
Women Across Cultures

A Global Perspective



Second Edition

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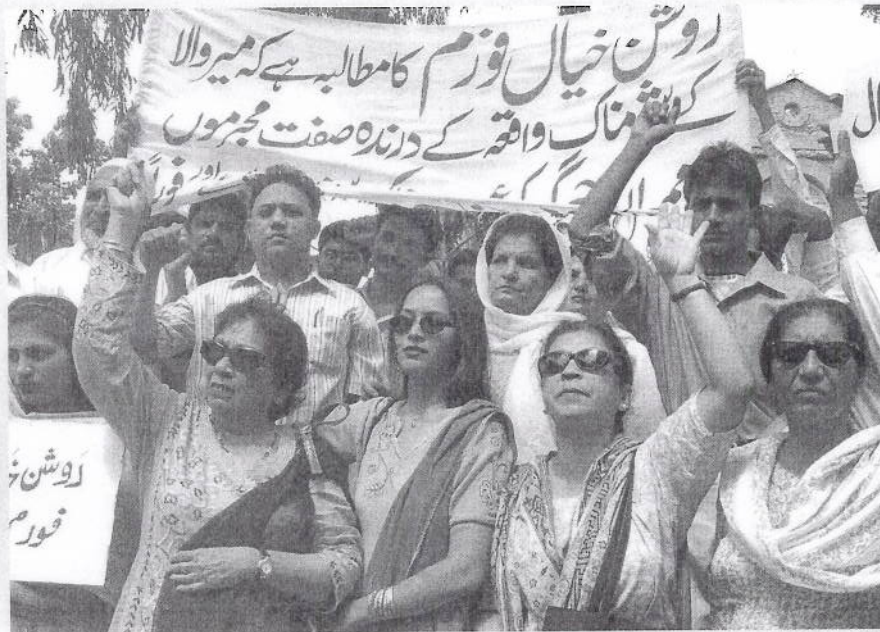
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Women's Low Status and Power

Although we are divided by race, class, culture, and geography, our hope lies in our commonalities. All women's unremunerated household work is exploited, we all have conflicts in our multiple roles, our sexuality is exploited by men, media, and economy, we struggle for survival and dignity, and, rich or poor, we are vulnerable to violence. We share

our "otherness," our exclusion from decision making at all levels.

—PEGGY ANTROBUS, Coordinator of Development with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and Director of Women and Development at the University of the West Indies



The scope of gender injustice is striking, but equally striking is the scope of women's activism.

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Worldwide, females are generally lower in status and power, relative to males. This may be called gender stratification, although it is sometimes referred to as gender inequality, sexism, patriarchy, and female disadvantage (Chafetz, 1990). This chapter provides a brief overview of the current status of women globally and introduces you to some of the gendered inequalities that exist in the world (refer also to the Appendix). Pay careful attention to the ways in which most modern societies are structured such that gender inequalities and patriarchy are enabled. In the sections that follow, it should become clear that societies are structured in ways that give men greater economic and political power and condone men's right to control women.

Males' Greater Economic Power

Many feminists view men's greater economic power and, correspondingly, women's economic dependence on men, to be at the heart of women's lower status and power. Once societies based on money evolved, men's labor appeared to have greater value because it was done for money or the exchange of goods. The important economic contributions that women make collecting fuel, taking care of animals, growing vegetables, doing laundry, preparing food, taking care of children, and so on are frequently forgotten or devalued as "natural." Research, both in the United States and elsewhere, consistently finds that women's power is related to their ability to make money. However, women's ability to make money has been constrained by their household responsibilities and by the designation of higher paying jobs as for men.

Worldwide, men control economies and resources, own more property, and occupy more positions of power in business and banking. This is true in virtually every country, including industrialized nations such as the United States. Men make more money than women, and even when they work the same jobs as women, this tends to be true. Women's labor is also undervalued relative to men's. On average, women have less leisure time than men do and they do more of the world's work than men. But because their labor is more likely to be unpaid or underpaid, women typically have less economic power. For example, employed women's earnings range between 50 and 95 percent of what men earn; on average they earn two-thirds of what men earn (International Labour Organization, 2003; United Nations, 1999). As you will learn in Chapter 5, "Women and Work," only part of this **gender wage gap** can be explained by differences in educational attainment and job experience.

Women's lack of economic power is related to their strong presence among the ranks of the poor. Poverty is said to have a "woman's face" because the majority of the 1.5 billion people living on one dollar a day or less are women (United Nations, 2000). The gap between women and men caught in the cycle of poverty has widened in the past decade, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the **feminization of poverty**. Chapter 6,

"Women and Development," and Chapter 7, "Women and Globalization," discuss the feminization of poverty in more detail.

Males' Greater Political Power

Politics is another arena in which women's low power and status are apparent. In the twentieth century, activists worked to gain women the right to vote (called **women's suffrage**). In most countries, voting rights have only been awarded to women in the last thirty years. Even in the United States, it was not until 1920 that women were granted the right to vote. By the year 2003, all countries that allow males to vote have granted women that same right, except for Kuwait. Box 2.1 discusses the efforts of women in Kuwait to gain the vote.

Figures from the Inter-parliamentary Union (2003) show that only 15 percent of the world's lawmakers are female (although the good news is that this is up from 11 percent in 1995). The United States ranked fifty-ninth among the 125 countries with female representatives. The United States, France, and Japan all lag behind thirteen sub-Saharan countries in Africa. Fifteen countries had no female representatives: Armenia, Bahrain, Micronesia, Palau, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Barbados, Kiribati, Libya, Nauru, Nigeria, Tonga, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. The Nordic countries have the highest percentages of female representatives (39 percent) and the Arab states the lowest (5.9 percent; Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003).

Women's presence in formal politics is important because male lawmakers are less likely to make laws that serve women and children's interests. Without the activism of women, most male lawmakers are not inclined to think about rape, domestic violence, women's health issues, and childcare. A current focus of activists is increasing women's political power by increasing the number of female lawmakers. For example, in 2003, in separate demonstrations, women's activists in India, Indonesia, and Jordan protested the failure of political parties to support woman candidates. They demanded that their governments require that 30 percent of representatives be female, a figure set by the United Nations as a goal for all countries by the year 2005.

Despite their somewhat poor representation in formal politics (parliaments, congresses, heads of state), women are often very political. In later chapters you will see that much of women's political influence comes from their activities in grassroots organizations that place pressure on formal political institutions. Chapter 9 focuses on women in politics and how women gain political power.

Males' Higher Status

Not only is women's work typically unpaid or underpaid, it is undervalued relative to men's work. Part of being the underclass is that your group is less val-

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Huda Shaarawi (1879–1947) was the founder of the modern Egyptian women's movement and encouraged Egyptian women to participate in politics. She organized meetings of Arab feminists from other countries and led delegations of Egyptian women to international conferences.

BOX 2.1 *Kuwaiti Women Seeking Political Rights*

Kuwait, a predominantly Islamic country, is located in the northwest corner of the Persian Gulf in the Middle East. By law, Kuwaiti women are assured equal rights in regards to pay and job opportunities, and women do serve in high-level appointed governmental posts. However, women make up only 16 percent of the workforce and occupy only 4 percent of administrative and management positions. Women in Kuwait are allowed to dress as they wish, although some favor the traditional *abaya* that covers them from head to toe. Law segregates public schools and universities by sex. Poor women from outside of Kuwait are imported from countries such as Bangladesh and the Philippines to serve as maids and sex workers. Human rights organizations have documented their harsh treatment.

During the occupation by Iraq in 1990 and 1991, Kuwaiti women courageously smuggled food, weapons, and information to resistance fighters and were surprised that after the war, they were not rewarded with political rights. Indeed, Kuwait is the only country in the world where men, but not women, are allowed to vote and hold political office. Resistance to women's voting rights is not religious, but social. Those opposed, such as law professor Abdrazzak Shayji, a law professor at Kuwait University, emphasize that in Kuwait, "the man speaks for the family," and "political differences between husbands and wives could damage the family." Others argue that politics would take women away from the home and their children.

Activists lobby politicians, hold silent protests, and have even attempted to register to vote. In November of 1999, 120 Kuwaiti women wearing t-shirts reading "Rise Up Women 2003" sat in the parliament's viewing gallery to encourage male politicians to vote in favor of women's suffrage. (The measure was defeated.) On February 1, 2000, the first day of the annual voter registration period in Kuwait, hundreds of women marched to the registration centers and demanded to be registered as voters. They were not allowed to register and subsequently filed several suits against the government. Kuwaiti feminists are hopeful that within the next several years their activism will result in the Kuwaiti parliament passing laws permitting them to vote and hold office. As Said Al-Habib, chief of cardiology at Kuwait Armed Forces Hospital said, "Women have more of a role to play than simply to cook and clean for men. We are here to contribute to society." She noted the irony of the fact that she clears the blockages to men's hearts but these same men block her from voting. Unfortunately, in July 2003, male Kuwaitis voted to keep parliament all male. The women that tried to force themselves into polling stations to vote were told to leave by security forces.

Sources: Lafferty, (2003), Perry (2003), Times Wire Reports (2003), United Nations (2003)

ued than the upper class, despite your group's contribution to the economy or culture. Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist and one of the first scholars to pay serious attention to the activities of women, noted, "Whatever the arrangements in regard to descent or ownership of property, and even if these formal outward arrangements are reflected in the temperamental relations between the sexes, the prestige values always attach to the activities of men" (1935, p. 302). Likewise, anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo (1974) points out that what is striking is that male activities, as opposed to female activities, are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultures bestow authority and value on the activities of men. She notes, for example, that in parts of New Guinea where women grow sweet potatoes and men grow yams, yams are the prestige food distributed at feasts.

The influence of French feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) may be seen in the work of many great feminist thinkers. She was one of the first to put forth the idea that women's lower status was linked to their role as reproducers and to make a distinction between biological sex and socially constructed gender. Beauvoir was also a women's rights activist.

"Daughters are not for slaughter."

Indian women's movement slogan

"The most gifted and beautiful girl is not as desirable as a deformed boy."

ancient Chinese proverb

Job prestige is one example of women's lower status. According to the UN, women worldwide are almost always in less prestigious and lower-paid jobs than men. As the level, prestige, and pay of a job increase, so does the numbers of men in those job categories (Burn, 1996). This is true even in countries you might think of as progressive. For example, in the United States, the majority of prestigious and professional jobs are held by men: 71 percent of computer scientists, 74 percent of doctors, 64 percent of college and university professors, 77 percent of architects, and 90 percent of engineers (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002).

Not only are male activities valued over female ones, but in most countries, families value male children over female children, in what is known as **son preference**. All over the world, people greet the birth of boys and girls differently (Mosse, 1993). For instance, among the Turkana people of northern Kenya, great feasting accompanies the birth of a boy, but there is no feasting if the baby is a girl. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2003), the areas most affected by son preference are South Asia (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan), the Middle East (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey) and parts of Africa (Cameroon, Liberia, Madagascar, Senegal). Although son preference is not as obvious in the West, great value is still placed upon producing a male heir to carry on the family name. Girls are expected to grow up, marry, take their husband's name, and have babies. In many families, their only achievement is expected to be to have children, who, because they have their husband's name, are not credited as achievements to her family but rather to his. Conversely, a son's achievements—financial successes, property ownership, education, and so on—are credited to his family of origin. In the United States, most Americans express the wish that their first child be a boy and that if they have more than two children, that there be more boys than girls (Atwood, 2001).

In some countries, son preference means that girls are disadvantaged from birth, receiving less care and fewer resources than sons do. Every year, about 250,000 girls die because they experience disadvantage relative to boys (United Nations, 1998). Female children aged 1 to 4 are more likely to die than male children in all countries in southcentral Asia (India, Bangladesh, and Nepal) and in nearly three-quarters of the countries in northern Africa and western Asia even though males are genetically more susceptible to most causes of infant death (UN, 1998). In Latin America, there is evidence of abnormal sex ratios in infant mortality figures in Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay. Discrimination in the feeding and care of female infants and/or higher rates of morbidity and malnutrition have been reported in most of the countries already listed and also in Bolivia, Colombia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Saudi Arabia (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003). The UN attributes these differences to the better nutrition, health care, and support that male children receive in some countries. **Femicide** (female infanticide) is also a contributing factor in some cases. In extreme cases, son preference may even lead to discrimination prior

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to birth in the form of **sex-selective abortion**. In mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, and India, some parents use amniocentesis and sonography (ultrasound) to determine fetal sex so that female fetuses can be aborted.

Femicide has significantly affected the sex ratio of the population in some parts of the world. According to the United Nations Population Fund (2003), worldwide it is estimated that more than 100 million girls are "missing" as the result of sex-selective abortion, infanticide, and neglect. India now has one of the most distorted sex ratios in the world; there are 927 females for every 1000 males when globally the average is 1060 females for every 1000 males. In two Indian states, northern Haryana and Punjab, it is even lower—793 girls for every 1,000 boys. The Women's Centre, a leading Bombay feminist group, was instrumental in passing legislation to ban tests for the use of sex determination in 1988 in the Indian state of Maharashtra and the federal government has requested that doctors not perform sex-selective procedures. The Women's Centre documented the growth of bargain clinics offering the service for low prices to the middle class and the poor. These clinics played on the fear of dowry with such slogans as "Better 500 rupees now than 500,000 later" (Bumiller, 1990). Despite legislation and government directives, son preference continues in India and women's activists continue their work to stop it.

According to the UN, the practice of son preference emerged with the shift from subsistence agriculture, which was primarily controlled by women, to settled agriculture, which is primarily controlled by men (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003). In the patrilineal landowning communities prevalent in the Asian region, the economic obligations of sons towards parents are greater. Sons are family pillars ensuring continuity and protection of family property. Sons are the source of family income and have to provide for parents in their old age. Sons bring prestige to the family. They are the interpreters of religious teachings and the performers of rituals, especially following the death of their parents. They are the holders of political power positions and high status jobs. They are the soldiers that protect the community. In contrast, daughters are expected to marry, leave the family, and have children. Consequently, they do not have the potential to enhance the family's economic or social position the way that sons do. Daughters in some cultures are viewed as wasted investments. For instance, an Indian proverb says, "Raising a daughter is like watering a shady tree in someone else's courtyard." Similarly, the title used to describe the female Muslim child translates to "another's wealth." This refers to the fact that any investment made in a girl is enjoyed only by her husband's family when she moves in with them upon marriage. Because she is in a sense a wasted investment, she will receive less attention and fewer resources than her brother (Goodwin, 1994).

In India, and other countries where it is expected that parents of daughters will pay a **dowry**, son preference is aggravated. A dowry consists of money or goods paid by the bride's family to the groom or his family. Dowry inflation is a problem in many countries, particularly Greece, India, and Pakistan. It costs more and more to marry off one's daughter as globalization increases the

BOX 2.2 *She Walked Away from Her Wedding Due to Dowry Demands*

In May 2003, Nisha Sharma, a 21-year-old computer student, became a role model to Indian women on the day of her wedding. As is common in upper middle-class Indian society, her parents found the bridegroom by placing a classified ad and interviewing prospective grooms. For dowry, her parents gave the groom's family two televisions, two home theater sets, two refrigerators, two air conditioners, and one car. On the day of the wedding, the musicians were playing, the 2,000 guests were dining, and the Hindu priest was preparing for the ceremony, when her about-to-be in-laws demanded an additional \$25,000 in rupees. Outraged, Nisha picked up

her cellphone and called the police to report a violation of the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 and called off the wedding. Sharma became an instant "shero," and television star. Interviewed on television and by newspapers, she posed wearing a sash reading "Anti-dowry," and encouraged other brides to walk away when in-laws request more dowry.

Sources: Devraj, 2003; Vasudev, Menon, Vinayak, David, & Muralidharan, 2003

consumerism of cultures and families with sons look at dowries as a way to increase family wealth and acquire material things. This makes daughters expensive, especially for those who are poor. In contrast, when a son marries, the family accrues wealth from the new daughter-in-law's dowry. Box 2.2 tells the story of an Indian woman who rebelled against demands for increased dowry.

Son preference is also common in cultures such as India and China where it is the responsibility of the son to take care of elderly parents, whereas daughters usually take care of elderly in-laws. For instance, in rural India, 90 percent of elderly men and 82 percent of elderly women live with their sons (Narayan, 1993). In many parts of China, families are restricted to one-child only and son preference has led to femicide and the abandonment of girl children. Interestingly, in the last decade, daughters' value has grown in some parts of the world as rural daughters go to work in the city and send their money home to the family. There is some evidence of this pattern in rural China, Mexico, and Guatemala. Some researchers have noted that girl children receive more intrahousehold resource allocations when they have moneymaking potential. Indeed, several studies suggest that in developing countries such as India, rural females' survival chances are increased by their participation in the paid labor force (Papanek, 1990). The suggestion is that the female's economic value to the family is higher in cases in which she may bring in money, and consequently, the family invests more resources in her survival.

Although you might expect that a scarcity of females due to femicide might also increase their value, this has not yet occurred despite shortages of females available for marriage in some parts of the world. In general, shortages are dealt with by importing poor women from other regions or countries. These women are willing to relocate for purposes of economic survival.

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Females as Property

When people are thought of as commodities or property, they are diminished and dehumanized and do not have the power to make their own life choices. In many cultures, a female is property—first of her father and then of her husband. These men decide her fate and she is expected to obey. In Pakistan, a father may take his daughter to court if she marries without his permission; the court may nullify the marriage and even charge the couple with the crime of having sex outside of marriage. In some countries, women are still objects of exchange between families—used to enhance a family's social status, to gain resources, or to settle disputes. In the United Arab Emirates and northern Africa, women follow parental orders to marry cousins so as to keep property in the family (Goodwin, 1994; Mertus, 1995). In Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and the tribal territories, a practice called *swara* persists (Amnesty International, 2002; DAWN, 2003). The practice involves handing over young girls and women to rival partners in order to settle conflicts. The idea is to end feuds between enemies by establishing a blood tie. In many parts of Ethiopia, women and girls are viewed as the property of male family members who may exchange them as they wish. The Ethiopia Women Lawyers' Association reports such cases as:

The sixteen year-old girl that sought protection from the EWLA from a forced marriage. The girl was given shelter, but the police forcibly took her home to be married off. EWLA sought support from all relevant government officials who ordered that the marriage be stopped. The parents were jailed. But in the meantime, other family members enforced the marriage.

In Oromia region, a young girl was given to an 80 year-old man. Her father took the old man's daughter. The first girl ran back to her home. Her father sent her back to the old man. The pattern of running away and being sent back continued. In the end, the girl killed her father.

The practice of making the first wife the wife of the family. All the male relatives of the bridegroom have sex with the bride on the first day of the wedding. If the bride does not conceive within the wedding period, the practice continues until she becomes pregnant.

Women being expected to give sexual services to their brothers-in-law when they stay overnight as well as to her husband's friends.

Wife inheritance. Another example from the Gambela region involved exchange marriage when a man inherited the wives of his late brother.

(African Women's Development and Communications Network, 2001)

As mentioned previously, the paying of dowries, common in India and Pakistan and parts of Africa, Portugal, China, Greece, and Turkey, is also reminiscent of women as property. Hundreds of years ago, dowries were property of the bride and provided her economic protection within the marriage. Women could not inherit land from their parents, and dowry was viewed as their inheritance. However, as currently practiced, dowries consist of goods

"I am a poor man, and this is how I can feed my large family. What else could I do? Many others are doing the same thing."

Afghan man that sold his 9- and 10-year-old daughters to wealthy opium poppy growers, 2003

or money *given to the groom and his family* by the bride's family. For example, in India, the parents arrange approximately 90 to 95 percent of marriages, and the parents of the bride must typically pay a dowry to the parents of the groom if it is requested. These dowries usually consist of material goods such as televisions and personal items such as jewelry, but sometimes they include money and land. Although the Indian Parliament outlawed dowry in 1961, the practice has actually spread as a way for families of sons to increase their wealth.

Brideprice (sometimes called *bridewealth* or *lobala*) is also common in the majority of African ethnic groups and is also practiced in parts of Papua New Guinea, India, and Afghanistan. The practice involves the groom giving money, goods, or livestock to the parents of the bride in return for her hand in marriage. In South Africa, even those who are highly educated often condone the practice. For example, university students condone the practice believing that it increases a husband's appreciation of his wife's worth, and keeps the divorce rate low since marriage is so expensive (Mwamwenda & Monyooe, 1997). Critics point out that brideprice forces women to stay in abusive marriages because divorce means their families will have to pay back the brideprice. Also, when a man has paid brideprice, he may view his wife as property that he has purchased to do with what he will (Women's International Network News, 2000). One particularly sad consequence of brideprice is that poverty drives some families to sell their very young daughters into marriage. For instance, in war-torn, poverty-stricken Afghanistan, the practice is on the rise and parents are selling their girls, aged 8 to 12, for \$300 to \$800 (RAWA, 2003).

"If a man wants to marry a woman, the man gets a delegation of about ten men who go to the woman's home. When they reach there, they find another delegation of men from the woman's side. The speaker from the woman's side says the number of cows, goats, and money that are 'worth' their daughter and the speaker from the man's side says what they are willing to pay, the process of 'please reduce and you must increase' continues as though they are in a commercial or political negotiation."

Woman from Uganda, 2000

"Through violence men seek both to deny and destroy the power of women. Through violence men seek and confirm the devaluation and dehumanization of women."

Rhonda Copelon, professor of law and Co-Director of the International Women's Human Rights Clinic

Physical Violence Against Women

Violence is often "gendered" in that types of violence, such as rape and domestic violence, are experienced disproportionately by women. Violence against women is used to reinforce men's power over women, to keep women in their place, to remind them that men are "boss." The fact that it is common, accepted (or at least ignored), and that police and legal systems frequently fail to intervene, is an indication of women's lower status and power.

The United Nations *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." Gender violence is broadly defined. The United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) suggests that violence against women includes: prenatal sex selection in favor of male babies, female infanticide, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment in schools and the workplace, trafficking, forced prostitution, dowry-related violence, domestic violence, battering, and marital rape. Violence against women and girls occurs in every segment of society—regardless of class,

ethnicity, culture, or country. In this section, the focus is on domestic violence, dowry death, honor killing, and rape.

Throughout the book you will see how women's social, political, and economic subordination are not only issues in and of themselves but are interrelated and influential in a variety of women's issues. The remainder of this chapter, which focuses on physical and sexual violence against women, shows how these factors combine to produce a situation in which women's human rights are violated. You will see how the perception of women as men's property contributes to their abuse by husbands, to war rape, and to the selling of daughters into prostitution or marriage. Women's lack of political power means that legal and police protections against domestic and sexual violence are often absent or minimal. Women's lower status leads to an acceptance of violence against them by families and authorities. Women's lack of economic power leads to prostitution, to women marketing themselves as mail-order brides, and to women staying in situations of sexual and physical abuse. The trafficking of women into prostitution and mail-order brides are discussed in Chapter 7.

November 25th is
International Day for the
Elimination of Violence
Against Women

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence includes bodily harm, usually accompanied by verbal threats and harassment, emotional abuse or the destruction of property as means of coercion, control, revenge, or punishment on a person with whom the abuser is in an intimate relationship (Human Rights Watch, 1995). Domestic violence is a concern of feminists worldwide because it exists in all regions, classes, and cultures. Reported rates vary by country but range from between 10 and 80 percent. Box 2.3 shows the incidence of domestic violence in a sample of countries.

The World Health Organization reports that 40 to 70 percent of women murdered in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Israel were killed by their husbands or male partners and that in nine Caribbean countries, 48 percent of women surveyed said their first sexual experience was forced or "somewhat forced" (United Nations, 2002). In the United States, battery is the leading cause of injury to adult women; close to 700,000 cases are reported each year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). In the Japanese government's first nationwide survey of domestic violence in 1999, one in twenty women reported life-threatening abuse at the hands of their husband and four times as many had experienced some sort of domestic violence (Magnier, 2002). Official estimates from Russia are that 12,000 women die each year from domestic violence and the leading women's rights organization in Pakistan concludes that upwards of 80 percent of women in that country experience domestic violence (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Surveys from Kenya indicate that 42 percent of women had been beaten by their husbands; in Papua New Guinea, 67 percent of rural women and 56 percent of urban women report being victimized by their husbands (Human Rights Watch, 1995). A third of Egyptian women report that they are beaten at home, and

BOX 2.3 *Prevalence of Physical Violence Against Women by An Intimate Partner 1991–1999*

	Last 12 Months	Ever
Australia	22%	—
Bangladesh	19	47%
Canada	3	29
Chile	23	—
Columbia	—	19
Egypt	—	34
Ethiopia	10	45
Korea	38	—
Mexico	27	27
Nicaragua	30	52
Nigeria	—	31
Norway	—	18
Palestine	48	—
Peru	31	—
Puerto Rico	—	48
Switzerland	6	—
Turkey	—	58
United Kingdom	12	30
United States	1	22

Source: <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/ww2000/table6c.htm>

Note: The UN cautions that studies varied in how physical violence was defined and that psychological and verbal abuse were not included. As well, the report mentions that these numbers are likely underestimations as many women were unable to be interviewed in private.

The U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline number is: 1-800-799-SAFE

the penalty for killing an adulterous wife is typically one to three years in jail (Daniszewski, 1997).

Carillo (1992) links domestic violence against women to the socially constructed dependency of women on men (Carillo, 1992). This dependency is frequently economic and results from a multi-layered system of sex discrimi-

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nation. First, much of women's labor is unpaid and therefore not valued. Second, even in paid jobs, women work for longer hours for lower pay with fewer benefits and less security. Women's dependency on men is more than economic, however. Carillo points out that women are trained to believe that their value is attached to the men in their lives—fathers, husbands, and sons. They are often ostracized if they disobey these men, and frequently social norms equate being a good woman with being an obedient woman. Bradley (1988, in Carillo, 1992, p. 109) said, "Threats of violence control women's minds as much as do acts of violence, making women act as their own jailers. This means that a woman makes her choices not on what she wants to do or believes is best, but on what she thinks her husband will allow her to do."

Lerner (1986) also points out that women are socially dependent on men. She says that class for men was and is based on their relationship to the means of production: Those who owned the means by which things are produced can dominate those who do not. However, the class position of women is generally consolidated and actualized through their sexual relationships with men. It is through men that women gain or are denied access to the means of production and to resources. Cross-culturally, women share the "unfreedom" of being sexually and reproductively controlled by men, although there are "degrees of unfreedom" ranging from the slave woman whose sexual and reproductive capacity was commodified as she herself was; to the slave-concubine, whose sexual performance might elevate her own status or that of her children; then to the "free" wife, whose sexual and reproductive services to one man of the upper classes entitled her to property and legal rights. (Lerner, 1986, p. 215)

Women's socioeconomic and psychological dependency on men makes it difficult for them to leave situations of violence or sexual harassment (sexual harassment is discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Adding to this problem is the fact that in many countries it is difficult for women to obtain a divorce and there is great social stigma associated with divorce. In comparison to men, a woman's status is significantly reduced if she is divorced, and this increases her dependence upon the marriage and her husband's power over her. For instance, in India, women have no right to matrimonial assets upon divorce, divorce renders women social pariahs, and abused women have few alternatives to remaining in an abusive marriage (Jaising, 1995). In the United Arab Emirates and in Iran, a divorced mother is only entitled to custody of her children until they are 7. Men may take second wives and divorce their wives without their wives' knowledge (Goodwin, 1994; Mirhosseini, 1995). Israeli women are not allowed to divorce their husbands if the husband refuses to grant the divorce; a husband's abandonment, disappearance, or incompetence is also not grounds for divorce. However, husbands may be granted a divorce even if the wife refuses (Shalev, 1995). In the Sudan, the man has the right to unfettered divorce, and once he says the words "You are divorced," a divorce takes place (Abdel Halim, 1995). In contrast, a woman must go to court and prove she is entitled to a divorce. After the divorce, there is a three-month period in which the husband may change his mind

"Every woman thinking of leaving worries about finances. Women find themselves forced back into abusive marriages because they can't earn a living."

Ritsuko Nomoto, Japanese woman that opened a restaurant to give battered women jobs.

and order the woman back. She is expected to comply. In Ireland—a country strongly influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, which is opposed to divorce—divorces were not granted until 1997. At that time there were an estimated 80,000 to 90,000 separated people who had been unable to divorce. Although now legal, divorce remains difficult for several reasons, aside from its stigma: Couples must be separated for at least four years, they must complete a rash of paperwork, and the court may still deny the petition for dissolution if it is deemed harmful to the family.

It is also important to recognize that the majority of countries do not provide assistance for women who want to leave abusive situations, making it difficult for women to do so. For example, despite the prevalence of domestic abuse in Japan, as of 2002, only thirty-five shelters for battered women existed (Magnier, 2002). If women's families do not support their leaving and they have nowhere to go and no way to survive outside of marriage, of course they will stay.

Women's activists often seek legal reform. In many countries, neither government laws nor the police protect women from domestic violence; it is viewed as a private family matter and a husband's right. For example, following years of activism, Japan enacted its first law against domestic violence in 2001 and the number of women's shelters grew from five in 1995, to thirty-five in 2002. Kenya enacted its first domestic violence bill in 2002. In 2003, in Pakistan, the Progressive Women's Association (PWA) presented a resolution to the Supreme Court demanding legislation on domestic violence against women and held a rally outside the Parliament. Malaysia passed its first domestic violence bill in 1994 after ten years of activism (UNIFEM, 2001a). Bills making domestic violence illegal were also considered in Zimbabwe and Kenya in 2002, and in Indonesia in 2003.

Unfortunately, laws prohibiting domestic abuse are little protection when police refuse to take men into custody and judges refuse to punish them. One such example is Uzbekistan where Uzbek authorities, committed to maintaining a low divorce rate, refuse to prosecute cases of domestic violence and tell abused women to go home to their husbands (Human Rights Watch, 2001a). Often, following the passage of legislation, women's groups have to work for the laws' implementation and enforcement. For instance, the Malaysian Women's Aid Organization works to strengthen implementation of Malaysia's domestic violence law and to make it easier for victims of violence to make complaints and leave their abusers (UNIFEM, 2001). Prior to activism, women had to go to three different places to make their complaint, had to pay significant amounts of money, and had to endure officials that encouraged them to return to their husbands. Activists also call for documentation of the problem of domestic violence, lobby for and create legal and community services for battered women, and educate the public about the problem. Examples include the South African program that educates young people, educators, and parents about violence against women in dating relationships and in Peru, a program that broadcasts fictional stories based on real cases to generate discussion and increase awareness. In Japan, grassroots

BOX 2.4 *Activist Profile: Doris Solis Carrion, Vice-Mayor of the City of Cuenca, Ecuador*

"Violence against women has always been at the core of my work," says Doris Solis Carrion. "Six out of every ten women in Ecuador are victims of violence within their own households and the cost of such violence is enormous: it impacts women, children, and society as a whole. So from very early on it was clear to me that eliminating violence against women was the first step towards social development and poverty eradication in my country."

Born and raised in Cuenca, Ecuador's third-largest city, Ms. Carrion and her eight brothers and sisters, grew up with a university professor father active in a progressive political party, and a mother involved in the women's movement. At 15, Ms. Carrion became an activist, working with the indigenous population that constitutes 40 percent of her country's population and with the women's movement.

For years Ms. Carrion worked as executive director of the NGO SENDAS (which stands for Services for an Alternative Development in the South) and as co-founder of the Programme of Gender Studies at the University of Cuenca. Two years ago she became the first woman to be Vice Mayor of the municipality of Cuenca where she was instrumental in instituting Cuenca's Equal Opportunities

Plan, which includes strengthening the system of social, legal, and health services for battered women, implementing education and sensitization campaigns for law-enforcement agencies, and drafting municipal laws committing the local government to eradicating violence.

"It took a lot of work just to create awareness of violence against women," explains Ms. Carrion, "and by 1995 the issue was addressed by a national law which later became part of Ecuador's constitution." But Ms. Carrion notes that despite this legal victory, "implementation is weak. Laws by themselves are not enough, what is needed is a comprehensive program to prevent and deal with the legal, psychological and health issues attached to violence." As a result of her efforts, the municipality of Cuenca established information and education programs, psychological assistance projects, a hotline and a shelter for abused women. "Today we have an Assessment of Gender Inequalities, an Equal Opportunities Plan and a wide-ranging plan to prevent violence against women," says Ms. Carrion.

Source: UNIFEM <http://www.unifem.org/>

women's organizations conduct and disseminate research on the problem, and conduct community forums, workshops, and exhibits. Box 2.4 profiles Doris Solis Carrion of Ecuador, an activist who has made a difference in reducing domestic violence.

Dowry Death

Dowry death refers to the murder of wives by husbands or in-laws in India and Pakistan. It occurs when the bride's family is unable to provide the agreed-upon dowry, when the husband's family wants to get rid of her so that they may get another dowry from a new bride to increase their family's wealth, or when a woman does not produce a son. Her husband or his family then stages her death.

In India, dowry deaths are sometimes called bride burnings because most victims are held over the cooking stove until their saris catch fire. In 2001, the Indian government reported over 7,000 of these fatalities. Forbes (1987)

notes that dowry deaths are related to the historically low valuation of women and a modern consumerism (influenced by the West) that has produced a new way of exploiting women's dependency. Dowry deaths are also an example of viewing women as property. Seeing women as objects of exchange between two families is responsible for the killing of wives who do not bring enough money or material goods to the marriage (Mosse, 1993). Since the 1970s, dowry deaths have been a leading concern of Indian feminists. They have raised public awareness of the problem, and in 1986 won their battle to strengthen the Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961. Unfortunately, these activists must continue to fight for enforcement (Bumiller, 1990; Forbes, 1987; Ray, 1999).

Honor Killing

Rana Husseini, reporter for the *Jordan Times*, received the 1998 Reebok Human Rights Award at age 26. Despite the risk of serious physical harm, she continues to investigate and write about the practice of honor killing in Jordan.

In 1998, Sarhan Abdullah of Jordan shot his sister in the head four times. He murdered his sister because her brother-in-law raped her and she therefore brought shame to the family. He was released from jail after serving six months (Jamison, 2003). This is an example of **honor killing**, a tradition whereby a man is obliged to kill a close female blood relative if she does something that is believed to tarnish the honor of the family. The most common transgression is for an unmarried woman to have sex, but marital infidelity (or suspected infidelity), seeking a divorce, flirting, being raped, and dating without parental approval, can all be seen as offenses dishonoring the family. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights reports honor killings in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan, Morocco, Turkey, Palestine, and Uganda (Mayell, 2002).

Because governments do not keep track of honor crimes, and because independent investigators face danger, the number of victims is unknown. However, the UN estimates at least 5,000 deaths annually (Jamison, 2003). Honor killings are seen as a way to keep moral stability and are therefore rarely punished and, when they are, the punishment is usually minimal. On average in Pakistan, there are two honor killings daily, but only 20 percent of cases are prosecuted; the law states that in murder cases, the family of the victim may compromise with the killer (who is in this case a relative) (Bonner, 2002; Pakistan Press International, 2003). Brazil still fails to prosecute and convict men who have committed honor killings because of alleged infidelity (Human Rights Watch, 2001b) and, in Jordan perpetrators of honor crimes receive sentences of three months to one year (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Jordanian women's and human rights activists have collected over 13,000 signatures on petitions calling on Parliament to end honor killings and 5,000 people (mostly women) rallied at the Parliament for legal changes (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Jamison, 2003). Turkey recently repealed a law that reduced the sentences of those who commit honor crimes, hoping that it would help with their bid to join the European Union (Zaman, 2003).

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Sexual Violence and Exploitation

Women routinely experience sexual assault in ways that have no immediate parallels for men (Chowdhury et al., 1994). Women are disproportionately sexually victimized (as in the case of rape) and sexually exploited (sexually abused for others' sexual gratification or for financial gain, as in the case of prostitution and pornography). This is further evidence of women's lower power and status, for if women and men were equal, women would not be sexually subjugated, and, if they were, there would be severe consequences. Barry (1995) summed it up well when she said that **sexual exploitation** objectifies women by reducing them to sex; this **sexual objectification** incites violence against women and reduces them to commodities for market exchange: "In the fullness of human experience, when women are reduced to their bodies, and in the case of sexual exploitation to sexed bodies, they are treated as lesser, as other, and thereby subordinated" (Barry, 1995, p. 24). When sex is treated as a thing to be taken, or to be bought, the human being is rendered into a thing, and her dignity and humanity are destroyed (Barry, 1995).

Rape

Rape haunts the lives of women on a daily basis: It is the stranger approaching on the street, the violent husband or partner at home (Niarchos, 1995). All over the world, you will find women's activists working to strengthen rape laws and their enforcement, educating men to see rape as wrong, training police in sensitive procedures for handling cases, and providing assistance to rape victims, largely through rape crisis centers.

Rape is a concern of feminists for five main reasons:

1. *Rape is a very real threat to women everywhere.* For instance, in the United States, one in four women experience a sexual assault in their lifetime and seventy-four women are raped every hour (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2003). In India, a woman is raped every thirty-five minutes and out of every hundred cases, only ten are reported to police (Vasudev & Renuka, 2002). For more information, see the Appendix while keeping in mind that rape is one of the most underreported of crimes.
2. *Rape laws are weak and poorly enforced.* Most of the world's rape laws conceive of rape as an act against the property of another man—either the father of the unmarried woman or the husband of the married woman (Mosse, 1993). Traditionally, rape is condemned as a violation of a man's honor and exclusive right to sexual possession of his woman/property, and not because it is an assault on a woman (Copelon, 1995). In most countries, rape victims receive little support and feel shamed and humiliated, which results in secondary

The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that more than 350 rapes a year will occur on a college campus with a population of 10,000 female students.

"Crimes against women will halve if they are careful about what they wear and know their limits."

R.S. Gupta, Police Chief of Delhi, India 2003, where rape is on the rise

"Violence against women will end when legal, philanthropic, governmental and non-governmental organizations and impassioned individuals unite and stand up to say it is a priority, to say that the time for ending violence is now."

Eve Ensler, founder of V-Day, playwright and women's activist. Ensler's play "The Vagina Monologues" is staged every February in the U.S. and Europe. Millions of dollars in proceeds have been donated to women's shelters and rape crisis centers.

victimization from family, the police, and the legal system. In extreme cases, like Pakistan, women may even be charged with the crime of having sex outside of marriage. As you read earlier, in some countries, victims may even be killed to preserve the family's honor. It is unsurprising then, that women often keep rape a secret; the woman who is raped is likely to be blamed for seducing her rapist, she brings shame upon her family, and may become unmarriageable because she is no longer a virgin.

3. *The threat of rape limits women's freedom of movement and denies them control over their sexuality.* More than any other crime, fear of rape leads women, consciously and unconsciously, to restrict their movements and their life choices or, alternatively, to prepare for battle (Niarchos, 1995).
4. *Many of the victims of rape are girl children and adolescents, often raped by an adult relative or acquaintance* (Neft & Levine, 1998). The problem is especially bad in parts of Africa, such as Zimbabwe and South Africa, where unscrupulous folk healers prescribe sex with a virgin to treat AIDS, and the practice has resulted in high infection rates in young girls (Murphy, 1998).
5. *The fact that men can and do rape women, whereas the reverse is not true, intimidates women and gives power to men.* Some feminists, such as Brownmiller (1986), view the threat of rape as the basis of men's power over women. Rape is an expression of dominance, power, and contempt, a rejection of women's right to self-determination (Niarchos, 1995). The threat of rape also makes women dependent on fathers, brothers, or husbands to protect them. This places women in a subordinate position to men. Brownmiller (1986) suggests that, historically, marriage and women's subjugation by men arose because women needed men to protect them from other men. Furthermore, says Brownmiller (1986), the price a woman paid for this protection was her male protector's exclusive ownership of her body.

War Rape

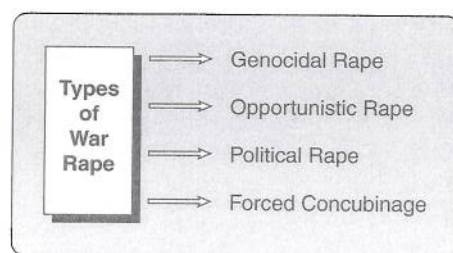
War magnifies the gendered structure of violence (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 1996). During times of war, women often experience great hardship. War often displaces women, and their dependent children, from their homes and makes them refugees, leaves them without husbands and fathers, and makes meeting basic needs difficult. If this weren't bad enough, they also face the increased prospect of rape.

Writings from as early as 420 c.e. document **war rape**, the rape of women during wartime. During World War II, Moroccan soldiers raped Italian women, Japanese soldiers raped Korean women, and Nazi soldiers raped Jewish women. In the 1970s, Pakistani soldiers raped Bengali women. In the

1980s, war rapes occurred in the Central American countries of El Salvador and Guatemala. In the 1990s, Bosnian Serb soldiers raped between 20,000 and 50,000 Muslim women in the former Yugoslavia. In Somalia's civil war, all factions raped women to punish rival factions. In Haiti the military raped female family members of male "subversives" and raped women's rights activists. Indian soldiers raped women in the rebellious Kashmir territory. In Peru, rapes were committed by government security forces as well as by their opposition (soldiers of the Shining Path resistance). An estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped during a civil war in less than 100 days in Rwanda in 1994. In 2003, reports from Liberia, Zimbabwe and Burma indicate that government soldiers used rape to terrorize and control groups opposing the government (Martin & Apple, 2003; Simmons, 2003; UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2003). A civil war in Congo also led to the rape of thousands of women in the period from 1998 to 2003; in fact, it is estimated that one in three women experienced gang rape (Wax, 2003).

The UN identifies four kinds of war rape, summarized in Figure 2.1 (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2003). One type, **genocidal rape**, such as that seen in Rwanda and the Balkans, is intended to destroy an ethnic or political group perceived as the enemy. **Opportunistic rape** occurs when men take advantage of the breakdown of law and order that may occur during wartime to commit crimes against women, knowing it is unlikely they will face consequences. **Political rape** punishes individuals, families, or communities that hold different political views. When daughters or wives are raped to punish their male relatives, political rape is a variation on the woman-as-property theme. The desecration of the female is viewed as the torture of the male (Chesler, 1996). For instance, during the war in the former Yugoslavia, women were raped to "pay" for the attitudes and behaviors of their husbands, sons, brothers, or fathers (Nikolic-Ristanovic, 1996). The rape of women during wartime is not merely a matter of being in the wrong place at the wrong time (Chinkin, 1993). Women are the male enemy's property, and they are used as an instrument to defeat or punish the enemy (Brownmiller, 1986; Nikolic-Ristanovic, 1996). Many of the rapes occur in the presence of the victim's family, the local population, or other victims, and many involve sexual torture and sadism (Niarchos, 1995).

FIGURE 2.1 *Four Types of War Rape*



BOX 2.5 *The War Rape of Marijana*

I met Marijana in a hospital in Zagreb. Her doctor told me she had arrived from Bosnia several days earlier. Though our interview was difficult, 17-year-old Marijana was beyond tears: dry, tense little face, little child's body. She didn't exactly tell me what had happened; I had to coax the words out of her, one by one. One day in April, Serb irregulars came to the village, near Tesanj, in central Bosnia, where Marijana, a Muslim Croat, lived with her family. Marijana, her mother, and her 7-year-old sister were tending their vegetable garden. The soldiers raped Marijana and her mother there, then loaded Marijana on a truck, along with twenty-three other women from the

village. This was the last time she saw her mother or her sister. Raping continued on the truck. The soldiers took the women to an improvised camp in the woods that operated as a military brothel. Women between the ages of 12 and 25 were kept in one room and raped daily. Marijana became pregnant in the first month. After four months, the soldiers let her and seven other visibly pregnant women go.

Source: Kuzmanovic, 1995.

Forced concubinage involves the kidnapping of girls and women to wash, cook, serve, and have sex with soldiers and militia. It takes the form of forced prostitution in "rape camps." For example, during World War II, the Japanese enslaved between 200,000 to 400,000 Korean, Filipino, Chinese, Indonesian, and Dutch women in "comfort stations" for sexual use by Japanese soldiers (Copelon, 1995). Ninety percent of these women died in captivity (Copelon, 1995). In Uganda in the late 1980s, rebels forced girls 12 years and older into sexual slavery; later these rebels received amnesty under a government program. Human rights organizations also documented military rape camps in Zimbabwe and Burma in the early 2000s (Martin & Apple, 2003; UN Integrated News Network, 2003). Box 2.5 offers an account of forced prostitution in the Bosnian conflict in the 1990s.

Until 1996, the UN postwar courts had never prosecuted sexual assault as a crime of war. Although postwar courts did hear evidence of rape, it was treated as secondary to other abuses. This changed on June 27, 1996, when a United Nations tribunal indicted eight Bosnian Serb military and police officers in connection with the rapes of Muslim women during the Bosnian war. The tribunal's chief prosecutor, Richard Goldstone, noted that "rape has never been the concern of the international community. . . . We have to deal openly with these abuses" (Simons, 1996). In 1998, the majority of the world's governments agreed to form the International Criminal Court (ICC), a permanent war tribunal. The ICC is to ensure redress for and protection against human rights violations committed in the course of war. Initially, the draft treaty did not acknowledge rape as a war crime. However, women's activists and legal experts worked to have women's concerns incorporated into the treaty establishing the ICC (Frankson, 1998). They formed the Women's Cau-

"Sexual violence constitutes a weapon of war."
Radhika Coomaraswamy,
Special Rapporteur of the
UN High Commissioner on
Human Rights on the Issue
of Violence Against
Women

cus for Gender Justice in February 1997 and received the backing of more than 300 nongovernmental organizations from around the world. In 2001, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia indicted eighty men for war rape, and in February 2002, three Bosnian Serbs were the first to be jailed for war sex crimes in a case involving sex enslavement (Taylor, 2002).

Prostitution

Prostitution is plainly about the sexual objectification of women, and it is clearly driven by economics. It is about women as commodities to be bought and sold and about how women's few economic options may force them into prostitution. The effect of prostitution on women is overlooked by governments such as Thailand, Korea, and the Philippines who use prostitution to boost tourism and their economies, and by militaries, such as the U.S. Army, who see "sexual recreation" as vital to the well being and morale of their troops. Although the prostitute herself typically earns barely enough to survive, an extended network of people profit from her body and her labor: The police and other government officials fine prostitutes or receive bribes to look the other way; pimps; bar, brothel, and hotel owners get a cut of her wages; airlines, travel agencies, and foreign customers also benefit. It is estimated that pimps control 80 to 95 percent of prostitution. These pimps find naive and needy young women, manipulate them into prostitution, and then take the majority of their money (Barry, 1995). Barry (1995) argues that prostitution is a form of sexual slavery because women and girls are held over time for sexual use and because getting out of prostitution requires escape. Worldwide, most prostitutes are women with no other economic choices because of multi-layered systems of sex discrimination. The greatest numbers of prostitutes are found in countries like Thailand, Brazil, and Hungary where there are few jobs for women and where **sexual tourism** is a major source of cash for economic development. Sexual tourism is discussed at greater length in Chapter 7, "Women and Globalization."

Activists say that cultural attitudes that consider prostitution a victimless crime, or that suggest women are sexual objects, must be changed. For instance, in Thailand, studies indicate that between 80 and 87 percent of Thai men have had sex with a prostitute and commercial sex is viewed as a legitimate form of entertainment and sexual release (Bales, 2002). Likewise, in the interest of keeping morale high, the U.S. Army permitted the **military sex-exploitation of women** in Southeast Asia. U.S. military bases in the Philippines, Korea, and in Okinawa, Japan, coordinated with government authorities and entrepreneurs to provide U.S. servicemen with sex (Enloe, 1996). The U.S. military often set up clinics where women were licensed and monitored for sexually transmitted diseases and received "sexual health" identification cards. In general, however, the women were not given information about contraception or the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (Coronel & Rosca, 1993). In the Philippines alone approximately 50,000 children have

The persistence and painstaking research of Yoshiaki Yoshimi, a Japanese history professor, was instrumental in getting the Japanese government to admit that Japanese soldiers had used girls and women from Korea and China as "comfort women." The Japanese government had covered up the situation for more than forty years.

"Eradicating violence against women requires coordinated action and commitment by many actors; including governments, civil society, the judiciary, police, media, health-care workers, educators, and the international community."
Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM

been fathered by U.S. servicemen over the past five decades (Coronel & Rosca, 1993).

In 2000, the U.S. military came under fire for allowing soldiers at Camp Casey in South Korea to frequent the dozens of clubs offering sexual services exclusively to U.S. soldiers (Demick, 2002). The women are mostly trafficked from the Philippines and the former Soviet Union. They are told they will be waitresses or entertainers, but shortly after arrival, find that they are expected to provide sexual services. Debt bondage is common, with most of their wages confiscated by club owners to pay for their plane ticket, rent, and food. They are held under slave-like conditions. The Korean Special Tourism Association lobbied the government to allow the import of foreign women, saying that it was essential to prevent American GIs from harassing and raping Korean women.

Explaining Women's Low Status and Power

At this point in the chapter you are no doubt wondering why women are so disadvantaged economically, politically, legally, and socially relative to males. Why is it that despite women's respected role as childbearers and child-rearers, they are still so often treated as second-class citizens? No one is sure, but to some extent it appears to be an artifact of a gendered division of labor and the rise of economies based on exchange.

At one time, all cultures had no means of birth control and no infant formula. This, along with males' greater size and strength, made some types of work more appropriate for males, and some more appropriate for females. Women's work became concentrated in the **private sphere** or domestic domain of the home, and men performed the labor in the **public sphere** outside the home because they were not constrained by childcare (Sanday, 1974). In other words, a gendered division of labor arose and women ended up doing the work that was compatible with the unavoidable female life course of bearing and nursing children (Chafetz, 1990; Lerner, 1986).

Once a gendered division of labor arose, people then constructed **gender stereotypes** (beliefs about the qualities of each gender) and **gender norms** (social rules regarding what is appropriate for each gender to do). These were then passed on culturally (through legends and religious texts for instance) and taught to children in order to prepare them for adulthood. Conformity to gender-role expectations was maintained by granting social status and approval to conformers and by ostracizing violators. In short, people develop beliefs about the qualities of groups of people from what they see people in those groups doing and what they are told by their culture. Once people develop such beliefs, in this case beliefs regarding differences between females and males, the beliefs operate as expectations regarding appropriate roles for people from those groups (Ridgeway, 2001). The gender roles lead to gender stereotypes and the gender stereotypes promote gendered social roles that are maintained through social approval and disapproval (Burn, 1996; Eagly, 1987). These processes appear to operate in all

"Clearly both men and women have the biological potential for many different kinds of behaviors. But like the external armor or shell that encases insects and other arthropods, androcratic social organization encases both halves of humanity in rigid and hierarchic roles that stunt their development."

Riane Eisler

FIGURE 2.2 *The Reciprocal Relationship Between Gender Roles and Gender*

Gender Stereotypes $\longleftrightarrow$ Gender Roles

cultures and explain how gender is socially constructed and maintained. Because gender is socially constructed, it can be changed if social structures are changed—admittedly something that is easier said than done.

It is true that a gendered division of labor is not in and of itself bad; sometimes it makes sense for females to do some things and males to do others. After all, men don't get pregnant and they can't breast feed infants. Unfortunately, over time, in most cultures, men's dominance in the public sphere led to them having greater property rights and political power, which they then used to sanction men's right to control the lives of women. Men's control of the public sphere, their greater size, and women's economic dependence on men meant that women couldn't do much about it, especially since they were occupied by their private sphere responsibilities.

Some theorists trace the development of patriarchy to the Neolithic period when agriculture developed and the labor of children was needed to increase production and further surpluses. At that point women came to be viewed as commodities—resources to be acquired, traded, and controlled (Lerner, 1986). Others have argued that males needed to control women in order to ensure that the children were theirs, as they did not want to support another man's children. The devaluing of women's work relative to men is linked to the development of societies based on money. Once this happened, men's labor appeared to have more value because women's labor was largely for the family's use (**private use value**) whereas men's labor yielded money or the exchange of goods, and thereby had **exchange value** (Glenn, 1992). Power and status, it seems, became increasingly tied to the ability to make money, and to control of material resources in the public sphere. Women's mothering and household duties consequently reduced their economic and political power as their energies were directed toward the children and home (Bem, 1993; Rosaldo, 1974).

Up until the late twentieth century, most anthropologists assumed that male-dominated societies had always been the norm. This belief arose out of a male bias in anthropology, one that viewed the world through patriarchal lenses. Slocum (1975) was one of the first to note a male bias in anthropology. According to her, historically, anthropologists assumed that most uniquely human behaviors—such as tool making, art, cooperation, and spoken language—arose out of early male hunting and that females contributed relatively little to human evolution. However, while males were out hunting and allegedly developing such skills as cooperation and inventing things such as language, tools, and weapons, females were hardly sitting around popping out babies and doing little else. Too little attention, Slocum says, has been

"To look for origins is, in the end, to think that what we are today is something other than the product of our history and our present social world, and more particularly, that our gender systems are primordial, transhistorical, and essentially unchanging in their roots."

Michelle Rosaldo

"Men and women live on a stage, on which they act out their assigned roles, equal in importance. The play cannot go on without both performers. Neither of them 'contributes' more or less to the whole; neither is marginal or dispensable. But the stage set is conceived, painted, and defined by men. Men have written the play, have directed the show . . . assigned themselves the most interesting, most heroic parts."

Gerda Lerner

"The fact that some male-dominated religions have goddesses undercuts the thesis that there is a direct correlation between the presence of goddesses and high status for women."

Rita Gross

paid to the skills required for the gathering of food (important long before hunting) and the raising of dependent young. Tools were probably developed by females to dig up roots and tubers, to open nuts, and to free the hands while carrying a baby. And, just as males had to communicate in order to hunt together, females had to communicate in order to gather food and fuel together and to train their young.

Today's anthropologists generally agree that in the foraging societies of early history, which covered much more time than the 120,000 years or so from the Neolithic to the present, the sexes were probably complementary and of equal importance (Ehrenberg, 1989). As Gross (1996) says, it is difficult to imagine that humanity could have survived if early humans wasted female productivity and intelligence. Cultures in which women and men were basically equal were also common to hunter-gatherer and horticultural societies prior to colonization (Eisler, 1987; Kehoe, 1983; Leacock, 1981; Sacks, 1982; Sanday, 1981). Even today there are some cultures with egalitarian gender relations. Examples include the Ju/'hoansi people of the Kalahari Desert, the Mbuti Pygmies of Zaire, and the Vanatinai people who live on a small island southeast of Papua New Guinea (Bonvillian, 2001; Renzetti & Curran, 1995).

Some writers argue that in ancient times **matriarchies**, or societies in which women had greater power than men, were common (cf. Bachofen, 1967; Cavin, 1985; Davis, 1971; Diner, 1975). Archeologist Marija Gimbutas (1991) extensively catalogued archeological evidence in favor of the view that matriarchies were common during the Neolithic period in Old Europe. Paleolithic foraging societies, Chatal Huyuk (a village in what is now Turkey), Old Europe, ancient megalithic cultures, and especially Crete are often discussed by advocates of this position, because there is evidence (much in the form of sculptures) that numerous, powerful goddesses were worshiped (Gross, 1996).

Many feminists are attracted to the view that matriarchies or egalitarian societies were common at one time. They would like to show that a world where women have power is possible and that, despite patriarchy's current domination of social systems, patriarchy is not as natural as it may appear. As Eisler said in her popular 1987 book *The Chalice and the Blade*, evidence from art, archeology, religion, social science, history, and many other fields show that "war and the war of the sexes are neither divinely nor biologically ordained. And it provides verification that a better future is possible—and is in fact firmly rooted in the haunting drama of what actually happened in our past" (p. xv).

Bamberger (1974) points out that, to some, the fact that there are no *existing* matriarchal or egalitarian cultures is proof that these forms are ineffective. (Box 2.6 provides examples of matriarchal societies today.) Otherwise, the argument goes, these societies would not be extinct. Eisler (1987) responds to this by suggesting that the span of human cultural evolution is too short to make such a judgment. According to her view, patriarchy represents a 5,000-year maladaptive "detour"—maladaptive because patri-

BOX 2.6 *Do Matriarchies Exist Today?*

In 1995, Juanita Darling, *Los Angeles Times* journalist, wrote that matriarchy flourishes in the town of Juchitán, Mexico. In the tradition of the pre-Colombian Zapotec empire, women dominate public economic activities, such as buying and selling products that are mostly produced by men. They also either make or participate in all decisions regarding the household and typically control the family money because men are believed to be incompetent when it comes to family finances. Unlike in most other parts of Mexico, women are not pressured to marry or to put up with a difficult husband. When a wife feels that her husband is not doing his share, she prefers to be alone. As one woman said, "The women in other places are submissive. They are tied to a man. Well, I am not going to beg a man to give me money to buy bread. Women here work. That is the base of our economy." Art, literature, and formal politics are seen as the domains of males. Politics are one of the few areas in which men occupy leadership positions.

Lugo Lake, in a remote corner of southern China, is another place that appears to have a matriarchal society. Property and names pass from mother to daughter, and the women rarely marry. Men engage in few productive activities; for the most part, it is the women who earn and control the money and grow the food. Men have no ownership of the children they father. The women of Lugo Lake like their traditions. They point out that their self-sufficiency means that they may choose men based on love, unlike outsider women who must choose based on whether prospective husbands can provide for them. As is the case in Juchitán, the men do hold most of the formal political posts, making decisions outside of the village but not within it.

Source: Darling, 1995; Farley, 1998.

archy's emphasis on dominance and violence may lead to the ultimate destruction of the earth and humankind. She further notes that cultural progression is not in fact linear, but rather has always been characterized by periods of advancement, and then regression. To solve our mounting global problems, Eisler (1987) believes that we must reject patriarchy and its emphasis on violence. Instead, we should choose to structure our societies in ways that are "more sexually egalitarian" and that emphasize the "life-generating and nurturing powers of the universe."

Many feminist anthropologists do not think that the anthropological evidence supports the idea that matriarchies and egalitarian societies were at any time common (Duley & Edwards, 1986; Ruth, 1995). For instance, Bamberger (1974) points out that the myths that tell of female-dominated societies typically conclude with women losing their power because of incompetence, unethical conduct, or weakness. In other words, the very myths that are often used as evidence of matriarchy can, upon closer examination, be used to deny women power. Or, as Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974) say,

Elaborate female burial rituals might, for example, indicate a world in which women were the rulers; but they could equally be the remains of wives or mistresses, concubines of male elites, or women who became heads of state in lieu of male heirs in a royal family. Female sculptures may

represent goddesses, but there are historically documented and well-studied contemporary societies that manifest female fertility cults while at the same time placing political power in the hands of men. (p. 3)

To further illustrate, imagine that we are all vaporized by aliens who leave our buildings and other creations intact. They land in the United States. There they see billboards and magazines such as *Playboy*, videos, and so on plastered with images of women. They might conclude from this that women dominated the society and were worshiped. However, the truth at time of vaporization is that women in the United States held a minority of political and business power positions—for example, only 13 percent of the U.S. Congress and 4 percent of corporate executive officers are female. Although most agree that the ancient world included many powerful and impressive goddesses, some believe that those in favor of the matriarchal hypothesis infer more from the material artifacts than perhaps they should (Gross, 1996).

We will never know for sure whether matriarchies or egalitarian societies were at any time common. As Eisler herself points out, the thousands of cave drawings and sculptures depicting women could be ancient analogues for today's *Playboy* magazine, or they could be evidence of goddess worship and the veneration of women's life-giving abilities. Eisler believes the latter. Furthermore, she makes the case that, in general, archeologists and anthropologists have interpreted the evidence in ways that fit their stereotypes of prehistoric peoples and that were consistent with their own views of man as dominator and woman as secondary. Of course, we can also accuse Eisler of letting her pro-female biases tilt her reading of the archeological record. However, even if you disagree with Eisler's interpretation, remember that this does not mean that we cannot move toward greater equality. Likewise, remember that even if you agree with Eisler, this does not mean that steps toward gender equality will occur without concerted effort. As Lerner (1986) says, "the creation of compensatory myths of the distant past of women will not emancipate women in the present and future" (p. 36). Regardless, activism, as well as a thorough knowledge and understanding of modern cultures, is required to bring about change.

Conclusion

This chapter documented women's lower power and status but is in no way intended to suggest that men are by nature evil beings intent on the oppression of women. Rather, as you will see throughout the book, men's individual, intentional acts of dominance over women are the reflections of cultures' overall systems of gender power relations. As Lips (1991) notes, the occurrence of many forms of routine oppression of women by men is mindless and unintentional, often unrecognized by either the perpetrator or the victim. Individuals, more or less unaware of the structure of power that surrounds them, participate in, maintain, and are limited by the power structures of

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their societies. For instance, many cultures define masculinity in ways that encourage the denigration of women and define femininity in terms of submissiveness and subordination to men. Both females and males are socialized into cultures that emphasize men's power over women and are taught by their parents and other agents of socialization (such as peers), to participate in traditional gender systems.

It is also important to realize that it is not uniquely male to create groups in which some individuals have greater power and status than do others. Women often discourage their girl children from challenging traditional gender relations and they often participate in the social systems that oppress women. For instance, it is usually adult women that perform the physically traumatizing genital mutilations of girls common in some countries. Similarly, the brokers that trick young women into sexual slavery are sometimes women, and women of the upper classes often exploit women of the lower classes (especially those of other ethnicities) for household labor. As you will see throughout the book, to override the human inclination to exploit and dominate other humans and justify it by seeing the "victims" as "lesser" generally takes a great deal of political and social activism.

To suggest that women have limited power and status in comparison to men is not to overlook their great strength. Women are really quite remarkable—carrying on, often under conditions of great adversity, in order to keep their families going. Although their lives are frequently hard, they find pleasure in their friends and family, and pride in their strength. Also, despite barriers to their political activity, they fight for their rights, and they have brought about significant change in the last fifty years through their efforts. For instance, there are many organizations working on the issues discussed in this chapter. War Against Rape (WAR) is a Pakistani women's organization dedicated to providing legal, medical, psychological, and moral support to victims of rape; to creating awareness about violent crimes against women; and to keeping up the pressure on government and law enforcement in the prevention and handling of rape cases. WAR's activism was an important factor in the establishment of special women's police stations in Pakistan. Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW) is a group based in Bombay, India, which works on a variety of issues including rape, dowry, wife beating, and sexual harassment. FAOW networks with other women's groups, lobbies the government for change, raises consciousness, and helps individual women escape abusive situations. The Mifumi Project in Uganda has as its mission the reform of bride price. These are just a few examples.

The following chapters pick up on some themes started here. For instance, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 return to the topic of women's labor and the feminization of poverty. Chapter 8 shows how in some cases, religion is an agent of patriarchy. Chapters 9, 10, and 11 all explore aspects of women's political activity and empowerment. The next chapter, Chapter 3, explores how women's power and status are affected by their role as "reproducer" and the importance of reproductive freedom for the achievement of gender equality.

"It's not governments or superheroes that will change the world—it's ordinary people who realize that governments and superheroes aren't doing anything."

*Lauryn Oates, age 20,
Canadian Human Rights
Activist*

