Learning Objectives

8.1 Analyze the distinction between sex and gender.
8.2 Define traditional gender roles.
8.3 Examine the roots of sexism and inequality.
8.4 Identify several examples of sexism and inequality today.
8.5 Assess the sources of sexism.
8.6 Describe the Women's Movement and its policy agenda.

Joelle Taylor is getting married next month. In the whirlwind of final preparations for a large wedding, she almost forgot about gathering all the documents she will need to revise once she changes her last name to Robson. Joelle Robson! Joelle asked her maid of honor for some assistance in coordinating her name change, knowing that there will be a lot of forms to fill out. Her maid of honor gave her an odd look, and responded "What? You're not going to change your name, are you? That's so old-fashioned ... so sexist ... so ugh." Joelle was shocked by her friend's response. Don't all women change their name when they get married? What's the big deal, she wondered? With the help of her maid of honor, Joelle did a little investigating and found that most women today do change their last names when they marry. Joelle also found out that several hundred years ago, married women had no surnames at all. They were simply the wives of so-and-so. By the sixteenth century, women began to routinely take the surnames of their husbands because they were considered his property, and religious doctrine of the time considered husband and wife to be a single person. That single person was the man; the woman could not hold property, vote, or speak out in a public assembly. Legally, wives virtually ceased to exist. In more modern times, most women continued to take their husband's names when they married, but the likelihood of doing so shifted somewhat from one decade to the next. But as if the name change quandary wasn't enough, Joelle's investigation also identified other aspects of weddings and married life that surprised her. Her engagement ring is a carryover from a custom designed to take women off the marriage market; the practice of a father giving his daughter away and handing her to the groom is exactly how it sounds; the tradition of a bride's parents paying for the wedding is reminiscent of dowry; the woman's white wedding dress symbolizes virginity; and her husband's lifting of the veil symbolizes his right to consummate the marriage. "Hmmm," said Joelle, "I just had no idea. Why do these sexist customs persist?"

Personal questions like Joelle's have sociological significance. Have you noticed that most women routinely change their last name when they marry, whereas men virtually never do so? There have been times in history when it was common for women to keep their last names, but in more modern times its popularity comes and goes. Today, about 20 percent who have

*times its popularity comes and goes. Today, about 20 percent who have married in recent years have kept their last name in full, and another 10 percent have retained it in part, such as hyphenating it with their husband's last name (**Miller and Willis, 2015**; **Sifferlin, 2015**). The remaining 70 percent have taken their husband's last name and discarded their own. Why do women change their last names when they marry? Some may argue, "It's just easier this way . . . ", but look at macro-explanations: Changing of wives' names is a carryover from older patriarchal and patrilineal customs where upon marriage a woman became the legal property of her husband. It was important to name the child after the father so that he could identify and establish "ownership" of his heirs. Surnames (last names) were created to codify inheritance rules and thereby bolster tax revenues (**Stevens, 1999**; **Stoiko and Strough, 2017**). But why does the tradition continue today? Much of what people do in marriage is simply done out of habit, even when the tradition has no legal or financial basis. There is a powerful pull toward reproducing tradition. Yet, these persistent traditions tell something about women's continued roles in our society.*

Virtually all social institutions—whether political, religious, economic, educational, or familial—differentiate between men and women in fundamental ways. Throughout the world, people are obsessed with perceived sex differences, and these become the basis on which power is distributed. Perceptions about differences between men and women are sometimes used to deny women equal rights under the law or equal opportunities in work or education.

Yes, it is true that over the past several decades women in the United States and around the world have made many notable gains. Rates of literacy are increasing; more women are gaining political rights in more nations; and there is an increasingly active global array of women's organizations working to achieve equal rights and empowerment. In many impoverished regions, it is women who form economic cooperatives, develop women's reproductive health clinics, carry forward the fight for women's political rights, and provide the greatest impetus to positive social change and economic development.

*In Western countries, women are increasingly gaining education and entering occupations that were traditionally dominated by men. For example, in the United States over one-third of lawyers and physicians are now women (**American Bar Association, 2017**; **Association of American Medical Colleges, 2016**). Moreover, the gap between the earnings of men and women is narrowing. At the end of 2017, the median earnings of women who worked full-time were about 81 percent of those of men, compared with 68 percent in 1985, just a generation ago (**Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 17, 2018**).*

Despite the gains of recent decades, however, sex discrimination and stereotyping continue to limit the opportunities of women. From a global perspective, the extent to which women remain subordinate to men remains a severe obstacle to further development. Women face an array of daunting social problems, including dire poverty, severe lack of rights in many nations and cultures, forced marriage, rape and other violence, enslavement in sex industries, and societal failure to recognize and develop their full human po-

*tential (**Kristof and WuDunn, 2010, 2014**). Globally, women are beset by hunger and violence far more than are men.*

*This chapter explores the relevance of sex and gender in our lives—within our societies, our culture, our social institutions, and our families and close relationships. Sex and gender are major organizing constructs within societies, cultures, social institutions, and personal relationships. They are critical components of our identity (**Rogers and Meltzoff, 2017**). You may be thinking that the two concepts are the same, but they are quite different.*

Is It Sex or Gender?

8.1 Analyze the distinction between sex and gender.

The term **sex** refers to biological differences and one's role in reproduction, as indicated in **Table 8–1**. Typically, people think of sex in terms of genitalia: male and female, or man and woman. However, anatomical categories are not always easily identifiable, as is the case with **intersexed** individuals. The ambiguity is often the result of chromosomal or hormonal imbalances during the prenatal stage. It is difficult to get a firm number of intersexed individuals because sexual ambiguities occur along a continuum and not everyone agrees on what exactly constitutes an intersexed person. The frequency of surgery needed to normalize the genital appearance runs about 1 or 2 for every 1,000 births. The genitals are usually surgically reconstructed to adhere to the child's genetic chromosomes, either XX for a female or XY for a male.

Table 8–1

Summary of Sex and Gender

Sex
• Biological differences and role in reproduction • Usually "male" or "female," although some people are intersexed
Gender
• Culturally and socially constructed differences associated with men and women • "Masculinity" or "femininity" is learned

sex
Biological differences and one's role in reproduction.

intersexed
Individuals with anatomical categories that are not easily identifiable.

In contrast to sex, which is rooted in biology, **gender** refers to the culturally and socially constructed differences between males and females, which are found in the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with femininity and masculinity. These concepts are learned attitudes and behaviors, not biological or physical qualities. Gender is socially constructed; expectations about gender differ around the globe. People may be born male or female, but they learn the culturally and socially prescribed traits associated with masculine or feminine patterns of behavior.

gender
: The culturally and socially constructed differences between males and females, which are found in the meanings, beliefs, and practices associated with femininity and masculinity.

8.1.1 Gender Is Socially Constructed

In most societies throughout the world today, and certainly throughout history, men and women have been viewed as far more different than alike. Men and women even refer to one another as "the opposite sex." Men are often assumed to be more aggressive, sexual, unemotional, rational, and task-oriented than women, whereas women are assumed to be more nurturing, passive, and dependent. Many social roles played out in families every day reflect these presumed characteristics. For example, research shows that mothers spend far more time than do fathers on childcare, even when both work outside the home for pay, because women are thought to be more innately nurturing (**Parker and Livingston, 2017**).

However, the suggestion that men and women are the opposite of one another is seriously flawed. Modern social science and biological researchers note that men and women are far more alike than different. Both men and women express aggression, passivity, nurturance, rationality, instrumentality, and other gender-typed behaviors. All people possess both so-called masculine and feminine traits, although to varying degrees.

Expectations about gender are in large part socially constructed (**Ward and Edelstein, 2014**). They are variable across and within cultures, are historically situated, and reflect broad social patterns. Gender is not completely innate or instinctive. Rather, much of it is socially and culturally produced. A hundred years ago the general consensus was that women were too frail to work outside the home. Exceptions were made for poor or immigrant women, but the popular folklore was that ideally, women were dainty creatures best suited to the confines of the home. Yet, biologically, women are the same today as they were then. Nothing has really changed except for the social construction of gender.

8.1.2 Sex Differences

Even though men and women are far more alike than they are different from one another, it is important to note that the biological differences between men and women extend beyond the ones necessary for reproduction (**Fine, 2017**; **Schmitt, 2017**). Although using human subjects in this line of research presents a set of special challenges, many studies suggest that males are biologically stronger, more active, and more ag-

gressive than females, on average. However, in other ways, males are more fragile. Males suffer from a wider variety of physical illnesses; infant mortality rates are higher among males; and their life expectancy is shorter in almost all countries, including the United States (**National Center for Health Statistics, 2017**; **Population Reference Bureau, 2018**). Males are afflicted with more genetic disorders and suffer from accidents at a higher rate than do females. Depression, however, is far more common among women, as learned in **Chapter 3** . Certainly, many men suffer from depression and many women deal with physical illness. However, scientists tend to be interested in statistically typical behaviors rather than exceptions.

There is also some scientific evidence that males and females may solve intellectual problems somewhat differently (**Mosley, 2014**). Although most research points to no overall differences in average levels of intelligence (measured with IQ tests), men tend to perform better at certain spatial tasks and mathematical reasoning tests. Meanwhile, women tend to outperform men in terms of the precision with which they perform certain manual tasks. Women also tend to excel on tests that measure recall of words or matching items.

What is the cause of these differences? Originally, the assumption was that these were innate biological differences. Then more recently, it was popular to attribute sex differences exclusively, or nearly so, to social learning. The argument was that males and females are treated differently because of sex-typing, and therefore, they come to behave differently and develop different skill sets (**Bandura, 1977**; **Bussey and Bandura, 1999**). However, the most recent accumulating evidence now suggests that some cognitive and skill differences may be present at very early ages. These differences may result from hormones such as women's higher levels of estrogen and progesterone and men's higher levels of androgens, including testosterone. Exposure to different hormones begins in the uterus and may have implications for the way the brain is "wired" (**McCarthy et al., 2012**; **Miller and Halpern, 2014**). Studies of female fetuses who had been exposed to abnormally large quantities of androgens because of a genetic defect called congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) showed that the girls exposed to CAH as children were more likely to prefer playing with typically masculine toys, such as construction or transportation toys, as compared with the other girls who preferred typically feminine toys (**Kimura, 2002**).

Although brain research is still in its infancy, there is some evidence that the size, shape, and use of the brain may differ somewhat by sex in regions involved in language, memory, emotion, vision, hearing, and navigation (Becker et al., 2008; **Bramble, Lipson, Vashist, and Vilain 2017**; McEwen and Milner, 2017). Some studies suggest that women may use more parts of their brain at once, while men are more inclined to have focused responses (**Onion, 2005**). One study conducted with mice has shown that, as mammals develop in the womb, testosterone and related hormones trigger cell death in some regions of the male brain and foster cell development in other regions (**Forger et al., 2004**). Removing or

adding testosterone in mice shortly after birth causes their brains to develop according to the presence or absence of the hormone, regardless of their sex.

Given these intriguing studies, what is the role of nature versus nurture, and how would this relationship play out in personal relationships, social institutions, cultures, and societies? Social scientists suggest that most sex differences are probably a result of both biological and social influences, with social factors powerfully shaping biological ones (**Eliot, 2009**; **Etaugh and Bridges, 2013**; **Fine, 2010**). This process becomes clear when examining the wide variety of sex and gendered expectations cross-culturally. What one culture defines as distinctly feminine behavior or activities, another culture may see as quite masculine, as the research by the famous anthropologist George **Murdock (1949, 1957)** has shown. Are females more emotional—or are males? Answers to questions like this one are not universal; they vary across different cultures.

Although all people may possess both masculine and feminine traits, most people display primarily the gendered traits that are associated with their sex in a particular culture. Females are indeed usually more "feminine" and tend to behave in culturally prescribed feminine ways, and males are more "masculine." This tendency is likely due to both the strong cultural messages received throughout our lives as well as various biological forces.

> ### What Do You Think?
>
> How would your life be different if you were the "opposite" sex? Put yourself in the same family and general social setting, but as the opposite of the sex you are now. Describe the changes that might take place.

8.1.3 Incongruence between Sex and Gender

Most people (but certainly not all) have a binary view of sex and gender; that is, you are either male and expected to behave in masculine ways or female and expected to behave in feminine ways. An interesting exception to this expectation occurs on a cultural level in Native American culture, in which berdache, or Two-Spirit, men assume a woman's social roles in virtually every respect. They are considered a third gender and not necessarily gay or lesbian.

People who are transgender have an identity that differs from what would be expected based on the sex characteristics with which they are born. Regardless of their physical appearance, inside they feel that they are truly the other sex. Transgender women are not usually as obvious in Western cultures because women are allowed more leeway to behave in traditionally masculine ways, such as wearing men's clothing or acting

aggressively.

Transgender issues have been largely ignored historically, but this situation is beginning to change as more transgender people speak out (**Platt and Bolland, 2017**; **Schilt and Lagos, 2017**; **Winter, Settle, Wylie, Reisner, Cabral, Knudson, and Baral, 2016**). Danica Roem made history, winning election to Virginia's House of Delegates as an openly transgender woman. Caitlyn Jenner, who was a male Olympic athlete in the 1970s, and Chaz Bono, a writer and musician who was the daughter of the famous singers Sonny and Cher, are examples of celebrities who have transitioned. Because of the long-held stigma associated with being transgender, no one knows the exact number of transgender men and women, but about 0.6 percent of the U.S. population, or roughly 1.4 million people *identify* as transgender (**Flores, Herman, Gates, and Brown, 2016**).

Some transgender individuals harbor a deep sense of discomfort about their sex and wish to live fully as members of the other sex (**Shipherd, Green, and Abramovitz, 2010**). These persons may undergo sex reassignment surgery and hormone treatments, either male-to-female or female-to-male. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons, which represents 94 percent of all U.S. board-certified plastic surgeons, revealed that members of the organization performed over 3,200 "transmasculine" and "transfeminine" surgeries in 2016, a 20 percent increase over 2015 (**American Society of Plastic Surgeons, May 22, 2017**). Sex reassignment surgery, however, is expensive, costing at least $100,000 (**Taylor, 2015**). The preparation is time-consuming and emotionally difficult. Consequently, because of the cost and potential difficulties, most transgender persons go without it.

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Olympic champion athlete Bruce Jenner was uncomfortable identifying as a

Olympic champion athlete Bruce Jenner was uncomfortable identifying as a male from earliest memories. She has now transitioned to Caitlyn, and finally feels that she is her authentic self. In contrast, Chastity Bono, the child of famous duo "Sonny and Cher," today identifies as a male living his life comfortably as Chaz.

8.1.4 The Social Evaluation of Sex and Gender

What should be clear by now is that men and women are somewhat different and somewhat alike and that the gendered roles associated with sex are socially constructed and vary not only from one place to another but also from one historical period to another. Why is this information important for the study of social problems?

It is important because societies, cultures, social institutions, and personal relationships *evaluate* these sex and gender differences, and guess what? Women very often come up short. Around the globe, women are often considered "less than" men. Women are trafficked as sex slaves, are mutilated by having their clitorises cut out from their bodies, are denied access to schools, are forbidden the right to vote, are raped on college campuses (among other places), are paid less than men for equal work, are subjected to the rule of their husbands, and are forced to marry, because women have been deemed as less important, less valuable, less intelligent, and less morally righteous than men. *This* oppression is a social problem, indeed.

What Do You Think?

Can you identify a specific personal experience situation in which you felt that men and women (or masculinity and femininity) were evaluated differently? How did this make you feel?

Traditional Gender Roles

8.2 Define traditional gender roles.

In **Chapter 7**  , we suggested that prejudice often becomes the justification for discriminatory behavior. That is, if people believe that a certain group is "inferior" or "different," they can easily justify less-than-equal treatment of its members. It is also suggested that the norms of society are an important source of prejudice and discrimination. If an entire society is prejudiced against a certain group and discriminates against it, then most members of that society will accept such actions as natural and right.

Until the 1960s or so, it was widely accepted that the primary desirable roles for a woman were wife, mother, and homemaker and that her entire life should revolve around these roles. Women were expected to be nurturing and skilled in the emotional aspects of personal relationships. They were considered too delicate to do "men's work" and therefore were legally denied many career and job opportunities. In contrast, men were expected to be leaders and providers, highly rational and able to not let emotions get in the way of action. They were taught to "act like a man" and that "big boys don't cry." These expectations often caused men to deny their emotions and thus made them less able to enjoy many aspects of life in their families and communities. Women and men were thought to be biologically different and hence were treated differently by social institutions—including the government and legal system.

Today many people think of the traditional roles of women and men as outdated. However, as you will see later in this chapter, vestiges of these gendered roles remain. You can see them in personal relationships and in social institutions. Nonetheless, it is also true that in many countries the status of women is far more subordinate than in our own country. Women face substantial restrictions on their lives and may be unable to pursue careers outside the home, make important decisions for their children, or vote. In 2017, Saudi women were finally allowed to drive, Saudi Arabia being the final holdout. This traditional hierarchy is extremely resistant to change. Women and men are shaped by the culture in which they are raised, so that most adults are thoroughly indoctrinated or socialized for the roles their culture has prescribed for them. Change is suspect because it threatens their identity. Sometimes people wonder why women allow themselves to be subordinate, but it is important to understand that they are subject to the same cultural teachings as are men.

However, within this hierarchy there is considerable variation in the types of behavior that are considered appropriate for men and for women. These behaviors often reflect the values of a particular society more than any innate or "natural" qualities. Whereas it was once supposed that behavioral differences between men and women are innate, today it is clear that many of these differences are taught and learned through socialization. And, although it was once believed that there are universal stan-

The Roots of Sexism and Inequality

8.3 Examine the roots of sexism and inequality.

Sexism is the counterpart of racism and ageism, which are discussed in **Chapters 7** and **9**, respectively. It may be defined as the "entire range of attitudes, beliefs, policies, laws, and behaviors discriminating against women (or against men) on the basis of their [sex or] gender" (**Safilios-Rothschild, 1974**, p. 1).[1] In this section we describe several factors that contribute to sexism around the world and in the United States.

1Safilios-Rothschild, C. (1974). *Women & Social Policy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

sexism

The entire range of attitudes, beliefs, policies, laws, and behaviors discriminating against women (or against men) on the basis of their sex or gender.

8.3.1 Power, Male Hegemony, and Patriarchy

Sociologists who study gender relations call attention to persistent patterns of male dominance throughout the institutions of modern societies. This is known as **patriarchy**, a form of social organization in which men dominate and have power and authority over women. R. W. **Connell (1995)**, for example, has analyzed how dramatic inequalities in the distribution of power in societies often deprive women of opportunities to realize their full potential. Connell's research shows that, wherever possible, males attempt to preserve their hegemony (controlling power) over women. In relations marked by hegemony, domination by one group, class, or sex over another is achieved by a combination of political and ideological means. Although political power or coercion is always important, ideologies can be equally important. In relationships between men and women, these ideologies differ from one culture to another, and can be reinforced by religion. For example, traditional religious texts are filled with passages demeaning women, although their interpretations may be softened in modern-day language. For instance, Christianity teaches patriarchy, as witnessed in the following passages in the New Testament (1 Tm. 2:11–15):

patriarchy

A form of social organization in which men dominate and have power and authority over women.

> *Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.*[2]
>
> **2**Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

Connell's (1995) work shows that, in much of the industrialized world, men still have much greater access than women to cultural prestige, political authority, corporate power, individual wealth, and material comforts. Individual men or small groups may be confused or insecure about these inequalities. Men with feminist ideals may join with women in rejecting male hegemony. But despite all the recent feminist criticism and despite all the documented struggles by women to assert their equality and make political and economic gains in the workplace, men continue to be dominant. With some notable exceptions (the occasional female boss or political leader), male–female relations are structured so that women are subordinate. This subordination is reinforced by the symbolic equation of masculinity and power.

An unfortunate aspect of ideologies that support male dominance is that even people victimized by them tend to believe that they are true. Thus, many women are prejudicial to other women, undervalue the work of other women, and tolerate, or even encourage the sexual objectification of women (**Vaillancourt, 2013**). This has been called, "internalized sexism" or "internalized misogyny" (**Feltman and Szymanski, 2018**; **Szymanski and Hendrichs-Beck, 2014**).

8.3.2 Stereotyping

As you saw in **Chapter 7**  , one source of prejudice and discrimination is stereotyping—attributing a fixed and usually unfavorable and inaccurate conception to a category of people. Stereotypes often make it easier to justify unequal treatment of the stereotyped person or group.

Women have traditionally been stereotyped as weak, emotional, nurturing, dependent, kind, and good listeners, among many other attributes. Although these might sound a bit outdated, many people believe that women are indeed weaker, more emotional and nurturing, more dependent, kinder, and better listeners than men. However, there is also a set of

dent, kinder, and better listeners than men. However, there is also a set of stereotypes about men that limits their ability to function fully and effectively. Some have argued that, although both boys and girls receive gendered messages about how they are supposed to behave, today perhaps boys experience even more pressure to conform to traditional stereotypes than do girls (**Kimmel and Messner, 2013**). The masculine stereotype is that all men are tough, unemotional, and dominant; yet, however unrealistic and inaccurate this stereotype is, many men (and women) believe it. And, although this may be surprising, younger men buy into many stereotypes more so than older men, as shown in **Table 8–2**  . The masculine stereotype not only limits the freedom of men to engage in any activity or occupation they choose but also limits their personal relationships. They are uncomfortable discussing their feelings with other men, and instead, their relationships are more competitive in nature.

Table 8–2

Percent of Men Saying that Men Face a Lot or Some Pressure to Do the Following

	Age 18–36	Age 37–52
Be Willing to Throw a Punch if Provoked	69%	55%
Have Many Sexual Partners	61%	34%
Join in When Other Men Are Talking About Women in a Sexual Way	57%	41%

Source: Data from Parker, K., Horowitz, J., & Stepler, R. (Dec. 5, 2017) "On Gender Difference, No Consensus on Nature vs. Nurture," Pew Research Center.

Examples of Sexism and Inequality Today

8.4 Identify several examples of sexism and inequality today.

Sexism is widespread and is found in virtually every society; however, it is obviously more pronounced in some societies than in others. In many places in the world today, women cannot drive, vote, divorce, or own property in their own name. In virtually every society, women's activities and jobs carry less prestige and pay than those that are primarily held by men. Even when men and women work in identical or comparable jobs, women are paid significantly less for their effort overall. Moreover, women are underrepresented in public office, and men primarily make the laws that women must follow, including those on issues that affect women in particular, such as abortion, birth control, or guaranteed family leave. These inequities are justified based on biology ("it's human nature"), religion ("it's God's will"), economics ("that's not a budget priority"), or cultural customs ("that's the way we do things here")—all representative of patriarchy as discussed in the previous section.

We begin this discussion of sexism and inequality by illustrating an extreme example of patriarchy experienced in the world today. Sometimes it is easier to see how patriarchy operates by examining the most glaring example because it is often easier to identify patriarchy elsewhere than it is within our own borders. We will then turn to gendered experiences in the United States and other developed nations: Does patriarchy operate here also?

8.4.1 Female Genital Mutilation

The young girl introduced in **A Global View: "Female Genital Mutilation,"** like 200 million other women and girls, suffers as she tries to recover from the dangerous practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female genital cutting or female circumcision (**World Health Organization, January, 2018**). In an excruciatingly painful procedure, often without anesthesia, a woman's clitoris, and possibly also part of her vulva and vagina, are cut and removed with a knife, razor blade, or broken glass. She is then sewn up to ensure virginity for her future husband.

A GLOBAL VIEW

Female Genital Mutilation

Shani is a young woman born and raised in a rural village in Egypt.

Like most females there, she has undergone female genital mutilation.

This is her story.

My genitals were mutilated at the age of nine. I was told by my grandmother that they were taking me down to the river to perform a certain ceremony, and afterwards I would be given a lot of food to eat. As an innocent child, I did not know what was ahead of me and the pain that I would endure for the rest of my life.

Once I entered the secret area behind the bushes, I was taken to a very dark room and was told to undress. I was scared, and therefore just stood there unable to move. But an old woman blindfolded me and stripped me naked. Four strong women carried me to the site for the operation. I was forced to lie flat on my back while two women held tight to each leg, and another woman sat on my chest to prevent my upper body from squirming away. A piece of cloth was forced in my mouth to stop me screaming.

When the cutting began, I put up a big fight. I was genitally mutilated with a blunt penknife. They stabbed and cut and ripped at my body. I was not given any anesthetic in the operation and the pain was terrible and unbearable. I lost a lot of blood and it was everywhere. I kept telling them, "You're going to kill me." Yet those who took part in the operation were happy. They ignored my screams. Some of them had alcohol to drink. I saw a few other women were dancing and singing.

After the operation, they tied my legs together so I could not move. I laid this way for nearly two weeks. The medicine they put on my wound stank and was painful. When I wanted to urinate, I was forced to stand upright. The urine would spray over the wound and would cause agonizing pain all over again. Sometimes I tried not to urinate because of the terrible pain. They did not give me any antibiotics to fight against infection. Afterwards, I hemorrhaged and became anemic. I suffered for a long time from acute vaginal infections.

When I married, my husband had to rip me open again. He tried not to hurt me, but I nearly passed out from the pain. He is a good man, but I hate sex, I'll always hate sex. But I know that it did not have to be this way. I've heard of other girls who were not cut. A health worker came to our village and said that cutting is no good. She urged us to leave our daughters alone. I believe her, and I will try to keep my daughter away from this.

Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images

Critical Thinking

Why do women put up with this procedure? Why don't they just say no? What obstacles might the health worker face when she goes into a village or community to tell people that "cutting is no good"? Can you design a public health strategy for eliminating, or at least reducing, female genital mutilation?
Per-Anders Pettersson/Getty Images

Among countries with adequate national data, Somalia, Guinea, Djibouti, and Sierra Leone have the highest prevalence of FGM; at least 90 percent of women ages 15–49 have had their genitals cut, as shown in **Figure 8–1** . In addition, the practice of FGM and its harmful consequences concern a growing number of women and girls in Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand as a result of international migration. It is estimated that about 500,000 women living in Europe have had their genitals cut (**World Health Organization, 2011**).

Figure 8–1

Percentage of Girls and Women Aged 15–49 Who Have Undergone Female Genital Mutilation

Slide Show

Beauty Ideals for Women

The United States is not the only country that has harsh beauty ideals for women. Historically, and around the world today, women have endured painful procedures and have been maimed in the quest to be beautiful in the eyes of men. As you look at the photos in this slideshow, reflect on the societal pressures that women face to be beautiful.

This woman, like millions of other women in China, was told that big feet are ugly on a woman. To secure a proper husband, she submitted to a procedure that slowly and painfully broke all the bones in her feet, so they could heal in a bent, deformed shape, referred to as "golden lilies" or "bound feet." Throughout the rest of her life, she could barely walk, and her dependency was considered a further attraction.
Print Collector/Getty Images

(**World Health Organization, January, 2018**). Many women also experience serious levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD after FGM (**Adelufosi, Edet, Arikpo, Aquaisua, and Meremikwu, 2017**).

Why is this practice so popular, and why has it continued for so many years? It is deeply rooted in the patriarchal traditions (rather than religious teachings) in these societies (**Panet, 2013**). Women are expected to be subject to the social and sexual control of men at all times. They are expected to be virgins at the time of marriage and must remain sexually faithful thereafter. Removing the clitoris, the source of women's sexual pleasure, ensures that they will not experience orgasm, and thus the likelihood of engaging in or enjoying sexual relationships outside of marriage is lessened. Among women whose entire external genital area has been removed, the opening that remains is so small as to forbid penetration. Husbands are virtually guaranteed that their wives are virgins.

> ## What Do You Think?
>
> How would you develop a campaign to eliminate female genital cutting? Who would you involve, and how would you get your message across? How would you take into account the culture in which people live?

FGM persists, and is endorsed, perpetuated, and often conducted by other women, because women's status is low and their options are few. Marriage and motherhood are the primary ways in which women receive recognition. Without marriage, they bring shame to themselves and to their families. Virginity is highly valued, and this procedure helps to ensure that women's sexuality will be muted. Mothers have been taught to believe that if they do not have their daughter's clitoris removed or have her infibulated, the chances of finding a husband will be reduced considerably and their daughter will bear considerable shame (**Yount, 2002**).

The good news is that FGM is declining around the world due to public health and education efforts. For example, in Guinea, where FGM is nearly universal among women 15 and older, only about half of girls under 15 have undergone the procedure. While it's likely that some of these young girls will undergo FGM eventually, today many women and men across Africa and the Middle East oppose it. Even in Somalia, where FGM is also nearly universal, a third of women think the practice should end (**UNICEF, 2016**). A recent survey conducted in Somalia and Ethiopia with nearly 500 students found that 59 percent of boys said that they would prefer to marry a girl who had not undergone this procedure—a step in the right direction because a primary motivation for FGM has been to enhance marriage prospects (**Abathun, Gele, and Sundby, 2017**).

8.4.2 Sexist Standards of Beauty

After reading about FGM, it's easy to say, "Whew, I'm glad I live in the United States." However, the United States has its own set of patriarchal

norms and sexist customs. Do any come to mind? How many U.S. presidents have been women? Vice presidents? Senators? How many heads of Fortune 500 companies are women? How does women's pay compare with men's? Where did you get your last name? How do standards of beauty vary for men and women—some with potentially dangerous or painful repercussions (hint: think cosmetic surgery, breast implants, waxing, or even high-heeled shoes)?

Nearly 1.8 million cosmetic surgery procedures were performed in 2016 (**American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2017**). Nearly 90 percent of cosmetic surgery patients are women. **Table 8–3** reveals the top five surgical cosmetic procedures in 2016 (**American Society of Plastic Surgeons, 2017**). All these procedures have declined since 2000 with the exception of breast augmentation, which increased by over 30 percent. These procedures should be cause for concern, as they can have short- and long-term side effects.

Table 8–3

Top Five Surgical Cosmetic Procedures in 2016

Type of Procedure	Number of Procedures
Breast Augmentation	260,467
Liposuction	235,237
Nose Reshaping	223,018
Eyelid Surgery	209,020
Facelift	131,106

Source: Data from 2017 Plastic Surgery Statistics Report, American Society of Plastic Surgeons. Retrieved from ***https://www.plasticsurgery.org/documents/News/Statistics/2017/plastic-surgery-statistics-report-2017.pdf****.*

There are a variety of reasons that a person might seek cosmetic surgery. The first is the desire to create change because of a birth defect, an accident, or an illness that affects the person's looks. The second reason is to enhance attractiveness in people who feel some aspect of their body could be changed and improved to make them more attractive to others. Women, in particular, fall victim to the idea that they must be "perfect" (however culturally defined). Women who have cosmetic surgery have internalized the media messages about "ideal" women's body image and are dissatisfied with their own bodies (**Lee and Clark, 2014**). As shown in the slide show, *Beauty Ideas for Women*, what we define as beautiful is socially constructed. There is no one absolute standard of beauty. Instead, beauty standards vary historically and across cultures.

Developed nations such as the United States contain many patriarchal norms and customs. Let's look at another example of sexism—women in the labor force.

Slide Show

Beauty Ideals for Women

The United States is not the only country that has harsh beauty ideals for women. Historically, and around the world today, women have endured painful procedures and have been maimed in the quest to be beautiful in the eyes of men. As you look at the photos in this slideshow, reflect on the societal pressures that women face to be beautiful.

This woman, like millions of other women in China, was told that big feet are ugly on a woman. To secure a proper husband, she submitted to a procedure that slowly and painfully broke all the bones in her feet, so they could heal in a bent, deformed shape, referred to as "golden lilies" or "bound feet." Throughout the rest of her life, she could barely walk, and her dependency was considered a further attraction.
Print Collector/Getty Images

The goal of this apparatus is to give the impression of an elongated neck, a sign of a woman's maturity and beauty. Girls may begin to wear small coils at the age of 2 and gradually increase the number of coils as they grow older. The weight of the coils will eventually place sufficient - pressure on the clavicles to cause them to deform and create an im- pression of a longer neck.
Elena Lemekhova/Alamy Stock Photo

When a Suri girl in Ethiopia is about to be married, usually in her teens (around 14 or 15), the gap between her lower lip and the flesh below is pierced and gradually stretched. In the beginning a hole is made in the lip with a wooden stick. The stretch continues as successively bigger discs of clay or wood are accommodated by the disfigured lip. Generally, the two lower front teeth are pulled (or knocked) out to aid the

process. The final size of the plates determines how many cattle the woman will receive as a dowry, so the more stretched her lip the better, and the more cattle the woman is worth. Some women have stretched their lips to allow plates up to 20 cm in diameter. Having a lip plate is considered a sign of beauty.
Eric LAFFORGUE/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images

Singer Taylor Swift illustrates the emphasis on thinness in American culture. The desire to be unnaturally thin is related to a wide variety of dangerous eating disorders among women, including anorexia and bulimia. Why is such extreme thinness considered beautiful?
Karwai Tang/Getty Images

Breast augmentation is a leading form of cosmetic surgery. Very few women with low body fat would have large breasts naturally; instead, they are turning to surgery. But surgery is risky, and women could face several side effects. But risks notwithstanding, why do so many women want to add uncomfortable weight onto their bodies? Why do they conform to unrealistic fantasies?
Tracy Whiteside/Fotolia

Critical Thinking

> Drawing on what you have learned in this chapter, why are standards of beauty for women often so extreme, and why do women go along with these standards?

8.4.3 Women in the Labor Force

In addition to unrealistic standards of beauty, sexism is also evident in women's employment situations. Women are concentrated in lower-status jobs at the low end of the pay scale. The vast majority of retail clerks, typists, and secretaries are women, whereas men account for the largest proportions of corporate directors, white-collar administrators, and blue-collar supervisors (**U.S. Department of Labor, October, 2017**). Some

people may try to claim that these differences are due to men's greater educational attainment. However, that claim is not the case. On average, women have more education than do men.

History of Women's Employment

Today, most women work outside the home for pay, whether or not they are married and whether or not they have children. But this practice has not always been the case. In early colonial America, most families worked closely with the land. Their lives revolved around the seasonal work necessary for farming and ranching. The labor of men, women, and children was needed and was considered invaluable to the success of the family enterprise.

In the nineteenth century, the U.S. economy was evolving from an emphasis on agriculture to an emphasis on industrialization. During this century, work was often done away from home, and people were paid wages for their labor. New industries needed expanding numbers of laborers, so, in addition to recruiting men, factories hired many young, poor, minority, and immigrant women and children. By 1890, 17 percent of women were in the labor force (**Coontz, 2000**). Much of the work in these factories was dangerous and dirty, and there were minimal occupational safety standards compared to today. Women's roles became increasingly intertwined with class and race: Poor or minority women *had* to work, whereas white middle-class women stayed far away from the outside world of work.

This pattern continued for many years. During the 1940s through the mid-1970s (except briefly during WWII), most employed women were either single, married without children, or had husbands that did not earn enough to support the family. Married mothers worked outside the home in small numbers and tended to organize their labor force participation around childbearing and childrearing. In the 1940s and 1950s, they tried to wait until their children had grown up before returning to work; in the 1960s, mothers tried to wait until their children were in high school; and by the 1970s, it had dropped to when children were in middle school. Nonetheless, the general convention was, unless a mother had to work because of dire economic circumstances, employment was secondary to the bearing and rearing of children.

By the mid-1970s, a new pattern of mothers' labor force participation emerged and has continued today: Over two-thirds of married mothers and three-quarters of unmarried mothers (i.e., never married, divorced, separated, or widowed) are employed for pay (**Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017**). However, instead of continuing to adapt work to fit childbearing, the reverse has occurred. Childbearing and childrearing are adapted to fit the demands of work. Families have delayed having children and have had fewer of them, and some women and men have chosen not to have children at all (**Martin et al., January 5, 2017**). Thus, a macro-level condition of changing norms surrounding women's employ-

ment has led to micro-level changes in the structure of families.

Beginning in earnest in the 1970s, Americans have witnessed a restructuring of the U.S. economy. Whereas the country was once heavily dependent on raw materials and manufacturing, today the U.S. economy is heavily geared toward the provision of a wide range of services from medical care to food and entertainment. Real wages (wages after accounting for inflation) have declined, and most families rely on two paychecks to make ends meet.

How Do Women Workers Fare?

How do female workers fare compared with their male counterparts? **Table 8–4** reports women's earnings as a percentage of men's earnings among people who work full-time over an entire year (**U.S. Department of Labor, October, 2017**). The table compares data for whites, blacks, Asians, and Hispanics. As you can see, there has been considerable movement toward greater equality over time, although the gap has remained relatively constant since the early 2000s. The data also reveal that black and Hispanic women earn incomes closest to their male counterparts, whereas the gender gap for whites and Asians is the widest. Why do you think this is the case?

Table 8–4

Women's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's Earnings, 1980–2016

	Total	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic
1980	64%	63%	76%	–	74%
1985	68%	67%	83%	–	78%
1990	72%	72%	85%	–	87%
1995	76%	73%	86%	–	87%
2000	77%	76%	84%	80%	88%
2005	81%	80%	89%	81%	88%
2010	78%	78%	88%	80%	89%
2016	81%	79%	88%	77%	84%

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau. 2017. "Women in the Labor Force: Data and Statistics." October. Retrieved 14 March 2018 (https://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/stats_data.htm).

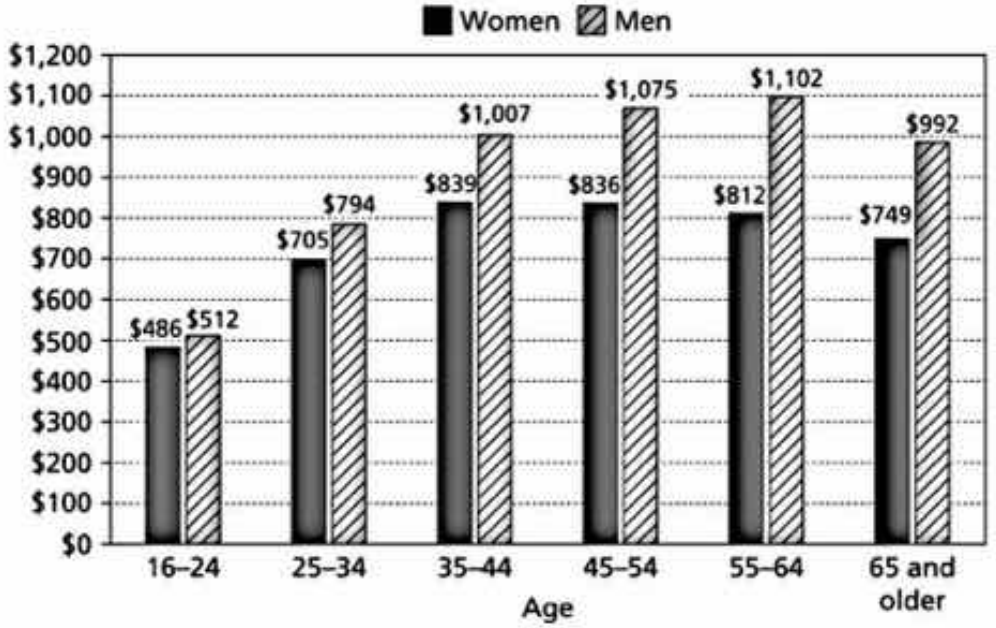
Pay differences continue even among those who are most educated. Women without a high school diploma earn about 77 percent of their male counterparts' salaries, whereas women with advanced degrees earn roughly 75 percent of men's salaries (**U.S. Department of Labor, August, 2017**). Thus, contrary to what we might believe, the pay gap be-

tween men and women who work full-time, year-round, increases rather than decreases with higher educational attainment.

Differences in pay between men and women are smaller among younger workers than they are among those who are older, as shown in **Figure 8–2**. For example, employed women between the ages of 16 and 24 earn about 95 percent of what men earn; however, the gap widens considerably after that. It is likely that these young adults are working at temporary, service-oriented jobs, and have the lowest levels of education. As men and women finish college, and begin to have children, the pay gap increases.

Figure 8–2

Women's and Men's Earnings, by Age, 2016



Source: Based on "Women's and Men's Earnings by Age in 2016," Bureau of Labor Statistics, August 25, 2017.

What Do You Think?

If young women between the ages of 16 and 24 earn 95 percent of men's wages (while older women earn less), do you think these young women will retain this advantage as they age, or will they see their advantage start to decline?

What Accounts For These Gender Differences?

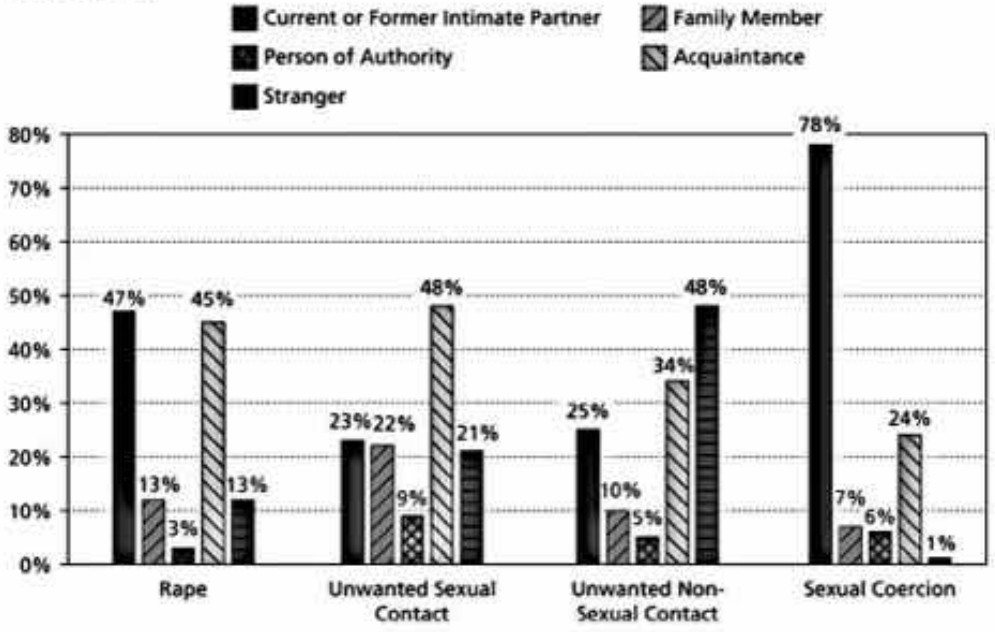
Realistically, differentials could be due to a number of factors. One explanation offered is the different work habits of men and women. For example, among full-time workers, men tend to work a greater number of hours, which could boost pay. But, as a sociologist, look at the social context of this fact—why is it men tend to work longer hours on average? Could it be because women are responsible for the majority of household

or spread rumors; and sexual pressure due to someone using their influence or authority.

Who is committing these crimes? It varies by the type of crime being committed, as shown in **Figure 8–3**. This figure includes data from females only and shows that the relationship between the perpetrator and victim tends to differ across these crimes. For example, rape is most likely committed by a current or former intimate partner, or by an acquaintance. Unwanted sexual contact is most often committed by an acquaintance, whereas noncontact, unwanted sexual experiences tend to be initiated by strangers (**Smith et al., 2017**). Sexual coercion tends to be committed by a current or former intimate partner. These crimes are often not reported to the police out of fear or shame.

Figure 8–3

Lifetime Reports of Sexual Violence Among Female Victims by Type of Perpetrator



Source: Data from Smith, S. G., et al. (2017) "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010–2012 State Report," National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia.

Rape, sexual assault, coercion, and harassment (which can include sexual contact or noncontact unwanted sexual experience) have a long history but received new attention recently as many prominent men's sexually harassing behavior was exposed, including politicians, actors, and comedians, among others. Anita Hill may have first opened the door to publicly denouncing sexual harassment in 1991, as she charged that Clarence Thomas, who was nominated to the Supreme Court, sexually harassed her. As his former employee and a law professor (currently at Stanford), she claimed that Thomas made lewd and suggestive comments and tried to coerce her into having sex with him. Despite her testimony, he was confirmed as a Justice to the Supreme Court and her allegations were almost forgotten. Today there is a renewed awareness, but social science

data, as well as personal testimonies from the #MeToo movement, to mind us that these unwanted behaviors have been around for a very long time. As prominent cases of harassment were uncovered, the #MeToo movement was born, representing the plight of the average woman coming forth to tell her story of harassment, assault, and rape by bosses, colleagues, and others.

Nowadays, sexual harassment may occur electronically. This can happen through text messages, email, instant messaging and social networks. It can include verbal threats, images, and as discussed in **Chapter 5**, revenge porn. A large study by the Pew Research Center based on a representative sample of adults found that half of young women between the ages of 18 and 29 report receiving explicit images that they did not ask for (**Duggan, July 11, 2017**). A large study of teenagers found that one in four dating teens is abused or harassed online or through texts by their partner (**Zweig and Dank, 2013**).

What Do You Think?

Have you or someone that you know ever been abused or sexually harassed online? How did you (or they) respond? How does this type of harassment differ from that which is done in person?

Stalking, another type of harassment, has received greater attention since California passed the first anti-stalking law in 1990. **Stalking** consists of repeated and obsessive contact or tracking of another person—attention that is unwanted and causes a reasonable concern for one's safety (**Smith et al., 2017**). It is a combination of many unwanted acts that, by themselves, are not necessarily abusive—for example, sending flowers or gifts, calling on the telephone, or sending a text or e-mail—but, when taken together may constitute a form of mental abuse. Stalking exists on a continuum. It may be so subtle that the victim is not even aware it is happening or, in contrast, the perpetrator may purposefully try to instill terror in the victim.

stalking

Obsessive contact or tracking of another person—attention that is unwanted and causes a reasonable concern for one's safety.

The College Environment

College students are particularly vulnerable to rape, sexual assault, harassment, and stalking, in part because of their age, but also because of the group living quarters and the party atmosphere at many universities (**Sinozich and Langton, 2014**). In a study of female undergraduates, 19 percent, or nearly one in five, experienced attempted or completed sexual assault since entering college. And many of the respondents in this study still had several years of college ahead of them (**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012**).

Source: Data from Smith, S. G., et al (2017) "The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2010–2012 State Report," National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia.

rape

Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.

Sexual assault may include rape, but it also includes other types of behavior, such as (1) *unwanted physical contact*—unwanted sexual experiences involving touch but not sexual penetration, such as being kissed in a sexual way, or having sexual body parts fondled, groped, or grabbed and (2) *unwanted noncontact sexual experiences*—unwanted experiences that do not involve any touching or penetration, including someone exposing their sexual body parts, flashing, or masturbating in front of the victim, someone making a victim show his or her body parts, someone making a victim look at or participate in sexual photos or movies, or someone harassing the victim in a public place in a way that made the victim feel unsafe.

sexual assault

An act that may include rape, but which also includes other types of behavior, such as unwanted physical contact or noncontact, unwanted sexual experiences.

More than one woman in four has experienced unwanted sexual contact, as has one in nine men, as shown in **Table 8–5** **(Smith et al., 2017)**. Noncontact, unwanted sexual experiences have occurred to one in three women, and one in eight men. Another 13 percent of women, and 6 percent of men, report that they have been **sexually coerced**, defined as unwanted vaginal, oral, or anal sex after being pressured in ways that included being worn down by someone who repeatedly asked for sex or showed they were unhappy; feeling pressured by being lied to, being told promises that were untrue, having someone threaten to end a relationship or spread rumors; and sexual pressure due to someone using their influence or authority.

sexual coersion

Unwanted vaginal, oral, or anal sex after being pressured in ways that include being worn down by someone who repeatedly asked for sex or showed they were unhappy, feeling pressured by being lied to, being told promises that were untrue, having someone threaten to end a relationship

or spread rumors; and sexual pressure due to someone using their influence or authority.

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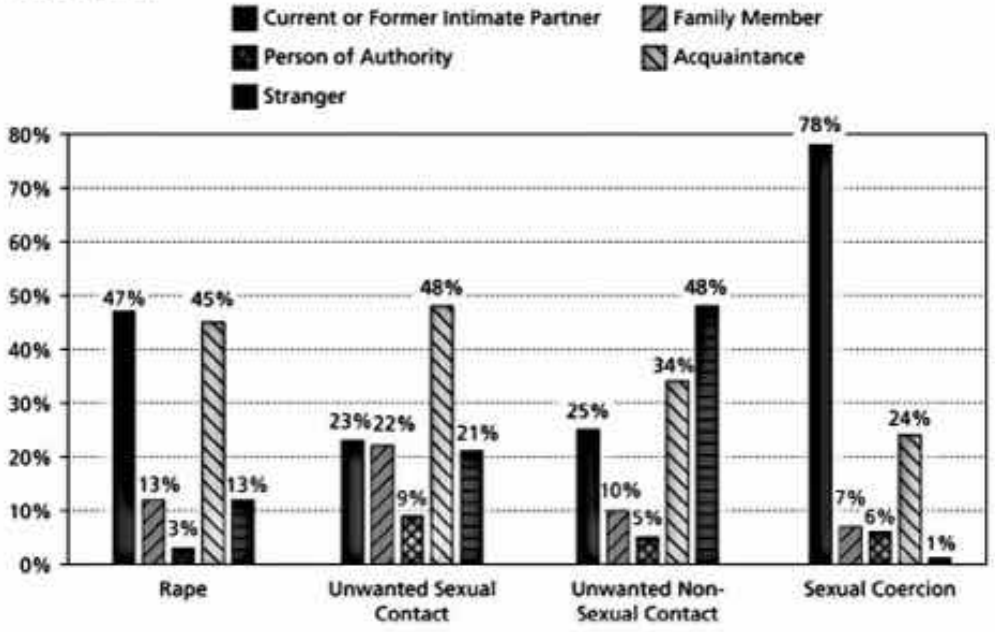

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Who is being raped, and who is doing the raping? Among college students, about 80 percent of victims and perpetrators know each other; they are intimate partners, "friends," roommates, acquaintances, and classmates (**Sinozich and Langton, 2014**). Women are raped by their study partner on the way to the library, by the guy they just met at the party in the dorm, by their roommate's brother, or by the partner they are involved with.

The pioneering work of Mary Koss and her colleagues (**Koss and Cook, 1993**; **Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski, 1987**) sheds some interesting light on college-age perpetrators. In a survey of 32 college campuses, they found that although fully 12 percent of men had committed acts that would fit the legal definition of rape or attempted rape, only 1 percent thought their actions were criminal. Many made a distinction between "forcing a girl to have sex" and "rape," as though they are different. The law, of course, makes no such distinction. Even today, many men believe in myths about rape (e.g., it's committed by strangers; no woman can be raped against her will), and those men tend to have murkier ideas about what constitutes consent (**Shafer et al., 2018**).

Oddly, many college women blame themselves for being raped, either wholly or partially (**Donde, 2017**). One study indicated that rape survivors attributed the most blame to themselves and to society, some blame to the situation, and the least blame to the male involved, even though the majority of women clearly voiced their nonconsent (**Cook and Messman-Moore, 2018**). They may be more likely to refer to the rape as a "sexual assault" than as an actual rape itself (**Donde et al., 2018**).

The issue of sexual assault among college students has gained new urgency in recent years as the number of reports of forcible sex offenses on campus has surged, and several cases have received national press. The Obama administration opened civil rights investigations of more than 110 colleges and universities for their handling of sexual violence complaints. Many rape victims fail to report the crime because they feel shame or perceive threats from the perpetrator (**Munzer, Fegert, Ganser, Loos, Witt, and Goldbeck, 2016**). A 2011 letter from the Office of Civil Rights told campus officials they must respond more promptly to reports of sexual violence and also use a less rigorous standard, known as "preponderance of the evidence," when determining whether an assault occurred. Until that time, many campuses had been using a more stringent standard, known as "clear and convincing." However, the administration of President Trump officially rescinded Obama-era campus sexual assault guidance. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, along with Republicans and groups that advocate on behalf of individuals' rights, have argued that the guidance amounted to an overreach of federal authority, and could put undue burden on accused students to defend themselves against allegations (**Camera, 2017**).

What Do You Think?

What is it about a college environment that makes rape and sexual

assault so prevalent? What do you think is happening at your college? What can or should be done about it? How can feminist theory or conflict theory guide you?

"DATE-RAPE" Drugs

Alcohol or drugs are often involved in a sexual assault (**Roudsari, Leahy, and Walters, 2009**). **Date-rape drugs** ⓘ such as gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), Rohypnol (popularly known as "roofies" or "roofenol"), or ketamine hydrochloride (ketamine) can immobilize a person to facilitate an assault (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office of Women's Health, April 28, 2017). The effects of these drugs cause people to be physically helpless, lose muscle control, feel very drunk, or lose consciousness, and they often can't remember what happened. The drugs usually have no color, smell, or taste and can be easily added to flavored drinks without the victim's knowledge. How can you protect yourself? Don't accept drinks from other people; open containers yourself; keep your drink with you at all times, even when you go to the bathroom; don't share drinks; don't drink from punch bowls or other large, common, open containers because they may already have drugs in them; don't drink anything that tastes or smells strange (sometimes GHB tastes salty); and have a designated nondrinking friend with you to make sure you stay safe.

date-rape drugs

Drugs such as gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), Rohypnol (popularly known as "roofies" or "roofenol"), or ketamine - hydrochloride (ketamine), which can immobilize a person to facilitate an assault.

Sources of Sexism

8.5 Assess the sources of sexism.

We have described some of the causes of the subordination of women and indicated some of the major inequities that women face in our society. In this section, we discuss in some detail the processes by which American institutions reinforce and perpetuate sexism.

8.5.1 Socialization

If much of gendered behavior is socially constructed and learned, where do people learn it? **Gender socialization** is the process whereby people learn to behave according to the gendered norms of a culture. They are taught the norms associated with being male or female (**Ward and Edelstein, 2014**). Gender socialization may be a conscious effort such as a teacher criticizing a young girl for being rowdy and "unladylike" in the classroom or scolding a young boy for displaying his emotions because "big boys don't cry." It also may occur on a less conscious level, for example, parents providing different toys for their children—dress-up clothes for their daughters and war toys for their sons. The **agents of socialization**, summarized in **Table 8–6**, include the people, social institutions, and organizations that teach boys and girls their gendered expectations. Through socialization, people internalize to varying degrees the roles, norms, and values of their culture and subculture, which become their guides to behavior and shape their deepest beliefs.

Table 8–6

Agents of Socialization and How They Work

Family Members
• Parents and other family members have the initial responsibility for introducing the gendered norms and expectations of their culture.
Toys
• Books show boys as leading characters and girls in stereotypical roles; toys are sex-typed.
Schools
• The "hidden curriculum" traditionally encouraged sex-typed behavior and taught girls to fear academic success. However, things are changing, and now girls are experiencing greater success at school than boys. Yet, training for many occupations remains sex-typed.
Peers

• Same-sex play reinforces different interaction styles that carry over into adulthood.
Media
• Television, music videos, and electronic games tend to focus more on boys and present girls in stereotypical and sexist ways.

gender socialization
A process whereby people learn to behave according to the gendered norms of a culture.

agents of socialization
The people, social institutions, and organizations that teach boys and girls their gendered expectations.

Family Members

Parents and other family members have the initial responsibility for introducing the gendered norms and expectations of their culture (**Endendijk et al., 2013**; **Halpern and Perry-Jenkins, 2016**). They teach a child about what to wear, how to behave, what toys to play with, what the child's status is, and what the overall expectations are for the child. Consciously or not, parents, especially fathers, often treat their sons and daughters differently (**Mascaro, Rentscher, Hackett, Mehl, and Rilling, 2017**). They hold baby girls more gently and cuddle them more than they do boys. Parents of girls describe their children as more dainty and delicate than do parents of boys, and the choice of dress usually reflects these perceptions. This different treatment might help to explain why many parents hold a specific preference for their child's sex, as discussed in the feature box, **A Closer Look: "A Son or a Daughter?"**

Toys

Children's toys and games are also differentiated on the basis of sex (**Jirout and Newcombe, 2015**; **Sweet, 2014**). Toys for boys often emphasize rough-and-tumble play (e.g., sports, guns, vehicles, action figures), whereas toys for girls often focus on quiet or nurturing activities (e.g., dolls, arts and crafts, kitchens and cooking).

An analysis of virtually any children's toy store will reveal that pink aisles specialize in girl toys whereas others are reserved for toys for boys. Toy websites are equally gendered. A toy as seemingly gender-neutral as a bicycle takes on great gender significance by its color: pink for girls, blue for boys. Targeting toys by sex has consequences beyond socialization. Boys are more likely to play with toys that develop spatial intelligence—

K'nex, puzzles, Lego bricks—than girls are. Marketing plays a role. Girl-oriented product lines such as Lego Friends focus on playacting rather than construction; aisles in some toy stores distinguish "building sets" from "girls' building sets" (**Jirout and Newcombe, 2015**).

A Closer Look

A Son or a Daughter?

> If you could have only one child, would you prefer to have a son or a daughter?

Kian Khoon Tan/Alamy Stock Photo

Around the world, many couples are answering this question with a resounding "son!" The preference for sons over daughters has dramatically shifted the sex ratio in countries like China and India, where strict birth control is encouraged but patriarchal norms are prominent. Preference for boys is also found in many other cultures throughout the world. This preference could lead to a worldwide shortage of girls now that various techniques for detecting the sex of a fetus can be assessed. But what about the United States? Is there a preference for sons over daughters here?

The Gallup Poll conducts research on a variety of social, economic, and political issues, using large, nationally representative samples of adults in the United States, and the data collected can be compared over time to assess how things are (or are not) changing. Gallup has conducted telephone interviews with over 1,000 adults ages 18 and older, living in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Americans have been asked about their preferences for a boy or girl—using slightly different wordings over the years—since 1941. The findings are generally consistent: If Americans could have only one child, they would prefer that it be a boy rather than a girl by a 40 percent to 28 percent margin (**Newport, 2011**). The preference for sons is highest among men, and, rather surprisingly, highest among younger adults. Younger men ages 18 to 49 prefer boys to girls by a 54 percent to 19 percent margin, as you can see in **Table 8–7**  . Republicans, conservatives, and those with less education also tend to prefer a son.

Table 8–7

Preference for a Son versus a Daughter, Responses to *"Suppose you could only have one child. Would you prefer that it be a boy or a girl?"*

	Boy	Girl	Doesn't matter/Unsure/No opinion
Total	40%	28%	32%
Men	49%	22%	28%
Women	31%	33%	36%
Age 18–29	54%	27%	18%
Age 30–49	39%	27%	34%
Age 50–64	34%	29%	37%
Age 65 and over	31%	29%	40%
Men 18–49	54%	19%	26%
Women 18–49	36%	35%	28%
Men 50 and over	41%	26%	33%

Women 50 and over	25%	32%	42%
Postgraduate	32%	33%	35%
College Graduate	35%	29%	36%
Some College	39%	28%	33%
High School or less	44%	25%	30%
Republicans/Leaners	43%	25%	30%
Democrats/Leaners	39%	33%	28%
Conservative	41%	25%	34%
Moderate	40%	27%	33%
Liberal	36%	37%	28%

However, there is some possibility that these long-held preferences are starting to change. A new study measured that preference in a different way. While having a daughter versus a son used to make American parents more likely to keep having children, presumably to try for a son, now the opposite is true. Having a daughter makes it less likely that parents will keep having children (**Miller, 2018**).

This trend is certainly one to watch.

Critical Thinking

> Why do men most starkly want sons, but women do not seem to care? Why are younger people, who are usually more liberal on social issues, more likely to want sons than are older persons? Do Americans deliberately attempt to select the sex of their child?

Schools

Schools represent a more formal type of socialization. Considering how much time children spend in school, the socialization they receive there inevitably affects how they behave. Daycare centers, preschools, elementary schools, secondary schools, and even college classrooms are important arenas in which gender socialization occurs. Research a decade or two ago revealed that teachers called on boys to answer questions more often than girls and that boys were given more public praise by teachers. The **hidden curriculum** informally teaches gen-

dered norms, and in this case, taught girls that academic achievement could mean forfeiting popularity (**Orenstein, 1994**). Consequently, although girls tended to excel in elementary school, by the time they reached middle and upper school, they lost confidence and tested more poorly than boys (**Kenney-Benson et al., 2006**).

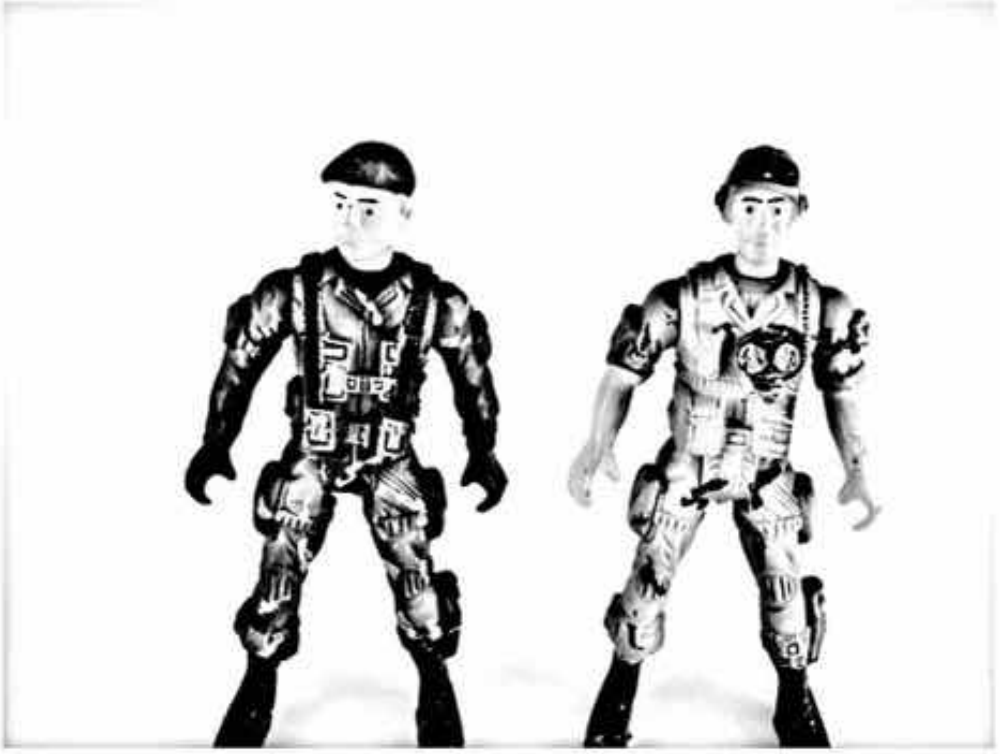
hidden curriculum

An undocumented teaching approach that informally teaches gendered norms.

What Do You Think?

Reflect on the toys you played with as a child or the books you read. Were they sex-typed? If so, why did you have sex-typed toys?

But something has changed. In recent years, much emphasis has been placed on ridding the schools of bias against female achievement and gender equality. Today, it appears that many girls and young women have a strong achievement ethic, are doing well in school, and are surpassing boys and young men. More girls apply to, attend, and graduate from college now than boys. For example, 33 percent of males between the ages of 25 and 29 have a bachelor's degree, as compared to 40 percent of their female counterparts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Many college majors, however, remain sex-typed. Students in nursing, elementary education, and social work are overwhelmingly female, whereas students in engineering and computer science are still primarily male.



timur1970/Fotolia

Toys for boys and girls differ and perpetuate gendered stereotypes. Dolls for boys are called "action figures" and usually emphasize toughness, whereas dolls for girls emphasize domesticity.
Alexandra/Fotolia

Peers

Peer groups, an important source of socialization, grow in importance as a child ages (**Mulvey and Killen, 2014**; **Kågesten et al., 2016**). However, even young children are socialized by their same-sex peers to conform to traditional gender expectations. Psychologist Eleanor **Maccoby (1998)**, in her seminal study of children's play groups, found that children between the ages of 2 and 3 tend to prefer same-sex peer play groups when provided with the opportunity to do so. She also noted that when girls were playing with other girls, they were as active as were boys playing with other boys. However, when girls were playing with boys, they frequently stood back and let the boys dominate the toys or games. Maccoby speculated that the boys' rougher play and greater focus on competition was unattractive to girls, and girls responded by pulling back rather than by trying to exert their own play style. Maccoby suggests that these peer groups reinforce different interaction styles that carry over into adulthood: Boys' groups reinforce a more competitive, dominance-oriented style of interaction, which carries over into adult male communication patterns that include greater interrupting, contradicting, or boasting. Girls' cooperative groups reinforce a style that contributes to adult female communication patterns, including expressing agreement and acknowledging the comments of others and asking questions rather than making bold pronouncements.

Mass Media

The mass media, including television, radio, and video games, are an important mechanism for socializing children. More than two-thirds of American households play computer or video games; 55 percent of these

games are an increasing part of children and teen's entertainment, and consumers spent almost $27 billion on games, hardware, and accessories (Entertainment Software Association, 2017). Women and girls are portrayed in these games much less frequently than are men and boys, and when they are included, are often shown in subordinate or "hypersexualized" ways (**Near, 2013**; **Strum, 2016**). In videos with ratings of Teen or Mature, women's bodies are often artificially thin with exaggerated breasts. They are also considerably more attractive than most of the male characters and are often portrayed with revealing clothing.

Television also teaches and reflects gendered stereotypes. Boys, especially middle-class white boys, are at the center of most children's television programming, playing the most roles and engaging in the most activity (**Gerding and Signorielli, 2014**; **Sink and Mastro, 2017**). Reviews of recent children's television shows reveal that male characters are still more likely than female characters to answer questions, boss or order others, show ingenuity, and achieve a goal. A study of morning commercials showed that half of the commercials targeted to girls spoke about physical attractiveness, whereas none of the commercials targeted to boys mentioned attractiveness (**National Institute on Media and the Family, 2009**). Incidentally, females are less likely than males to be shown eating, not an insignificant finding given the higher rates of eating disorders among girls and women (**National Institute of Mental Health, 2013**).

Recent advertising campaigns have sought to attract the growing population of educated females by presenting successful businesswomen and female scientists to endorse products. But the patterns of sexism in advertising remain strong: Sex appeal and sexual stereotypes are still used to sell many products.

Socialization reinforces sexism, as do many social institutions. In particular, organized religion and the legal system contribute to sexism in our society.

8.5.2 Organized Religion

Women attend church more frequently, pray more often, hold firmer beliefs, and cooperate more in church programs than men do (**Pew Research Center, April 12, 2016**); yet, organized religion is dominated by men (**Mills, 1972**). In their theological doctrines and religious hierarchies, churches and synagogues tend to reinforce women's subordinate role. Explicit instructions to do so can be found in the Bible: "A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet. For Adam was created first, and Eve afterwards; and it was not Adam who was deceived; it was woman who, yielding to deception, fell into sin" (Timothy 2:11–15).[4]

4Timothy 2:11–15, The New English Bible.

Historically, organized religion has reinforced many secular traditions and norms, including the traditional views that men are primary and women secondary, and that a woman's most important role is procreation. In Judaism, women are required to obey fewer religious precepts than are men because less is expected of them. Orthodox Jewish males recite a prayer each morning in which they thank God that they are not women. The Catholic Church still assumes authority over a woman's sexual behavior, forbidding the use of birth control devices because they prevent reproduction.

In recent decades there have been some changes. The movement to allow women to hold leadership positions in churches and synagogues has had some success: In more liberal denominations (such as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Reformed Jews), women may be ordained as ministers and rabbis. Within the Catholic Church, there are groups of women devoted to changing the norm against female priests, but they encounter resistance from traditionalists in the Catholic hierarchy.

8.5.3 The Government and Legal System

There have been many legal barriers to sexual equality throughout history. For example, a 1919 study by the Women's Bureau (a federal bureau created by Congress) found that women were explicitly barred from applying for 60 percent of all civil-service positions, notably those involving scientific or other professional work. Women were placed in a separate employment category, and their salaries were limited. Many labor laws were also implemented for women during the early and mid-1900s, such as those that set shorter work hours, allowed lower wages, regulated how much a woman could lift, and required breaks from work for lunch or bathroom use (**Stansell, 2010**). These laws were ostensibly to protect women, but in effect kept them from a variety of jobs. As late as 1965, the EEOC stated that laws designed to protect women (but not men) were not discriminatory. Labor laws have now changed, but they have left behind a legacy that says it is okay to treat men and women differently under the law.

As another example, it took until 1938 for a judge to lift the ban on birth control, a ruling that involved Margaret Sanger, a leading crusader for the rights of all women to have access to contraceptives. However, it took until 1965 for the Supreme Court (in *Griswold v. Connecticut*) to guarantee married couples the right to use birth control, ruling that it was protected in the Constitution as a right to privacy. Meanwhile, millions of unmarried women living in 26 states were still denied the right to buy birth control to protect themselves from an unwanted pregnancy. It took until 1972 for the Supreme Court (in *Baird v. Eisenstadt*) to find birth control to be legal for all citizens, regardless of marital status. Again, while laws surrounding birth control have changed, women have more recently fought for their reproductive self-determination.

As a final, more modern-day example, in the United States men are 15 times as likely to be incarcerated as are women. What explains this gap? Is it due to sex differences in the frequency and type of criminal behavior, or are courts or prosecutors treating genuinely equivalent cases differently based on sex? According to research, both are operating. Men do indeed commit a greater number of serious crimes, but women and men who commit identical crimes are treated differently under the criminal justice system, with far greater leniency for women (**Starr, 2012**). Using information gleaned from four national data sources, Sonja B. Starr, a researcher from the University of Michigan Law School, found that women are twice as likely as men to avoid incarceration if convicted of the same crime. Moreover, if incarcerated, men receive sentences that average 63 percent longer than women do (**Starr, 2012**). She speculates on the factors that may explain the leniency afforded to women.

Girlfriend Theory: Women might be viewed as minor players—perhaps mere accessories of their male romantic partners. Prosecutors and judges may consider such women less dangerous, less morally culpable.

Parental Responsibilities: Prosecutors and/or judges worry about the effect of maternal incarceration on children, and therefore give women lighter sentences.

Cooperativeness: Female defendants receive leniency because they are more cooperative with the government.

Sympathetic Life Circumstances: Female defendants may be seen as having more troubled life circumstances, such as poverty, mental illness, addiction, and abuse histories. If so, they may be perceived as less morally culpable or as candidates for rehabilitation.

Starr's research allowed her to test these theories statistically. She found that these theories were important and explained part, but not all, of the sex differences in punishments for identical crimes. She speculates that sex discrimination may be a remaining factor due to chivalry, paternalism, and trivializing women.

Social Policy

8.6 Describe the women's movement and its policy agenda.

There are many social policies that touch on sex and gender. This section looks at a broad issue, the women's movement, describing its history and policy agenda.

8.6.1 The Women's Movement

The women's movement in the United States was officially founded in 1848, when a women's rights convention held in Seneca, New York, was attended by 300 women and men, many of whom, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, were active in the abolitionist movement. The Seneca convention endorsed a platform that called for the right of women to vote, to control their own property, and to obtain custody of their children after divorce, all thought to be heresy at the time. After women won the right to vote in the 1920s, considered to be a major political victory, the women's movement receded from public consciousness. This consciousness was awakened again in the 1960s, a decade characterized by considerable activism and numerous social movements.

The resurgence of the movement in the 1960s occurred in a context of widespread social change. In 1963, the year in which Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, appeared, the President's Commission on the Status of Women published its recommendations for equal opportunity in employment. In 1964, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which included a provision (Title VII) that made it illegal to discriminate against women in promotion and hiring. But the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), established to enforce Title VII, was unwilling to serve as a watchdog for women's rights. As a result, in 1966, a pressure group, the National Organization for Women (NOW), was founded. Its stated purpose was "to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society *now*, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men."[5]

5Statement of Purpose, The National Organization for Women's 1966 Statement of Purpose, National Organization for Women. Retrieved from **https://now.org/about/history/statement-of-purpose/**

In 1970, enthusiastic and resolute women march in a parade down Fifth Avenue in New York on the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the right to vote.
John Olson/Getty Images

Attitudes about gender roles have undergone a major transformation since the resurgence of the women's movement. Although as we have seen, significant inequalities and double standards continue to exist, they are far less sharply defined than they were in earlier decades.

8.6.2 Changes in Men's Roles

The issues of women's rights have often eclipsed the need for men to examine and change their own gendered roles. Inspired by the successes of women, however, many men are exploring the roles that have also limited them in the past, and they are discovering a new freedom in moving toward sex-role egalitarianism, as shown in the feature box, **A Personal View: "What Does It Take to Be a 'Good Father'?"** There is evidence of a beginning shift in male gendered roles, especially among educated men in their twenties and thirties. The presence of women in the workforce, especially mothers, is leading to greater egalitarianism as women become breadwinners and men participate more freely (although not equally) in childrearing and housework, as described in upcoming **Chapter 10**.

As suggested earlier in this chapter, some people suggest that boys experience even more pressure to conform to cultural stereotypes than do girls (**Kimmel and Messner, 2013**). Girls are allowed more leeway. They can behave in ways that have been considered masculine; for example, there is little social stigma in being a "tomboy," whereas boys are not allowed to behave in ways that are deemed feminine. To be told that "you throw like a girl" or to be labeled a "sissy" (which is the opposite of a tomboy) is tantamount to social suicide. Likewise, women have moved into many occupations traditionally held by men (such as doctor or lawyer), whereas men may still shy away from occupations such as nursing or elementary education, in part because they would feel stigmatized for doing "women's work," and fear that their masculinity will be questioned.

And finally, while women are allowed, even encouraged, to express their emotions, the cultural imperative for men is to remain stoic and strong. Suppressing emotions can lead to problem behaviors among young boys. The use of alcohol and drugs, police detainment, fighting and other acts of aggression against their peers, school suspension, or forcing someone to have sex against their will, are all associated with heightened traditional masculine ideals. Consequently, numerous books have been published over the past decade about the "boy crisis"—how to raise emotionally healthy, well-balanced, and achievement-oriented boys (**Slocumb, 2015**).

As a final, more modern-day example, in the United States men are 15 times as likely to be incarcerated as are women. What explains this gap? Is it due to sex differences in the frequency and type of criminal behavior, or are courts or prosecutors treating genuinely equivalent cases differently based on sex? According to research, both are operating. Men do indeed commit a greater number of serious crimes, but women and men who commit identical crimes are treated differently under the criminal justice system, with far greater leniency for women (**Starr, 2012**). Using information gleaned from four national data sources, Sonja B. Starr, a researcher from the University of Michigan Law School, found that women are twice as likely as men to avoid incarceration if convicted of the same crime. Moreover, if incarcerated, men receive sentences that average 63 percent longer than women do (**Starr, 2012**). She speculates on the factors that may explain the leniency afforded to women.

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A Personal View

What Does It Take to Be a "Good Father"?

In this essay, 41-year-old David, father of two, compares what it takes to be a good father today with what it meant for his father's generation. *Sean Prior/Alamy Stock Photo*

When I was a young boy living at home with my parents, my father was not very involved in day-to-day activities around the house. We all understood that his job was to earn a living and support us. He did so with gusto and was generally gone from home from 7 in the morning until at least 7 at night, and sometimes all day on Saturdays, too. Sunday was our primary family day, and we usually did something

special—took a drive to the beach, visited our relatives, or had a special Sunday dinner. Although my dad wasn't around much, my sisters and I all considered him to be a "good father." When he was at home in the evening after work, usually he was catching up on the evening news on television or reading the newspaper. Sometimes he helped us with our homework, but usually we had it done well before he came home in the evening. My mom always said, "Try not to bother your dad with things like homework. He's tired when he comes home and needs to relax." This is just how it was in the 1960s.

Fast forward to today. I am 41 years old and have two children of my own. I cannot imagine my wife saying to them, "Try not to bother your dad with things like homework. He's tired when he comes home and needs to relax." It just wouldn't happen. Why? First, we both work. Unlike my mom who was a homemaker, my wife Ana is a nurse, and therefore we both need to take care of the children. Second, I actually want to be involved in the day-to-day activities around the house. No offense to my father—I understand that he was just doing what was expected of him at the time—but I want a different path. I don't want to just earn money, but I want to help spend it too! I like hanging out with the kids, helping them with homework, taking them fun places, and watching them grow and become the best they can be. Third, even if I wanted to just be a breadwinner, I don't know whether society would let me do that. I think I would be labeled a "bad father" if I just went to work and then came home and read the newspaper while my wife did all the housework and childcare. Men, at least in my circles, are looked down on if they don't at least help pitch in. In only one generation we have completely redefined what it means to be a "good father."

Critical Thinking

> On a societal level, what accounts for the changes in how we define a good father? How do you think David's father would interpret the changes associated with what is expected of fathers? David says, "Men, at least in my circles, are looked down on if they don't at least help pitch in." Do you think that is the case for all men today? What types of men are most likely to agree, and disagree, with David?

8.6.3 Future Prospects

What **Jessie Bernard (1987)** refers to as the "feminist enlightenment" has made significant progress in recent years. Women throughout the world have benefited in many ways, ranging from improved health and education to expanded economic and political opportunities. Over the past half-century, American women have increased their levels of education, strengthened their position in the labor force, and boosted their econom-

ic standing by gaining access to more well-paying occupations (**Geiger and Parker, 2018**). Globally, more women today can read and write than ever before in history. More women have access to family planning services, giving them increasing control and power over their lives. Where once it was regarded as a private matter, preventing and redressing violence against women and girls is at last on the public policy agenda (**U.N. Women, 2015**).

Much of this progress can be attributed to the role of the United Nations as a platform for women's issues. These efforts continue to build momentum throughout the developing world. Gender rights are *human rights*, as former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in her speech at the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women (**Clinton, 2018**).

Nonetheless, in no country are women as a group truly equal to men in terms of political power, economic opportunities, and social status. How can this be changed? Laws establishing equal rights for women provide an important basis for demanding and achieving equality in practice. These laws can be a critical reference point for political and cultural struggles, driving changes in social norms, popular attitudes, and policy shifts. But ensuring women's rights requires more than just legal reform. The translation of equality in the law into equality of outcomes is not automatic. Even where gender-equal laws have been put into place, entrenched inequalities, discriminatory social norms, and harmful customary practices, as well as dominant patterns of economic development can undermine their implementation and positive impact (**U.N. Women, 2015**).

According to the United Nations, the achievement of substantive equality requires action in three interrelated areas (**U.N. Women, 2015**):

- redressing women's socioeconomic disadvantage
- addressing stereotyping, stigma, and violence
- strengthening women's agency, voice, and participation[6]

6U.N. Women, 2015.

Coordinated public action across all three of these dimensions has the potential to make lasting transformations in structures and institutions that constrain women's rights. These are issues for both developed countries, including the United States, and developing countries around the world. Although the particulars differ from country to country, the facts are indisputable: empowering women can have tremendous rewards for the world economy, reducing poverty and social inequality, improving health and well-being, and increasing environmental sustainability (**International Monetary Fund, 2016**; **U.N. Women, 2015**, **2017**; **Worldwatch Institute, 2016**).