CHAPTER 9

Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

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Sexual Differentiation

Men and women are different. Biology differentiates their physical structures, and cultural norms in every society differentiate their roles. In this chapter, we describe some of the major differences in men's and women's lives as they are socially structured in the United States. We will be particularly interested in the extent to which the ascribed characteristic of sex has been the basis for structured inequality.

Sex versus Gender

In understanding the social roles of men and women, it is helpful to make a distinction between sex and gender. **Sex** refers to the two biologically differentiated categories, male and female. It also refers to the sexual act that is closely related to this biological differentiation. **Gender**, on the other hand, refers to the normative dispositions, behaviors, and roles that cultures assign to each sex. (See the Concept Summary on Sex versus Gender.)

Although biology provides two distinct and universal sexes, cultures provide almost infinitely varied **gender roles**. Each man is pretty much like every other man in terms of sex—whether he is upper class or lower class, African American or white, Chinese or Apache. Gender, however, is a different matter. The rights, obligations, dispositions, and activities of the male gender are very different for a Chinese man than for an Apache man. Even within a given culture, gender roles vary by class, race, and subculture. In addition, of course, individuals differ in the way they act out their expected roles: Some males model themselves after Brad Pitt and some after Johnny Depp or Will Smith.

Just how much of the difference between men and women in a particular culture is normative and how much is biological is a question of considerable interest to social and biological scientists. This question has led some biologists to investigate whether characteristics we typically think of as male and female also characterize nonhuman species. If they did, that would lend support to the idea that these male/female differences are biological. Results from these studies are decidedly mixed. Among goby fish, females sport bright colors to attract the opposite sex, but among birds it is usually males who do so. Male baboons certainly dominate female baboons, but male marmosets (small monkeys) take care of the young, and male lions depend on the females to do all the hunting. Meanwhile, whales and elephants live in matriarchal families.

For the most part, social scientists are more interested in gender than in sex. They want to know about the variety of roles that have been assigned to women and men and, more particularly, about the causes and consequences of this variation. Under what circumstances does each gender have more or less power and prestige? How does having more or less power affect women's and men's everyday lives? And what accounts for the recent changes that have occurred in gender roles in our society?

Sex is a biological characteristic, male or female.

Gender refers to the expected dispositions and behaviors that cultures assign to each sex.

Gender roles refer to the rights and obligations that are normative for men and women in a particular culture.

Gender Roles across Cultures

A glance through *National Geographic* confirms that gender roles vary widely across cultures. The behaviors we normally associate with being female and male are by no

concept summary

Sex versus Gender

	Sex	Gender
Divides population into:	Male or female (or maybe intersex)	Masculine and feminine
Based on:	Biological characteristics (chromosomes, sex hormones, penises or vaginas, etc.)	Cultural expectations regarding appropriate behaviors and attitudes for each sex
Consequences:	On average, men have more upper body strength than women because of their hormones.	Men also have more upper body strength because women are warned that they will look "too masculine" if they lift weights too much.
	On average, men are taller than women because of their genes.	In poor countries, sex differences in height are amplified because boys receive more food than do girls.

means universal. Among the Wodaabe, a nomadic tribe of western Africa, boys carry mirrors with them from the time they can walk (Bovin 2001). Even when boys spend days alone in the bush herding cows, they begin each day by fixing their hair and putting on their jewelry, lipstick, mascara, and eyeliner. In contrast, because girls are primarily evaluated on their health and ability to work hard, they are expected to pay far less attention to their appearance than do boys. Wodaabe courtship mostly takes place during men's dance competitions, in which women judges select the winners based on the men's physical beauty and charm. Afterward, the women openly approach the men they find most attractive to be their romantic partners.

Despite cross-cultural variations such as these, and despite the fact that women do substantial amounts of work in all societies (often providing more than half of household food), in almost all societies women have less power and less value than men (Kimmel 2000). A simple piece of evidence is parents' almost universal preference for male children (Sohoni 1994), a preference which can be life threatening for girls. Currently, there are about 120 boys for every 100 girls under the age of 5 in China—far higher than the natural ratio of about 105 to 100 (Zhu, Lu, & Hesketh 2009). This difference is primarily due to the use of abortion to kill fetuses identified prenatally as female. Other girls are killed at birth or, more often, die because they receive less food and medical care than their brothers. The preference for boys is less strong in modern industrial nations, but parents in the United States nonetheless prefer their first child to be a boy by a two-to-one margin (Holloway 1994).

Another result of female power disadvantage is widespread violence toward girls and women. According to the respected international organization Human Rights Watch, "Abuses against women are relentless, systematic, and widely tolerated, if not explicitly condoned. Violence and discrimination against women are global social epidemics" (Human Rights Watch 2004). For example:

- Each year, about 1.5 million American women are raped or physically assaulted by intimate partners (Tjaden & Thoennes 2000). Although men are also sometimes assaulted by their partners, they are more likely to be hit in self-defense and less likely to be seriously harmed or killed (Fox & Zawitz 2004). (Violence between intimates is further discussed in Chapter 11.)
- In Uganda, Darfur, Bosnia, and elsewhere, armies have used rape both as a systematic tool to subjugate the population and as a form of "sport" for soldiers.
- Between 100 and 140 million women, mostly in African countries but also in Asia, South America, and Europe, have undergone genital mutilation—removal of some or all of the clitoris and surrounding genitalia (World Health Organization 2008a). Aimed at eliminating sexual desire in women, the practice is dangerous and even deadly.
- In Afghanistan, Islamic fundamentalists have thrown acid onto the faces of girls who dare to go to school, disfiguring and sometimes blinding them (Filkins 2009).

At home and abroad, violence against women results from the lower status accorded to women. In growing numbers, women around the world are demanding equal rights. In some of the least-developed nations, this means changing cultural and legal values that treat women essentially as their husbands' or fathers' property. In the United States and the rest of the developed world, the problems are more subtle. Those problems lead sociologists to ask: How are gendered identities developed? And what are the institutional forces that maintain inequality, with or without overt violence and discrimination?

Theoretical Perspectives on Gender Inequality

Women rather than men bear children because of physical differences between the sexes. Most of the differences in men's and women's life chances, however, are socially structured. Different sociological theories offer different explanations for the persistence of this structured gender inequality.

Structural-Functional Theory: Division of Labor

The structural-functional explanation of gender inequality is based on the premise that a division of labor is often the most efficient way to get a job done. In the traditional sex-based division of labor, the man does the work outside the family and the woman does the work at home. According to this argument, a gendered division of labor is functional because specialization will (1) increase the expertise of each sex in its own tasks, (2) prevent competition between men and women that might damage the family, and (3) strengthen family bonds by forcing men and women to depend on each other.

Of course, as Marx and Engels noted, any division of labor has the potential for domination and control. In this case, the division of labor has a built-in disadvantage for women because by specializing in the family, women have fewer contacts, less

information, and fewer independent resources. Because this division of labor contributes to family continuity, however, structural functionalists have seen it as necessary and desirable.

Conflict Theory: Sexism and Discrimination

According to conflict theorists, women's disadvantage is not a historical accident. Instead, it is designed to benefit men and to benefit the capitalist class.

Two major concepts employed by conflict theorists to explain how gender inequality benefits men and capitalists are sexism and discrimination. **Sexism** is the belief that women and men have biologically different capacities and that these differences form a legitimate basis for unequal treatment. Conflict theorists explain sexism as an ideology that is part of the general strategy of stratification. If others can be categorically excluded, the need to compete individually is reduced. Sexism, then, reduces women's access to scarce resources and allows men to keep those resources for themselves.

Discrimination is the natural result of sexism. If we believe that women are better suited to work with children and men are better suited for intellectual work, then we will be more likely to admit men to medical school than women, more likely to hire a man as a doctor than a woman, and more likely to hire a woman as a pediatrician than as a neurosurgeon.

Symbolic Interactionism: Gender Inequality in Everyday Life

Symbolic interactionist theory is particularly useful for understanding the sources and consequences of sexism in everyday interactions. For example, sociologist Karin Martin (1998) was interested in understanding how boys and girls learn gender-normative ways of moving, using physical space, and comporting themselves. To research these questions, she studied 112 preschoolers in 5 different classrooms, at 2 different preschools, with 14 different teachers. She found that teachers routinely structure children's play and impose discipline in ways that reinforce gender differences. Little boys are actively discouraged from playing "dress-up" (even though many of them enjoy doing so). And whereas boys are allowed to have fun shouting, playing rough and tumble games, and moving about wildly, girls are disciplined to raise their hands, lower their voices, and refrain from running, crawling, or lying on the ground. By the end of preschool, then, boys and girls are well on their way to learning the nonverbal behaviors and communication styles that are typical of, and seem so natural for, adult men and women. We will discuss these gendered differences in more detail later in this chapter.

A second study illustrating the symbolic interactionist perspective on gender inequality drew on observations collected at a sleepaway camp during the course of one summer (McGuffey & Rich 1999). At this camp, high-ranking boys attained power and popularity primarily through athletic prowess. They bolstered their positions and won approval from other boys by acting aggressively toward lower-ranking boys and by sexually harassing girls. In addition, and most importantly, high-ranking boys led other boys in teasing, assaulting, or excluding any boys they deemed too "feminine" and any girls they deemed too "masculine." Interestingly, high-ranking boys were able to redefine "feminine" activities they enjoyed (such as hand-clapping games) into masculine activities. In these ways, high-ranking boys maintained their status

Sexism is a belief that men and women have biologically different capacities and that these form a legitimate basis for unequal treatment.

and power over other boys, and almost all boys maintained greater status and power than girls.

Gender as Social Construction and Social Structure

To sociologists, gender is not simply something that individuals have—a biological given—but rather is something that is constantly re-created in individual socialization, in medical and cultural practices, and in social interaction. Similarly, sociologists describe gender as an attribute not only of individuals but also of social structures.

Developing Gendered Identities

From the time they are born, girls are treated in one way and boys in another—wrapped in blue blankets or pink ones, encouraged to take up sports or sewing, described as cute or as strong before they are old enough to truly exhibit individual personalities. In these ways, as symbolic interactionist studies illustrate, children learn their gender and gender roles. By the age of 24 to 30 months, they can correctly identify themselves and others by sex, and they have some ideas about what this means for appropriate behavior (Cahill 1983).

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Despite many changes in gender roles in the United States, boys and girls still tend to experience large doses of traditional gender socialization.

Young children's ideas about gender tend to be quite rigid. They develop strong stereotypes for two reasons. One is that the world they see is highly divided by sex: In their experience, women usually don't build bridges and men usually don't crochet. The other important determinant of stereotyping is how they themselves are treated. Substantial research shows that parents treat boys and girls differently. They give their children "gender-appropriate" toys, they respond negatively when their children play with cross-gender toys, they allow boys to be active and aggressive, and they encourage their daughters to play quietly and visit with adults (Orenstein 1994). When parents do *not* encourage gender-stereotypic behavior, their children are less rigid in their gender stereotypes.

As a result of this learning process, boys and girls develop strong ideas about what is appropriate for girls and what is appropriate for boys. However, boys are punished more than girls for exhibiting cross-gender behavior. Thus, little boys are especially rigid in their ideas of what girls and boys ought to do. Girls are freer to engage in cross-gender behavior, and by the time they enter school, many girls are experimenting with boyish behaviors.

Reinforcing Biological Differences

Because of gender socialization, girls and boys and men and women understand quite well what a "proper" male or female should be like. These ideas can become self-fulfilling prophecies, as the *belief* that males and females are biologically different *keeps* males and females biologically different (Lorber 1994). To understand how this works, Shari Dworkin (2003) spent two years doing participant observation at two gyms.

She found that trainers at both gyms told women patrons that they could lift weights without fear because only men can "bulk up." Nonetheless, 25 percent of women didn't lift at all because they feared developing "masculine" muscles. Another 65 percent restricted their weight lifting to shorter periods or lighter weights after they *did* develop bigger muscles. By the end of two years training, these women remained relatively unmuscular. They lacked muscles not because they were inherently unable to develop them but because they chose not to do so, based on their beliefs about proper male/female differences.

Biological sex differences can also be reinforced by medical practices. Doctors sometimes prescribe hormones to keep girls from growing "too tall" and boys from being "too short" (Weitz 2010). Doctors also offer plastic surgery to women with small breasts and men with small pectoral muscles. In this way, the very bodies we see around us come to reinforce social ideas about male/female differences.

Our belief in the naturalness of biological differences is also reinforced when we are, in essence, kept from seeing how similar males and females can be. Television offers far more coverage of female cheerleaders and male football players than of male cheerleaders and female football players, reinforcing the idea that it is impossible for women to play strenuous sports and that no "real men" would be interested in cheerleading. Similarly, Olympic games that evaluate female figure skaters on their grace and male skaters on their speed and power force female and male skaters to develop different skills and leave audiences believing that female and male skaters naturally have quite different abilities. The same is true for athletic rules that limit the size of the basketball court on which girls can play or that forbid male and female athletes from competing together.

"Doing Gender"

Gender differences are also reinforced when we "do gender." Sociologists use the term "doing gender" to refer to everyday activities that individuals engage in to affirm their commitment to gender roles (West & Zimmerman 1987). Women who are professional bodybuilders almost always wear long, blonde hair so that no one will question their femininity despite their muscles (Weitz 2004), and male nurses sometimes talk about their athletic interests or heterosexual conquests to keep others from questioning their masculinity. Each of us does gender every day when we (whether male or female) choose to wear skirts or jeans, to speak softly or boldly, to get a butterfly tattoo or shark tattoo, and so on. In these ways we participate in the social construction of gender. Another way to think about this is that gender is not something that we innately have, but rather is something that we *do*.

Because adolescence is a time when individuals are actively creating their self-identities, doing gender is particularly important during those years. Although we often focus on girls and women when we think of gender, boys are also under strong pressure to do gender. In fact, those pressures are so strong that they lead to *compulsive heterosexuality*. **Compulsive heterosexuality** consists of continually demonstrating one's masculinity (which in mainstream culture includes demonstrating one's heterosexuality). In her observations at a California high school, sociologist C. J. Pascoe (2007) found that boys constantly encouraged each other to tell about their female sexual conquests, to physically threaten or assault girls, and to sexually threaten or assault girls. Shockingly, teachers did nothing to stop these behaviors, even when the girls were placed at physical risk. The combination of boys' actions and teachers' *in*action both reinforced the idea that such behaviors were natural aspects of masculinity and helped the boys to prove their masculinity to themselves and others.

sociology and you

How are you doing gender right now? Are you sitting with your legs splayed apart or crossed at the ankles? Are you wearing makeup? What kind, and for what purposes? What color clothes are you wearing? (Probably not pink, if you are male.) If you are snacking on a muffin while reading this book, did you apologize beforehand or explain how you know you need to lose weight? These are all examples of doing gender.

Compulsive heterosexuality consists of continually demonstrating one's masculinity and heterosexuality.

Gender as Social Structure

Gender is also a social structure, a property of society (Risman 1998). Gender is built into social structure when workplaces don't provide day care; women don't receive equal pay; fathers don't receive paternity leave; basketballs, executive chairs, and power drills are sized to fit the average man; and husbands who share equally in the housework are subtly ridiculed by their friends. Importantly, this suggests that changing gender roles and attitudes will only produce social change if there are parallel changes in the social structure of gender. Equally important, when social structure changes, gender roles and attitudes change. For example, Barbara Risman (1998) found that fathers whose wives died or deserted them learned quickly how to be good "mothers" who could nurture their children as women would.

Differences in Life Chances by Sex

In terms of race and social class, women and men start out equal. The nurseries of the rich as well as the poor contain about 50 percent girls. After birth, however, different expectations for females and males result in very different life chances. This section examines some of the structural social inequalities that exist between women and men.

Health

Women are at a substantial disadvantage in most areas of conventional achievement; in informal as well as formal interactions, they have less power than men. But men, too, face some disadvantages from their traditional gender roles.

Perhaps the most important difference in life chances involves life itself. Boys born in 2015 can expect to live 76.4 years, whereas girls can expect to live 81.4 years (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009a). On average, then, women live more than 5 years longer than men. Part of this difference is undoubtedly biological, with women's hormones offering them some protection. But men's gender roles also contribute to their lower life expectancies (Rieker & Bird 2000).

A major way male gender roles endanger men is by encouraging them to "prove" their masculinity through dangerous activities. As a result, compared with young women, young men are twice as likely to die in motor vehicle accidents and six times more likely to be killed by guns (Minino 2002). Similarly, men are far more likely than women to earn their living through dangerous jobs, such as fishing and lumbering.

But risk taking alone cannot explain all the difference between men's and women's life expectancies. For example, research suggests that men are at greater risk of dying from heart disease partly because the male gender role places little emphasis on nurturance and emotional relationships. Maintaining family and social relationships is usually viewed as women's work, and so men who stay single, get divorced, or are widowed often end up alone. Ultimately, this lack of social support leaves men especially vulnerable to stress-related diseases and may explain why their suicide rate is four times higher than women's (Minino 2002; Nardi 1992).

In contrast, in poor countries, women's social positions greatly increase their risk of dying. This topic is explored in Focus on A Global Perspective: Pregnancy and Death in Less Developed Nations on pages 218–219.

Education

Fifty years ago, few young women went to college. Those who did were encouraged to focus not on earning a B.A. but on earning an "MRS" (that is, a marriage certificate). These days, women and men are about equally represented among high school graduates and among those receiving bachelor's and master's degrees. It is not until the level of the PhD or advanced professional degrees (such as in architecture) that women are disadvantaged in quantity of education.

More important than the differences in level of education are the differences in *types* of education. From about the fifth grade on, sex differences emerge in academic aptitudes and interests: Boys take more science and math, whereas girls more often excel in verbal skills and focus their efforts on language and literature. In large part, these sex differences in aptitudes and interests are socially created (Sadker & Sadker 1994). In all subjects, but especially math and science, teachers typically assume that boys have a better chance of succeeding. One result is that teachers more often ask girls simple questions about facts and ask boys questions that require use of analytic skills. When boys have difficulty, teachers help them learn how to solve the problem, whereas when girls have difficulty, teachers often do the problem for them. By the time students arrive at college, girls often lack the necessary prerequisites and skills to major in physical sciences or engineering, even if they should develop an interest in them (Sadker & Sadker 1994). As a result, women college graduates are overrepresented in education and the humanities, and men are overrepresented in engineering and the physical sciences—fields that pay considerably higher salaries.

Table 9.1 shows the proportion of bachelor's degrees earned by women in various fields of study in 1971 and in 2007. You can see from the table that there were changes over this period. Women comprised a far higher proportion of graduates in traditionally male fields in 2007 than in 1971. In fact, women now comprise about half of all graduates in business, pre-law, mathematics, and social sciences and history.

TABLE 9.1 Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees Earned by Women, by Field, 1971 and 2007
Between 1971 and 2007, the percentage of college degrees in traditionally male fields that were earned by women increased substantially. Nevertheless, engineering continues to be largely a male preserve, and education—especially home economics education—a female preserve. Because engineers earn roughly three times what teachers earn, this difference in majors is one reason why, on average, women earn less than men.

Field of Study	1971	2007
Business	9	49
Computer and information sciences	14	19
Education	75	79
Engineering	1	18
Health sciences	77	86
Home economics education	97	99
Library and archival sciences	92	88
Pre-law	6	58
Mathematics	38	44
Social sciences and history	37	50

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics (2009).

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Pregnancy and Death in Less-Developed Nations

In the poorer nations of the world, women face a very different set of health risks. Within these nations, the most dangerous thing a woman can do is get pregnant. One of every 75 women in the less-developed nations dies from pregnancy or childbirth—almost *100* times the number that die in the most-developed nations (World Health Organization 2009). Map 9.1 shows how the lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy or childbirth varies around the world.

The high rates of pregnancy-related deaths in the developing nations are a consequence of *social* conditions (World Health Organization 2009). First, in any country, about 10 percent of women may die pregnancy-related deaths if they lack access to medical care—a common situation in the less-developed nations.

The remaining causes of pregnancy-related deaths in the developing nations result from women's low social status. In countries in which women have little value, they rarely get enough to eat. This can be fatal for a pregnant woman, who needs extra nourishment to feed both herself and her developing fetus. Lack of nutrition leaves women more likely to become fatally ill, to hemorrhage during childbirth, or to experience other fatal complications during pregnancy or childbirth.

Similarly, in countries where women's value comes primarily from the children they bear, girls are pressured to marry before their bodies are fully developed. As a result, they may be unable to push a baby out, leaving both baby and mother to die. By the same token, when a woman's worth and a man's power are measured by the number of their sons, women have little choice but to become pregnant repeatedly. For biological reasons, each pregnancy after the third places the mother at greater risk than did the previous one.

Finally, in countries where women's health is valued less than that of their fetuses, the final major cause of pregnancy-related death is unsafe abortion (World Health Organization 2009). Most women who obtain abortions are married mothers who believe they cannot afford to feed another mouth. Deaths typically occur when women swallow toxic chemicals to abort themselves or when others use unsterile instruments or accidentally pierce the uterus during an abortion, leading to infection or hemorrhage (Sedgh et al. 2007). Yet abortion is a technically simple procedure, far safer than childbirth when performed by trained professionals working in sterile conditions with proper tools (World Health Organization 2009). Thus, deaths from abortion typically occur when abortion is illegal or when trained providers are unaffordable.

In sum, the best way to keep girls and women from dying during pregnancy and childbirth is to improve their social position.

Still, striking differences between men and women remain. In 2006, only 19 percent of graduates in engineering and 25 percent of graduates in computer sciences were women. Meanwhile, 79 percent of graduates in education, 86 percent in health sciences (mostly nursing), and almost all graduates in home economics and library sciences were women (U.S. Department of Education 2009). Because engineers and computer scientists earn a great deal more than do home economics teachers, librarians, and nurses, these differences in college majors have implications for future economic well-being. This situation is an example of institutionalized sexism. (Recall that Chapter 8 discussed the parallel concept of institutionalized racism.)

Work and Income

Among Americans ages 16 and over, 68 percent of men compared with 57 percent of women are in the labor force (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009a). This gap is far smaller than it used to be and will likely continue to shrink (Figure 9.1). Although most young women nowadays still expect to be mothers, they also overwhelmingly expect to work full time after completing their education.

MAP 9.1: Lifetime Risk of Dying from Pregnancy or Childbirth

In North America, only 1 out of every 6,000 women eventually dies from pregnancy or childbirth; the risk is similar in Australia, New Zealand, and Europe. in contrast, 1 out of 300 women dies from pregnancy or childbirth in South America, 1 out of 120 dies in Asia, and a stunning 1 out of *26* dies in Africa.

SOURCE: Population Reference Bureau (2008).

Despite growing equality in labor-force involvement, major inequalities in the rewards of paid employment persist. Women who are full-time workers earn 78 percent as much as men (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2009a). This percentage has not changed much since 1950.

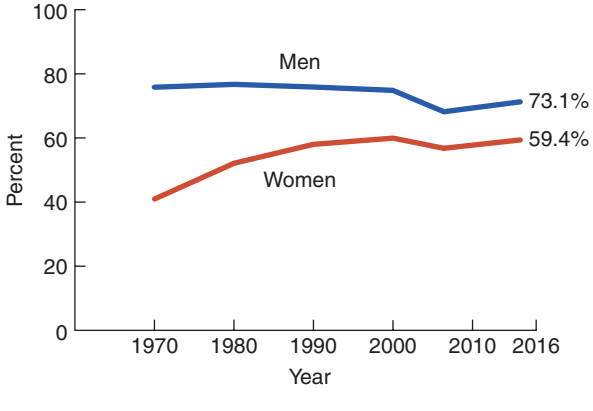

FIGURE 9.1 Labor-Force Participation Rates of Adult Men and Women, 1970–2016 (estimated)

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a).

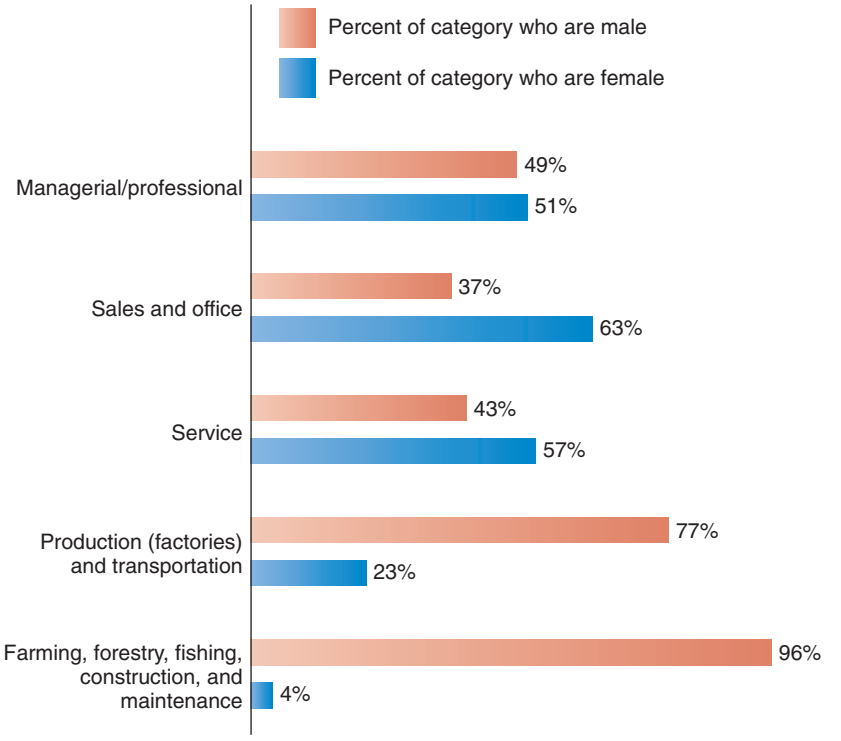

FIGURE 9.2 Sex Differences in Occupations
SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009a).

Why do women earn less than men? The answers fall into two categories: differences in the types of occupations men and women have and differences in earnings of men and women in the same types of occupations.

Different Occupations, Different Earnings

A major source of women's lower earnings is that women are often employed in different occupations than are men, and women's occupations pay less than men's. The major sex difference as shown in Figure 9.2 is that women dominate sales, office, and service occupations, whereas men dominate blue-collar occupations. The proportion of men and women in professional and managerial occupations is equal. Generally, though, men professionals are doctors and women professionals are nurses; men manage steel plants and women manage dry-cleaning outlets.

There are three major reasons why men and women have different occupations: *gendered occupations*, *different qualifications*, and *discrimination*.

1. *Gendered occupations.* Many occupations in today's segmented labor market are regarded as either "women's work" or "men's work." Construction is almost exclusively men's work; primary school teaching and day care are largely women's work. These occupations are so sex segregated that many men and women would feel uncomfortable working in a job where they were so clearly the "wrong" sex. These stereotypes, combined with the low pay of traditionally female fields, keep most men out of these fields. However, growing numbers of women have moved into jobs that used to be reserved for men, such as insurance adjusting, police work, bus driving, and medicine. This does not, unfortunately, signal that women now have increased access to good jobs. Rather, women by and large move into jobs that men have abandoned because of deteriorating wages and working conditions (Reskin 1989).

focus on  AMERICAN DIVERSITY

Gender Differences in Mathematics

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Without question, women's position in the work world has improved in recent years. However, they remain underrepresented in the high-paying, high-growth fields of engineering, information technology, and the sciences.

One reason men are overrepresented in these fields is because women less often took advanced math courses or did well on standardized math tests when they were in high school. But are boys and men actually better than girls and women at math, and, if so, is this difference based on nature or nurture?

Neuroscientists interested in this question have begun exploring the relationship between fetal exposure to sex hormones and characteristic differences in the brains of adult men and women. For instance, higher levels of fetal exposure to testosterone (a "male" hormone) are associated with right-brain dominance, while lower exposure levels are associated with left-brain dominance. This association may help explain why, compared with the opposite sex, men more often are left-handed with good visual-spatial skills (a "right-brain" trait) and women more often are right-handed with good verbal skills (a "left-brain" trait).

From findings such as these, some researchers reason that gender differences in mathematical performance are at least partially a result of hormonal differences. But just because hormonal differences are *associated* with mathematical performance does not mean that the hormonal differences *caused* the differences in performance. For one thing, gender differences in mathematical performance are considerably smaller in countries such as China that less strongly consider mathematics a "male" field (Evans, Schweingruber, & Stevenson 2002). At any rate, the gender differences in performance are small. Because the differences *within* each sex are so much larger than the differences *between* them, critics of the biological perspective argue that hormones can explain only a very small part of the overall variation in mathematical performance. This leaves a great deal of room for the influence of social factors. Evidence for this point of view comes from two lines of research.

First, research suggests that the average test score for girls is lower than that for boys because girls more often respond poorly to the stress of timed tests. Even when girls understand math as well as boys, they simply don't test as well. In addition, boys typically don't take SAT tests unless they are especially good students, whereas girls often take the tests even if they are only average students. As a result, the mean test score for girls is lower than that for boys (especially on the math section) simply because a broader pool of girls takes the test (Lewin 2006).

Second, research shows that the male advantage in mathematical performance is small, only emerges late in high school, and has declined steadily since the 1960s (Leahey & Guo 2001). One possible explanation for this pattern is that boys and girls are now being socialized more similarly, thereby reducing the traditional male advantage in math.

2. *Different qualifications.* Although the differences are smaller than they used to be, women continue to major in fields of study that prepare them to work in relatively low-paying fields, such as education, whereas men are more likely to choose more lucrative fields. (Some of the reasons for this are discussed in Focus on American Diversity: Gender Differences in Mathematics.) More important than these differences in educational qualifications are disparities in experience and on-the-job training. Believing that women are likely to quit once they marry, have children, or lose interest, employers invest less in training and mentoring them (Tomaskovic-Devey & Skaggs 2002).

TABLE 9.2 Sex Differences in Representation and Median Weekly Earnings, by Occupation*

Women are clustered in lower-paying occupations. But even when women have the same occupation as men, they tend to earn substantially less money. Women tend to be employed in lower-paying firms and subfields and to experience discrimination in hiring, raises, and promotion.

Occupation	Male Income	Female Income	% of Workers Who are Women
Chief executives	$1,903	$1,603	24%
Lawyers	1,751	1,509	38
Computer programmers	1261	1,003	22
Elementary and middle-school teachers	994	871	81
Retail salespersons	623	440	43

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009b).
*Full-time, year-round workers only.

As a result, women are less likely to be promoted to management positions—even if they have no intention of having children or marrying.

3. *Discrimination*. Although men and women have somewhat different occupational preparation, a large share of occupational differences is due to discrimination by employers (Hesse-Biber & Carter 2000). Employers reserve some jobs for men and some for women based on their own gender-role stereotypes. As a result, women remain nurses rather than nursing administrators, and salesclerks rather than store managers.

Same Occupation, Different Earnings

Not all occupations are highly sex segregated. Some, such as flight attendant, teacher, and research analyst, contain considerable proportions of both men and women. Within any given occupation, however, men typically earn substantially higher incomes (Table 9.2). There are two main explanations for this: *different titles* and *discrimination*.

1. *Different titles*. Very often, men and women who do the same tasks are given different titles—women will be maids or executive assistants, and men doing the same work will be janitors or assistant executives. Simply because one job category is considered "male" and is occupied by males, it is paid a higher wage.
2. *Discrimination*. Even when women and men have the same job titles, women tend to be paid less. One reason for this is that, within any given occupation, men tend to hold the more prestigious, better-paying positions (Hesse-Biber & Carter 2000; McBrier 2003). Male lawyers tend to be hired in large, high-paying firms to specialize in prestigious fields, whereas women tend to be hired in small, low-paying firms, specializing in less prestigious fields. Male sales staff tend to be hired by stores and departments that offer better salaries or hefty commissions, whereas female sales staff work in less remunerative areas. These differences reflect the segmented labor market (discussed in more detail in Chapter 13).

Even when women and men work in the same occupations and positions; work for the same employers; and have equal education, experience, and other qualifications,

women earn less. The absence of any other explanations for this difference has led researchers to conclude that it must be caused by discrimination (Maume 2004).

This discrimination occurs in both female- and male-dominated fields. In female-dominated occupations, women's careers progress gradually. In contrast, men often encounter a "glass escalator" that invisibly helps them to move rapidly into administrative positions and prestigious specialties (Williams 1992; Hultin 2003). In male-dominated occupations, men's careers typically progress gradually, whereas women more often are pressured out of the occupation altogether (Maume 1999). This is often done through subtle discrimination such as exclusion from informal leadership and decision-making networks, sexual harassment, and other forms of hostility from male co-workers (Chetkovich 1998; Jacobs 1989). This informal discrimination creates a "glass ceiling"—an invisible barrier to women's promotions (Freeman 1990).

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Although sexism continues to have an impact, more and more women are finding employment in fields formerly open only to men.

Gender and Power

As Max Weber pointed out, differences in prestige and power are as important as differences in economic reward. When we turn to these rewards, we again find that women are systematically disadvantaged. In the family, business, the church, and elsewhere, women are less likely to be given positions of authority.

Unequal Power in Social Institutions

Women's subordinate position is built into most social institutions. In some churches, ministers quote the New Testament command, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands" (Ephesians 5:22). In colleges, women's basketball coaches are paid less than men's basketball coaches. In politics, prejudice against women leaders remains strong, and women still comprise only a minority of major elected officials in the United States and around the world.

Unequal Power in Interaction

As we noted in Chapter 4, even the informal exchanges of everyday life are governed by norms; that is, they are patterned regularities, occurring in similar ways again and again. Careful attention to the roles men and women play in these informal interactions shows clear differences—all of them associated with childhood socialization and with women's lower prestige and power.

Studies of informal conversations show that men regularly dominate women in verbal interaction (Tannen 1990). Men take up more of the speaking time; they interrupt women more often; and most important, they interrupt more successfully. Finally, women are more placating and less assertive in conversation than men, and women are more likely to state their opinions as questions ("Don't you think the red one is nicer than the blue one?"). This pattern also appears in committee and business meetings, which is one reason women employees are less likely than men to get credit for their ideas (Tannen 1994).

Laboratory and other studies show that this male/female conversational division of labor is largely a result of status differences (Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz 1985;

decoding the data

Sexual Harassment on the Job

SOURCE: Calculated from General Social Survey. http://sda.berkeley.edu. Accessed June 2009.

	Percentage answering yes	
	Male	Female
College graduates	16%	23%
Not college graduates	20%	29%

By definition, sexual advances or propositions from professors, work supervisors, or others who have power over another individual are considered sexual harassment. Harassment is experienced more often by females and by those who have not graduated from college, regardless of their sex.

Have you ever experienced sexual advances or propositions from supervisors, whether involving physical contact or just sexual conversations?

Explaining the Data: Why would females be more likely than males to experience sexual harassment? Why would those with less education be more at risk of sexual harassment?

Critiquing the Data: Are there any reasons why males would be more likely than females to report these experiences? why females would be more likely than males to do so?

Are there any reasons why college graduates would be more likely than others to report these experiences? why nongraduates might be more likely to do so?

This question was asked of all persons who responded to the national, random General Social Survey, regardless of whether or for how long they had ever held a job. How might the percentage reporting harassment have changed if the question was asked only of full-time workers?

Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin 1999; Tannen 1990). When women clearly have more status than men, such as when a female professor talks with a male student, women do not exhibit low-status interaction styles.

Case Study: Sexual Harassment

The impact of women's relative lack of power becomes clear when we look at the topic of **sexual harassment**—unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other unwanted verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Although estimates vary widely depending on the definition and sample used, as many as half of all working women probably experience sexual harassment during their lifetime (Welsh 1998). Men also can be sexually harassed—by men as well as by women—but this occurs far less often. The extent and measurement of sexual harassment is discussed further in Decoding the Data: Sexual Harassment on the Job.

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

There are two forms of sexual harassment (Shapiro 1994). By law, harassment exists when an employer, teacher, or other supervisor expects sexual favors (from inappropriate touching to sexual intercourse) in exchange for something else: keeping one's job, getting a good grade or letter of recommendation, and so on. Sexual harassment ranges from subtle hints about the rewards for being more friendly with the boss or teacher to rape. Sexual harassment also exists when an individual finds it impossible

to do his or her job because of a hostile sexual climate, such as when pornographic photographs are posted in an office or co-workers frequently make sexist or sexual jokes.

Sexual harassment exists because women have less power than men. (Similarly, men are only harassed in situations where they have little power.) But sexual harassment not only *reflects* women's relative powerless social position, it also helps to *keep* them in that position. For example, women students in engineering classes or firms who experience sexual harassment are less likely to continue to pursue a career in engineering. They also may lose confidence in their abilities and their judgment and may suffer long-lasting psychological troubles (Sadker & Sadker 1994).

Sexual harassment remains common—if illegal—in the workplace.

Fighting Back Against Sexism

To fight back against sexual harassment, woman battering, job discrimination, and the other problems discussed in this chapter, women—and men—have united in the feminist movement (Evans 2003; Freedman 2002). At its core, the feminist movement holds that women and men deserve equal rights and that women's lives, culture, and values are as important as are men's. This chapter is an important marker of the success of the feminist movement: Thirty years ago, no sociology textbook would have included a chapter on sex and gender.

This section looks at the history of the feminist movement and at the particular issues involved for nonwhite women.

The Feminist Movement

The first wave of the American feminist movement arose in the mid-nineteenth century. At the time, women's legal status was essentially that of property. Like slaves (both male and female), women regardless of race could not own property, vote, make contracts, or testify in a court of law, and only two small colleges admitted women. Many women (both black and white) who were active in the movement to abolish slavery took from their experience a belief in equality and the organizing skills needed to start the feminist movement.

Because of feminist protest, by the end of the nineteenth century, the most egregious legal restrictions on women's lives had been lifted, and a growing (though still small) list of colleges accepted women students. At this point, feminist activity shifted almost entirely to obtaining the vote (suffrage) for women. In 1920, Congress adopted the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted female suffrage.

After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, feminist activity declined precipitously. In the 1960s, however, two groups of women began pressing for further change, in what became known as the *second wave* of feminism. The first group (known as *liberal feminists*) came to feminism through involvement in mainstream political and professional organizations and fought for women to gain equal rights within the existing system. They deserve credit for such social changes as requiring selective public high schools and colleges to admit female students and forbidding employers from posting job advertisements "for men only." The second group (known as *radical feminists*) came to feminism through the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements and fought for more radical social changes. They deserve credit for bringing public awareness to incest, domestic violence, and date rape. (In fact, the latter two terms didn't even exist before radical feminism.) They also deserve credit for promoting the idea that women can and should enjoy sexual pleasure, which includes the right to birth control.

sociology and you

Did you play on a sports team in high school, or do you play on a team now? If so, and if you are female, you owe your athletic career in part to Title IX of the federal Educational Amendments of 1972. Title IX was a product of liberal feminist activism. It prohibits sex discrimination in any educational institution or activity that receives federal funding. Title IX applies to everything from financial aid and class offerings to athletics and health insurance, from kindergarten through graduate school. It has led to a dramatic rise in women's educational attainment and their athletic participation.

Beginning in the 1990s, a new group of feminists, know as the *third wave*, came to the fore. Because third-wave feminists grew up in a society that had been deeply affected by earlier waves of feminism, they focused on emphasizing how women's position had improved. Similarly, they focused on celebrating women's sexual freedom and pleasure rather than on highlighting sexual dangers. In addition, third-wave feminists emphasized the particular ways that sexism, racism, class inequality, and other forms of inequality differently affect different groups of women (Evans 2003; Freedman 2002).

Fighting Sexism and Racism

Throughout the history of the feminist movement, white and nonwhite women worked together to improve women's lives. Nevertheless, and as third-wave feminists pointed out, the feminist movement has sometimes (if unintentionally) focused on issues that mainly concerned white women.

For nonwhite women, the struggle for equality starts from different places and provokes different questions and answers. Most importantly, nonwhite women face a two-pronged dilemma. First, they have not benefited from the sheltered position of traditional white women's roles. Nonwhite women have always worked outside the home: For example, in 1900 married African American women were six times more likely to be employed than were married white women (Goldin 1992). Although they worked, they still had to face the economic and civic penalties of being women. Consequently, minority women traditionally have had less to lose and more to gain from abandoning conventional gender roles. On the other hand, nonwhite women face a potential conflict of interest: Is racism or sexism their chief oppressor? Should they work for an end to racism or an end to sexism? If they choose to work for women's rights, they may be seen as working against men of their own racial and ethnic group.

Current income figures indicate that sex is more important than race in determining women's earnings: The difference in earnings among Hispanic, African American, and white non-Hispanic women is relatively small compared to the difference between women and men. This suggests that fighting sex discrimination would aid nonwhite women more than fighting racial discrimination would. But this conclusion overlooks the fact that women and their children also need the earnings of their husbands and fathers. For example, because of the low earnings and limited employment opportunities of African American *men*, African American women and children are three times more likely than their white counterparts to live below the poverty level. As a result, nonwhite women have much to gain by fighting racism as well as sexism.

The dilemma remains. The women's rights movement is often seen as a middle-class white social movement; racial and ethnic movements have been seen as men's movements. Nevertheless, minority women have a long history of resistance to both racism and sexism.

The Sociology of Sexuality

Like gender, sexuality is also a product of both biology and culture. Ideas about "proper" sexuality vary cross-culturally, and have varied historically. A hundred years ago, a woman who admitted to enjoying sexual pleasure could have been declared insane and locked in a mental hospital. Now, a woman who does *not* enjoy sexual pleasure may be labeled frigid and referred to a therapist. In ancient Greece, male youths

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"Abstinence only" programs now dominate sex education in the United States. Yet research consistently finds that such programs work only in the very short term, if at all.

were expected to engage in homosexual behavior with their adult male mentors; these days, adults (of either sex) who have sexual relations with minors can be imprisoned. In this section, we look at current sexual behavior in the United States.

Sexual Scripts

In few areas of our lives are we free to improvise. Instead, we learn roles and norms scripts that direct us toward accepted behaviors and away from unaccepted ones. Sex is no exception. Cultural expectations regarding who, where, when, why, how, and with whom one should have sex are referred to as **sexual scripts**. Depending on your subculture, you may have learned a sexual script in which sex was something done only between spouses, for the purpose of procreation, at night, behind closed doors. Or you may have learned a script in which sex was something to be celebrated and enjoyed, between any willing partners, in any location and at any time that felt comfortable.

Because no modern culture is fully homogeneous, different sexual scripts are often in conflict. And because we are exposed to sexual scripts from multiple sources—parents, teachers, friends, religious leaders, the mass media—the sexual scripts we adopt often change over time.

Premarital Sexuality

One of the most important sexual scripts has to do with the appropriateness of sexuality outside of (heterosexual) marriage. Premarital intercourse has become increasingly accepted over the last few decades (Ku et al. 1998; Abma et al. 2004). Moreover, whereas in the 1950s couples typically only had sex if they intended to marry, now teens may "hook up" with no intention of even having a relationship.

Similarly, the proportion of never-married teenagers who say that they have had sexual intercourse increased from about 40 percent in the 1950s to about 50 percent

Sexual scripts are cultural expectations regarding who, where, when, why, how, and with whom one should have sex.

for girls and 60 percent for boys by the late 1980s (Abma et al. 2004). Since then, however, rates of sexual intercourse among teens have declined slightly, to about 46 percent among both boys and girls (Abma et al. 2004). What explains this decline?

The answer is definitely *not* the abstinence-only sexual education programs that now dominate in the United States. Research consistently finds no credible evidence that such programs work except in the very short term (Dailard 2003).

More likely, the drop in teenage sexual activity reflects the growing awareness of the threats posed by AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Not surprisingly, the percentage of teenagers who report using condoms the last time they had sexual intercourse has increased steadily since 1988. It is now common for young people to use condoms the first few times they have sexual relations with a new partner. After that, though, most conclude that they know and can trust their partners and so abandon condom use. Women are especially likely to believe that their partner loves them and wouldn't hurt them; men are especially likely to believe that they are invulnerable and don't need to worry. Unfortunately, it is usually impossible to know if someone has a sexually transmitted disease unless they admit it. But many individuals don't know they are infected, while others know but don't tell.

Marital Sexuality

In certain important ways, the sexual scripts followed by married couples have changed little over time. For example, frequency of sexual activity seems to have changed very little among married people over the years (Call, Sprecher, & Schwartz 1995; Laumann et al. 1994). And now, as in the past, most couples find that the frequency of intercourse declines steadily with the length of the marriage. The decline appears to be nearly universal and to occur regardless of the couple's age, education, or situation. After the first year, almost everything that happens—children, jobs, commuting, housework, finances—reduces the frequency of marital intercourse (Call, Sprecher, & Schwartz 1995). Nevertheless, satisfaction with both the quantity and the quality of one's sex life is essential to a good marriage (Blumstein & Schwartz 1983; Laumann et al. 1994).

Despite these historical continuities, the sexual scripts followed by married couples have undergone some important changes in recent decades. First, oral sex, a practice that was limited largely to unmarried sexual partners and the highly educated in earlier decades, is now more common. Second, women and men are now equally likely to have extramarital affairs. The double standard has disappeared in adultery: Studies conducted in the 1990s suggest that as many as 50 percent of both men and women have had an extramarital sexual relationship (Laumann et al. 1994). Unfortunately, more recent data on marital sexuality is not available, because federal funding for sexuality surveys was essentially abandoned under the administration of President Bush.

Sexual Minorities

Although the majority of the population is heterosexual—preferring sex and romance with the opposite sex—significant minorities diverge from this script. This section discusses homosexuals and transgendered persons.

Homosexuals (also known as gays and lesbians) are people who prefer sexual and romantic relationships with members of their own sex.

Homosexuality in Society

The largest of the sexual minorities is homosexuals (also known as gays and lesbians). **Homosexuals** are people who prefer sexual and romantic relationships with members

of their own sex. On well-regarded surveys, somewhere between 2 and 6 percent of Americans admit *recent* homosexual activity or describe themselves as homosexual, with rates about twice as high among men as among women (Binson et al. 1995; Lauman et al. 1994). Considerably more report that they engaged in homosexual activity at some point in their lives. Undoubtedly many others have also done so but have not admitted it to survey researchers.

Attitudes toward homosexuality have fluctuated greatly over time. During the last 50 years, however, American attitudes have become increasingly more positive. In a Gallup Poll conducted in 2008, 55 percent of surveyed Americans agreed that homosexual activity between consenting adults should be legal (Saad 2008). Support for gay rights is highest among persons who are less religious, younger, urban dwellers, non-Southerners, more educated, and more liberal in general.

The Gay and Lesbian Rights Movement

Growing acceptance of homosexuality is a direct outgrowth of the gay and lesbian rights movement. The American gay and lesbian rights movement grew rapidly in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when gays and lesbians who had worked in the civil rights and feminist movements began questioning why they too should not have equal rights (Clendinen & Nagourney 2001; Marcus 2002).

The pivotal moment for the incipient gay rights movement came with the Stonewall Riots, which began June 27, 1969. For many years before that date, the police had routinely raided gay bars in New York City. But something was different that night: This time the bar's patrons fought back. The police responded brutally, but the riot only grew, with about 2,000 people from the heavily gay and lesbian neighborhood joining in over the next few days. By the time the riots ended, the modern gay rights movement had come of age.

The AIDS epidemic also played an important role in the history of the movement. When AIDS was first identified in 1981, many erroneously labeled it a "gay plague," and both prejudice and discrimination increased. As gay men were forced by their illness to reveal their sexual identity or were identified as gay after they died of AIDS, heterosexuals came to realize how many of their friends, relatives, co-workers, neighbors, and favorite film stars (like Rock Hudson) were gay. As a result, stereotypes and prejudices often fell by the wayside.

The gay and lesbian rights movement has achieved some notable successes. The American Psychological Association no longer considers homosexuality per se an illness; at least 21 states and the District of Columbia outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force 2009); and open homosexuals have been elected to public office, including in the U.S. Senate. Most importantly, in 2003 the U.S. Supreme Court declared that states could no longer criminalize private, consensual, same-sex activities. Currently, the hottest battles are being fought over the right of gays to marry or enter into civil unions.

Transgender in Society

Transgendered persons are individuals whose sex or sexual identity is not definitively male or female. There are two main types of transgendered people: intersex persons and transsexuals.

Transgendered persons are individuals whose sex or sexual identity is not definitively male or female.

Intersex persons are individuals who are born with ambiguous genitalia, such as a small penis as well as ovaries. Intersexuality is a naturally occurring, if rare, phenomenon. In the early stage of fetal development, all fetuses are sexually ambiguous. All fetuses (and adult humans) produce both male and female hormones (including estrogen and testosterone), and these hormones lead to sexual differentiation—the

development of ovaries, penises, and so on—later in fetal development. Intersexuality occurs when that differentiation is incomplete. When such cases are identified, doctors typically use surgery or hormones to transform the individual's body into one that more closely matches our accepted ideas of what males or females should look like. As when plastic surgeons give women larger breasts, these medical interventions serve to reinforce social ideas about proper sexuality. In contrast, some other cultures recognize the existence of more than two sexes (Herdt 1994; Lorber 1994).

Unlike intersex persons, transsexuals' sex is not ambiguous: There are no observable biological differences between them and other heterosexual males or females. Instead, transsexuals are persons who psychologically feel that they are trapped in the body of the wrong sex. As with intersex persons, most doctors consider it appropriate to prescribe hormones or perform surgery (removing penises and constructing vaginas or vice versa) to give transsexuals the bodies they desire. Some observers, however, question the wisdom of these medical interventions (Meyerowitz 2002). They wonder whether, in a society that allowed both men and women more freedom, anyone would feel "trapped" in the wrong body, and they question whether there is really something so wrong with men who enjoy "chick flicks" and taking care of children, or with women who prefer wearing crew cuts and working on cars. To these observers, the medical treatment of transsexuality is another example of the social construction of both gender and sexuality.

Where This Leaves Us

Gender roles have changed dramatically over the last 30 years, in ways that have affected us deeply. As structural functionalists point out, traditional roles had their virtues. Everyone knew what was expected of them, and complementary male/female roles held families together by forcing each sex to depend on the other. In contrast, the decline in traditional gender roles has brought stress to many people—not only to men who lost rights and power but also to women who found themselves caught between changing expectations.

But conflict theorists are also correct: Everyone did not benefit equally from traditional roles, and everyone paid some price for maintaining them. Women endured lower earnings, narrow educational and occupational opportunities, sexual harassment, sexist prejudice and discrimination, and, sometimes, physical violence. Men who held to traditional masculine gender roles experienced more stress, less nurturing relationships, and shorter lives.

Sex is a biological category, something we are born with. But sex, gender, and sexuality are also socially constructed. Doctors can change patients' physical bodies so that individuals' sex and gender better fit social expectations. Society, in general, continually evolves its ideas of what it means to be male and female, masculine and feminine, and all of us contribute to this process when we socialize our children, "do gender," and interact with each other. Creating a more just world will require that we change the social structure of gender and sexuality as well as its interpersonal aspects.

Summary

1. Although there is a universal biological basis for sex differentiation, a great deal of variability exists in the roles and personalities assigned to men and women across societies. In almost all cultures, however, women have less power than men.
2. Structural-functional theorists argue that a division of labor between the sexes builds a stronger family and reduces competition. Conflict theorists stress that men and capitalists benefit from sexism and a segmented labor market that relegates women to lower-status positions. Symbolic interactionism does not address why gender inequality arose but does help us understand how it is perpetuated in interaction.
3. Sex stratification is maintained through socialization. From earliest childhood, females and males learn ideas about sex-appropriate behavior and integrate them into their self-identities. Sex stratification is also maintained by medical and social practices that magnify biological differences between the sexes.
4. Gender is not simply an individual attribute. It is also a property built into social structures and built into our everyday actions. "Doing gender" refers to everyday activities that individuals engage in to affirm that they understand what is expected of them as male or female. Boys' perceived obligation to constantly demonstrate their masculinity and heterosexuality is referred to as *compulsive heterosexuality*.
5. Men as well as women face disadvantages due to their gender roles. For men, these include higher mortality and fewer intimate relationships.
6. Women and men are growing more similar in their educational aspirations and attainments and in the percentage of their lives that they will spend in the workforce.
7. Women who are full-time, full-year workers earn 78 percent as much as men. This is because they have different (poorer-paying) occupations and because they earn less when they hold the same occupations. Causes include different educational preparation and discrimination.
8. Women's subordinate position is built into all social institutions. Although some of this has changed, men disproportionately occupy leadership positions in social institutions. They also dominate women in conversation.
9. For over 150 years, the feminist movement has fought to improve the position of American women. It has had many notable successes.
10. Premarital sexuality is now widely accepted. However, it has declined in frequency since the late 1980s, primarily in response to the AIDS epidemic.
11. Homosexuality is growing more accepted in the United States. Some sociologists question whether the medical treatment of transgendered persons reflects and reinforces traditional ideas about gender roles.

Thinking Critically

1. Suppose you want your daughter to consider science as a future profession. How would you go about encouraging her to consider this career choice? As a member of the PTA at your daughter's school, what changes would you encourage her school to make in order to increase the chances of girls considering science as a profession?
2. Chapter 8 discussed institutionalized racism. Consider the parallels between racism and sexism. Can you think of some specific examples of how institutionalized *sexism* works against women in the workplace? against men? What kinds of programs or policy might help reduce this discrimination against working women?
3. If men have more power, why do they die earlier and have higher rates of heart disease, suicide, and alcoholism? As women gain power, should we expect them to have similar health problems? Why or why not?
4. In TV commercials, males predominate about nine to one as the authority figure, even when the products are aimed at women. Using your sociological knowledge, how would you explain this?

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