

men's number of offspring and the representation of this combination of genes in the future gene pool. But it probably would not increase women's. According to one evolutionary theory, this is why evolution led to more preference for casual sex among men (Buss 1994).

Even if evolution is one factor in why men seek casual sex more than women, sociologists also point to a social factor. Our culture features a **double standard of sexuality** (Crawford and Popp 2003; England, Schafer, and Fogarty 2008; Kreager and Staff 2009). This is the tendency to judge women more harshly than men for having casual sex. One piece of evidence that a double standard is in play is that we have many more pejorative terms to refer to women who we think have sex too casually—terms like *slut* or *whore*—than we have for men doing the same thing. Many men engage in the same behavior, but we are less likely to call them similar names. There are some terms like this to refer to men (such as *man whore* or *player*), but they seem less consistently negative. Indeed, within male peer culture, being a player is often a positive source of status. Recognizing the double standard, sociologists point out that women are more motivated than men to avoid casual sex because it does greater damage to their reputations. It is not entirely a matter of a biologically dictated lack of interest.

One way that we know biology has some relevance to sex is that among youth of the same age, those who are experiencing puberty and have the associated increases in certain hormones are more likely to have sexual fantasies and engage in sexual behavior. But the same study that shows this also shows that social factors are relevant as well. For example, youths brought up in religious households that discourage early sex are less likely to engage in such behavior (Udry 1988). Further evidence of social influences on sex is the fact that the prevalence of sex before marriage has changed quite drastically in most modern societies, as we'll discuss later.

Sexual Minorities

12.3.3: Identify the challenges that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning individuals encounter.

The term **sexual minority** refers to anyone who is not heterosexual or who is transgendered (having changed their sex or gender from what was assigned to them at birth). To understand what it means to be a member of a sexual minority, consider the situation of a hypothetical 17-year-old named Tom, who has just recently begun to identify himself as gay. If Tom is typical of the young American gay men interviewed in one study, he was first aware of attractions to other males at age 8, first knew the meaning of the term *homosexual* at age 10, first applied the term *homosexual* to his own attractions at age 13, and first had sexual

contact with another male at 14, yet he didn't think of himself as gay until age 17, won't tell any of his friends he is gay until age 18, and won't tell his family until age 19 (Savin-Williams 1998). Why the secrecy and the delay in squaring one's identity with one's urges? The answer lies in the messages about sexual orientation that one gets from social experiences growing up. This is called **heteronormativity**, a situation where the culture and institutions send the message that everyone is heterosexual, or at least that this is the only normal way to be.

To see what heteronormativity is like, consider all the experiences our hypothetical young man is likely to have had growing up. Tom listens to rock music, and most of the songs are about sex or romance between men and women. The plots of most television shows or movies feature romances or sexual escapades between men and women. In his high school, bias against gays abounds (Pascoe 2007). His male friends frequently insult each other with the term no one wants to be called ("fag"), and another common put-down is, "You're so gay!" Tom was never on the receiving end of these insults, and he doesn't want to be either; that's one reason he doesn't want to tell people at his high school that he is gay. He also hears friends say, "No Homo" jokingly when they are touching each other. At his family's church, nothing is said pro or con about homosexuality, but his friend who belongs to a more conservative church says that, at his church, the preacher talks about the evils of being gay from the pulpit. Tom reads that same-sex marriage is being legalized in many states, but the only weddings he or his parents have been to involve a man marrying a woman. He has never met a married couple consisting of two men. He certainly can't imagine gaining popularity, and figures he might invite ridicule if he asks a boy to his senior prom. It is little wonder that Tom gets the impression that his same-sex attractions are something to hide. His experience is typical of young people growing up gay, lesbian, or bisexual. You can see from Tom's example some of the difficulties of growing up as a member of a sexual minority in a heteronormative environment.

But some members of sexual minorities experience even worse things. Those who show affection for someone of the same sex are often ridiculed by youth peer groups, regardless of whether they appear masculine or feminine. Some employers refuse to hire those they think are gay or fire people upon discovering it. Such discrimination, even if completely open, does not violate any federal law; discrimination in employment based on race, religion, sex, or national origin is illegal, but discrimination based on sexual orientation is not prohibited by U.S. federal law. In renting or selling housing, it is illegal to discriminate based on race according to federal law, but there is no protection if someone won't rent to gay people. Surveys indicate that nearly half of sexual minority members