today most people don't think much of "secretaries," but they were respected enough at one time that we still use the term to refer to high-level government positions like secretary of state.

During World War II, women's support roles as typists funneled them into early computer programming.[68] The government employed women in top secret positions as "compute-ers," workers who operated and supervised computing machines.[69] They were preferred because it was believed that the work required patience, something women supposedly had thanks to "maternal instinct." "It's just like planning a dinner," explained the pioneering programmer Grace Hopper to *Cosmopolitan* in 1967; it "requires patience and the ability to handle detail. Women are 'naturals' at computer programming."[70] As late as the mid-1980s, computer science was more gender-integrated than other science, technology, and engineering fields. Women made lots of important contributions to computer science during this time, but as the value of computing rose and women were pushed out, their contributions were made invisible. Reimagined as a nerd's playground, computer science today is among the least sex-integrated occupations and, not coincidentally, highest in prestige and pay.

Other occupations have also changed gender and, when they do, we see a similar shift in value.[71] Since 1970, for example, enrollment in veterinary college has gone from 11 percent to over 80 percent female.[72] Wages have correspondingly stagnated compared to similar professions like medicine and law, which have seen less overall feminization. Generally, the rule is clear: As women enter an occupation, status goes down; as men enter it, status goes up. It's as if men's social status rubs off on the work they do.[73] In one study, for example, ten- and eleven-year-olds were asked to rate the status of fake jobs like "cilpster" and "heigist."[74] The children who were told that these jobs were performed mostly by men gave them higher status rankings than the children who were told they were done primarily by women. In other studies, college students asked to rank the prestige of jobs will rank them lower if they are told that the occupation is feminizing and higher if they're told it's masculinizing.[75]

We call this the **androcentric pay scale**, a strong correlation between wages and the gender composition of the job.[76] Even when we hold things like education, skill, and experience constant, the gender composition of a job plays an important role in determining wages. In fact, according to a study by the Bureau of Labor

These IBM computers look unusual and outdated for modern eyes, but the female technicians may also seem surprising, given our myth of progress on all fronts for women. The rising status of computer sciences is associated with a falling share of women in this field.

Statistics, the gender composition of a job is the *single largest contributor* to the gender wage gap.[77] It is more important than level of unionization, industry, supply and demand, the safety or comfort of the work, and workers' education, marital status, and experience. Even controlling for all these things, "women's work" pays, on average, anywhere between 5 and 21 percent less than "men's work."[78] The effect grows larger as occupations become increasingly male or female dominated.

If there is an androcentric pay scale, then we should expect male-dominated jobs to be among the highest paying. They are. Consider Figure 12.3, which lists all American occupations (with reliable demographic data) that pay over $100,000 a year.[79] In the rightmost columns, we include the gender and race composition of these high-paying jobs. Since men make up 53 percent of the workforce, any job that is more than 53 percent male is disproportionately so, or more male than we would expect by chance alone. Likewise, since 63 percent of the workforce identifies as non-Hispanic white, any job that is more than 63 percent white is disproportionately so.

Figure 12.3 shows that sixteen of the twenty-five highest-paying occupations are more than 53 percent male and six are more than 75 percent male. All but two of these occupations—computer hardware engineer and software developer—are disproportionately white.

FIGURE 12.3 | GENDER AND RACE COMPOSITION OF THE HIGHEST-PAYING JOBS IN THE UNITED STATES

Occupation	Avg. Annual Wage	% Male	% White
Physicians and surgeons	$214,700	60%	66%
Chief executives	$196,050	72%	86%
Dentists	$180,010	64%	77%
Computer and information systems managers	$149,730	71%	72%
Architectural and engineering managers	$146,290	91%	74%
Financial managers	$143,530	44%	73%
Lawyers	$141,890	63%	84%
Marketing and sales managers	$140,600	55%	77%
Aircraft pilots and flight engineers	$138,690	94%	88%
Public relations and fundraising managers	$127,690	37%	85%
Personal financial advisors	$124,140	68%	80%
Advertising and promotions managers	$123,880	47%	78%
Human resources managers	$123,510	29%	75%
General and operations managers	$123,460	66%	75%
Purchasing managers	$121,810	48%	76%
Pharmacists	$121,710	43%	64%
Judges, magistrates, and other judicial workers	$121,050	72%	81%
Computer hardware engineers	$119,650	83%	48%
Optometrists	$119,100	50%	89%
Training and development managers	$117,690	40%	81%
Aerospace engineers	$115,300	91%	74%
Chemical engineers	$112,430	83%	87%
Software developers	$111,780	81%	54%
Medical and health services managers	$111,680	30%	70%
Industrial production managers	$110,580	74%	81%

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "May 2017 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm.

In the last chapter we introduced the idea of the feminization of poverty; we might call the concentration of men in high-earning occupations, and their result-ing ability to accumulate savings, investments, and assets, a **masculinization of wealth**.[80] Believe it or not, this accumulation of money starts when men are boys. Sons are 15 percent more likely than daughters to get an allowance in exchange for doing chores; even when daughters get paid, sons get paid more.[81] In other words, boys spend fewer hours on chores than girls, enjoy more leisure time, and *still* end up with more money in their piggybanks.

The Value of Gendered Work

In 2013, an Asiana flight crash-landed at San Francisco International Airport. While the survival of all but two of the 307 passengers was called a "miracle," it was in no small part thanks to the flight attendants on board. They success-fully enacted the protocol for a ninety-second evacuation, despite two slides

that didn't correctly deploy. As passengers were fleeing the wreckage, some flight attendants fought the rising flames while others hacked trapped passengers out of their seatbelts with knives. They carried injured passengers out on their backs. "I wasn't really thinking, but my body started carrying out the steps needed for an evacuation," explained Lee Yoon Hye, one of the flight attendants. "I was only thinking about rescuing the next passenger."[82] Later she learned that she'd sustained a broken tailbone.

The top five news stories at the time used passive language that made the work of the flight attendants invisible: "slides had deployed" and passengers "managed to get off."[83] Instead of being described as the first responders they were, flight attendants were portrayed as just a special kind of passenger. The crash forced "frightened passengers and crew to scamper," read one article; another reported that "passengers and crew were being treated" at local hospitals. Only one of the five stories acknowledged that the sixteen flight attendants *worked* through the crash and its aftermath.

Which leads us to ask: Do flight attendants have skills?

They do. Flight attendants learn hundreds of regulations and the safety features of multiple types of airplanes. They know how to evacuate a plane on land or sea within ninety seconds; fight fires 35,000 feet in the air; keep a heart attack or stroke victim alive; calm or restrain an anxious, aggressive, or mentally ill passenger; respond to hijackings and terrorist attacks; communicate effectively with people who are frozen in fear; and survive in the case of a crash landing in the jungle, sea, desert, or Arctic. As one flight attendant said: "I don't think of myself as a sex symbol or a servant. I think of myself as somebody who knows how to open the door of a 747 in the dark, upside down, and in the water."[84]

Flight attendants are doing a job that's supposed to remain invisible unless needed. "I have an outer appearance of calm and reserve," explained one flight attendant.[85] But she is alert and prepared. "You always have to be ready for an emergency—something with another crew member, passenger has an epileptic attack, emergency landing. I could go on and on." Even when survival is unlikely, many flight attendants take their job gravely seriously. As one flight attendant said:

> If we were going to make a ditching in water, the chances of our surviving are slim, even though we know exactly what to do. But I think I would probably—and I think I can say this for most of my fellow flight attendants—be able to keep [the passengers] from being too worried about it. I mean my voice might quiver a little during the announcements, but somehow I feel we could get them to believe … the best.[86]

Many lives have been saved, and many final moments have been less filled with sheer terror, thanks to well-trained and effective flight attendants who are committed to doing their job well—if necessary, until the bitter end.

Airlines, though, are loath to reveal the intense and ongoing emergency, security, first-aid, combat, and survival training that flight attendants receive. Talking about the "live fire pit" and "ditching pool" used for training might remind passengers of the potential dangers of air travel.[87] It's much better for airlines if we think flight attendants are just "sky waitresses" and, if we're lucky, we'll never be in a situation in which their skills and knowledge become suddenly and terrifyingly apparent.

So, many of the skills flight attendants have are invisible to most of us most of the time, both by circumstance and design. Meanwhile, we tend to dismiss the work we see as unskilled. Early airlines hired women for their extraordinary beauty, grace, and charm. They were to have a "modest but friendly smile," be "alert, attentive, not overly aggressive, but not reticent either," "outgoing but not effusive," "enthusiastic with calm and poise," and "vivacious but not effervescent."[88] No problem, right? All women *don't* naturally have these skills; that's why flight attendants were valorized as the perfect women.

This part of the job is referred to as **emotion work**, the act of controlling one's own emotions and managing the emotions of others. Flight attendants are tasked with seamlessly performing the proper emotions in interaction with an impossibly wide range of people who bring their own, often negative emotions to the moment. And, thousands of feet up in the air, there is no manager to ask for help or call for backup. Trying to summarize the job, one flight attendant said:

> *[It] requires judgment, ingenuity, skill, and independence in an area of the most difficult sort—not handling inanimate and usually predictable machinery—but large numbers of human beings of all ages, walks of life, varied national and racial backgrounds, under panic conditions.*[89]

And one has to be nice about it. One stewardess working in the 1960s described having to "force a drunk passenger in the back of the cabin to sit down and stop throwing cigarette butts on the floor *with gentleness*."[90] In 2001, another explained how she managed the problem of sexual harassment without offending her customer: "If someone puts their hand on your bottom, you should say, 'Excuse me, sir, but my bottom accidentally fell into your hand.'"[91]

These are impressive interpersonal talents. "Even when people are paid to be nice," wrote one scholar studying this kind of emotion work, "it is hard for them to be nice at all times, and when their efforts succeed, it is a remarkable accomplishment."[92] Or, as one flight attendant put it: "We, basically, are the best actors and actresses in the world."[93]

Undeniably, these skills are also *valuable* resources for the airlines. Yet airlines have historically framed their flight attendants' performances as "natural." As historian Kathleen Barry explains:

[A]irlines' favorite metaphor for stewardesses' work was that they were playing gracious hostess to guests in one's own home, which suggested their efforts were a natural, voluntary expression of female domesticity and of social *rather than* economic *value.*[94]

The work of flight attendants, in other words, was defined as *outside the realm of work*. If being nice just comes naturally, then the flight attendants are just being themselves. Being oneself is not a *skill* and, therefore, it shouldn't be compensated as one. The benevolently sexist idea that women are naturally gracious causes us to dismiss the work of female flight attendants as nothing special.

In fact, lots of the work women disproportionately do is framed as natural to the female sex. In contrast, "men's work" is usually considered skilled almost by definition. Stereotypes of men include being good with their hands, talented at understanding how things work, and steadfast behind the wheel. If we were inclined to devalue these skills, we could argue that it was only natural that men would become surgeons, engineers, and truck drivers. Given the opportunity, the logic would go, they would do these things anyway because that's just how they *are*; we'll pay them for their time, but it's ridiculous to argue that these are *skills*. That is, in fact, exactly how "women's work" is frequently understood.

Traditional women's work—like soothing an autistic child, organizing twenty kindergarteners, making middle school kids care about literature, ensuring a boss's day runs smoothly, or carefully monitoring the health of an elderly patient—all require knowledge, concentration, effort, creativity, problem solving, practice, and emotion work.

So does responding to sexual harassment in ways that are effective but not explosive. In a 2017 article about sexism in the tech industry, entrepreneur and investor Susan Wu discusses

the countless times I've had to move a man's hand from my thigh (or back or shoulder or hair or arm) during a meeting (or networking event or professional lunch or brainstorming session or pitch meeting) without seeming confrontational (or bitchy or rejecting or demanding or aggressive). . . . [It's] a pretty important skill that I would bet most successful women in our industry have.[95]

Women are still apologizing for their bottoms falling into men's hands, and we continue to devalue women's work as unskilled and unworthy of the compensation awarded to men's work.

If jobs filled by women are devalued, then we should expect these jobs to pay less than jobs filled by men. They do. Consider Figure 12.4, which lists all American occupations (with reliable data) that pay under $25,000 a year.[96] In

FIGURE 12.4 | GENDER AND RACE COMPOSITION OF THE LOWEST-PAYING JOBS IN THE UNITED STATES

Occupation	Avg. Yearly Wage	% Female	% Minority
Cashier	$22,130	73%	47%
Dishwasher	$22,210	20%	57%
Host and hostess	$22,290	86%	41%
Counter attendant	$22,530	62%	47%
Dining room cafeteria attendant and bartender helper	$23,050	46%	49%
Entertainment attendant	$23,480	43%	41%
Lifeguard/ski patrol	$23,570	50%	20%
Childcare worker	$23,760	94%	43%
Laundry and dry-cleaning worker	$23,770	68%	69%
Food preparation worker	$23,900	59%	52%
Gaming services worker	$23,950	47%	64%
Home health aide	$24,280	89%	59%
Personal care aide	$24,100	84%	57%
Food server, non-restaurant	$24,150	70%	50%
Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerk	$24,250	61%	51%
Parking lot attendant	$24,330	17%	67%
Grader and sorter, agricultural products	$24,620	67%	64%
Maid/housekeeper	$24,630	88%	70%

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey," Employed Persons by Detailed Occupation, Sex, Race, and Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018, "May 2017 National Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates." Retrieved from www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm.

the rightmost columns, we include the gender and race composition of these low-paying jobs. Since women make up 47 percent of the workforce, any job that is more than 47 percent female is disproportionately so. Likewise, since 63 percent of the workforce identifies as non-Hispanic white, any job that is more than 37 percent minority is more so than we would expect by chance alone.

More than two-thirds of the lowest-paying occupations (thirteen of eighteen) are disproportionately female; five are more than three-fourths female. The remainder of the jobs—the ones not disproportionately held by women—are filled by men, but not white men. Black men are twice as likely as white men to work in feminized industries and Latino and Asian men are one and a half times as likely.[97] This is partly because racial discrimination gives men of color fewer options than white men, but also possibly because men of color are more likely to adopt feminized qualities like care and kindness as valued personal characteristics.[98] With few exceptions, the lowest-paying jobs in America are disproportionately staffed by racial minority women (in twelve occupations) or, barring that, mostly women or racial minorities (in one and five occupations, respectively).

The devaluation of feminized occupations is especially acute for **care work**, work that involves face-to-face caretaking of the physical, emotional, and educational needs of others: children, the elderly, the sick, and the disabled. These jobs are paid *even less* than other feminized jobs, holding education and training constant.[99] Consider the job of childcare worker. In 2017, the average yearly income for childcare workers was $23,760.[100] You know who's paid more than the people who are taking care of children? People who take care of coats in the coat check, parked cars, broken bicycles, dry cleaning, motel reservations, and roadkill.

Job segregation contributes to the gender pay gap because we attribute more value to "men's work" than "women's work." An occupation disproportionately filled by women is seen as *legitimately* lower paid than an occupation dominated by men. Because of this, job segregation doesn't just create a differentiated workforce; it creates an unequal one. This means that both men and women can lose prestige and income when they enter a feminine occupation. Women working in predominantly female occupations earn 26 percent less than women working in mostly male ones; men pay a similar price.[101] It also explains the pay gaps between heterosexual and homosexual women and men.[102] Openly gay and bisexual men are more likely to go into feminized occupations and openly gay and bisexual women into masculinized ones. Gay and bisexual men earn about 30 percent less than heterosexual men, whereas gay and bisexual women earn about 20 percent more than their heterosexual counterparts.

Job segregation, then, explains a large part of the pay gap. But it doesn't explain all of it. Women are not just paid less than men overall; they are also paid less than men *in the same occupations*. What is going on?

DISCRIMINATION AND PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT

Thanks to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it's no longer legal to discriminate based on gender, but discrimination didn't simply vanish. Enforcing the new law meant going to court, proving the existence of discrimination and the intent to discriminate, and creating consequences. It took decades for the hundreds of cases filed by flight attendants, for example, to make their way through the courts. The last marriage ban was struck down in 1970; routine weigh-ins for female (but not male) members of the cabin crew were standard as late as the 1990s.[103]

Today, flight attendants still deal with sexual objectification from coworkers and passengers as well as bosses who police their bodies.[104] Sexual harassment from passengers is just a "hazard of the job," according to one flight attendant.[105] Some pilots also continue to see flight attendants as a source of sexual titillation

FIGURE 12.5 | WOMEN'S EARNINGS FOR EVERY DOLLAR OF MEN'S IN THE 20 MOST COMMON OCCUPATIONS FOR WOMEN AND MEN*

Occupation	Cents/Men's Dollar
Registered nurse	$0.91
Cook	$0.91
Customer service representative	$0.90
Elementary and middle school teacher	$0.87
Secretary and administrative assistant	$0.86
Cashier	$0.86
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aide	$0.85
Laborers and freight, stock, and material mover	$0.84
Janitor and building cleaner	$0.84
First-line supervisor of office/administrative support workers	$0.83
Software developer	$0.83
Chief executive	$0.80
Sales representative	$0.78
Manager, all other	$0.77
Accountant and auditor	$0.77
Retail salesperson	$0.74
Driver/sales worker and truck driver	$0.73
First-line supervisor of retail sales workers	$0.72

Some of the most common occupations for men are also the most common for women, so the total number of occupations is less than 20.
Source: Institute for Women's Policy Research, "The Gender Wage Gap by Occupation 2017 and by Race and Ethnicity," April 2018. Retrieved from https://iwpr.org/publications/gender-wage-gap-occupation-2017-race-ethnicity/.

and pleasure to which they're entitled. In 2011 a pilot hoping to "get lucky" on his layover was caught on tape complaining to his copilot that the flight attendants assigned to his flight were "eleven f****** over-the-top f******, ass-f****** homosexuals and a granny."[106]

And, yes, there is a pay gap in this profession today: Female flight attendants make $0.82 for every dollar made by their male counterparts.[107] The gendered pay gap isn't just true overall, it's true for almost every occupation in the United States. Figure 12.5 shows the wage gap in the most common occupations for men and women, ranked from smallest difference in pay (among registered nurses and cooks) to the largest (among retail salesperson supervisors).

Gender discrimination accounts for some of the wage gap within occupations: Men are seen as better workers and supervisors no matter what qualities are considered ideal for the job. In one study, participants rated two hypothetical candidates for the job of police chief: one named Michael and the other Michelle.[108] When Michael was described as "streetwise" and Michelle as "formally educated," participants recommended hiring Michael on the basis that he was tough, a risk taker, and physically fit. When Michelle was the one described as streetwise, however, they *still* recommended Michael, this time on the basis that he was well educated, able to communicate with the media, and politically

connected. In other words, participants moved the goalposts in order to ensure that, whatever the qualifications, Michael was seen as more qualified than Michelle. Both men and women exhibited this bias, but men more than women.

If this sounds implausible, consider the stories of people who have been both a man and a woman in the workplace. In a study of twenty-nine trans men, two-thirds reported that they received a post-transition advantage at work. This was especially true if they were white and tall. Crispin, for example, worked at Home Depot; he said customers had often dismissed his expertise when they perceived him as a woman, but now heartily welcomed his advice. Henry said he was suddenly "right a lot more" than he had been before.[109] Trans men said they got more credit for less work and, if they wanted, they could be less nice and suffer no consequences. Keith said that behavior perceived as overly "assertive" when he was seen as a woman was now "take charge."[110] Preston explained that before his transition, his bosses and coworkers were rarely helpful, but things changed after: "I swear it was like from one day to the next of me transitioning, I need this, this is what I want and [snaps his fingers]. I have not had to fight about anything."[111] Thomas, who previously went by Susan, told a story that sums it up: After his transition, a client commended his boss for firing "Susan" and hiring the "new guy" who was "just delightful!"[112]

Because of discrimination of this sort, women and men continue to turn to the courts for justice. Many American companies and public service sectors have lost or settled gender-based class action lawsuits in the last fifteen years, including Abercrombie & Fitch, Albertson's, Bank of America, Best Buy, Boeing, Coca-Cola, Costco, the FBI, Goodyear, Heald College, Hewlett-Packard, Home Depot, the International Longshoremen's Union, LexisNexis, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Merrill Lynch, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Mitsubishi Motors, Morgan Stanley, Novartis Pharmaceuticals, Outback Steakhouse, Publix Supermarkets, Qualcomm, Smith Barney/Citigroup, State Farm Insurance, Tony Roma's, Uber, Union Pacific Railroad, United Airlines, the U.S. Mint, Wachovia, Walmart, and Wells Fargo.

Clearly, sexism is still prevalent in the workplace. Scholars have identified three forms it takes: men's hostile and benevolent sexism, women's double binds, and employers' preferences for men.

Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

Most men do not exhibit sexist behavior at work and, even among those who do, some are more aggressive or persistent than others, but it only takes one or two sexist people in a workplace to create a hostile environment. Recent high-profile cases—like those against the actor Kevin Spacey, the mega movie producer Harvey Weinstein, the comedian and producer Louis C.K., and the television

hosts Bill O'Reilly and Matt Lauer (all credibly accused of patterns of sexual harassment of multiple women)—reveal that just one person can do a lot of damage. Even in less lofty and visible workplaces, a few particularly sexist superiors can do significant harm, even if the employees targeted are generally surrounded by supportive colleagues of all sexes. On average, traditionalist men with homemaker wives are more likely to be discriminatory; unfortunately, it is exactly these kinds of men who are disproportionately bosses, officers, and managers.[113]

When asked, 22 percent of men and 42 percent of women reported being the victim of gender discrimination at work, with women in male-dominated workplaces most likely to say so.[114] The discrimination includes being treated as incompetent; passed over for good assignments or promotions; and silenced, slighted, or isolated; as well as receiving less support from superiors. Some of this discrimination takes the form of overtly hostile sexism, including sexual harassment and violence, and some of it comes in the form of benevolent sexism.

Benevolent sexism is discrimination in the form of chivalry. In this case, men attempt to protect women from unpleasant, dirty, confrontational, dangerous, or otherwise unfeminine activities and, in doing so, end up undermining women's career trajectories. Cynthia, a construction worker, described how her coworker behaved toward her at work and what she did about it:

> *One journeyman treated me more like his wife because he pampers his wife. [He would say:] "Don't carry this and don't carry that." I started getting in this rut of standing at the bottom of the ladder handing him tools. So one day, I said this is such crap, I've got to do something. I just started doing everything before he had a chance. I'd grab the ladder and make him do the light work. I said, "Let me do some work, I'm an electrician."*[115]

In another occupational context entirely, researchers found that tech industry managers give women less concrete negative feedback than men because they don't want to hurt their female employees' feelings.[116] Without straightforward critique and clear ideas for improvement, women are at a disadvantage compared to men, who are better positioned to know how to improve their performance. Benevolent sexists may be trying to be "nice," but they hurt female employees when "protection" prevents them from learning their job, demonstrating their skills, or becoming better and more effective employees.

Discrimination against women also comes in the form of hostile sexism. Especially in some occupations, some men feel strongly that women should stay in the home or shouldn't be doing men's work, so they isolate women or put them in dangerous situations. Female construction workers, for example, report being forced to do "two-man" jobs all by themselves just to prove they can.[117] Such women are in lose-lose situations: If they try to prove they can "work like

a man," they end up doing the dirtiest work or getting hurt. If they refuse to do that kind of work, they get accused of demanding "special treatment."

Sometimes hostile sexism is also sexual. In Chicago, for example, the city's Fire Department is currently facing a lawsuit brought by five female paramedics.[118] They allege sexual comments and texts from several male coworkers and superiors (e.g., "What kind of panties do you wear at work?"), requests for sexual favors (e.g., asked for sex in exchange for a schedule change), sexual threats (e.g., cornered in a private sleeping space by a superior), and physical violations (e.g., kissed and licked against their will and having their hands placed on men's genitals). At least one woman was retaliated against for reporting the harassment to the city's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Sexual harassment is sometimes argued to be a harmless show of attraction, but these are not clumsy attempts at flirting. They're reassertions of dominance in response to the entrance of women into jobs to which men feel entitled.[119] In these instances, women are a **symbolic threat**; their presence potentially degrades the identity of the dominant group. Female construction workers, tech workers, firefighters, and other women in masculinized occupations present a symbolic threat to men in their trades insofar as the men's self-esteem comes, in part, from being a man doing men's work. As long as men's esteem rests on being different from and better than women, men will likely resist women's entry into male-dominated jobs.

Interrupting the idea that some kinds of work are for "manly men" can be good for both men and women. In 1997, Rick Fox, a man in charge of the operation of the then-deepest offshore oil well ever dug, embarked on an unusual experiment.[120] Working on an oil rig ranks among the ten most dangerous jobs, and Fox figured that men's concern with showing weakness, fear, or ignorance—violations of core tenants of masculinity—was part of why. If men were averse to asking questions when they didn't know something, admit nervousness when something seemed dangerous, or show weakness if they couldn't handle a task, accidents were going to happen.

So, Fox collected his men and brought in a facilitator to get them thinking about, and sharing, their fears and insecurities. In front of their coworkers, men confessed to losing loved ones, drowning their sorrows in alcohol, worrying about being a good husband and father, and more. In the end, they felt much more comfortable asking for help, listening, and cooperating—core tenets of femininity—and this transformed the workplace. Over the next fifteen years, Fox's company implemented this training across all its oil platforms. The accident rate declined by 84 percent and productivity increased.[121]

When men embrace elements of femininity as job skills, they become more accepting of women, trans men and women, and less masculine men as coworkers. Anthropologist Jessica Smith, for example, studied the expansion

Women of color are disproportionately well represented in male-dominated physical jobs.

of a Wyoming coal mine as it began incorporating female miners to meet labor demand.[122] Instead of reacting to the symbolic threat to their individual interest, the miners were encouraged to think of their crew as a family. "A good miner was someone who cared for their coworkers," wrote Smith.[123] They were responsible not just for themselves but for their whole crew-family. Because care was considered a female strength, it was easy for men to imagine that their new female coworkers would be excellent coal miners.

Men's workplace discrimination against women and other men isn't inevitable. It can be interrupted, especially when employment opportunities are expanding and men aren't worried about losing their jobs.[124] When it is, hegemonic masculinity, compulsive heterosexuality, and the gender binary may lose, but most everyone else wins. And when women are successfully integrated into workplaces, their mere presence further appears to reduce sexist beliefs and behavior.[125] The presence of high-status female managers also makes a difference, decreasing the pay gap between men and women in their companies.[126]

Hostile and benevolent sexism limit career choices, create hostile and dangerous workplaces, and harm career trajectories. Women pay more of these costs. In male-dominated occupations, though, women not only have to deal with sexism; they also have to contend with the idea that women aren't as suited as men for these occupations, a sentiment often shared by men and women alike.

The Double Bind

Women in masculine occupations often suffer from the perception that they're not quite right for the job. Some attorneys, for example, will describe litigators in gendered terms. Being a lawyer is a "male thing," they say; it's "men beating each other up."[127] Ineffective attorneys are described as "impotent" or needing to "man up." Women in these jobs, then, experience a tension between being a worker and being a woman. This is the double bind discussed in the "Women and Femininities" chapter: To be successful at her job, a woman needs to do masculinity, but to be accepted by her boss, colleagues, and clients, she needs to do femininity.[128] Each undermines the other. Feminine women are seen as likeable but incompetent, while women who do masculinity are seen as competent but not likeable.

Many women workers experience this kind of impossible balancing act. "I'd rather act feminine and friendly and cute than get harassed, ignored, or treated worse," said one lesbian-identified woman in this position.[129] She worked in construction and understood quite well that performing a feminine apologetic was required to avoid being the target of hostile sexism. She also understood, though, that being too feminine would undermine her credibility as a worker. "It's like I have to be careful that I don't act overly feminine," she continued, "because they'll think I can't work." Her male coworkers didn't believe that women—feminine women, anyway—could do the job, but they also didn't tolerate women who weren't feminine. She was stuck.

Because both men and women tend to dislike women who act "like men" at work, those who act confident in their abilities, ask for raises and promotions, and negotiate with their bosses are evaluated less positively than women who don't and men who do. It doesn't matter if they demand or ask nicely.[130] One study, for example, examined how people responded to hypothetical men and women who expressed anger or sadness after losing a client because a colleague was late to a meeting.[131] The angry male was evaluated most favorably, followed by the sad female, the sad male and, lastly and least, the angry female. They saw the angry woman as "out of control" but considered the angry man to be legitimately upset. Asked to attribute a salary to each, participants offered the angry woman $0.62 on the angry man's dollar.

All too often, in all too many spaces, women are damned if they do and damned if they don't.

Invisible Obstructions and Opportunities

WOMEN IN MALE-DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS Together, these findings—the costs of hostile and benevolent sexism and the double bind—are behind the

idea of the **glass ceiling**, an invisible barrier between women and top positions in masculine occupations. Most women simply don't get the training, mentorship, or promotions received by many men.[132] Men, on average, enter the workforce at a higher rank with a better salary and then advance and see their pay rise more quickly. These findings are true even when researchers account for the number of years in the workforce, the industry, geographical location, parenthood status, women's level of ambition, and the strategies they use for advancement. Even very successful businesswomen feel the strain: nearly three-quarters of successful female executives at Fortune 1000 companies agree that gender stereotypes are a barrier to women's success.[133]

For black women and Latinas, the proper metaphor may not be glass but concrete.[134] Such women are even less likely than white and Asian women to hold jobs in the top ranks of professions.[135] Stereotypes such as the "angry black woman" and the "hot-blooded Latina" doubly penalize women of color for not living up to expectations for white femininity. This requires them to put even more energy into their feminine apologetic.

When women do break through a ceiling, they often encounter a **glass cliff**, a heightened risk of failing, compared with similar men.[136] This is not because women are unsuited for leadership; rather, it's because women tend to be promoted during times of crisis and given jobs with a higher risk of failure. This phenomenon is found in contexts as wide-ranging as funeral homes, music festivals, political elections, and law. Because of the glass cliff, the average tenure of female CEOs is just half that of male CEOs.[137]

If women are seen as less capable than men, why would companies promote them in times of crisis? The answer has less to do with how managers feel about women than it does with how they feel about their male coworkers. When decision makers are predominantly male, they may make efforts to ensure that men with whom they feel chummy get the better positions. The bad jobs are then given to whomever is left over: typically women and racial minorities of both sexes.[138] This was the experience of one female Marine Corps officer: "It's the good old boys network. The guys helping each other out and we don't have the women helping each other out because there are not enough of us around. The good old boys network put the guys they want to get promoted in certain jobs to make them stand out, look good."[139]

When women succeed in precarious positions, and they often do, their reward is often to be put in charge of yet another fragile project. Many women, faced with a revolving door of failing assignments, eventually do fail. Or they burn out from stress. In fact, while we often hear the claim that women "opt out" of high-pressure jobs because they want to spend more time with their families, in real life women cite this as the reason for leaving their jobs only 2 to 3 percent of the time (that is, no more often than men). Dissatisfaction, feelings of underappreciation, blocked opportunities, discrimination, and harassment are much

more significant factors.[140] If women seem to be less ambitious than men, then, this can be at least partly explained by the fact that they face barriers at work that men, all things being equal, do not.

This resonates with research on work more generally: People in jobs with a **sticky floor**, ones with no or low opportunity for promotion, tend to limit their aspirations.[141] Women, more often than men, find themselves in a position where it doesn't make sense to be ambitious, and this is even more true for women of color and immigrant women. In contrast, both women and men in high-mobility positions with a significant chance of promotion tend to be correspondingly motivated.

MEN IN FEMALE-DOMINATED OCCUPATIONS Do men in female-dominated occupations face the same struggles as women in male-dominated ones? It turns out, no. Men in female-dominated occupations are disadvantaged relative to men in male-dominated occupations, but they aren't disadvantaged relative to their female coworkers. Instead of facing glass ceilings or cliffs, they often are presented with a **glass escalator**: an invisible ride to the top offered to men in female-dominated occupations.[142]

A series of studies have found that men in female-dominated occupations are advantaged in terms of pay, promotions, and support from colleagues and supervisors.[143] In a two-year study of 5,734 secondary and elementary school teachers, for example, all else being equal, men were three times more likely than women to be promoted to administrative positions.[144] Likewise, though women are overrepresented in fashion design, men are more likely to win accolades and awards on the assumption that their work is more inspired and artistic.[145] This is true especially if they're white and, in some cases, heterosexual.[146] Some sexual minorities report being forced to stay in a **glass closet**, an invisible place in which sexual minorities hide their identities in order to avoid stigma, suspicion, or censure at work.[147]

Not all men, though, view the glass escalator as a blessing. Sociologist Christine Williams, who coined the phrase, described how a male librarian, six months after starting his first job, was criticized by his supervisors for "not shooting high enough."[148] "Seriously," he said, "they assumed that because I was a male—and they told me this . . . that somehow I wasn't doing the kind of management-oriented work that they thought I should be doing." He worked in the children's collection for ten years and had to fight the whole time to avoid being promoted; he enjoyed the job he had. Male nurses, likewise, often find themselves steered to emergency medicine, where salaries are higher.[149] Gender stereotypes are at work here—and not just positive ones like the idea that men are better leaders, but also negative ones like the idea that men aren't suited to working with children.

Men who pursue feminized occupations, then, may face policing from their peers and bring home lower salaries than they would if they were in male-dominated occupations but, relative to their female colleagues, they will be promoted more quickly and earn more money.[150] This isn't necessarily what all men want, but it does translate into advantages at work and the persistence of the pay gap.

Glass and concrete ceilings, alongside glass cliffs, closets, and escalators, conspire with sticky floors to keep (white, heterosexual) men at the top of many workplaces. Expectations surrounding parenthood contribute as well.

PARENTHOOD: THE FACTS AND THE FICTION

Today one can't read a mommy blog without encountering the problem of so-called work-life balance. Almost always considered a "women's issue," the conflict rests on the incompatibility of two hegemonic cultural ideologies: intensive motherhood, which we discussed in the last chapter, and the **ideal worker norm**, the idea that an employee should commit their energies to their job without the distraction of family responsibilities.[151] Echoing the norm, one senior manager interviewed for a study about workplace culture explained:

> *The members of the Management Committee of this company aren't the smartest. . . . We're the hardest working. We work like dogs. We out-work the others. We out-practice them. We out-train them. . . . What counts is work and commitment. . . . I don't think we can get commitment with less than fifty or sixty hours a week. . . . To be competitive, that's what we need to do.*[152]

The ideal worker norm is especially strong in the United States.[153] It frames employees as less than ideal if they sometimes need time off to do family-related tasks (attend parent-teacher meetings, care for sick children or ailing parents, step in when daycare arrangements fall through) or can't always go above and beyond stated job responsibilities (work overtime and on weekends, on short notice, or relocate for the company). In Northern California's Silicon Valley, ideal workers are described as ones with "zero drag," meaning that absolutely nothing about their lives interferes with their ability to work. Po Bronson, a journalist who investigated this hypercompetitive workplace culture, wrote that

> *new applicants would jokingly be asked about their "drag coefficient." Since the job is a full hour's commute from San Francisco, an apartment in the city was a full unit of drag. A spouse? Drag coefficient of one. Kids? A half point per.*[154]

Employees who do "just" a good job are penalized; great workers go "above and beyond," creating a cycle in which workers have to outwork each other just to stay in the game.

The ideal worker norm assumes that workers have homemaker partners or paid help to take care of any family- or house-related demands. All individuals with family responsibilities (and many without) often find themselves straining to live up to this norm, but women with children bear the brunt.[155] Research finds that they often suffer a **motherhood penalty**, a loss in wages per hour on the job associated with becoming a mother. U.S. mothers experience, on average, a 7 percent decline in their wages for each child.[156] Women married to men, poor women, highly educated women, and white women face the largest penalties. Mothers married to women are an exception; they see their wages go up.[157]

Dads, for their part, receive a **fatherhood premium**, a wage increase that accrues to married men who become fathers.[158] Married fathers earn 4 to 7 percent *more* than married men without children. Stepfathers, fathers without custody of their kids, racial minorities, and less educated men see a smaller fatherhood premium or none at all. If we put the penalty and premium together, the numbers are stark: Among all full-time workers, women make 82 percent of what men do; but among parents working full time, women's relative earnings drop to 71 percent.[159]

The motherhood penalty and fatherhood premium are a result of both *actual* time and effort spent on work and, even more so, employers' *beliefs* about time and effort.

Working on the Mommy Track

More than nine times out of ten, if a parent takes time off work after a child is born, it's a woman.[160] If that woman has two children three years apart and takes a break from work that lasts until the second child enters preschool, she'll have been out of the workforce for seven years. Those are unpaid years, and when she returns to work, she'll have less work experience than a person who didn't take time off. Most women do not take this much time out of the workforce, but they are still substantially more likely than men to take at least some, and that time makes them less competitive at work.

When women do go back to work, what happens at home matters, too. Recall that married mothers and fathers have a tendency to specialize: men do about two-thirds of the paid work and women do about two-thirds of the housework and childcare.[161] Struggling with work-life balance, mothers may allow themselves to be put on a **mommy track**, a workplace euphemism that refers to expecting less intense commitment from mothers, with the understanding that they're sacrificing the right to expect equal pay, regular raises, or promotions.

The mommy track sends a message: we'll let you stay, but we don't think you're an ideal worker.

In contrast, fathers often increase their effort at work. This choice likely resonates with their employers' gender ideology. Employers sometimes accept that a woman needs to respond to her children's schedule and take care of emergencies, even if they begrudge them this flexibility. Those same employers often do not accept that men have to do the same. Since there is rarely a daddy track, new fathers likely face fewer options than new mothers: be an ideal worker or get fired.

Time out of the workforce to care for children and reduced overall work hours are plausible causes of mothers' economic disadvantage. But there are reasons to question whether it's the whole story. Studies actually find that many mothers *do* put in great amounts of effort at work; some evidence even suggests they're *more* productive than non-mothers.[162] This is consistent with the finding that the bigger contributor to the motherhood penalty and the fatherhood premium isn't how mothers and fathers actually perform at work, it's employers' and coworkers' *beliefs* about how they perform.[163]

Beliefs about Moms and Dads

Research shows that many employers see mothers as less-than-ideal employees and fathers as especially ideal ones regardless of how much talent and effort men and women display at work.[164] Mothers may find themselves put on the mommy track based purely on stereotypes: sent home when others are asked to stay late, excused from important work-related travel, kept off intensive projects that require long hours. In a striking example from one study, for instance, a new mom started getting sent home at 5:30 sharp while her husband, who worked for the same person, was given extra work designed to boost his career.[165]

As law professor Joan C. Williams describes it: "Managers and coworkers may mentally cloak pregnant women and new mothers in a haze of femininity, assuming they will be empathetic, emotional, gentle, nonaggressive—that is, not very good at business."[166] In fact, mothers' value at work is ranked as about equivalent to other stigmatized workers: elderly persons and people receiving welfare. Single mothers and black mothers are often judged even more harshly.[167] And the more motherly they are, the less we value them. One study, for instance, found that respondents judge breastfeeding mothers to be less competent workers than mothers who bottle-feed.[168]

But, Williams continues, "If these women shine through the haze and remain tough, cool, emphatic, and committed to their jobs, colleagues may indict them for being insufficiently maternal."[169] What would we think, after all, of a new mother who *didn't* want to go home early? Mothers face a double bind: Their supervisors and coworkers don't take them seriously as employees; if they

shine as employees, their coworkers might conclude that the mothers shouldn't be rewarded for what is perceived to be neglectful parenting.

The belief that mothers are bad workers sits alongside the belief that fathers are the best workers. Sociologist Shelley Correll and her colleagues studied whether individuals reviewing applications for a marketing job would evaluate female and male parents and non-parents differently.[170] They did. Mothers were considered to be the least hirable: Only 47 percent of the mothers were recommended for hire, compared to 84 percent of the non-mothers. And if hired, mothers were offered starting salaries that were $13,477 less per year than those of non-mothers. Mothers were rated as the least competent, committed, promotable, and suited for management training. In contrast, fathers were rated *more* favorably than non-fathers: 73 percent of fathers were recommended for hire, compared to 62 percent of non-fathers. Fathers were seen as more committed and more likely to be promoted. They were also considered to be worth $7,351 more a year than non-fathers and $15,927 more than mothers.

These findings hold up in the real world. Following up, Correll and her colleagues sent 1,276 fake résumés, carefully constructed to give hints as to parental status, to 638 actual employers. Mothers received fewer than half as many callbacks as non-mothers. Fathers were called back at a slightly higher rate than non-fathers. Non-mothers actually received the most callbacks. Employers generally seem to like hiring women, then, maybe even more than they like hiring men; they just don't like moms.

THE CHANGING
WORKPLACE, REVISITED

If being a flight attendant in 1945 was almost as glamorous as being a movie star, it certainly isn't anymore. Commercial air travel today is an unpleasant form of mass transportation: more like riding a city bus than being escorted through the sky by a white-jacketed steward.[171] While once airlines offered plenty of space, free full-course meals, and blankets and pillows, today they offer little more than the opportunity to get from one place to another safely, with a beverage and snack service sufficient to ensure that passengers literally don't pass out from thirst or hunger.

In the United States, this shift from elite to "economy class" was spurred by the federal government's decision to set fewer standards on air travel.[172] Deregulation, complete by 1985, left airlines to set their own fares and routes. Without a regulatory floor, capitalist competition sent airlines into a downward spiral as they slashed costs to try to offer the cheapest fares. It was a battle for survival and many airlines at the time went bankrupt, while others saw their debt soar.

The need to reduce cost is why most airlines today offer only the most basic of amenities for non–first class passengers; it's also meant squeezing as much work out of the fewest employees for as little pay and benefits as possible.[173] Flight attendants had a strong history of labor unionization and were organized to protect their rights and interests as coworkers, but legal and illegal efforts by airlines to "bust" unions hindered their ability to collectively bargain.

Consequently, the working conditions, security, and pay of flight attendants were devastated. Flight attendants suffered huge layoffs, heightened work demands, and more unpredictable and erratic schedules. In the 1980s, their income fell by a third.[174] In the meantime, passengers are now even more likely to be tired, frustrated, and uncomfortable, so flight attendants have to work harder than ever to soothe them.[175] "Ask any flight attendant," said a veteran stewardess in 2003, "when we all took this job, it was for the lifestyle, the freedom. But it's changed so much, with mergers and layoffs and concessions and service reductions and waiting for pay cuts. The thrill is gone."[176]

Indeed, the thrill is gone for many workers throughout the Western world, but especially in the United States.[177] Compared to the mid-twentieth century, most employees today work harder for less. As Figure 12.6 shows, starting in the early 1970s, employers stopped sharing profits with their employees, keeping more and more for themselves. Today's workers enjoy less pay, flexibility, and security, and fewer benefits, even as their productivity has risen.[178] As the gap between the rich and poor has widened, a middle-class lifestyle has become increasingly elusive. The top 1 percent of Americans now brings home 22 percent of all income and holds 39 percent of all wealth, more than all the income and wealth enjoyed by the bottom 90 percent combined.[179]

Like with the flight attendants, these outcomes are largely the result of a combination of governmental policies and workplace practices. Our economy is now characterized by a commitment to the "free market" at the expense of protecting workers, producing low regulation and suppression of union activity. Teachers' work conditions and pay have declined so markedly, for example, that many must take second jobs to make ends meet; companies like Uber are even actively recruiting them ("Teachers: Driving Our Future" was an actual tagline).[180] More than half of American workers today work "by the hour" and 6.4 million of them are working part time when they'd rather have a full-time job.[181] The service industry now generally prefers to hire workers part time to avoid having to offer employees benefits. Part-time workers can also be denied regular work hours; they're often given shifts that vary from week to week with little to no notice, so they can't count on a steady income, even a low one.

For many other kinds of workers, too, the absence of "good jobs" has pushed them into the "gig economy," a romanticized form of self-employment that, in practice, typically means patching together a variety of dead-end jobs like driving, delivering, and walking dogs.[182] But surviving on an assemblage of odd jobs

FIGURE 12.6 | THE GROWING GAP BETWEEN PRODUCTIVITY AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION
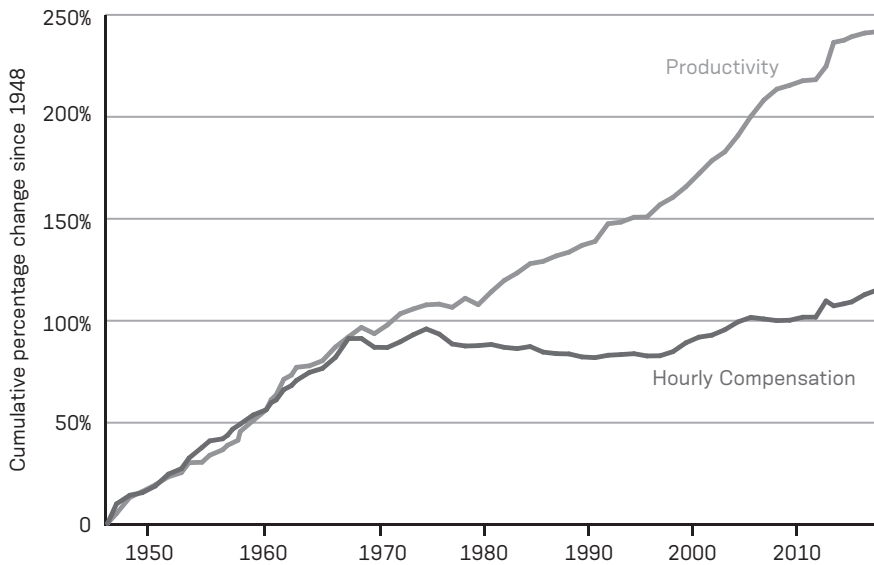
Note: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. "Net productivity" is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.
Source: Economic Policy Institute, "The Productivity-Pay Gap," October 2017, Retrieved https://www.epi.org/productivity-pay-gap/

brings no benefits and offers no security. This is not the kind of work that allows either women or men to support their families. Nevertheless, this is a new normal: since 2007, involuntary part-time work has increased five times faster than voluntary part-time work and eighteen times faster than all work.[183]

With the decline of labor unions, employers get to choose whether to be generous with pay and benefits. Some of the highest-paying occupations treat employees quite well—the corporate giants of the tech industry, for example, famously offer benefits like egg freezing to delay motherhood and free chef-prepared meals—but most jobs are not like this. Nearly half of U.S. workers make under $15 an hour.[184] Because women, especially women of color, are clustered in industries that pay at or near the minimum wage (or, in the case of tipped workers and home health aides, even less), their financial situation is especially precarious. Poverty and homelessness for families headed by women earners are rising, even as more families are depending on women's wages. Experts estimate that over a million children experience homelessness each year.[185]

Men, though, as well as women and children, have been harmed by growing inequality in the economy. We noted earlier, for example, that a quarter of the decline in the wage gap is due to men's declining wages. The absence of

a breadwinner wage—one that is sufficient to support a family—has contributed to demoralization and family fragility in African American communities for decades. Now that white men's jobs, families, and communities are being affected, it's becoming recognized as a serious flaw in how the economy is organized.[186]

As women of color have noted in the past, closing the gender pay gap will be a bittersweet victory if men's wages are depressed and few jobs offer secure work that pays the bills. Indeed, even if all forms of discrimination were eliminated tomorrow, life-threatening inequalities in income would persist. This is something that many Americans, including ones who identify as feminist, have been working on, and is part of the larger topic of political activism that we tackle next.

Revisiting the Question

Q+A   **If women now have equal rights in the workplace, why aren't they as successful as men at work?**

Women are less successful for a complex set of reasons: About 10 percent of the pay gap is explained by differences in job experience due to time spent in and out of the workforce, largely for the purposes of caregiving.[187] Almost half (49 percent) is explained by job segregation and the devaluation of women's work. The remaining 41 percent is likely due to discrimination against women and mothers.

Not all these factors are present to the same degree in every workplace. Discrimination against women is a larger factor in blue-collar occupations than discrimination against mothers, while the opposite appears to be true in white-collar workplaces.[188] Many supervisors, both male and female, go out of their way to ensure women can compete on equal footing with men. Many women are talented and dedicated enough to overcome at least some of the gendered disadvantages. Still, despite many individual and organizational examples to the contrary, women as a group still face barriers to success at work that men do not.

As a result, women who work full time earn $0.82 for every dollar earned by comparable men. For the typical woman working fifty weeks a year, that means earning $8,550 less each year.[189] This isn't just problematic *in principle*. For poor women and their families, economic disadvantage translates into *real* deprivation: an inability to pay rent, keep food on the table, or buy their children back-to-school clothes. For more financially secure women, it translates into fewer opportunities and pleasures. With an extra $8,550 a year, a woman could pay the majority of the tuition and fees at her local state college, get a massage every two and a half days for a year, or learn how to fly an airplane.[190] If she invested it, experts predict it'd be worth $46,405 twenty-five years later. If she saved for ten

years, $85,500 would be enough to start a business or put a hefty down payment on a house. Maybe she's not interested in buying a home and settling down. She could use that money to take an entire year off work, maybe three. It's easy to think about the wage gap in purely theoretical terms, but money buys everything but happiness. It matters.

Next . . .

The last few chapters have established that gender inequality is not just a theoretical exercise but a lived experience. Sexism, androcentrism, and subordination play a role in how we understand and express our sexualities, organize and experience our home lives, and earn a living and pursue our careers. Gendered ideas, interactions, and institutions structure our lives at every turn, creating both difference and inequality. Gender inequality is clearly not good for women, but it's not ideal for most men either. This is what motivates many people to get involved in changing or conserving the social constructions, interpersonal interactions, and institutions that organize our societies. In the next chapter, we'll ask:

How do we change societies?

This is politics.

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13

Politics

For most of modern history, governments did not allow women the right to vote. Nor did they grant women the other rights and responsibilities of citizenship: to serve on juries, give legal testimony, or hold public office. This meant that women had no formal right to choose who represented them to state and federal governments, weigh in on laws and policies, be elected to represent others, be judged by a jury of their peers, or testify at a trial, even in their own defense.

American women were no exception. So, in 1848, at the first-ever women's rights convention in the United States, a small group made the first recorded decision to change this. They resolved that women should act to "secure to themselves their sacred right to the elective franchise." And with that they began a movement for women's **suffrage**, the right to vote.

Opponents of women's suffrage began organizing in response. They thought the idea was dangerous. In their minds, women were wives and, if wives could vote, it would mean that their husbands weren't voting *for* them. Would husbands no longer be the representatives of the family? Clergymen worried aloud that husbands and wives would hold different political positions, threatening family unity with disagreements over the dinner table. It was much better, they surmised, if women didn't have political opinions at all.

This pro-suffrage cat from around 1908 may look cute, but don't be fooled—it was used to suggest that giving women the vote would be as absurd as extending the vote to felines.

They also thought it was laughable. Women belonged in the home, they argued, apart from public life. They compared wives to another domesticated animal: the housecat.[2] "I want my vote!" meowed a black and white kitten on an anti-suffrage poster. The message was clear: respecting women's capacity to make a reasoned decision was about as sensible as respecting the preferences of a pet.

Proponents of the female vote, called suffragists, fought back. In a time-honored tradition, they embraced the insult intended to mock them. A pro-suffrage Christmas card issued in 1908 featured a tabby standing on its hind legs holding a sign that read, "Votes for Women." The accompanying poem was a pledge:

> *I'm a catty suffragette.*
> *I scratch and fight the P'lice.*
> *So long as they withhold the vote*
> *my warfare will not cease.*[3]

It was a long war. Suffrage was not won quickly or easily, and many suffragists died of old age before they could see their efforts realized. In addition to criticism and ridicule, suffragists faced government repression and violence. Over 1,000 suffragists would be imprisoned in the United Kingdom and United States. There they endured brutal force-feeding after initiating hunger strikes.[4] Most suffragists were peaceful, but some weren't above aggression themselves. One group in the United Kingdom set buildings on fire and learned jujitsu to defend themselves from the police; they made that catty pledge a reality.[5]

The fight for suffrage involved both inspiring coalitions and ugly divides. Many suffragists were **abolitionists** first, activists in the fight against human slavery. White and black men and women worked side by side for this hard-won victory. After slavery was abolished in 1865 and black men were granted suffrage in 1869, black women continued to fight valiantly for their own vote. As the abolitionist Sojourner Truth observed: "If colored men get their rights, and colored women not theirs, the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before."[6]

White suffragists often disagreed as to whether their efforts should benefit all women or only white women.[7] Anti-suffrage activists tapped into widespread animosity toward black people, reminding a racist public that women's suffrage would not only put women into the voting booth, it would double the black vote. Some suffragist groups were themselves racist, excluding black women from their organizations, activities, or platforms. Consequently, some black women leaders like Ida B. Wells Barnett started suffrage organizations of their own.

Suffragists around the world started to work together in the 1880s and, by the early 1900s, this international women's organizing had begun to shift public opinion. New Zealand was the first to grant women the right to vote, in 1893. The U.S. federal government came around just about one hundred years ago, in 1920, giving suffrage to both black and white women together; Native American women and men would have to wait four more years.

By then the movement was rolling across the globe. In less than thirty years, women's suffrage became a global norm.[8] There were a few holdouts, but the last nation to allow women to vote, Saudi Arabia, did so in 2015.[9] Today **universal suffrage**, the right of all citizens to vote, is the very definition of democracy. In the 1800s, however, it was a wholly **radical claim**, or an idea that doesn't (yet) resonate with most members of a population.[10]

Ida B. Wells Barnett was a founder of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, created to address both black civil rights and women's suffrage. After a friend was lynched, she became a passionate crusader against white mob violence.

That universal suffrage is now almost universally supported is evidence that change—even radical change—is possible. In fact, as the timeline in Table 13.1 illustrates, feminists and other activists have turned plenty of radical ideas into the status quo. They continue to do so. Some of the most exciting feminist activism in world history may even be happening right now. We don't know what will come next. Many things that seem radical today may become part of the taken-for-granted way societies operate a hundred years from now.

Our final question, then, is:

Q+A   How do we change societies?

We change them with politics.

Politics is the word we use to describe the various activities involved in determining public policies, and electing people to guide this process. The word is often used derisively, like when politicians are described as corrupt or dishonest, but politicking isn't inherently this way. Instead, politics is how we make decisions. It isn't always pretty, and we don't always get along, but it's the only way we have to get together and figure out the best way to be a society.

This chapter is about the **politics of gender**: how people change and resist change to the gender order. **Feminist politics** are those involving efforts to make society's gender order less hierarchical and more supportive of the full development of human capacities for everyone. **Anti-feminist politics** is committed to the value of gender difference and hierarchy and aims to prevent feminist change. This isn't necessarily about going "back" to how things used to be; it could be an invention of a future kind of techno-patriarchal society. Patriarchy changed radically at least once, with industrialization, and it could be modified again as we move into a new, differently shaped future.

In doing this work, feminists don't just wrestle with often stubborn governments and dedicated anti-feminists, but with one another. They have always disagreed, and continue to do so, about what a **feminist utopia**—or a perfectly gender-egalitarian society—might look like. Because feminists come in all shapes and sizes, are differently positioned in society, and have different needs, feminist politics are necessarily and inevitably intersectional. This leads to sometimes tough negotiations, but it's undoubtedly strengthened feminism by making it more responsive to people of all genders and all intersectional identities.

Gaining rights has always been an incremental process reflecting the slow dismantling of many different social hierarchies. As the timeline in Table 13.1 shows, rights have often been granted unevenly by race, sexuality, family status, and more. Wealthy white women are usually the ones to break glass ceilings because they generally carry more privilege and have more opportunity than poor women, women of color, and women disadvantaged in other ways. The first woman to serve in Congress, for example, was Jeannette Rankin, a white woman from Montana. She was elected in 1916, before the federal government granted women the vote but after Montana had. It would be another eighty-three years before the first openly gay woman was elected. Likewise, in 1981 Sandra Day O'Connor, a white woman, became the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court. The first woman of color was appointed in 2009.

Nothing about politics is simple. It's a thorny, often heated enterprise with lots of moving parts. It can be both exciting and intimidating, as there are no predetermined endings or guarantees. What comes next is uncertain, but one thing is for sure: politics will be involved.

TABLE 13.1 | MOMENTS IN U.S. GENDER POLITICS SINCE SUFFRAGE

1920 Most American women win the right to vote.

1922 The Supreme Court decides that U.S. women who marry noncitizen men are able to retain their own citizenship.

1923 The Equal Rights Amendment is introduced into Congress.

1924 Native American men and women win suffrage.

1928 Puerto Rican women win suffrage.

1933 Frances Perkins becomes the first woman member of a presidential cabinet.

1963 The Equal Pay Act makes it illegal to pay men and women different wages for exactly the same job.

1964 The Civil Rights Act outlaws discrimination on the basis of racial, ethnic, or national origin, religion, and sex.

1965 The Supreme Court decriminalizes the use of birth control by married people.

1968 The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rules that gender segregation of "Help Wanted" ads is illegal.

1970 The last "marriage ban" barring women from paid employment is struck down.

1972 The Supreme Court extends to single people the right to use contraceptives.

Title IX bans sex discrimination in schools receiving federal funding.

The Equal Rights Amendment is passed by Congress. Thirty-five states would ratify the amendment, falling short of the thirty-eight needed.

1973 The Supreme Court grants women the right to abortion in the first and second trimesters.

1974 The Equal Credit Opportunity Act establishes married women's right to have a credit card in their own name and, thus, have a credit history and score.

The Supreme Court rules that mandatory dismissals of public school teachers who become pregnant are unconstitutional.

1975 The Supreme Court grants women equal rights and responsibilities for jury duty.

1976 Military academies are ordered to admit women.

Nebraska becomes the first state to make marital rape illegal.

1978 The Pregnancy Discrimination Act requires employers treat pregnancy like any other temporary disability.

1981 Women are allowed to enlist in all military branches.

1992 The "Year of the Woman" sees an unprecedented number of women elected to Congress.

1993 Don't Ask, Don't Tell is introduced, requiring sexual minorities to remain closeted if they want to serve in the military, but protecting them if they do.

1996 President Bill Clinton signs the Defense of Marriage Act, defining marriage as only between a man and a woman.

The Supreme Court declares that states cannot deny gays and lesbians protection from discrimination.

TABLE 13.1 | *continued*

1999	Tammy Baldwin becomes the first openly gay person to serve in Congress.
2004	Massachusetts becomes the first state to legalize same-sex marriage.
2009	The Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act overturns a Supreme Court decision that prevented women from challenging past pay discrimination.
	Sonia Sotomayor becomes the first woman of color confirmed to the Supreme Court.
2010	The Navy ban on women serving on submarines is overturned.
	Don't Ask, Don't Tell is repealed.
2012	The Affordable Care Act requires health insurance to cover contraception.
2015	The Supreme Court declares same-sex marriage a legal right in all fifty states.
	The military begins allowing women to serve in front-line combat roles and lifts the ban on military service by trans people.
2016	Hillary Rodham Clinton becomes the first woman nominated by a major political party for president of the United States.
2017	Americans march for women's rights in the largest protest in U.S. history.
	Danica Roem becomes the first openly trans state legislator (Virginia).
2018	Tammy Duckworth becomes the first senator to give birth while in office.

To begin, let's go over some basics: what is "the state" and why should we care?

THE STATE

States are institutions entrusted with the power to regulate everyday life on behalf of the group. They are what we, in more ordinary language, refer to as countries or nations. States are important because they wield a greater power than almost any other social entity on earth, second only, perhaps, to global alliances like the United Nations and transnational corporations like Google. States have vast resources and the exclusive right to pass laws, collect taxes, and detain and imprison citizens. States can even legally wage war according to a set of international rules.

Today, states are the dominant way of promoting group welfare. This is called **governance**: the process of making decisions for the nation, enforcing the laws of the land, and—if the state is a democracy—ensuring the state's accountability to its citizens. There are two ways to think about gender and governance.[11] The first involves the **governance of gender**: how the gender of residents shapes the way they are regulated. The second is the **gender of governance**: who holds

political office and whether it matters. In this section, we talk about both as well as consider what feminists think the governance of gender should look like.

The Governance of Gender

Though the state can seem abstract and distant, its policies affect all aspects of our daily lives, from what we're paid for our work, to the health of our environments, to the content of our education, and more. State policies are also gendered, sometimes explicitly and intentionally and sometimes in their unintended consequences.

GENDER AND POLICY At the most basic level, states enforce gender ideologies in deciding how many and which gender categories to recognize. In the United States, birth certificates, drivers' licenses, and passports reflect the gender binary, requiring that everyone identify as male or female, not neither, both, or other. This is required by the federal government and nearly all states, with the notable exceptions of California, Oregon, and Washington.[12]

Other states formalize different gender categories. In some cases, these categories are specific: in India and Bangladesh, a person can formally identify as hijra. In other states, third gender categories are broadly defined to capture individuals who don't identify with the binary for any reason, as in Australia, Canada, and Germany. Whether this is allowed for adults, children, or both, and what documents it applies to, varies by country.

States also decide whether to require gender binary spaces (like public restrooms, prisons, and military barracks); enforce gendered roles in marriage; and allow trans men and women to modify their names, bodies, or documents. If German parents do identify a sex for their babies, for instance, the law requires that the child be given a clearly masculine or feminine name.[13] In the United States, if the Transportation Security Administration decides to pat down a passenger being screened at the airport, they must use a same-sex attendant. In large and small ways, states send messages and enforce rules that both challenge and affirm gender ideologies.

Policies do more than just shape our identities, though; they also shape our lives. Gender is governed with policies influencing how we work and whether we marry and have children. Since the number of births and participation in the workforce influence whether a country can feed and educate its citizens, fill its jobs, support its elderly, or fight a war, this is very serious business for states. In Japan, for example, the fertility rate has fallen to 1.4 children per woman, far below the number required to maintain the population. Scholars point to a failure to protect working mothers (70 percent of women quit their job when they

become pregnant) and the prohibitive cost of childrearing (2.5 times more expensive than in the United States).[14] There are so few babies that, as one commentator put it, "Sales of adult diapers will soon surpass those of baby diapers."[15]

In response, Japan, like the United States, has begun offering tax credits for every child in the household. This is a **pro-natal policy**, one that encourages childbearing, whether intentionally or not. Japan might also consider giving new mothers a "baby box," like they do in Finland, filled with diapers, baby clothes, crib sheets, and other goods worth several hundred dollars. Or providing day care at virtually no cost, like they do in France. Each of these policies encourages childbearing by making it a little more affordable and convenient.

States also make **anti-natal policy** discouraging childbearing. Worried about overpopulation, China, for instance, imposed a "one-child policy" in 1979, revising it to a "two-child policy" in 2015. India distributes educational material encouraging couples to have just one child and offers money in return for undergoing sterilization. Both pro- and anti-natal policies can have unintended consequences that states have to address in turn. Because of preferences for boys over girls, and illegal but widely employed sex-selective abortion, China and India now have a different problem: 107 million more men than women and a marriage crisis.[16]

Work-related policies can also be pro- and anti-natal. More support for balancing work and family encourages childbearing, while less support discourages it. Parental leave policies are an example. In most states featured in Figure 13.1, either the employer or government subsidizes new parents' wages so that they lose little or no income (though not all states extend these benefits to all parents). The United States offers no paid leave at all. It guarantees only twelve weeks of unpaid leave, and only if parents can afford to take them without pay, and only to the third of Americans who work a minimum number of hours at the right kind of company. Other countries, including most in Europe, offer months or even a full year of paid leave. Some of these even set aside some time specifically for the father, ensuring that men get used to being active participants in childrearing early.

Some U.S. states have "family caps" on their support for poor parents, hoping to discourage them from having more babies, revealing that family and work policy is not only gendered, but intersectionally so.[17] In contrast to the tax policies that encourage high income earners to specialize and leave one spouse at home, policy aimed toward poor women pushes them into the workforce by requiring mothers to hold a job to remain eligible for benefits like low-income housing, childcare waivers, and "food stamps." Regardless of whether we think mothers of young kids should hold paid jobs, it might be surprising that state policy encourages one kind of mothering for poor kids and another for wealthier ones.

States govern, then, in gendered ways. Today they typically do so with a balance of incentives and disincentives that don't specifically apply to men and

FIGURE 13.1 | STATE VARIATION IN PAID MATERNITY LEAVE

Weeks of paid maternity leave

Average payment rate (% of salary)
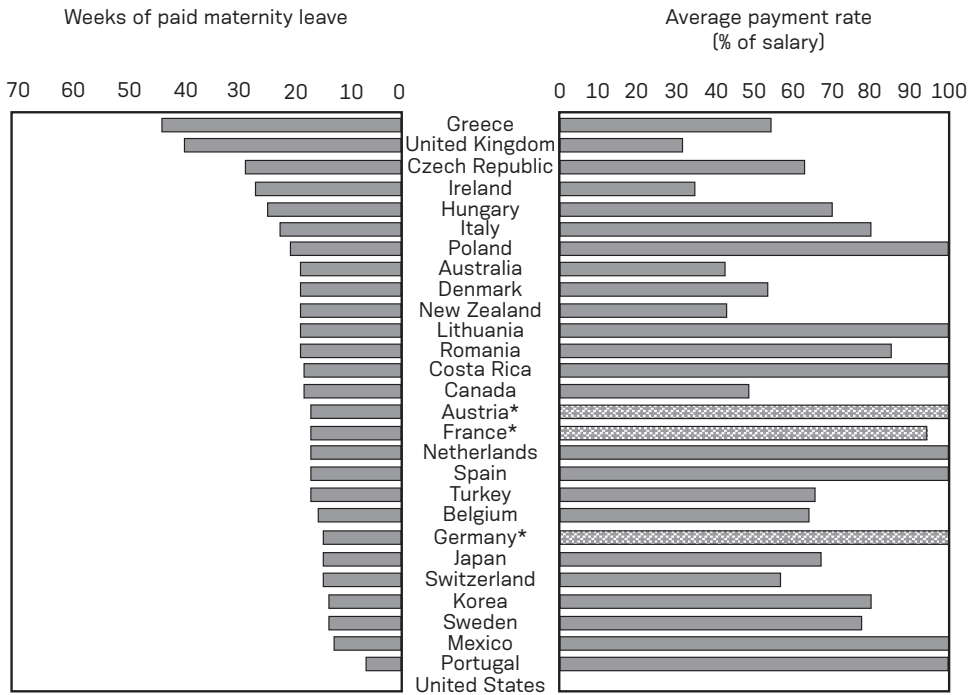
Cross-hatching indicates payment rates based on net earnings.

Source: OECD Family Database, "PF2.1 Key Characteristics of Parental Leave Systems," Oct. 26, 2017, Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

women differently, but have gendered effects because we live in a gendered society. Moreover, these policies support some visions of the gender order but not others, and they often do so in intersectional ways. Because gendered policy effects are often unintended, thinking about gender when making policy is important.

Accordingly, some feminists want politicians to commit to **gender-aware policymaking**, a practice of carefully considering the likely effects of a policy on both men and women, as well as different kinds of men and women. The European Union instituted gender-aware policymaking almost twenty-five years ago and the programs of the United Nations—from peacekeeping operations to refugee support—now give attention to gender as a matter of official policy.[18]

Consider the buses, trams, trains, and subways of Vienna, Austria. During a recent reorganization of their public transit system, city planners discovered

that it was designed around the needs of men commuting to work.[19] The typical woman had more diverse transit needs that included shopping, taking children to school and doctor appointments, and getting to work and back again at more irregular times. To make the transit system friendlier to the typical woman, the city instituted zoning rules to minimize distances among housing, stores, and medical clinics, and scheduled more trains and busses during the day.

Changes like these reduce the isolation and stress of mothers, but also address the needs of "atypical" men: single, stay-at-home, or primary-caretaker dads, or men who are retired, disabled, or unemployed. They help men because systems are rarely organized around men to begin with; they're organized around the *stereotype* of a man. In fact, decisions made to help women often also make life a little easier for all people who don't meet hegemonic expectations.

THEORIZING GENDER EQUALITY Even gender-aware policymaking, though, doesn't necessarily help us know what to do. Feminists themselves disagree as to what exactly a feminist utopia might look like. There are roughly three approaches that correspond to the three types of inequality: sexism, androcentrism, and subordination. Most countries incorporate at least some policies that reflect each.

The United States is a good example of a society that emphasizes **equal access**, an approach to ending sexism focused on dismantling legal barriers and reducing sex discrimination. Examples of this include laws that make it illegal to discriminate in the workplace, guarantee equal access to education, and allow women to enlist in the military.

Such policies significantly reduce sexism but can exist quite comfortably alongside androcentrism and subordination. They don't do anything to encourage people to value femininity, nor do they ensure that women will be able, in practice, to enter the masculine arenas to which these policies promise access. Equal access works well, then, for women who aim to be in the same places that men already are, whether in a coal mine or a boardroom, but it doesn't do anything to widen men's opportunities and may not appeal to women who prefer the feminized spheres of life.

An **equal value** model is designed to tackle the problem of androcentrism by raising the value of the feminine to match the value of the masculine. This strategy is compatible with gendered divisions of labor but resists the idea that different is unequal. A society characterized by equal value, for example, would reward reproductive labor (pregnancy, breastfeeding, and childcare responsibilities) so that this didn't result in economic insecurity for women, as many states in Figure 13.1 do.

For women and men who embrace femininity, equal value is a more promising model than equal access. It would destigmatize the feminine side of the binary,

giving men the opportunity to balance femininity and masculinity, much as women already do. It would also raise the prestige and pay of both women and men who work in feminized jobs or specialize in the domestic sphere.

Some countries put more emphasis on equal value than equal access. Compared to the United States, for instance, Germany has weak gender discrimination laws but generous social services for parents. If a new mother takes all of her federally guaranteed maternity leave, she can stay home with her child for thirteen and a half months and be paid 73 percent of her salary.[20] As a result, German mothers often work quite a bit less than American mothers, but they enjoy greater emotional and financial well-being.[21] American women have more opportunities to compete in the workplace, but the state support available to them if they become mothers is relatively meager.

Some feminists are enthusiastic about the potential of the equal value model. In their view, gender difference is a significant source of pleasure, and could be even more so.[22] If gender was no longer a metaphor for power, men wouldn't feel the need to be masculine to feel powerful, and neither would women. New femininities and masculinities might emerge. Meanwhile, if the binary was no longer an ideological infrastructure for inequality, its importance might fade, making more room for people who don't identify as male or female.

Many feminists, however, are concerned that equal value strategies will lead to coercive enforcement of gendered roles. Both the Vatican and the Arab states of the Middle East use the idea of equal value to resist equal access. They believe that the gender binary is God-given and challenges by women, sexual minorities, trans, and nonbinary folks are inherently wrong. In this scenario, women and men would enjoy status contingent on their conformity to their expected social roles, and women's positions would remain subordinate to male authority. So challenging the devaluation of androcentrism without also tackling sexism and subordination is a risky strategy.

If equal access tackles sexism and equal value speaks to androcentrism, then the **equal sharing** approach targets subordination by attempting to ensure that men and women participate equally in positions conventionally understood as masculine and feminine. Unlike the equal access approach, this model presses for dramatic shifts in how men spend their time. It does so by providing incentives for men and women to take more proportionate responsibility for the less valued parts of life.[23] In Iceland, for instance, parents get nine months of paid leave but, for couples in other-sex marriages, three months of these can only be used by the father. If he doesn't take them, the family forfeits the paid time off.

The sharing approach appeals greatly to those who believe that we should be working to establish societies in which gender all but disappears as a meaningful category.[24] If everyone is doing the same work, it may no longer matter who is who at all. In this model, one's genitals would be about as significant as

whether one is right- or left-handed, making the gender binary, heteronormativity, and the concept of a fixed sexual orientation a thing of the past.

Those of us who are strongly invested in our gender identities—including some trans men and women, many of whom have had to fight hard personal, interpersonal, and political battles for recognition—may not be pleased to see something important to them disappear. Others argue that the trans experience would be substantially less stressful in a society without a gender binary to begin with. Like so many of the issues feminists wrestle with, there is rarely an easy answer that satisfies everyone and has no undesirable consequences.

Even beyond the ideas of equal access, value, and sharing, there are different ways of thinking about what a feminist utopia looks like.[25] There are socialist feminists who worry most about the intersection of gender with class; libertarian and anarchist feminists who focus on freeing women and men from state control; ecofeminists who draw connections between men's treatment of women and their treatment of nature; postcolonial feminists who oppose the imposition of Western feminisms around the world; and black, Chicana, indigenous, Muslim feminisms, and more. There are feminists who think that women and men are essentially the same and ones who think we are inherently different. There are separatist feminists who want nothing to do with men, feminists who are men, and feminists who make understanding masculinity their primary concern. There are also feminist reformers who try to achieve incremental gains and radical feminists who specialize in asking societies for things that seem impossible.

As this list suggests, people who call themselves "feminist" often have very different ideas about how to solve the problem of gender inequality. This can cause disagreement, but it can also spark productive conversations about what feminist activism should look like. This is part of why it's helpful to think of feminism as a *conversation* instead of a set of *positions*.

This conversation, alongside the work of imagining and implementing policies that govern gender, is why early American women wanted the right to vote, and it continues to motivate people of all genders to get involved in politics.

The Gender of Governance

In modern history, it is overwhelmingly men who have been granted the power to govern nations: to theorize our political systems, write our national constitutions, develop and vote on our laws, guide our economies, and determine our foreign affairs. This was true in societies that operated as classic patriarchies, in which men were lawfully in charge, but it's also the case in the types of modified patriarchies we live in now. To give American women the right to vote and run for political office was to give women **standing** alongside men: the right to represent herself and others in decisions being made.

By changing who had standing in American politics, universal suffrage was a massively important step toward dismantling political systems that recognized some people as full citizens but not others. Though its effects were slow and cumulative, and have not been fully realized, giving women standing disrupted all three types of inequality: the classic patriarchal rule that women cannot hold power (sexism), the modified patriarchal belief that power is inherently masculine (androcentrism), and men's prerogative to make decisions on behalf of women (subordination).

GENDER IN THE LEGISLATURE   Table 13.2 shows the global rise in the number of female politicians over time. Across the world, the percentage of women in **legislatures**—groups of individuals elected to represent their constituents in regulating the affairs of the country—ranges from 0 to 56 percent. The countries most inclusive of women are those with highly egalitarian approaches to gender (such as in Scandinavia) and states where wars have discredited men's leadership while giving women peace activists special standing (as in Rwanda and Sierra Leone). In these types of countries, women represent 40 percent or more of members of legislatures.[26]

The United States has not been a leader in this regard.[27] As of 2018, U.S. women hold 22 percent of states' elective executive offices, 25 percent of seats in state legislatures, and 20 percent of seats in Congress.[28] Internationally, this level of representation is the middle of the pack.[29] Still, the rapid rise of women in American politics is remarkable; of all the women who have *ever* been elected to Congress in its more than 225-year history, about a third (107 of 322) are holding seats at

TABLE 13.2 | HISTORICAL COMPARISON OF THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS ACROSS REGIONS

Region	Percent of Women in Legislatures						
	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005	2018
United States	3%	2%	4%	5%	11%	15%	20%
Scandinavia	10%	9%	16%	28%	34%	38%	41%
Western Industrial*	4%	4%	6%	9%	13%	23%	29%
Latin America	3%	3%	5%	8%	10%	17%	26%
Africa	1%	3%	5%	8%	10%	16%	22%
Eastern Europe	17%	18%	25%	27%	8%	16%	22%
Asia	5%	5%	3%	6%	9%	15%	17%
Middle East	1%	1%	3%	4%	4%	8%	15%

Includes the United States.

Source: Table adapted from Pamela Paxton, Sheri Kunovich, and Melanie M. Hughes, "Gender in Politics," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007): 263–284. Additional calculations by the authors with data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union, "Women in National Parliaments," May 1, 2018, Retrieved from http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.

the time we are writing this book.[30] Thirty-eight of these, or 7 percent of all seats in Congress, are held by women of color.

Feminists might support shared governance in principle, but does it matter in practice? Does **symbolic representation**—women's presence in government—translate into **substantive representation**—policies important and helpful to women? Yes and no.

On many issues—such as the economy, religion, and the highly partisan issue of abortion—gender has made little difference.[31] Male and female politicians in the same party tend to vote largely similarly. Meanwhile, diversity among women means that any individual woman may have something in common with other women, but other, sometimes more important things, in common with their fellow male legislators. So, women don't often vote as a bloc.

On other issues, though, such as support for peace and environmental causes, women's opinions have long differed on average from men's.[32] Women legislators in the United States are more supportive of measures to reduce climate change, for example, even after controlling for partisanship.[33] In countries with more elected women making decisions, levels of greenhouse gases are lower.[34] Female politicians also tend to vote differently than men on issues that obviously affect female constituents.[35] They show strong support for social welfare, women's health, and family-friendly workplaces, and for reducing inequality of all kinds.[36] Some of this difference has to do with shifts in what male politicians support, not long-standing differences between men and women. Health, welfare, and environmental issues used to have widespread bipartisan support from both sexes, but male politicians have shifted away from supporting these issues, especially since the 1990s.[37]

Female politicians are also more likely than male ones to introduce bills that address women's needs.[38] So, the presence of female politicians changes what legislators of both sexes are voting *on*. Many male politicians support these initiatives, reminding us that it's not just that women vote "like men." Men also vote "like women" when they have the opportunity to do so.

There may be something to the principle of it, too. Getting women elected is one step toward ensuring that politicians remember that women are part of the population they are governing. When they are there, it's harder for the men who've historically had power to ignore issues that impact women's lives. In other words, just having women in office may make policymakers more gender-aware, and having more kinds of women in office can make them even more so.

This is why what Tammy Duckworth did in 2018 was so remarkable. Injured while serving in the Army, in 2017 she became the first disabled woman elected to Congress. She is also the first member of Congress born in Thailand. And, in 2018, she became the first sitting senator to give birth. Ten days later, Duckworth rolled into the Senate chamber to take a vote with her baby in her lap.

There had been weeks of debate in Congress.[39] Senator Orrin Hatch worried about inviting a baby boom: "But what if there are ten babies on the floor of the Senate?" Eventually the senators voted unanimously to allow Duckworth to bring the baby, though some were reluctant. Responding to their concerns, she promised no diaper changes or breastfeeding. And they made exceptions to the dress code. "The baby will not be required to wear pants or a skirt or a tie," reported one of the senators. The baby was also not required to abide by the rules for hat wearing and proper footwear. It could even go barefoot. Would the baby be required to wear the Senate pin? No.

Of course, Duckworth isn't the first parent of an infant to serve in the Senate. She is just the first *woman* to do so. The fact that no baby had ever before been brought to the Senate floor reveals that both parenting and working remain strongly gendered. So, when she came to work that day with baby in tow, she served as a real reminder not just that women exist, but that mothers exist—*working* mothers even—and that makes the struggles faced by working parents of all genders just a little harder for all those men to ignore.

Senator Tammy Duckworth beams as she arrives at the U.S. Capitol Building with her ten-day-old child. "It feels great," she told reporters. "It is about time, huh?"

In the aftermath of the Trump election, Emily's List, an organization aimed at supporting Democratic women's aspirations for political office, saw a tremendous twelve-fold increase in potential candidates.[40] Record numbers of women have filed as candidates for the House of Representatives, the Senate, and governor's races.[41] This group is also more diverse than any previous group of aspiring female politicians: there are more women of color and immigrants, many are young and single, and two candidates have run campaign ads in which they discuss their political positions while breastfeeding their babies.

This is significant because when women run for political office, they raise just as much money as men, get as many votes, and are equally likely to win.[42] The average man in the United States seems rather indifferent toward a candidate's sex, whereas the average woman tends to prefer female candidates.[43] Things can change, radically, and fast.

But as the Trump election demonstrated to all, the "highest hardest glass ceiling" in the United States remains intact. What did we learn about gender and the American presidency in 2016?

GENDER AND THE AMERICAN PRESIDENCY The United States still has yet to elect a woman president. Many other countries have. In 1960, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka became the first women elected to lead a modern country. Since then, more than fifty women have served as head of state. Female leaders have been found disproportionately in Europe, but every region on earth has seen at least one.

Who has the standing to lead the United States? If our nation is "the homeland," and our internal politics are "domestic," then the president is the metaphorical "head of the household": a leader taking care of a national family, setting the house rules, disciplining the disobedient and, above all, protecting its members from the outside world.[44] Family is the dominant metaphor for the state, and it's a gendered one. As presidential historian Forrest McDonald put it: "Whether as a warrior-leader, father of his people, or protector, the president is during his tenure the living embodiment of the nation."[45]

Scholars argue, in fact, that the U.S. presidency is possibly the most masculine job in the nation.[46] This has long made candidates' masculinity a central feature of political campaigns. Throughout the twentieth century, manliness explicitly came into political debates about wars (from the Spanish-American to Iraq), and many presidential candidates tried to show they had masculine hobbies (like brush-clearing, ranching, or football), used masculinized talk (seeming brash, risk-embracing, and adventurous), and discussed policy in terms of power (by being "tough on crime" and "strong on national security").

In this way, the battle for the Republican presidential nomination in 2016 was relatively routine: It was a battle among men over manliness. Rick Perry challenged Donald Trump to a pull-up contest. Trump and Ted Cruz competed over the attractiveness of their respective wives. The Cruz campaign made fun of Marco Rubio's fashionable boots, calling them "high-heeled booties." Trump attempted to emasculate his rivals, calling Ben Carson "super low energy," Jeb Bush "really weak," and Rubio a "frightened little puppy." Rubio responded by suggesting that Trump had a small penis. Trump retorted: "I guarantee you there is no problem."

Trump in particular performed an "unapologetic masculinity," one that, at its core, was about dominating others: "winning" in business, with women, in politics, and over other men.[47] He had a signature violent handshake, promised to "bomb the shit" out of enemies, claimed immigrants were rapists, and boasted of kissing and grabbing women without their permission. When these revelations threatened his campaign, he invoked exculpatory chauvinism—that idea that men are naturally "bad boys" and that being bad is part of what makes them great—calling it "locker room talk." *I'm a bad boy*, Trump seemed to say unapologetically, *but a bad boy is exactly what America needs right now*. All of this, including the dozen alleged sexual assaults, likely both helped and hurt his election chances.

After the primaries, during the face-off between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, both used coded language invoking masculinity.[48] Trump repeatedly questioned Clinton's strength, stating at one rally: "Hillary's not strong. Hillary's weak, frankly. She's got no stamina." In a campaign ad for Trump, the voiceover said: "Hillary Clinton doesn't have the fortitude, strength, or stamina to lead in our world." He also claimed that Clinton didn't have a "presidential look" and suggested that she was unattractive.

In response, Clinton questioned what *kind* of man Trump was. "A man you can bait with a tweet," she warned, "is not a man we can trust with nuclear weapons." In her convention speech, she followed that statement by quoting former First Lady Jackie Kennedy, who once said that wars were started not by "big men with self-control and restraint, but by little men—the ones moved by fear and pride." In her own way, Clinton was asserting that Trump was not man enough to be president. Whether the candidate was male or female, Republican or Democrat, then, the masculinity of all these presidential candidates was on trial.

Ultimately, Trump did become president. We know that gender was a part of the campaign rhetoric, but did it also factor into the decisions of voters? And did it change how men and women orient themselves toward politics? We know a few things already.

First, while Americans have become increasingly approving of female politicians, there are some holdouts and some exceptions, increasingly structured on partisan lines.[49] While most report that they would be "comfortable" with a female president, only 28 percent of Americans are enthusiastic about one, and 26 percent of American voters are hostile to the idea.[50] Half of Americans say women's family responsibilities don't leave them enough time for politics and a quarter believe they aren't "tough enough."[51] Two studies have found that Americans are more comfortable with women in lower-level political offices than in higher-level ones.[52]

In practice, the average American also appears to be more comfortable with women *in* office than with women *running for* office. For decades, Clinton's popularity among Americans was tied to whether she was in office (during which time between 20 and 40 percent saw her unfavorably) or running for office (during which her unfavorability scores would rise to 45 to 55 percent).[53] In her final week as secretary of state in 2013, for instance, her favorability rating was at an all-time high of 67 percent, but during her runs for Senate and the 2008 and 2016 presidential nomination, that number was below 50.

Gendered messaging was pervasive during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Second, sexism, hostile sexism, and precarious masculinity were all at work in the 2016 presidential election. Compared to people who didn't vote for Trump, Trump voters scored higher on measures of hostile sexism and were more likely to report dislike and distrust of working women.[54] Stoking anger—something Trump did expertly on the campaign trail—intersected with sexism among men, increasing support for the Republican candidate.[55] In one study, men who were exposed to a threat to their masculinity changed their voting preferences; like the men who chose boxing over a puzzle after being asked to braid hair, men who were primed to think about how women now outearn their husbands in a grow-ing number of households were less likely to support Clinton over Trump.[56]

Among women, internalized sexism predicted support for Trump, too.[57] Some are attracted to a breadwinner/homemaker model and are eager to see men's economic strength enhanced, even relative to women's.[58] For women whose own economic options are quite limited, a patriarchal bargain that gives men more ability to support them makes good sense; meanwhile, they don't see the more feminist-inclined Democratic Party as doing much for women like them, and they may not be wrong. Other women may be pro-life or anti-"big" government and put those concerns before any they had about Trump. And, of course, some women, like some men, were motivated by racist, anti-immigrant, or Islamo-phobic sentiment. Sexism was predictive of voting decisions in 2016, but racism was even more so.[59]

Third, this election was striking in how starkly it separated the sexes. Women voted for Clinton over Trump by about 12 percentage points, and men voted for Trump over Clinton by about the same margin. This in itself is not surprising—as gendered issues like climate change and concern about inequality have become more partisan, women have leaned Democratic and men more Republican (Fig-ure 13.2)—but the gender difference in the 2016 election was bigger than any seen in the last twelve presidential elections.[60]

The numbers are even more striking when we consider them intersection-ally.[61] Young voters—ages eighteen to twenty-nine—were least likely to vote for Trump, but gender still mattered: Sixty-three percent of young women voted for Clinton compared to 47 percent of men. Seventy percent of young Latinas and 64 percent of Latinos voted for Clinton, alongside a whopping 94 percent of black women and 75 percent of black men, compared to 50 percent of white women and 35 percent of white men. All told, no demographic intersection under thirty voted for Trump in the majority except white men (at 52 percent). This group, further, was especially motivated to get out and vote: about a mil-lion more young white men came out to vote in 2016 than is typical.[62]

Finally, Hillary Clinton wasn't just *any* woman; she had endured sexist por-trayals in the media for decades. In 1978, when her husband was first elected governor of Arkansas, the *New York Times* referred to her as an "ardent feminist"

FIGURE 13.2 | GENDER GAP IN PRESIDENTIAL VOTING
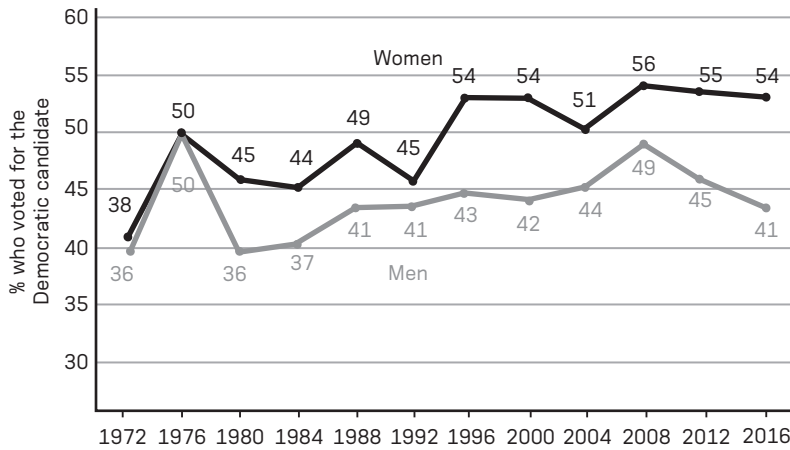
Source: Richa Chaturvedi, "A closer look at the gender gap in presidential voting," *Pew Research Center*, July 28, 2016, Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/28/a-closer-look-at-the-gender-gap-in-presidential -voting/; Alec Tyson and Shiva Maniam, "Behind Trump's victory: Divisions by race, gender, education," *Pew Research Center,* Nov. 9, 2016, Retrieved from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions -by-race-gender-education/.

because she had chosen to keep her own last name: Rodham. This launched four decades of jokes about her being a dumb blonde, a bitch, and a witch.[63] In 1992, when her husband was running for president, twelve years after she'd caved and changed her name to his, she finally replied to relentless questions from the media about whether she would quit her job: "I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was to fulfill my profession." That year she got more attention than Madonna.[64] By 2016, when she ran against Trump, it was easy to cast her as a pariah.

There is no doubt that 2016 was a gendered election. A man and a woman faced off for the presidency for the first time in American history, gendered messaging was pervasive, and men and women voted differently, even more differently than in previous elections. Men and women also responded differently to Trump's victory. After the election, women's confidence in the future of the United States dropped: 43 percent of women said they had "quite a lot" of confidence in the future of the country before the election, compared to 29 percent after.[65] In contrast, men's confidence rose, from 47 percent to 53 percent. Among people born in the 1980s and after, 44 percent of men, but only 32 percent of women, agreed with the statement "Trump is my president."[66] Nine months into Trump's term, men were substantially more likely to approve of his job as president (44 percent

of men compared to 31 percent of women).[67] Gender differences are not new to American politics, but the Trump-Clinton race, the Trump victory, and the ensuing Trump presidency have exacerbated gender difference, pushing men and women further apart politically.

Hillary Clinton did not become the first female president in 2016, and her loss was a window into the persistence of sexism in America, but there are silver linings. She was the first woman in this country's 239-year history to be nominated for president by one of its two major parties, and she won the popular vote (48 percent of voters cast their ballot for Clinton, compared to 46 percent for Trump). These are meaningful "firsts" that reflect a hundred years of increasing female representation in our legislatures. Women have fought to be recognized and most men have changed how they think about women.[68] Undoubtedly, women will keep fighting and the face of politics will continue to change. In the meantime, many of those battles—just like ones first fought by suffragists—won't happen on the inside of politics; they'll happen on the outside.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton understood that the vote was the first step toward women's full emancipation. "The grant of this right," she declared, "will secure all the others." In fact, founding documents of many countries around the world were amended in the latter half of the 1900s to grant equal political rights to women, but the U.S. Constitution was not one of them. Instead, the Supreme Court first held that women were a "new class of citizens" who could vote but did not automatically have other rights.

To change the U.S. Constitution to ensure women's rights, American feminists have introduced an Equal Rights Amendment every year since 1923. If adopted, the Constitution would include the statement, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." Feminists are still waiting to see it passed and ratified.

Congress *can* pass gender-equality laws, then, but it doesn't have to, nor does it have to renew the ones now on the books. Women's right to credit cards, jury duty, and equal education—*all* women's rights—are contingent on the whims of legislators and the will of their constituents. It might sound impossible that such rights could disappear, but there's no rule that radical changes can't involve a return to somewhere we've already been, or a place we think is even worse.

In the meantime, feminists have had to fight for each right individually. They have done this like through "regular" politics like voting, supporting legislation, and lobbying, and also "irregular" politics like protest campaigns, public

marches, and demonstrations. This latter type of politics is part of what we call **social movements**: collective, nongovernmental efforts to change societies. The remainder of this chapter is about how women and their allies have used social movement tactics to secure rights for women, and continue to do so.

Feminist Politics across the Generations

The visibility and viability of feminist politics have waxed and waned over the decades, leading observers to make references to feminist "waves." The metaphor is a little too neat: It suggests clear beginnings and ends and oversimplifies what feminists wanted at any given time.[69] But it does capture the ebb and flow of feminist politics in American history.

As we noted earlier, the first feminist campaigns began in the mid-1800s. This first wave won many women suffrage, family rights, and the right to higher education. First wave feminists also campaigned against drunkenness (which often led to domestic violence and poverty for women) and for maternal and child welfare, public education, and world peace. They also drafted the Equal Rights Amendment and began to challenge Congress to pass it.

Many women-led organizations were born in this first wave, including parent-teacher organizations, the League of Women Voters, the National Association of Colored Women, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.[70] Because they did not have the vote in most states until the 1920s, these women also organized to pressure male legislators, arguably becoming the first political lobbyists in the United States.[71] They campaigned on many political issues in which they believed women had special interests but followed a policy of being absolutely nonpartisan.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the second wave of feminism aimed to end gender segregation in higher education, challenge job and wage discrimination, make marriage and family law gender neutral, and give women control over their own bodies in sex and reproduction (by organizing around sexual assault and harassment, access to contraception, coerced sterilization, and abortion). The first national women's advocacy organization, the National Organization for Women, was founded in 1966.[72] Second wave feminists echoed the first wave in building **women's movements**, social movements organized by women for women. By definition, women's movements are **autonomous** in that they can function independently of men's participation and approval.[73]

Feminists in the second wave shared the first wave's global perspective and willingness to challenge political bodies in which they had no standing, like the United Nations. The United Nations responded by initiating conferences organized around an International Women's Year in 1975, described as "the world's largest consciousness-raising session."[74] In 1977, when the United States had its own International Women's Year Conference in Houston, it became the first

battleground for struggles between feminists and anti-feminists, those who saw themselves as "defending the family" from single mothers, homosexuality, easy divorce, and career women. This resonated with media portrayals of second wave feminists as humorless, hostile to sexual pleasure, and anti-man. This was exactly the environment that Hillary Clinton stepped into when she entered public life and, decades later, a surprising number of people still believe that feminists are ugly, uptight, angry, aggressive, dogmatic, and demanding.[75]

The backlash stalled the process of state ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, which had sailed through Congress in 1972 after forty-nine years of feminist organizing. And when the United Nations released a statement in support of gender equality in 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the United States did not sign on. Sixteen years later, the United States did join 182 other countries in agreeing to a global "Platform for Action" driven by the belief that "women's rights are human rights."[76] These statements have helped to legitimize an international norm of gender equality, but the United States has only ambivalently committed itself to it.

Many of the changes in patriarchal relations we have traced in this book are thanks to the mobilization of the second wave, not only in new women's rights lobbying organizations, but also in a proliferation of new knowledge about women, initially in women's bookstores and now institutionalized in higher education as women's, gender, and sexuality studies programs. Gender awareness took the form of consciousness-raising for women, rediscovery of lesbian and gay history, and challenges to sexual objectification.[77] Increasingly, their feminism focused on intersectional issues like racial justice, labor rights, queer politics, and human rights.

The backlash also drew partisan lines, pushing feminists into one political camp and anti-feminists into the other. Men and women began to vote more differently than before, with women, including non-activists, increasingly likely to identify as Democrats. Ironically, this undid an earlier association between feminism and the Republican Party, which supported the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights until 1980.

The third wave started in the mid-1990s, after an African American law professor's testimony splashed across the screens of televisions across the country. Anita Hill had been called before the Senate Judiciary Committee to testify that Clarence Thomas, a nominee for the Supreme Court, had sexually harassed her. This was a scandalous accusation, then even more than now. Transfixed, the public watched as an all-white, all-male panel of fourteen senators delivered an "aggressive, gloves-off" attack on Hill's character.[78] Many women saw this as a sign that men did not understand women's experiences and they brought their frustration to the ballot box.[79] In the next election, twenty-four women were elected to the House, the largest single group of women ever. And the number of women in the Senate tripled, from two to six.

In 1991 Anita Hill testified before an all-white, all-male panel of senators that Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas sexually harassed her.

The third wave took an even broader view of what was needed to end patriarchy: attacking gendered norms, including the gender binary and heteronormativity, and reaffirming its concern with peace, environmental protection, child health, and public education.[80] Responding to the stereotypes applied to second wavers, third wavers also embraced femininity and sex positivity. By this time, most feminist activists also saw their issues as aligned with the Democratic Party.

Third wavers addressed some of the earlier problems with transnational feminist activism. Western feminists had sometimes exhibited a troublesome tendency to think they were more *advanced* than women in other countries, leading them to try to export their own version of women's liberation around the globe. Third wave feminists got better at understanding that there are feminisms, not a feminism, and began working with women and their allies in other countries more collaboratively.

Likewise, they continued efforts by earlier feminists to build a more inclusive feminism, advocating for an **intersectional feminist activism**, one that attends to the lived experiences of different kinds of women and men.[81] Today the phrase "it's not feminism if it's not intersectional" has become a common rallying cry. Young feminists of color are among the leading innovators of "hashtag movements" that are decentralized, less hierarchical, and more intersectionally inclusive, including #BlackLivesMatter and #SayHerName, against
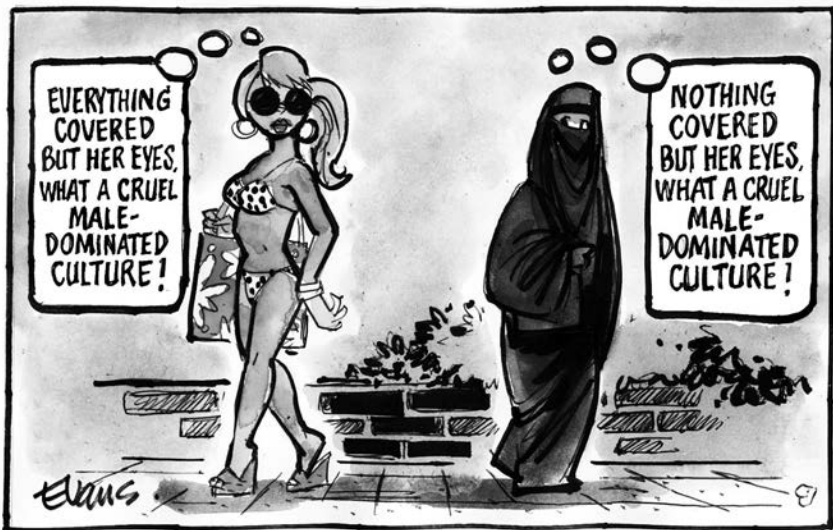
This cartoon by Malcolm Evans draws attention to the fact that definitions of women's oppression and liberation can vary tremendously.

police violence suffered by African Americans, and #NeverAgain, the gun control movement started by the victims of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High.

These hashtags bring us into the present, and some argue that the third wave has evolved into a fourth wave that is happening right now.

Feminist Politics Today

A substantial majority of people today believe men and women are inherently equal and should be treated as such.[82] Americans coming of age in the 2000s and later show the strongest support for gender equality.[83] Today's young feminists are also more diverse than those in previous generations: they are more likely to identify as queer, nonwhite, or multiracial, and are more politicized around disability, immigration, and more. Thanks to the work of previous generations, these feminists are well poised to take advantage of the international norms of gender equality, prebuilt feminist movement organizations, and some hard work toward making feminism more inclusive.[84] Truly, it's an exciting time to be a feminist.

So, what's up for the fourth wave? In some ways, today's feminists are up against the same old forces that American feminists have fought for nearly two hundred years: anti-feminists, stubborn government bureaucracy, ugly stereo-

types, negative press, lack of inclusivity and equality in feminist circles, and the sheer effort of organizing over decades, even lifetimes. But in other ways they're facing new forces, both helpful and troubling.[85] The remainder of this chapter discusses some of the novel context for contemporary feminist organizing.

NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES Before the mid-1990s, media gatekeepers tightly controlled what could be mass produced and disseminated through print, radio, and television. Today, the Internet gives a much wider proportion of the population the ability to produce media content. These technologies are also less costly, more efficient, and wider reaching than the mimeographs and newsprint used by women's groups of the 1970s.[86] This has particularly helped members of groups who've historically been excluded from and misrepresented by the mass media. Especially since the mid-2000s, anyone with access to the Internet can contribute to the international conversation, making an amazing array of feminists just a search away.

Regardless of whether this vast global network brings activists into the streets, it supports a sense of community built around norms of gender equality. The hashtag #metoo is a powerful example. Coined in 2006 by African American activist Tarana Burke, it catapulted into awareness after movie producer Harvey Weinstein's decades of abuse of women became public. When actress Alyssa Milano invited people on Twitter to say #metoo, half a million people responded within twenty-four hours.[87] In that same time period on Facebook, twelve million posts and comments were uploaded.[88] A millennial version of the second wave slogan "the personal is political," #metoo was a new way to "come out" and make what feels personal a very public and political issue.

The hashtag was more than just an easy click on a computer; it drew attention to the pervasiveness of the problem of sexual harassment and assault. Soon it became a chorus of #allwomen, including those in middle- and low-status and pay occupations.[89] It was used by sexual minorities, trans women, and cisgender men to draw attention to their abuse, too.[90] Both domestically and internationally, #metoo resonated with already-organized feminist efforts, spurring mobilization around gendered violence globally.[91]

Online organizing, around hashtags and otherwise, has been an incredible tool in the new millennium.[92] But anti-feminists have taken advantage of this as well.[93] Sometimes misleadingly called "men's rights advocates," anti-feminists have used the Internet to nurture and strategize around their anger at women, make life uncomfortable for women's advocates online, and potentially radicalize violent misogynists. In online spaces, aggrieved men define themselves as incels (involuntary celibates), MGTOWs (male separatists), and Red Pillers (who share tips for how to dominate women), and sometimes applaud mass murderers.[94]

Even as a daily experience, online harassment makes for a hostile environment. Women are twice as likely as men to report being sexually harassed

online and are more likely than men to state that harassment online is a "major problem" (70 and 54 percent, respectively).[95] Men are more invested than women in defining it as free speech (56 and 36 percent, respectively), with 64 percent of men saying that online harassment is "taken too seriously." As law professor Mary Anne Franks argues, it is exactly because it is seen as so normal—described, often, as *merely* trolling—that makes it "both so effective and so harmful, especially as a form of discrimination."[96]

Governments and corporations have been caught unawares by these developments and both have been slow to take them seriously.[97] In addition to creating opportunities, then, the Internet has created new problems and threats for feminists, as well as new areas of law and practice that feminists need to press companies and governments to address meaningfully.

There are other things to watch out for in this brave new world.

INDIVIDUALISM AND "YOU GO GIRL" CAPITALISM Ever since men were encouraged to be competitive in the workforce and women were encouraged to practice selflessness in the home, putting oneself first has been considered masculine. As women have been offered increasing opportunities to enter masculine spheres of work and play, they've become increasingly like men in this regard. Accordingly, we've seen a rise in **individualism** in the United States, a focus on the individual over the group, and a decline in **civic awareness**, a focus on the well-being of groups and societies as wholes.[98]

Individualism can lead people to assume that gender inequality is an individual problem that requires only individual solutions. A recent study on the gender politics of young adults found that almost all believe that people have the right to live their lives however they like, gender notwithstanding, but had a difficult time thinking of what they might do to change the world, over and above designing innovative lifestyles.[99] This is partly because capitalist forces encourage us to think about ourselves in individual terms and use consumption as a way to express our identities. In a **corporate co-optation of feminism**, companies today often encourage this, using feminist-sounding language and imagery for marketing purposes.[100] Both the makeup company CoverGirl (#GirlsCan) and the feminine hygiene product brand Always (#LikeaGirl) have recently taken this approach.

Most of this marketing reduces feminism to individual empowerment and ties that empowerment to a product the company has for sale. Dove, for example, launched a highly successful viral ad campaign titled *Real Beauty Sketches*.[101] In the ad, a sketch artist draws women both as they describe themselves and as another describes them, then reveals both sketches to the participants. The women inevitably look more beautiful in the second sketch than the first, sending the message that others see their beauty more clearly than they do. One participant responded: "I should be more grateful of my natural beauty. It impacts

the choices and friends we make, the jobs we apply for, how we treat our children. It impacts everything. It couldn't be more critical to our happiness." In other words, it's empowering just to *feel* more beautiful.

Fair enough. At best, though, the message is that each individual woman can choose to feel better about how she looks. Dove's #realbeauty and #redefining-beauty campaigns never suggest looks are irrelevant to a woman's value. The company doesn't go that far, because challenging the social power of appearance norms in actual interactions would disrupt their profits: women would spend a lot less money on fashion and beauty products if they were less worried about being judged on their looks.

Marketing with feminist content is, first and foremost, intended to entice people to buy things, which makes some people wealthy at the expense of others. Meanwhile, the same companies also often exploit female workers. The developer and distributor of Ivanka Trump's clothing and accessories line, for instance, is aimed specifically at working mothers and branded with the hashtag #women-whowork.[102] Ironically, at a factory in Indonesia where her clothes are manufactured, the employees—three-quarters of whom are women—receive only the government-mandated parental leave, are paid no more than the mandated minimum wage, and are allegedly forced to work overtime for no pay. Many are so poor that they can't afford basic necessities like baby formula or school books.[103]

Elsewhere, in Sri Lanka, girls as young as ten years old work sixty hours a week in uncomfortable "sweatshop"-like conditions.[104] It would take them a month to earn enough money to buy a single pair of leggings from the clothing line they work for: Beyoncé's Ivy Park. About the brand, Beyoncé says: "I know that when I feel physically strong, I am mentally strong, and I wanted to create a brand that made other women feel the same way."[105] Feminist advertising, no matter how "woke," doesn't usually translate into feminist practices.

The frequency with which pseudo-feminist themes appear in advertising has made "girl power" a cliché and the preponderance of such rhetoric makes it conceptually difficult to distinguish between feminism and individualism. Often, it's simply self-promotional egotism, telling girls and women they're awesome just by virtue of being female and so they deserve to be and have anything they want. But having a diva complex doesn't make a person a feminist. Likewise, advertising that tells girls and women they should be self-centered does not empower women to work for gender justice for anyone but themselves.

NATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF AUTHORITARIANISM Before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, no one would have imagined that a candidate like Trump—one who'd insulted women's faces, bodies, and temperaments on record; who'd said "putting a wife to work is a very dangerous thing" and pregnancy is "an inconvenience for a business"; who advocated treating women "like shit" and called his own daughter "a piece of ass"; who'd bragged about grabbing

women and had been accused of sexual assault—could *win*. Prior to Trump, neither Republican nor Democratic candidates spoke in this way. Even relatively minor gaffes, like Mitt Romney's clumsy comment that he had "binders full of women" to consider for jobs, were considered damaging to a campaign.[106] Trump's election revealed that Americans aren't as opposed to his version of masculinity as politicians thought. And the continued support of his presidency by voters and fellow politicians alike—even as he bears the brunt of new sex scandals and successfully enacts anti-feminist policies—shows that he is the representative of a set of values in American society, not just an unlikely presidential candidate.

Politics can change, radically, and not always in ways that feminists want. Here, Americans' rights to birth control and reproductive freedom are illustrative. Long before Trump chose as his vice president a politician strongly hostile to women's rights to abortion and contraceptive use, a movement had been growing to limit access to both. In the five years before Trump announced his candidacy, states adopted 288 new laws aimed at restricting women's access to abortion, including mandatory counseling and waiting periods, required parental consent or notification, and new regulations on abortion clinics, many of which were forced to close.[107] Today, 90 percent of counties in the United States do not have a single abortion provider.[108]

In 2014, the Obama administration granted religious nonprofit organizations—like schools and hospitals—an exemption to the law requiring businesses to provide contraceptive health care coverage to their employees. In 2017, the Trump administration extended this right to *any* employers who object to their employees using birth control. Bills have also been introduced into Congress to make some forms of birth control illegal and stop anyone on public health care programs (including the forty million women on Medicaid) from receiving birth control or prenatal care from Planned Parenthood.[109] The Trump administration also reinstated the Bush-era "global gag rule," forbidding all domestic and foreign health care providers who receive funding from the United States even to mention abortion. And Trump has pledged to nominate only pro-life judges to the Supreme Court in the hopes of overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which guarantees women a limited right to abortion.

Reproductive politics that override women's choices are often found in countries experiencing a rise in **nationalism**, a belief in the superiority of one's own country, its rightful dominance over others, and exclusionary policies that restrict citizenship by race, ethnicity, or religion. Nationalists see some kinds of people as the rightful residents of nations and use group membership as grounds for exclusion. Nationalists see women as responsible for reproducing the nation that nationalists want.[110] Nationalist thinking, then, justifies aiming pro-natal policies (like restrictions on abortion) at women seen as legitimate citizens and anti-natal policies (like forced sterilization) toward other women.

Nationalist sentiment offers men the opportunity to dominate other men and gain control of women, and it's on the rise today in the United States and elsewhere.[111] Across Europe, there is a turn toward harsh treatment of immigrants and ethnic minorities as well as restrictions of the rights of sexual minorities, limitations on women's reproductive decision making, and attacks on gender-aware politics. In the United States, President Trump has assembled the most male-dominated staff in decades, appointed known white nationalists to senior positions, and undermined freedoms and protections previously thought safe.

In fact, Trump's election is part of a global retreat from states transparently sharing governance with legislators and citizens.[112] Since 2006, *The Economist* has published a regular report on the state of democracies around the world. High scores reflect "full" democracies, measured by scores on sixty indicators, including strong voting rights, high inclusion and participation, a healthy political culture, and the protection of civil liberties.[113] Low scores indicate an authoritarian regime, one controlled by an authority with near total power and little accountability. Between 2016 and 2017, more than half of the 167 countries measured fell away from democracy and toward **authoritarianism**, a leadership style that celebrates patriarchal power and masculine aggression as national values. The United States' own score has been consistently falling since 2006 and we are now what *The Economist* calls a "flawed" democracy. We are nowhere near being labeled an authoritarian regime, but Trump's election suggests that there is plenty of support among Americans for authoritarian-style leadership.

The authoritarianism we observe is also closely tied to a global politics of masculinity. In India, some Hindus are celebrating the assassination of Gandhi as a defeat of pacifism, which they see as weak and feminine. In the Philippines, strongman Rodrigo Duarte ordered his soldiers to shoot female rebels "in the vagina." And Vladimir Putin, in Russia, uses his control over state media to release staged photographs of him lifting weights, riding horseback bare-chested, and hunting a Siberian tiger, while making it illegal to distribute any material related to rights for sexual minorities, in the name of "traditional values."

Today's feminists are up against a rising tide of nationalism and the anti-immigrant mobilization and repression of gender freedoms that come with it. A substantial proportion of the American public is attracted to authoritarian leadership and support rolling back many of the rights feminists and others have fought for in the century in which they've had the right to vote. If the nationalist and authoritarian turn has alarmed feminists, though, it has also mobilized them.

NEW POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES In the aftermath of Trump's election, many Americans who'd believed that feminist progress was secure and inevitable suddenly realized that it was neither, while longtime feminists found themselves reinvigorated. The 2017 Women's March on Washington was one sign of this gain in momentum.

The Women's March was scheduled for January 21, the day after Trump's inauguration, as a protest against all his election suggested. First envisioned by a white woman and man, it was criticized in its early planning stages for centering the perspective of white women.[114] Responding to this criticism, the organizers diversified their team to include an organizing group of about twenty individuals with a wide array of backgrounds.[115] This made the march more inclusive and resulted in a platform that emphasized traditional feminist concerns like reproductive rights and violence against women, but also the problems of violence in policing; workers', disability, immigrant, and indigenous rights; equality for sexual and religious minorities; and civil rights and environmental justice for all.[116]

Even with such a broad platform, no one anticipated the incredible turnout. Crowd estimates ranged from three to five million across the United States, making it the largest protest in American history.[117] Marchers included men as well as women, nonbinary and trans individuals, the young and the old, and people of all colors and religions. A third of attendees reported that this was their very first protest; more than half said they hadn't been to a protest in the last five years.[118] Trump's election had newly politicized people, inspiring them to get out into the streets, be seen, and stand up.

Clever handmade protest signs revealed this new energy, engagement with electoral politics, and feminism's decades-long trend toward inclusiveness. "So outraged," said one sign, "I'm running for office."[119] "Gun violence is a woman's issue" and "Destroy the patriarchy, not the planet," said two more.[120] A white-haired woman held a sign declaring, "Ninety, nasty, and not giving up!"[121] And a young woman's sign pledged: "I have only begun to fight."[122]

The marchers' messages crystallized under the symbolism of the now famous "pussy hats": pink knitted caps, some with cat ears, worn to convey resistance to the way that Trump spoke about women. Many of the handmade signs also took up the theme of "pussy grabs back." Its resonance with the "catty suffragettes" who promised to "scratch and fight" until they won the vote is probably just coincidence, but it draws an evocative line, across 169 years, from the first wave of feminism to the fourth.

Protesters in pussy hats invoke the full weight of history during the 2017 Women's March on Washington.

Revisiting the Question

Q+A   **How do we change societies?**

We do it with passion, commitment, and cooperation. In every society there is tension between the gender order—its entrenched and often unquestioned ideas about gender, interactions that reproduce it, and gendered institutions—and the power of individuals to resist and transform it. Every individual has at least a little bit of power and, when individuals join together, that power accumulates. In other words, the system is bigger than any one of us, but *we're in it together*. If enough of us decide we want to change it, we can.

The best strategies are to get women and feminist-friendly politicians on the "inside" and an intersectional group of feminists and their allies on the "outside" building support for feminist policies through movement activism.[123] Using that strategy, feminists have changed states dramatically in the last hundred years. They have changed each other as well, adding texture and depth to feminist politics by widening the scope of their attention to many of the inequalities with which women live and setting up a new generation of activists to imagine an even more radical future.

Next . . .

A farewell and some advice!

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IN MANY WAYS IT IS A TERRIBLE
LESSON; IN MANY WAYS A
MAGNIFICENT ONE.

—C. WRIGHT MILLS[1]

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Conclusion

Gender is a powerful idea that shapes our experience of ourselves, each other, and the institutions with which we interact. It's pervasive and unavoidable. And while it's fun sometimes—more for some of us than others—it's also unfair. Our ideas about gender support a hierarchical system, one that intersects with other hierarchies in ways that ensure some men have more power than other men, most women, and people who are neither.

Everyone pays a price.

We all contend with forces that narrow the options for the type of person we're allowed to be. It may not feel like oppression—men are told that masculinity is better than femininity and many have internalized an aversion to the feminine that has come to feel natural—but masculinity, even for men who take to it easily, is not the same thing as freedom. It's a set of rules that threatens to undermine men's value in their own eyes and those of others. Still, many men embrace the gender order because it offers a psychological wage: the idea that they're superior to women and at least some other men.

Some women, in turn, might feel like gender isn't the oppressive force it used to be. Their daily lives may feel freer than those of the men around them, and they may be right. But the cultural permission to perform masculinity isn't liberation; it's an "homage to

patriarchy."[2] It affirms the superiority of men and masculinity, just as men's avoidance of femininity is a sign that they think less of it. Women are allowed a taste of the privileges that come with being male (and if they are otherwise advantaged in society, they may enjoy other privileges as well), but ultimately the requirement to do femininity translates into a social system in which women as a group will be seen as less valuable than men and will do a disproportionate amount of the least rewarded work. If they do defy these expectations—if they demand or enact equality with men in sex, family life, at work, or in politics—they risk being a pariah.

For young people in college, this might sound absurd. The average woman outperforms her male peers throughout school: She gets better grades, runs the clubs, dominates student government, and outnumbers men in higher education. But that's exactly why what happens after college is unfair. Privilege is, by definition, unearned. So, men as a group will still be advantaged. This will become more acutely noticeable in heterosexual interaction (where women enjoy fewer orgasms and face greater danger) and more obvious in the workplace (where the average male college graduate earns more than his female counterpart from day one), in families (where the responsibility for unpaid housework and childcare falls disproportionately on women), and in the power centers of our societies (where men overwhelmingly are positioned to make the big decisions).

Those are the facts. The gender binary isn't real, it isn't fair, and we can't pretend it doesn't affect us. For 4,000 years, its purpose has been to differentiate us and place us in a hierarchy. And the good and bad things in life are still distributed along that hierarchy in unequal ways. That's the world we live in and there's no guarantee that it will be better, or even as good as it is now, in the future.

This is an unpleasant reality, which is why we began this chapter with C. Wright Mills's observation that the attainment of new knowledge can be, in many ways, terrible. Truly, this book has given you plenty of good reasons to be angry, sad, scared, or frustrated. But Mills also points out that knowledge, even of terrible things, can be *magnificent*. This is because understanding the system in which we live is the first step toward changing it. Knowledge helps us make more informed decisions for ourselves, treat others with more empathy, and get to work making a better world. So, before we end, here are some suggestions for how to put its lessons to work in your daily life.

Consider tossing your gender binary glasses

With your glasses off, you can now see the gender binary for what it really is—a social construction—but you'll still encounter the idea that men and women are

"opposite" sexes every day. Try to be skeptical. Don't forget the basics: All differences are average differences with a great deal of overlap; men are not all alike and neither are all women; differences and similarities are caused by the intersection of nature and nurture, not one or the other; and science shows that we are more alike than different, and probably for good evolutionary reasons.

That the gender binary is a social construction applies to *you*, too, of course. If you're a person who sometimes worries about whether you fit into the binary, know that it's perfectly normal to wonder. The binary isn't real, so, to a greater or lesser degree, we're all square pegs being hammered into round holes. Don't blame yourself for how uncomfortable it is. And even if you personally feel quite comfortable, try to be understanding toward people who aren't and give them space for finding their own comfort zone.

Think about how you want to interact with others

You already break gender rules all the time, but now you probably do so more consciously. When you're policed, remember there are three options: obey and refrain from breaking the rule, break the rule but offer an account that affirms it, or renounce the rule as arbitrary and unnecessary. The last option has the most potential for destabilizing the rules and the gender binary they protect. Think about if and when you might want to do this. It would be exhausting to do it all the time and, in some cases, the price you could pay might be too high. Sometimes, though, the rewards outweigh the costs.

You can also choose to police the policers by pointing out other people's efforts to enforce gender rules. Challenging the entitlement of others to demand obedience to gender rules can provoke both mild and severe negative reactions: irritated parents, alienated friends, angry bosses, or retaliation from peers. Pay attention to when other people are likely to get your point and then balance the harm of their policing with the penalties you might face. Sometimes it will feel like the right thing to do.

Another possibility is to personally opt out of gender policing. This will take practice, since most of us police gender out of habit. Don't forget that policing people away from gender stereotypes (like pushing a little sister to be less concerned with her appearance) is not the *opposite* of policing; it's just enforcing a different set of gender rules. Opting out means not reacting to gender performances *at all*, refraining from making comments aimed at endorsing, questioning, or attacking someone's choices. This isn't the final answer to the problem—there will still be people who defend the gender binary, marketers with products to sell, and policy makers who pass gendered laws—but you will be making a real difference by quietly contributing to a freer and less judgmental space for your friends, family, and coworkers.

Reflect on your relationship with the institutions around you

Gendered institutions push us to make gendered decisions while also making these choices seem natural and inevitable. Now you can see these forces for what they are. Use this knowledge to wrest some autonomy from the institutions that bear down on you.

You may want to do this in order to satisfy your individual preferences; resisting institutional pressures can mean living a life more in tune with who you are. Or, you may choose to resist these pressures because of the way institutions place you into unequal relationships with others. Because institutions reflect not only gender inequality but all social inequities, our participation in them typically means being advantaged by virtue of someone else's disadvantage. We hope you keep sight of this fact and make it a practice to ask how institutions are tying you to both visible and invisible others in ways you may not like.

Some institutions are in real flux, making it easier to get around them. At this point in history, for example, the way we institutionalize family life is undergoing rapid and dramatic change. When so many people are making unconventional choices, it becomes easier for others to do so. Neither marriage, nor heterosexuality, nor parenthood is mandatory anymore. Consider all your options. And think about how your career choices might help or hurt your ability to live the life you want. You might have to make some hard sacrifices. They might just be worth it.

Do your best and be creative, but be flexible, too. One of the most striking findings in the study of gender, work, and marriage is that young people's plans for their future families have almost no relationship to their lives a decade or more later.[3] Our ideals have to compete with other realities, like unexpected fertility or infertility, whether we end up with a well-paying job that we enjoy, surprising reactions to the practice of parenting, and the unpredictable qualities of the person we fall in love with, as well as the not-unlikely possibility that we'll pass through our childbearing years without meeting someone at all. Happiness isn't about getting what we want; it's about finding a way to find joy in what we get.

While the institution of the family is in flux, other institutions are much more deeply entrenched. Even in these cases, though, there are some things we can do. The institutions that function to produce, transport, and sell the vast majority of goods and services we consume are incredibly hard to avoid, for instance, but there are some choices you can make. Buying clothes second hand is a way to avoid supporting a garment industry that exploits mostly female labor. Buying gender-neutral products over gendered ones—from deodorant, to exercise equipment, to cell phone covers—can discourage companies from exploiting gender stereotypes to get your money. Paying feminized labor a living wage can help, too, whether in the tips you leave for your waitress or the wages you pay to a housekeeper. Think about how you can opt out, even in small ways, of institutions you feel have harmful effects on people's lives.

Some of you may have more freedom than others to make choices that oppose institutionalized norms; it depends on your particular mix of advantages and disadvantages. If you *can* make counterinstitutional choices, and you choose to do so, know that you'll slowly be helping to dismantle ideologies and practices that others have less freedom to resist. You'll be using your privilege, in other words, to help others with less of it.

Remember that the mechanisms that produce inequality aren't simple

Compared to the average person, you have a much more sophisticated understanding of how gender inequality is maintained. Most people are familiar with the idea of sexism and object to the idea that one sex should receive preferential treatment, but androcentrism and subordination are less well understood and less obviously problematic. *You*, though, understand. You're tuned into the hierarchy of men and the way that gender inequality places men in competition for the rewards that accrue to masculinity; you are also aware that not all men benefit equally from gender inequality.

You see that intersectionality complicates the notion that anyone is subordinated or elevated by virtue of their sex alone. You're more likely to notice how women, too, enjoy certain privileges and enter into relationships of exploitation. You are aware of how much is going on when individual men or women make patriarchal bargains, and you can be both more critical of *and* sympathetic to these choices. Relatedly, you have a more nuanced sense of the attitude, behavior, and policy changes required to challenge gender inequality, as well as a healthy appreciation for just how intensely feminists debate their utopias.

Use this knowledge to resist the common misperceptions about feminist progress, like the idea that equality is simply a matter of ensuring equal access and that we can proclaim "mission accomplished" once we get a few privileged women into corner offices. Or the notion that men have nothing to gain from reducing gender inequality, as if they aren't in many ways constrained by the gender binary and its masculine hierarchy. Question the suggestion that feminists are driven by anger instead of empathy; feminists are in it not because they hate men, but because they care about both men and women and the struggles they face. Recognize, too, that because most feminists are concerned with racism, poverty, and other -isms and injustices, their goal is not to point fingers; since there is always some dimension on which any given person has some privilege, it would be self-destructive to think about activism as a matter of assigning guilt and claiming innocence. Finally, be suspicious of anyone who tells you liberation can be found in the right purchase, a good slogan, or sheer narcissism.

All this may leave you with more questions than answers, which is a really good place to be. Keep asking those questions, trying out answers, listening to others' perspectives, and forming your own theory of how the world works. No one has the last word on truth. So, continue to puzzle over the ideas shared here, add them to the bank of information you've learned from others, see if they explain your own experiences, and let your understanding of the world evolve.

Know that change is always possible

Sometimes problems seem overwhelmingly large and entrenched, but now you know that gender relations change, sometimes dramatically and surprisingly quickly, and in unpredictable ways. At the core of these changes are people. Social change is about power and everybody has some. Individuals work—alone or together—to imagine, enact, and share new ways of doing things.

Some of you may be passionate about reducing gender inequality and may decide to make activism a central part of your life. There are lots of ways to do this. You can write and speak about injustice, donate time or money to feminist organizations, or be an activist in your workplace, your church, or a political campaign. Others of you may not be interested in activism, but that doesn't mean your choices aren't political ones. We're all political whether we like it or not: We either accept the status quo or try to change things. Doing nothing *is* doing something. That's OK, but be aware that this is a political choice, too.

Even if you're not a passionate activist, there are probably *some* things you'd like to see change. Go ahead and pick a battle or two. That's how most of us do it.[4] Maybe you decide to be the person in your social circle who tries out a gender-neutral pronoun just to see what it's like; you might give relief to a non-binary friend you didn't know you had. Or maybe you're a woman who decides to quit wearing makeup every day; suddenly you're an inspiration for a friend who isn't as brave or deeply motivated. Or maybe you're the man who commits to calling himself a feminist; now you're pushing back against the idea that feminism has nothing to offer men, as well as the idea that men don't care about women's rights.

If you're a student, you can question the gender order in your immediate environment. Maybe you'll be the one to start an organization on campus dedicated to exploring what it means to be a man, the one who ensures that the college provides unisex bathrooms for genderqueer and trans students, or the one who does the research to find out whether your school's sexual assault policy is in compliance with federal law.[5] It might be intimidating, and it's impossible to know if you'll succeed, but these are all things you could do *today*. Think about what inspires you.

Once you leave school, you'll have even more opportunities to remake the world. As a police officer, parent, teacher, or religious leader you will be a part of the institutions that maintain order, raise and educate young people, nurture spirituality, and promote social responsibility. You may be an employee of a corporation with a hand in making key decisions about how its goods are designed, produced, or marketed; its profits allocated; or its impact on the environment managed. You might see ways to improve these institutions from the inside or you might take your critique outside and try to press for change from there. Make like-minded friends and see what you can do. As the anthropologist Margaret Mead famously said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."[6]

Ultimately, no matter how passionate you are, aim for balance. As legal scholar Joan Williams reminds us, "Equality is not everything, even for feminists themselves."[7] Maybe another political issue is more important to you: immigration reform, climate change, or the opioid epidemic. All these issues are important and, as you already likely suspect, gendered. It's also OK to want peace at the holiday dinner table, even if your grandfather still thinks it's strange that men today wear earrings and women get tattoos. It's OK to want to look beautiful in an evening gown or dashing in a tuxedo. That craft beer with the sexist ad campaign is *delicious*; we get it. Even the most dedicated feminists make trade-offs. They balance a desire for social justice with the need for happy, productive, meaningful lives. Feminist principles win out some times and not others. And that's life.

Enjoy the vertigo

For better or worse, the gender binary offers us a clear path; it helps us make decisions, from the minor to the momentous. Without gender to push some options off to the side and place others in front of us, we are left to make these decisions with fewer guidelines. This can be incredibly disorienting. The sociologist Barbara Risman calls it "vertigo," capturing how dizzying letting go of gendered logic can be.[8] Standing at a precipice, looking at a vast expanse of possibility, you are no longer protected by familiar boundaries. It's both exhilarating and frightening. Enjoy the magnificent lessons you've learned: the way that understanding how gender is a social construction makes life a little more fun, a little more interesting, and a little freer.

It's pretty great, actually.

But know, also, that the terrible part never fully goes away. At times it will be upsetting. Feel free to be annoyed and share your frustrations. This might make people a little annoyed with *you*, but there are worse things. Sometimes the

terrible part will be deeply personal, as you struggle with your own challenges. Other times you will be angry with what you see around you and feel small and powerless to change things. We all do from time to time. And, of course, sometimes you can only laugh.

In the mix of frustration, disorientation, and hope, though, is the magic. It's what frees our minds and gives us the motivation to think up alternate realities. Remember that "radical" ideas are only ideas that haven't been accepted *yet*. So go ahead and imagine the unimaginable. The future is yet unwritten.

GLOSSARY

ableism individual and institutional bias against people with differently abled bodies

abolitionists activists in the fight against human slavery

account an explanation for why a person broke a gender rule that works to excuse his or her behavior

accountability an obligation to explain why we don't follow social rules that other people think we should know and obey

action effect within biological limits, our bodies react to use by developing the capacities we ask of them

ageism an institutionalized preference for the young and the cultural association of aging with decreased social value

aggrieved entitlement a kind of anger felt by some men based in the idea that something they rightfully own or deserve is being unjustly taken or withheld from them

agrarian a type of society in which the invention of agriculture—the cultivation of domesticated crops—allows groups to put down roots

androcentric pay scale a strong correlation between wages and the gender composition of a job

androcentrism the granting of higher status, respect, value, reward, and power to the masculine compared to the feminine

androgyny the blending of masculinity and femininity or absence of gender cues

anti-feminist politics activities of those committed to the value of gender difference and hierarchy and aiming to prevent feminist change

anti-natal policies those policies that discourage childbearing, whether intentionally or not

associative memory a phenomenon in which cells in our brains that process and transmit information make literal connections between concepts, such that some ideas are associated with other ideas

authoritarianism a leadership style that celebrates patriarchal power and masculine aggression as national values

autonomous functioning independently of men's participation and approval

benevolent sexism the attribution of positive traits to women that, nonetheless, justify women's subordination to men

binary a system with two and only two separate and distinct parts, like binary code (the 1s and 0s used in computing) or a binary star system (in which two stars orbit around each other)

biocultural interaction how our bodies respond to our cultural environment and vice versa

brain organization theory the idea that male and female brains may have different strengths and weaknesses

breadwinner/housewife marriage a model of marriage that did not legally subordinate wives to husbands but continued to define the rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives differently; women owed men domestic services and men were legally required to support their wives financially

care chain a series of nurturing relationships in which the care of children, the disabled, or the elderly is displaced onto increasingly disadvantaged paid or unpaid caregivers

care work such work that involves face-to-face caretaking of the physical, emotional, and educational needs of others

cisgender a term to describe male-bodied people who comfortably identify as men and female-bodied people who comfortably identify as women

civic awareness a focus on the well-being of groups and societies as wholes

coital imperative the idea that any fully sexually active couple must be having penile-vaginal intercourse (also known as "coitus") and any fully completed sexual activity will include it

colorism a racist preference for light over dark skin

commodification the process by which goods transition from something a family provided for itself into something bought with a wage

commodity a thing that can be bought and sold

compensatory masculinity acts undertaken to reassert one's manliness in the face of a threat

compulsory heterosexuality a rule that all men be attracted to women and all women to men

concerted cultivation an active and organized effort to develop in children a wide range of skills and talents

corporate co-optation of feminism the use of feminist-sounding language and imagery for marketing purposes

cult of domesticity the notion that women could and should wholeheartedly embrace the work of making a loving home

cultural competence a familiarity and facility with how the members of a society typically think and behave

cultural traveling moving from one cultural or subcultural context to another and sometimes back

culturalism the idea that we are "blank slates" that become who we are purely through learning and socialization

culturally unintelligible to be so outside the symbolic meaning system that people will not know how to interact with you

culture a group's shared beliefs and the practices and material things that reflect them

deceptive differences those differences that, by being embodied and observed, can make it seem as if men and women are more sexually dimorphic than they naturally need to be

democratic brotherhood the distribution of citizenship rights to certain classes of men

disability prejudice bias against people with disabilities

distinction efforts to distinguish one's own group from others

doing gender a phrase used to describe the ways in which we actively obey and break gender rules

domestic outsourcing paying non-family members to do family-related tasks

double bind a situation in which cultural expectations are contradictory

drag queens and kings conventionally gendered and often heterosexual men and women who dress up and behave like members of the opposite sex, usually for fun or pay

dual-nurturers families in which individuals disinvest in work together and turn their energy toward the home

egalitarians people who prefer relationships in which both partners do their fair share of breadwinning, housekeeping, and child rearing

emasculation a loss of masculinity

emotion work the act of controlling one's own emotions and managing the emotions of others

emphasized femininity an exaggerated form of femininity "oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men"

emphatic sameness a strategy by which women try to be "just one of the guys"

employer selection hypothesis a theory that proposes that employers tend to prefer men for masculine jobs and women for feminine jobs, slotting applicants into gender-consistent roles during hiring and promotion

equal access a model of creating egalitarianism by dismantling legal barriers and reducing sex discrimination

equal sharing a model of creating egalitarianism that targets subordination by attempting to ensure that men and women participate equally in masculine and feminine spheres

equal value a model of creating egalitarianism designed to tackle the problem of androcentrism by raising the value of the feminine to match the value of the masculine

erotic marketplace the ways in which people are organized and ordered according to their perceived sexual desirability

exculpatory chauvinism a phenomenon in which negative characteristics ascribed to men are presented as "natural" and offered as acceptable justifications of men's dominance over women

family wage an income paid to one male earner that was large enough to support a home, a wife, and children

fatherhood premium a wage increase that accrues to married men who become fathers

female a type of sex

female-bodied used to specify that sex refers to the body and may not extend to how a person feels or acts

feminine apologetic a requirement that women balance their appropriation of masculine interests, traits, and activities with feminine performance

feminine things we associate with women

feminism the belief that all men and women should have equal rights and opportunities

feminist politics activities of those involved in efforts to make society's gender order less hierarchical and more supportive of the full development of human capacities for everyone

feminist utopia a perfectly gender-egalitarian society

feminization of poverty a trend in which the poor are increasingly female

forager societies ones that migrate seasonally, following crops and game across the landscape

formal gender equality the legal requirement that men and women be treated more or less the same

fragile masculinity an exaggerated aversion some men have to doing femininity that, ironically, imbues femininity with the power to damage or destroy manliness

gender the symbolism of masculinity and femininity that we connect to being male-bodied or female-bodied

gender-aware policymaking a type of policymaking in which consideration of the effects on both men and women—and different kinds of men and women—is a required part of the policymaking process

gender binary the idea that there are only two types of people—male-bodied people who are masculine and female-bodied people who are feminine

gender binary glasses a pair of lenses that separate everything we see into masculine and feminine categories

gender binary subdivision the practice by which we divide and redivide by gender again and again, adding finer and finer *degrees* of masculinity and femininity to the world

gender dysphoria a term used to describe the discomfort some people experience with the relationship between their bodies' assigned sex and their gender identity

gender equivocation the use of both emphasized femininity and emphatic sameness when they're useful and culturally expected

gender expression a way of expressing one's gender identity through appearance, dress, and behavior

gender fluid without a fixed gender identity

gender identity a sense of oneself as male or female

gender ideologies widely shared beliefs about how men and women are and should be

gender of governance who holds political office and whether it matters

gender order the social organization of gender relations in a society

gender pay gap the difference between the incomes of the average man and woman who work full time

gender policing a response to the violation of gender rules that is aimed at exacting conformity

gender rules instructions for how to appear and behave as a man or a woman

gender salience the relevance of gender across contexts, activities, and spaces

gender strategy finding a way of doing gender that works for us as unique individuals who are also shaped by other parts of our identity and the material realities of our lives

genderqueer identifying as outside of or between the binary between male and female (see also nonbinary)

gendered institution a social institution in which gender is used as an organizing principle

gendered job segregation the practice of filling occupations with mostly male or mostly female workers

gendered love/sex binary a projection of the gender binary onto the ideas of love and sex

genes a set of instructions for building and maintaining our bodies

genotype a unique set of genes

glass ceiling the idea that there is an invisible barrier between women and top positions in masculine occupations

glass cliff a heightened risk of failing faced by women who break through the glass ceiling

glass closet an invisible place in which sexual minorities hide their identities in order to avoid stigma, suspicion, or censure at work

glass escalator an invisible ride to the top offered to men in female-dominated occupations

going steady the practice of an often short-lived, but still exclusive, public pairing off

good girl/bad girl dichotomy the idea that women who behave themselves sexually are worthy of respect and women who don't are not

governance of gender how the gender of a country's residents shapes the way they are regulated

governance the process of making decisions for the nation, ensuring the state's accountability to its citizens and enforcing the laws of the land

greedy institutions those institutions, such as work and family, that take up an incredible amount of time and energy

hegemonic masculinity pertaining to a type of man, idealized by men and women alike, who functions to justify and naturalize gender inequality

hegemony a state of collective consent to inequality that is secured by the idea that it is inevitable, natural, or desirable

hegemonic masculinity a type of masculine performance, idealized by men and women alike, that functions to justify and naturalize gender inequality, assuring widespread consent to the social disadvantage of most women and some men

heteronormative designed on the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, with individuals presuming so unless there are culturally recognizable signs indicating otherwise

heterosexism individual and institutional bias against sexual minorities

heterosexual male gaze a way of looking at society from the perspective of a hypothetical heterosexual man

hierarchy of masculinity a rough ranking of men from most to least masculine, with the assumption that more is always better

homonormativity a practice of obeying every gender rule except the ones that say we must sexually desire and partner with someone of the other sex

hookup culture a new norm on college campuses in which casual sexual contact in the absence of romantic intentions is held up by many as an ideal

hookups one-time nonromantic sexual encounters

hormones messengers in a chemical communication system

hostile sexism the use of harassment, threats, and violence to enforce women's subservience to men

hybrid masculinities a collection of gender strategies that selectively incorporate symbols, performances, and identities that society associates with women or low-status men

hypermasculinity extreme conformity to the more aggressive rules of masculinity

ideal worker norm the idea that an employee should have the ability to devote themselves to their job without the distraction of family responsibilities

ideology a set of ideas widely shared by members of a society that guides identities, behaviors, and institutions

ideology of intensive motherhood see *intensive motherhood*

individualism an attitude that reflects a focus on the individual over the group

institutions persistent patterns of social interaction aimed at meeting the needs of a society that can't easily be met by individuals alone

integrated motherhood an ideology of motherhood that includes work outside the home, financial self-sufficiency, and a network of support

intensive motherhood the idea that (1) mothers should be the primary caretaker of their children, (2) child rearing should include "copious amounts

of time, energy, and material resources," and (3) giving children these things takes priority over all other interests, desires, and demands

intersectional feminist activism feminist activism that attends to the lived experiences of different kinds of women and men

intersectionality the fact that gender is not an isolated social fact about us but instead intersects with all the other distinctions among people made important by our society

intersex bodies that are not clearly male or female

kin groups collections of individuals considered family

learned differences those differences that are a result of our familial or sociocultural environment

learning model of socialization a model that suggests that socialization is a lifelong process of learning and relearning gendered expectations and how to negotiate them

legislatures groups of individuals elected to represent their constituents in regulating the affairs of the country

male a type of sex

male flight a phenomenon in which men abandon feminizing arenas of life

male-bodied used to specify that sex refers to the body and may not extend to how a person feels or acts

marriage bans policies against employing married women

mascing advertising one's masculine traits and concealing one's feminine ones in an effort to appease others' preferences for masculine men

masculine things we associate with men

masculinities different ways of doing masculinity, arrayed in a hierarchy, that are more or less available to people with different social positions, intersectional identities, and contexts of interaction

masculinization of wealth the concentration of men in high-earning occupations

matrix of domination a structure in which multiple hierarchies intersect to create a pyramid of privilege, leaving on top only those people who are advantaged in every hierarchy

mental rotation the ability to imagine an object rotating in your mind

misogyny fear and hatred of women with power

misogynistic murder the killing of women by men who are motivated to punish them for attempting to exercise that power

modified patriarchies societies in which women have been granted formal gender equality but the patriarchal conflation of power with men and masculinity remains a central part of daily life

mommy tax a term for the lost wages, benefits, and Social Security contributions that come with taking time out of the workforce to raise small children and then re-entering it with less momentum

mommy track a workplace euphemism that refers to expecting less from mothers, with the understanding that they are sacrificing the right to expect equal pay, regular raises, or promotions

monogamy the open practice and encouragement of long-term intimate relationships with only one person

mononormativity the normalizing of monogamy

motherhood penalty a loss in wages associated with becoming a mother

nationalism a belief in the superiority of one's own country, its rightful dominance over others, and exclusionary policies that restrict citizenship by race, ethnicity, or religion

naturalism the idea that biology affects our behavior independently of our environment

nature/nurture debate argument between people who believe that observed differences between men and women are biological and those who believe that these differences are acquired through socialization

neo-traditionalists people who embrace a modified version of traditionalism: They think that a woman should be able to work if she desires, but only if it doesn't interfere with her "real" duty to take care of her husband and children

nonbinary identifying as outside of or between the binary between male and female (see also *genderqueer*)

norms beliefs and practices that are well known, widely followed, and culturally approved

nuclear family a monogamous mother and father with children who live together without extended kin

observed differences findings from surveys, experiments, and other types of studies that detect differences between men and women

open relationships relationships in which comitted partners agree that each can have sexual encounters outside the relationship

orgasm gap a phenomenon in which women involved in heterosexual relationships report fewer orgasms than men

otherfathers men in the neighborhood who act as substitute fathers out of inclination or kindness

othermothers women in the neighborhood who act as substitute mothers out of inclination or kindness

pariah femininities ways of being a woman that, by virtue of directly challenging male dominance, are widely and aggressively policed

partnership marriage a model of marriage based on love and companionship between two equals who negotiate a division of labor unique to their relationship

patriarch/property marriage a model of marriage in which a woman was entered into a marriage by her father, who owned her until he "gave her away" at the wedding

patriarchal bargain a deal in which an individual or group accepts or even legitimates some of the costs of patriarchy in exchange for receiving some of its rewards

patriarchy literally, "the rule of the father"; it refers to the control of female and younger male family members by select adult men, or patriarchs

phenotype an observable set of physical and behavioral traits

policies explicit and codified expectations, often with stated consequences for deviance

politics the activities involved in determining national policies and electing people to guide this process

politics of gender how people change and resist change to the gender order

politics of respectability a form of resistance to negative racial stereotypes that involves being "good" and following conservative norms of appearance and behavior

polyamory the open practice and encouragement of long-term intimate relationships with more than one partner at a time

precarious masculinity the idea that manhood is more difficult to earn and easier to lose than femininity

priming a trick in which study subjects are reminded of a stereotype right before a test

privilege unearned social and economic advantage based on our location in a social hierarchy

production the making of goods for sale

pro-natal policies those policies that encourage childbearing, whether intentionally or not

protective legislation policies designed to protect women from exploitation by restricting their workplace participation

push-and-resist dynamic a situation in which it is normal for men to press sexual activity consistently in the direction of increasing intimacy (whether he wants to or not) and for women to stop or slow down the accelerating intimacy when he's going "too far" (whether she wants to or not)

racial prejudice attitudes and behaviors that are biased against some races and in favor of others

racism social arrangements systematically designed to advantage one race over others

radical claim an idea that doesn't (yet) resonate with most members of a population

rape culture an environment that justifies, naturalizes, and even glorifies sexual pressure, coercion, and violence

reproduction the making and nurturing of human beings

second shift work that greets us when we come home from work

selective exit hypothesis an explanation for job segregation that emphasizes workers' abandonment of counterstereotypical occupations

self-objectify the process by which people internalize the idea that their value is heavily dependent on their physical attractiveness

separate spheres the idea of a masculinized work world and a feminized home life

service and information economy an economy dependent on jobs focused on providing services for others or working with ideas

sex physical differences in primary sexual characteristics (the presence of organs directly involved

in reproduction) and secondary sexual characteristics (such as patterns of hair growth, the amount of breast tissue, and distribution of body fat)

sexism the favoring of one sex over the other, both ideologically and in practice

sexual dimorphism degrees of difference in appearance and behavior between males and females of a species

sexual double standard different rules for the sexual behavior of men and women

sexual minorities gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and others who identify as nonheterosexual

sexual objectification the reduction of a person to his or her sex appeal

sexual orientation whether one prefers male-bodied or female-bodied people as sexual partners, or both or neither.

sexual script the rules that guide sexual interaction

sexual subjectification the process by which people are told what their internal thoughts and feelings should be

sharing doing more or less symmetrical amounts of paid and unpaid work

smashing a term used to describe having a same-sex crush

social construct an arbitrary but influential shared interpretation of reality

social construction a process by which we make reality meaningful through shared interpretation

social identity a culturally available and socially constructed category of people in which we place ourselves or are placed by others

social movements collective, nongovernmental efforts to change societies

social structure the entire set of interlocked institutions within which we live our lives

socialization hypothesis a theory that suggests that men and women respond to gender stereotypes when planning, training, and applying for jobs

specialization splitting unpaid and paid work so that each partner does more of one than the other

spectating watching one's sexual performance from the outside

stalled revolution a sweeping change in gender relations that is stuck halfway through

standing the right to represent oneself and others in decisions being made

states institutions entrusted with the power to regulate everyday life on behalf of the group

stereotypes fixed, oversimplified, and distorted ideas about what people are like

sticky floor a metaphorical barrier to advancement describing jobs with no or low opportunity for promotion

subjectivity internal thoughts and feelings

subordination the placing of women into positions that make them subservient to or dependent on men

substantive representation policies important and helpful to women

suffrage the right to vote

symbolic representation women's presence in government

symbolic threat a presence that potentially degrades the identity of the dominant group

toxic masculinity strategic enactments of masculinities that are harmful both to the men who enact them and to the people around them

traditionalists people who ascribe to the values of the breadwinner/housewife marriage that emerged with industrialization and came to be seen as "traditional" and who believe that men should be responsible for earning income and women should be responsible for housework and childcare

trans (or transgender) a diverse group of people who experience some form of discomfort with the relationship between their bodies' assigned sex and their gender identity, or otherwise reject the gender binary for themselves

transnational feminist activism a type of activism that involves efforts by feminists to change gender relations outside their own states and collaboration between and among feminists in different countries

treating a practice in which a man funds a woman's night on the town

universal suffrage the right of all citizens to vote

unmarked category the identity that is assumed for a role or context without qualification

victim blaming identifying something done by a victim as a cause their victimization

wage money gained from working in places like factories, mines, and shops that belong to others

women's movements social movements organized by women for women

working poor individuals who work but still live in poverty

xenophobia individual and institutional bias against people seen as foreign

NOTES

Chapter 1: Introduction

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Chapter 14: Conclusion

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