Gendered Worlds

FOURTH EDITION

Judy Root Aulette | Judith Wittner | Kristen Barber

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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NEW YORK OXFORD
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

For titles covered by Section 112 of the US Higher Education Opportunity Act, please visit www.oup.com/us/he for the latest information about pricing and alternate formats.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Aulette, Judy Root, author. | Wittner, Judith G., author. | Barber, Kristen, author.
Title: Gendered worlds / Judy Root Aulette, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, Judith Wittner, Loyola University Chicago, Kristen Barber, Sourthern Illinois University, Carbondale.
Description: Fourth Edition. | New York : Oxford University Press, [2019] | Revised edition of Gendered worlds, [2015]
Identifiers: LCCN 2019015779 (print) | LCCN 2019017495 (ebook) | ISBN 9780190647865 (e-book) | ISBN 9780190647827 (pbk.)
Subjects: LCSH: Sex role. | Women—Social conditions. | Feminist theory.
Classification: LCC HQ1075 (ebook) | LCC HQ1075 .A95 2019 (print) | DDC 305.3—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2019015779

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed by LSC Communications, United States of America

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Talking About

Preface

The first edition of this book was a work of faith—faith that we could grasp the massive wealth of gender scholarship in one brief volume. This fourth edition is our continued effort to tap into the global discussions on gender and to introduce our readers to an even broader array of empirical research and theory-building that increasingly makes feminist scholarship so crucial today.

This book is our attempt to bring together the multiple strands of gender studies and related research on everything from the local and everyday manifestations of masculinities and femininities to the gendered institutions that undergird today's global politics and social crises. To accomplish this objective, each chapter builds on five principles.

First, we weave together theory and empirical data. The book gathers scholarship—mainly sociological, but also interdisciplinary—that has accumulated in many substantive areas. For example, readers will learn about research on the gender of violence and how it affects families, as well as how gender, together with race/ethnicity, social class, and sexuality, shapes media, sports, politics, sexual rights, religion, education, health, and bodies. Theories that have grown out of and alongside this research provide frameworks for interpreting the issues presented in each chapter, allowing students to see how theory emerges from and helps to explain empirical studies.

Second, we connect personal experiences with sociological concepts by offering both social constructionist and social structural approaches to gender that explain the production of inequalities in face-to-face interactions within organizations as well as the gendered character of the institutions themselves. We ask how the gendered features of our everyday lives are given life, shape, and meaning by these larger organizations and institutions; and how we, in turn, act back on these structures to reimagine social relationships and social structures that could move us toward a more just world.

Third, this is a book about gender as an inclusive concept. Often, people conflate gender studies with women's studies, but men's lives, too, are shaped by gender; and the experiences of transgender, gender nonconforming, and intersex people show how gender enters everyone's life. In fact, a discussion of gender that focuses only on cisgender women and cisgender men reinforces the myth of sex and gender binaries that research shows are actually socially constructed and exclusionary patriarchal tools. We

invite the reader to join us in our attempt to uncover and understand how the binary of woman/man is re-created on multiple levels and how it might be eliminated by thinking and interacting with each other differently, as well as by reorganizing our social institutions.

Fourth, this book reminds readers that there are differences within groups. Intersectionality is an approach that recognizes that we are never just gendered and sexed, but that we are all located in what black feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins called a "matrix of domination." There is no way to understand gender as a phenomenon separate from social class, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and nation. Women are not a monolithic group; they experience gender differently based on their race/ethnicity, for example. This intersectional perspective is a feature of each chapter and is intended to help readers better understand the complicated character of power and inequality. Gendered identities are accomplishments, not fixed states of being, and gender intersects with other social structures to provide opportunities to some people while creating barriers for others. Privilege and subordination are dynamic and variable, so that while some men experience a massive amount of—taken-for-granted—privilege, others are subordinated along racial/ethnic, national, sexual, and class lines. In each chapter, we explore these advantages and disadvantages, as well as how people are sometimes complicit in perpetuating but also often resisting social inequalities.

Fifth, this book shoulders the enormous task of taking a global view. Our goal is to help readers gain a sense of how culture, national identities, and immigration and migration similarly or differently shape gender in different places. We hope to encourage students to begin asking questions about the many ways gender structures people's lives all around the world.

CHANGES TO THE FOURTH EDITION

- Updated data, both qualitative data and statistics, and streamlined the presentation of information to make it more readable.
- Clarified, further explained, and provided examples of topics based on the suggestions of the thousands of students who have used this book in courses taught by the authors.
- Increased significantly the discussion of sexuality as a component of gender and included more discussion of the experience of LGBTQ and gender nonconforming people in every chapter.
- Reversed the order of Chapters 3 and 4 to strengthen the logic of the text. In addition, we have titled Chapter 4 Gender Theory as a jumping-off place for considering the different levels at which gender operates in the substantive topics covered

in the rest of the chapters. Chapter 4 lays out the fundamental sociological concepts of socialization, social construction, and social institutions/social structure as interlocking factors that shape our social interactions and our broader social world.

- Revised the conceptualization of the book from being a repository of information to being more of a teaching and learning tool. We have retained the solid knowledge base by continuing to pack chapters with the latest issues and research, but we have also altered the format of information in many places to pose questions and move the readers from being passive recipients to being engaged interpreters of information. For example, we have added "Talking About" boxes throughout the chapters. These boxes present photos and text and pose a series of questions that call on students to not only review the topics but also to reflect on the issues and to question their own thinking, as well as the authors' presentation of material as they move through the text. We hope these boxes prove useful to readers and, furthermore, will provide ready-made discussion sections for instructors to use during class or as media activities.
- Revised and updated, password-protected Instructor's Manual/Test Bank, and PowerPoint slides available on www.oup.com/he/aulette4e.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provides a brief overview of the assumptions we make and the tools we use throughout this book to introduce the reader to gender. The chapter explains three basic ground rules for studying gender: life is socially based and politically structured; gender is part of a larger web of social inequalities; and scholarship is political. We also introduce the overarching framework of the text: intersectionality.

Chapter 2 begins with the question of biology. Most people believe that male and female, masculinity and femininity, and heterosexuality are natural and normal. We discuss how biological, historical, and anthropological research on intersex and transgender individuals challenges this "standard story." We show how not everyone is male or female and explain that we overlook sex and gender diversity when we assume that all "normal" males become heterosexually masculine and all "normal" females become heterosexually feminine.

Chapter 3 focuses on sexuality as a key component of understanding the relationships among sex, gender, and social power. We open with a discussion of how the intersecting dimensions of gender, race/ethnicity, class, and nation have historically shaped sexuality. While, currently, men and women are often expected to be heterosexual, actual sex practices offer much more complicated and interesting examples of the ways gender identities enter into and produce sexual desires, sexual acts, and sexual identities. Feminist, queer, and antiracist studies of sexuality have exposed the political character of

sexuality. The chapter moves from discussing the construction of conventional sexualities by means of sexual scripts and gendered double standards to describing the global politics of sex tourism and sex trafficking, and exploring organized efforts by LGBTQ communities to challenge normative sexualities and demand sexual human rights.

If biology is not the basis of gender, then what is? Chapter 4 reviews the sociological and social psychological theories scholars have developed to explain the sources of gender. These theories look at three levels of social life: socialization, social interaction, and social structure. We both explain and critique these three theoretical approaches. We also show that, when taken together, feminist theories on gender spotlight the constructedness of our gendered worlds and thus open up possibilities for change toward greater equality.

Chapter 5 makes clear that gender in education is not a simple story. In some ways and in some places, girls and women are not allowed the same opportunities in education as boys and men are, but gender in schools creates problems for boys, too, especially for boys of color. Boys are more likely to be diagnosed and treated for hyperactivity, for example. They also have lower graduation rates, and black and Latino boys in the U.S. are often stereotyped as potentially criminal and tracked out of the classroom and into disciplinary spaces. Racism and poverty contribute to the diminished education that many children receive, and when we look at the intersection of these factors with gender in the global South, unexpected problems become evident, such as how the lack of access to water and toilets results in educational inequality.

Chapter 6 turns the lenses of gender, race/ethnicity, class, and nation on local and global economies and on the gendered and raced character of work. This chapter is divided into three broad issues: gender inequality in the paid workforce; gender inequality in unpaid work; and gender inequality in the global workforce. The chapter covers topics such as how race/ethnicity intersects with gender to determine who encounters the glass ceiling or who rides the glass elevator at work.

The family has been a contentious political issue in the United States for many years, as conservatives hold its so-called decline responsible for the ills of contemporary life. In Chapter 7, readers will have a chance to draw their own conclusions about family life today. Does marriage really prevent poverty? Will allowing same-sex marriage undermine marriage as an institution, or will it give it new life? What is the purpose of marriage, and whom does it serve? In addition to marriage, the chapter covers the family issues of divorce, caregiving, and balancing work and family.

Chapter 8 shows that gender is a central feature of the continuum of violence that stretches from our most intimate lives to the ongoing global tragedies of militarism and war. Street harassment, rape, domestic violence, gendered violence in prisons, militarist masculinity, wartime rape, the enslavement of women by militias, sex

trafficking, and growing civilian casualties—what can explain such relentless and pervasive gendered violence? This chapter reviews the complex intersections of gender, nation, and race/ethnicity as a way of answering this question. Inequalities of race/ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality shape our relationship to violence, both as victims and as perpetrators. Feminist movements to end violence are sweeping the globe, and so we discuss the emergence of the #MeToo movement in the United States and Ni Una Menos in South and Central America, as well as the work on the International Criminal Court.

Chapter 9 recounts the many ways that health and illness are raced and gendered around the globe. Everything we have explored up to this point impacts the distribution of health and illness, including the sexual division of paid and unpaid labor, the political economies and ruling orders of the nations in which people live, and membership in particular sexual communities. For example, how are men and women who work on Nestle- and Kellogg-owned palm oil plantations in the global South facing risks particular to local labor laws? This chapter also describes feminist and antiracist social movements involving reproductive rights, including the right to abortion. It also reviews the debate over how best to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In addition, we discuss how local actions can grow into transnational movements linking reproductive and general health to a wide range of rights to housing, education, employment, and freedom from violence.

Is changing the gender of officeholders sufficient to make positive political change? According to studies we discuss in Chapter 10, the evidence is mixed. This is because men dominate all channels of contemporary politics around the world: electoral politics, the news media, and the metaphors of political discourse—war and sports. These issues are examined across nations, challenging the common belief among Americans that the United States is a model of democracy by exploring data on the participation of U.S. women in legislative and executive positions compared to other nations. Policies that have made other nations more gender equal in political representation are discussed, and readers are asked to consider their efficacy and the barriers they might confront if we were to attempt to implement them in the United States. Politics is not just about elections and offices, however. Other political issues that are also shaped by gender as well as race/ethnicity and class are reviewed in this chapter, as are the prison system and the military. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the conceptualization of power.

Our daily lives are saturated with media. The thousands of images and messages we receive in these ways exhort us overtly or subtly to view, experience, and act on the world in prescribed ways. Chapter 11 explores how these messages are simultaneously gendered and raced, and often sexualized. Some progress has been made, but gender stereotypes continue to abound in all media forms. Women are still missing as subjects of media

stories and behind the scenes as reporters, writers, and producers. While representations vary across borders and by race/ethnicity and age, some factors are consistent, especially the underrepresentation of transgender, queer individuals, and people of color. The chapter describes these problems and discusses the notion of normalizing the diversity that is our real social experience by emphasizing inclusion and rejecting marginalization in media representations.

Chapter 12 covers the topic of sports. Historically, women have largely been excluded from athletics, based on the widespread idea that femininity does not include athletic ability or athletic experience. In contrast, being a successful athlete and being a "real man" are closely related. Critics of organized sports cite normalized violence, the weaponization of male bodies, and excessive competitiveness as both physically and psychologically damaging for men. For women, however, athletics can be a space to challenge gender divisions and sexual barriers that have forced queer athletes to hide their sexual identities and women athletes to suppress their athletic performance and potential. Studying gender and sports forces comparisons between the highly organized and competitive fan-supported sports that have become big business and participation sports that are more loosely and democratically organized activities.

In Chapter 13, we focus on gender and religion, one of the most loaded topics of debate today, as we have seen the rise of religious fundamentalism and the rise in hate crimes against religious minorities. Ironically, although fundamentalist religions subordinate women in many ways, more women than men are fundamentalists. But religious communities, regardless of doctrine, can also be places where women find support and space for some freedom of expression in otherwise restrictive societies. Religion has played an important positive role in the civil rights, peace, and antiwar movements, for example. Not all forms of spirituality and religious organization constrain women; Ecofeminism has even centered around the worship of goddesses. Ancient and indigenous societies provide examples of forms of worship that were egalitarian and that revered women's bodies for their lifegiving abilities. Activists also often resist constraints imposed on women within religions. Some Catholics, for example, are calling for an end to the ban on women priests.

Our world is filled with injustice, inequality, and pain. It is also filled with hope and promise that grow from the many people who resist injustices and promote potential and pleasure. We dedicate this book to furthering those ends.

Acknowledgments

Writing this book required the authors to learn new areas of research about which they may initially have known little. Judy Aulette thanks Anna Aulette-Root, Elizabeth Aulette-Root, and Albert Aulette for their help with this work through their careful reading and essential feedback on many drafts of chapters. In addition, she thanks them for living with this project for so many years. She also thanks her most recent coauthor, Kristen Barber, for bringing to the text greater awareness of sexuality as a critical component of gender and the value of queer theory in understanding the links among sex, gender, and sexuality. In addition, Barber's insights into how to transform the book into a teaching tool were invaluable. Most importantly, Judy Aulette thanks her coauthor, Judith Wittner, for her knowledge, creativity, tenacity, and especially her friendship.

Judith Wittner thanks the members of her writing group, Susan Stall and Martha Thompson, for their encouragement and support. Her thanks also go to Judy Aulette for her handholding and great patience and to Kristin Blakely for the intelligence and energy she brought to our project. Special thanks to Jenny Wittner, Jorge, Nathaniel, and Alex Pinheiro, Liz Wittner, and John, Mollie, Mario, and Lily Pepper.

Kristen Barber thanks Judy Aulette, Judith Wittner, and Sherith Pankratz for bringing her on board as a coauthor. She is honored to be part of such a comprehensive feminist project. She is also grateful to Annie Johnson, who helped dig up new statistics and images to update the text, and to Damien Ricklis, who is a pillar of support and provided input on many of the chapters. While working on this book, Oliver Beau Barber-Ricklis was born, joining his sibling, Beatrice Rose Barber-Ricklis. Together, this voyager and peacemaker have made Kristen even more dedicated to the feminist mission of inclusion, equity, and justice—a mission guiding this book.

We all thank Sherith Pankratz from Oxford University Press for choosing to continue the project and inviting us to write a fourth edition. And we thank Grace Li and William Murray for their careful attention to all of the details in the final stages. Special thanks to the terrific copyeditor, Betty Pessagno. Also special thanks to Soma

Chaudhuri for reviewing the chapter on violence and to Michael Messner for providing exceptionally thoughtful suggestions on the sports chapter. We also are grateful to additional reviewers who provided vital and supportive suggestions that helped make this text something we are very proud of:

Nancy Provolt, Eastern Michigan University
Lisa DiDonato, David & Elkins College
Annamaria Formichella Elsden, Buena Vista University
Melissa M. Gosdin, Albany State University
Nancy Porter, Chestnut Hill College
Amy Sorenson, Radford University
Nivedita Vaidya, California State University, Los Angeles
2 anonymous reviewers

GENDERED WORLDS

1 CHAPTER

What is This Book About?

FIGURE 1.1: In 2017, the bronze statue, "Fearless Girl," by artist Kristen Visbal, was placed in front of Wall Street's "Charging Bull" by Arturo Di Modica, which had been there since 1989 and represented U.S. resiliency after the 1987 stock market crash. Following the Women's March, the Fearless Girl was installed by the investment management group, State Street Global Advisors, to mark International Women's Day. While some people called her an advertising ploy, other people rallied behind the sentiment of courage and independence, and so the statue remained in place well beyond the few weeks for which she was scheduled. In 2018, Fearless Girl was permanently installed across from the New York Stock Exchange. Why do you think the presence of the Fearless Girl resonated with so many people? How does the Charging Bull represent masculinity, and what does it say about the United States to have the bull serve as a symbol of national character? Would the Fearless Girl have been received differently by the public if she had not been installed just after the 2017 Women's March?

Introduction

Climate change and the environmental disasters that accompany it would seem to be issues that touch all human beings in the same way. But when a tsunami hit Indonesia in 2004 killing more than a quarter of a million people, 75% of them were women (Oxfam 2005). This scenario is not unusual. Women typically far outnumber men in mortalities resulting from environmental disasters. This effect is strongest in countries where women have few social and economic rights (Neumayer and Pluemper 2007; Juran 2012).

Physical differences between men and women do not explain the higher mortality rate for women in disasters. In the case of the tsunami, for example, some men may have survived because of greater physical strength that allowed them to hang on to trees or to stay afloat. But not all men are stronger than women, and there tend to be more in-group than between-group differences in terms of size and abilities. For example, supermodel Petra Nemcova was strong enough to survive the tsunami by clinging to a palm tree for eight hours with a broken pelvis. Social factors were far more significant, especially the social factor of gender (Oxfam 2005; Doocy et al. 2007). Reports on the tsunami identify a number of gendered issues that contributed to women being more likely to have died:

- Swimming and tree climbing were taught mainly to boys. These skills were essential to survival when the waves of the tsunami hit land.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

> Identify and explain three basic ground rules for studying gender: Life is socially based and politically structured; gender is part of a larger web of social inequalities; and scholarship is political.

> Understand the importance of variation in gender equity across the globe by reviewing some empirical evidence ranking different nations.

> Know how intersectional analysis is key to understanding gender in a global context.

> Be able to define the concepts: sex, gender, hegemonic masculinities, emphasized femininities, and transnational feminism.

- Women were indoors, whereas men were more likely to be outside working, shopping, and socializing; therefore, information warning residents to leave the area reached women later than men who were out in public.
- Responsibilities for others, especially children and adult dependents, prevented women from moving fast enough to escape the floods. In Aceh, for example, many women were found dead with babies still clutched in their arms. Some personal accounts from survivors tell of mothers pushing their children to safety on buildings or trees that withstood the tsunami, but being swept away themselves.
- The same division of labor that placed women indoors and in charge of dependents placed men in fishing boats at sea (a tsunami wave is not as dangerous at sea as when it crashes to shore), farming in agricultural areas away from the beach, or serving as soldiers in conflict areas away from the shore, making them less likely to be affected.
- Long dresses women wore inhibited their ability to run or swim to save themselves from the floods. In addition, some women who were in their homes but casually dressed when the first wave struck ran to put on culturally "acceptable" outdoor clothes before seeking safety and as a result drowned or barely escaped (Juran 2012).

Are you surprised that gender played such an important role in determining whether people lived or died in this environmental disaster? Do the differences in gender seem relatively insignificant if they are taken out of context? For example, would you have thought that gender differences in clothing or play activities like swimming and tree climbing could be so important?

The tsunami scenario emphasizes gender differences. You are probably familiar with the images of devastation following Hurricane Katrina that revealed the importance of race/ethnicity and social class in that disaster. If you look at images of the people desperately weathering the flood at the Superdome—a shelter of last resort—many were women. Why is this? How did gender add to or interact with the racial/ethnic and class inequalities that made it more difficult for poor black women to survive the storm and its aftermath (Deitz and Barber 2015)?

The researchers who studied the tsunami argue that biology had little to do with differences in survival. What do you think of this argument in general? Is gender mostly a function of biology? Or are social factors most important? And what exactly is gender? Is gender a problem only for women? Or does gender cause problems for men, too? And what can we learn about gender by looking at the lives of gender-nonconforming individuals?

The tsunami describes a situation in Asia, but how does gender affect people's lives around the globe? Why is it important to consider other social factors, including race/ethnicity, social class, sexuality, and immigration status, for example, to really understand

the effects of gender on groups of people? How are gender expectations being challenged locally and globally? And how might these changes reshape our relationships, behavioral expectations, structural opportunities, and institutional protections?

These are the kinds of questions we will be asking in this text. Our goal is to explore how gender appears in every corner of our lives and every section of the globe. Before the tsunami, very few scholars had ever considered the connections between gender, environmental disasters, and mortality (Enarson and Morrow 1998). Every day, researchers are discovering new situations in which gender critically impacts people's lives. We will be trying to keep up with them as we travel around the world looking for gender and seeking ways to understand how it works, what its effects are, and the ways we might address the problems it causes.

SOME GROUND RULES FOR STUDYING GENDER

Determining a place to begin answering questions about gender is difficult. What to focus on and what to ignore are challenging issues. In this book, we approach the subjects with three assumptions: life is socially based and politically structured; gender is part of a larger web of social inequalities; and scholarship is political. These assumptions reflect a critical approach to understanding gender as a complicated and often invisible structure that profoundly shapes people's lives around the world in myriad ways.

Life Is Socially Based and Politically Structured

Like many features of social life, we all build explanations about the world based on our own experiences and observations of gender. Our familiarity with the topic, however, means we may take a lot for granted and thus accept the conventional wisdom of our time. In addition, our experiences are limited to, well, our experiences. One aspect of conventional wisdom about both **sex** and **gender** is the belief that these ideas are biological certainties: all humans are male or female; men are inherently masculine and women are feminine; and these categories are inborn, natural, unchanging givens. This book challenges these ideas by emphasizing the social character of gender. We will also be noting contemporary global shifts in gender and sexual policing, movements, and identities. For example, recent changes in gender include the increasing number of people, especially young people, who are openly trans and gender nonconforming (Davis 2018). Gender is complex, variable, and dynamic, and in our examination of the issues, we will need to be constantly aware of these factors.

In addition to asking you to critically reconsider biological explanations, we propose that gender never stands alone. In order to understand its social construction, we also must look at the organization of other relations of power, especially race/ethnicity, class, and

sexuality, and how they intersect with gender to differently shape our identities and our interpersonal and structural experiences. For example, how do all these things come together to shape our educational opportunities, work lives, and risk of interpersonal violence?

You will notice in this book that we use the term "race/ethnicity" rather than separating these two factors. We do this because the distinction between the two terms implies that race is a biological factor, while ethnicity is a social one. Since we regard both race and ethnicity as social factors that are intertwined, we have combined the terms to remind us that neither has anything to do with biology but both are socially constructed and have enormous social consequences. We also maintain that sex, gender, and sexuality are socially constructed and that these three concepts have been defined differently over time and across cultures. This book is dedicated to showing how and with what consequences sex, gender, race/ethnicity, and sexuality are social constructions, not biological truths. In addition, we explain how these constructions work together to create hierarchical relations between groups of people within power systems where some are privileged at the expense of others.

Gender is Part of a Larger Web of Social Inequalities

This book explores gender inequalit*ies*, their consequences, and the movements around the world that are challenging them. We emphasize the plural character of inequality because gender does not stand alone in limiting or providing opportunities and compensation, for example. Instead, we live in a world built atop gendered differences intertwined with hierarchies of race/ethnicity and sexuality, but also put together by class-based systems of power at the global level: patriarchal oppression, **heterosexual privilege**, the racist repercussions of colonization and slavery, and the dynamics of global capitalism that feed the growing gap between the rich and powerful few and the disenfranchised many.

Sometimes scholars use the word *lenses* to talk about the complexity of social life. If you were to put on a pair of glasses that allowed you to see only objects that were green and another pair that blocked everything but blue or red, and so on, then each time you took off one pair of glasses and put on another, you would see only a piece of the view and never the whole picture. Similarly, if we investigate our social world using only one lens, whether it is the lens of gender or that of race/ethnicity, class, nation, or sexuality, we have a distorted view of history as well as of the present. In this book, we put on our rainbow glasses and try to see a more comprehensive wholistic panorama of the world, with all of its variations and intersections.

In this book, we try to see the whole picture by considering diversity within the United States but also diversity more globally by comparing and contrasting differences among nations. Table 1-1 provides us with some data that give us a glimpse of a global view of gender. In the next section, we discuss the information provided in Table 1-1 and explore some of the key comparisons. Throughout the book, we will investigate why these differences exist by looking at how gender operates in varying contexts.

TABLE 1-1
The Global Gender Gap Index 2017 Rankings (highs and lows)

Country	Highest Ten Ranks	Score
Iceland	1	.88
Norway	2	.83
Finland	3	.82
Rwanda	4	.82
Sweden	5	.82
Nicaragua	6	.81
Slovenia	7	.80
Ireland	8	.80
New Zealand	9	.79
Philippines	10	.79
Country	**Lowest Ten Ranks**	**Score**
Jordon	135	.60
Morocco	136	.60
Lebanon	137	.60
Saudi Arabia	138	.59
Mali	139	.58
Iran	140	.58
Chad	141	.58
Syria	142	.57
Pakistan	143	.55
Yemen	144	.52

Source: World Economic Forum (2017).

GENDER GAP AROUND THE GLOBE. One of the most important goals we have in this book is to present a global view of gender. The gender gap affects everyone's lives, but the way in which gender is constituted and experienced varies across many social and political borders. The World Economic Forum (WEF) ranks the inequity between men and women in 144 of the world's approximately 195 nations. Table 1-1 lists the ten countries with the least inequality and the

ten countries with the most inequality. We can see here that, according to these rankings, no country has achieved gender equity. If you would like to see all of the nations' rankings, as well as much more information on individual countries, check out the full report: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf.

WEF ranks countries by evaluating four factors: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; political empowerment; and health and survival. The highest possible score a nation can receive is 1.00, which would mean that women and men were 100% equal on all four factors.

In the nations represented in the full table, equity ranges from .52 in Yemen to .88 in Iceland. Some of the highest-ranked nations are what most people would expect. They are located in Europe and Scandinavia, nations that are known to value gender equality between women and men and to have implemented strong policies to encourage it. Other high-ranking nations, such as Rwanda, the Philippines, and Nicaragua, may be more surprising, since we don't hear about them in discussions of gender as often.

These numbers have been compiled annually following changes that have occurred over the past few decades. The rankings and the scores of the top rated countries have nearly completely closed the gap between women and men in health outcomes (96%) and educational attainment (95%). The gap between women and men remains wide in economic outcomes (59%) and political outcomes (23%) (WEF 2017).

The numbers in Table 1-1 give us one way to make comparisons around the globe, but we also don't want to forget the gaps that exist within nations. The numbers for each nation, for example, hide the diversity of experience among racial/ethnic groups and social classes within each nation. In addition, statistics for trans or gender nonconforming individuals would surely reveal a gap in all of the measures between them and cisgender individuals. The term *cisgender* might be a new one for you. In Chapter 2 we will discuss the term more extensively, but for now just remember that cisgender refers to people whose gender identity corresponds with the sex to which they were assigned when they were born (Gingerich 2017).

Scholarship is Political

Sociologists have long debated whether the study of human beings can be based on a model that demands distanced "objectivity" and that promotes the idea that only experts can tell us all we need to know about social life. Writing in the third person and avoiding the use of "I" in formal scientific papers, for example, evokes what Donna Haraway (1988) refers to as the "god trick" that gives the impression research findings are being made and reported by disembodied unbiased authorities (Haraway 1988, 581). More than six decades of feminist activism and research have developed the alternative idea—**standpoint epistemology**—which asserts that researchers cannot and should not claim to be neutral. The questions researchers ask, how they go about designing studies to investigate

these questions, and how they make sense of their findings are all shaped by their social locations, their political beliefs, and their personal biographies.

Feminists argue that, rather than claiming objectivity, researchers should acknowledge that their political opinions and interests shape their studies and identify exactly what those opinions and interests are. Feminists also support and conduct research that amplifies the voices of people at the bottom of power systems of gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and class. As a challenge to the history of the scientific community—the experts—speaking for disenfranchised people, building knowledge from the perceptions and lives of the marginalized and least powerful members of society produces knowledge *for*—not just *about*—people (Smith 1999). Promoting research that gives voice to those who are most marginalized is not only more just, it is also more valid because it allows us to obtain the fullest view of social life.

This book is written in the tradition of the scholars who take this alternative, political view of scholarship. We seek to replace the "view from above" with the "view from below" by exploring the lives of people who have often been invisible, ignored, censored, or oppressed (Mies 1986). The topics we examine and the perspective we take emphasize the point of view of those who are marginalized by gender as well as by race/ethnicity, sexuality, social class, nation, and religion. This does not mean we ignore privilege. We consider inequality a double-sided coin that privileges a few at the expense of many. By writing from the perspective of those on the margins, we seek not only to describe and explain the social world but also to discover ways to transform it.

THE OVERARCHING APPROACH OF INTERSECTIONALITY

In this text, we look at the crosscutting inequalities that complicate gender, an approach that is called **intersectional analysis** (Collins 2000). Intersectional analysis simultaneously focuses on multiple social categories, especially gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, and nation. The gender order is hierarchical: overall, men dominate women in terms of wealth, power, and social position, but not all men dominate all women. The racial/ethnic order, in which whites have power over people of color, for example, crosscuts gender so that some white women are richer, more powerful, and more privileged than poor men of color. The sexual order means cisgender people often have more social status than transgender and gender nonconforming individuals and heterosexuality reigns supreme and puts gay men, lesbians, and members of other sexual minorities at a decided disadvantage. Through its wealth and power, the **global North** (nations and regions of the world that are the most economically developed, such as the United States and Europe) still dominates the **global South** (poorer, less powerful nations and regions such as those in Africa and Latin America). The lesson of intersectional analysis is this: not all women or trans individuals suffer oppression

in the same way, nor do all cisgender men always benefit from patriarchal privileges simply because they are men.

When people do have social privilege, this privilege is often invisible to them and thus so are the ways they benefit from this privilege. This was exactly the problem in the 1960s, when white women feminists ignored their racial/ethnic privilege and the role they played in the perpetuation of racism. They sometimes called for all women to unite around a common experience of gender oppression without understanding what separated them from their sisters. Have you ever had moments when you noticed your own privilege or that of another person in a social interaction? Can you think of examples in the news or in your own experience of people who are unaware of their invisible privilege? How do these insights illustrate standpoint theory? Being a white, affluent man opens doors, offers privileges, and produces rewards. Being poor and black increases the difficulties and barriers a woman faces in her life. Few people, however, are completely oppressed or completely privileged inasmuch as oppression and privilege shift with the social context. A working-class man may be privileged in the context of his family, where he dominates his wife and children by virtue of his paycheck and patriarchal privilege. At the same time, in the workplace, he may be dominated by his boss and may be relatively powerless to change the terms of his employment. Intersectionality, then, focuses attention on the ways that multiple and sometimes conflicting sources of oppression and power are intertwined and shift, depending on the historical moment and local conditions.

Hegemonic Masculinities and Emphasized Femininities

The insights of intersectional analyses help us to see that there is not one, universal way to be gendered, although certainly cultural images of the "right" way to be a man or a woman dominate our thinking. Sociologist Raewyn Connell (1987) first introduced the idea of hegemonic masculinity—idealized, culturally ascendant masculinity—into feminist masculinities scholarship. The word *hegemony* means dominant, and Connell uses the term ***hegemonic masculinity*** to refer to the culturally exalted form of masculinity linked to institutional power at a given time, such as that displayed at the top levels of the military, business, and the government. This form of masculinity regularly appears in the media and as a component of our image of political leaders. Think of Rambo (Sylvester Stallone), who won the on-screen Vietnam War for the United States, John McClane (Bruce Willis), the NYPD detective who traveled the country and sometimes the world saving people from terrorists and drug lords, or Tony Stark (Robert Downey Jr.), the billionaire arms contractor and playboy turned Iron Man who fights terrorists in Afghanistan. Do you think the patriotic, violent, tough, uncompromising hero is still hegemonic in the United States, or are there other competing ideals of manhood? What other characteristics have you observed of exalted forms of masculinity? Where have you

seen competing ideals? What is their message (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005)? Take a look at Box 1.1: Talking Hegemonic Masculinity and Supermen for some thoughts and questions about images of hegemonic masculinity.

In the real world, dominant men are usually white, heterosexual citizens of the global North from elite schools with professional, managerial, or political careers. Hegemonic men are the powerful, decision-making members of national and increasingly global orders. Some men are hegemonic within local or specific orders such as subcultures but not necessarily in the larger social community. The coach and the drill sergeant, for example, are usually working-class men with authority only over their soldiers or their team and fans. Connell also identifies **subordinated masculinities**, among which she includes sexually marginalized gay men, "sissies," "mother's boys," and "wimps."

BOX 1.1: Talking About... Hegemonic Masculinity and Supermen

This Superman statue stands in front of the Massac County Courthouse in Metropolis, Illinois, representing "truth, justice and the American way." Masculinities scholars often use John Wayne and Superman as popular representations of U.S. hegemonic masculinity. They are white, muscular, and invulnerable protectors. Connell (1995) says that few men actually live up to their culturally specific form of hegemonic masculinity. But this doesn't matter so much. What gives hegemonic masculinity its power is its cultural prominence, the value we give it, and men's attempts to approximate it. Do you think John Wayne and Superman are still good examples of hegemonic masculinity in the United States today? How might "softer" representations of manhood still uphold gender inequalities? What do hegemonic masculinities look like in other countries?

The intersections of class and race/ethnicity produce **marginalized masculinities**, or men who are rendered socially invisible or who don't reap the same unearned privileges of white patriarchy. Connell also points out that many men demonstrate **complicit masculinity**; these men are not necessarily hegemonically masculine, but who still benefit from sexism. Men who are complicit in sexism might not ogle women or pay women less for the same job as men, but they also don't advocate for equal pay or interject when their friends harass coworkers, sexually objectify women, or make jokes at the expense of genderqueer individuals.

There are different sorts of femininities as well. What Connell named ***emphasized femininity*** is the media version of womanhood. Women in TV-land are often white, young, thin, conventionally beautiful, heterosexual, and nurturing. Other forms of femininity resist and remake femininity, hidden in the experiences of women in the margins: "spinsters, lesbians, unionists, prostitutes, madwomen, rebels and maiden aunts, manual workers, midwives and witches" (Connell 1987, 188). The recovery of these marginalized forms of masculinity and femininity has been the work of many feminist scholars and activists. Recognizing marginalized forms diversifies our understanding of gender. Throughout this text, we look at the hegemonic forms of masculinity and emphasized femininity, as well as the ways people are reimagining masculinities and femininities and even the possibility of eliminating these categories altogether (Lorber 2005).

MAKING HISTORY

At the core of sociology is the idea that, although individuals make choices about their destinies, they make them within the limits of the society in which they live. We are all constrained by the ideas, social relationships, and social institutions that surround us. The laws that protect equality (or not), the media messages we are sent modeling acceptable ways for women and men to behave, the technology available for health care or warfare, and the pay scales and the jobs available in our economic system all limit, enable, and sometimes even determine the choices we make as we interact with one another and make decisions about how we live, work, and play.

It is difficult to successfully challenge these constraints as long as systems of inequality are in place. We cannot live outside of society; and if we break the rules, there are repercussions that encourage most people to color neatly inside the lines. But this does not mean we can't change the systems. C. Wright Mills was one sociologist who explained that our laws, ideas, technologies, social institutions, and ways of doing things did not drop from the sky or emerge as a fact of nature. Instead, he said, they were invented and implemented by human beings and are constantly being reinvented and re-created. Mills (1959) wrote, "By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove" (11).

This quote has two important implications. First, it suggests that our experiences of gender and our gendered relationships with one another are subject to constant debate and struggle. Second, it means that we all have the opportunity to shape the course of history—our own and our society's—by entering into these disputes and the social movements that surround them. Sociologists use the term **agency** to describe the ways people seek to change their social circumstances, to dismantle existing ways of thinking and acting, and to create new ideas and new social institutions. To do this, though—to be agents of change—first we have to understand exactly how inequalities operate.

Throughout this text, we call attention to the ways organizations, small and large, local and global, are challenging systems of gender inequality as they intersect with other systems of inequality. In confronting gender inequality, feminists have been at the forefront of both revision and reinvention. Feminists, however, have not been alone. For many decades, abolitionists, civil rights activists, black power organizations, LGBTQ activists, labor movements, and socialists and communists have been working to seek social justice in many forms all over the world. In the 1960s, universities began to engage with these movements, and Women's Studies—and later Gender Studies—emerged. Today we are writing about gender and you are reading about it because of this history.

Feminist Activism in the United States and Africa

The early-20th century suffragist movement in the United States emerged out of abolitionism—the movement to abolish slavery—although leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton later infamously excluded black women from its efforts. The women's liberation movement of the 1960s, what is sometimes called the "second wave" of feminism, similarly had roots in the civil rights and antiwar movement but focused on women's economic and sexual liberation. This agenda ignored women of color who had long been in the workforce and who had a history of being hypersexualized. A "third wave" of feminism emerged in the 1990s calling out the second wave as a white feminism that essentialized sexual dichotomies and ignored racism. This third wave instead emphasized the racial/ethnic diversity of women as well as gender variation to include men, transgender, gender nonconforming, and intersex individuals, together with a slew of LGBTQ issues. Today there are second-wave feminists, third-wave feminists, and even postfeminists who believe that gender equality has been achieved (Negra and Tasker 2007).

African women's feminist activism is also marked by turning points and waves, but the moments and the focal issues are quite different from those identified throughout the history of American feminisms. Scholars of African history have proposed a postcolonial timeline of African women's activism running from 1950 to 1970. During this period, the focus was on development issues such as "integrating women into development, promoting women's cooperatives, developing small-scale industries, training rural women to take on leadership positions, and establishing national mechanisms for integrating women in development projects" (Adams 2006, 189).

Despite its vast area and diverse nations and cultures, an African regional activism emerged in 1980 and continues today. This period is marked by responses to global debt, structural adjustment, and economic crisis that affect people throughout the continent. The globalized economy has introduced problems to the people of Africa, but it has also facilitated international communication and organization that has helped to increase gender equity in Africa and to facilitate the growth of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) committed to addressing issues such as reproductive rights and war crimes. Peace and the elimination of poverty have dominated the agendas of these NGOs.

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was another turning point: In 2002, the launching of the African Union (AU) gave impetus to the struggle for gender justice. The AU is modeled after the European Union and "seeks to promote unity among African countries and peoples, political and economic integration, peace and respect for democracy and human rights" (Adams 2006, 196). A centerpiece of the AU is its commitment to gender equity. Women make up fully half of the executive body of the organization. In 2003, it passed the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which explicitly endorsed quotas to increase women's representation in decision-making bodies, called for the prohibition of female genital cutting, promoted setting the minimum age of marriage at 18, and guaranteed a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy in the case of rape, incest, or to save the mother's life. In 2010, the African Women's Decade was launched with the aim of advancing gender equality by accelerating implementation of United Nations and African Union decisions on gender equity.

Africa's history of feminist activism shows different turning points and different activities and organizations than those of U.S. feminisms. It also shows a different trajectory. While much remains to be done in many African nations, especially in regard to LGBTQ rights, gains are being made by those seeking gender justice, and many African nations are moving forward in progressive ways. At the same time, the trajectory in the United States has reversed itself regarding several gender justice issues. Once seen as the leaders in gender equity, U.S. women are now losing ground on multiple issues, including reproductive rights and protection and support of the rights of LGBTQ people.

A number of explanations have been offered for why the United States in particular is losing its battle for gender justice (Tripp 2006):

- A growing complacency among Americans about defending gender equality.
- The demise of the labor movement, which has historically been the seedbed of much of American reform.
- A general strengthening of the position of conservative political forces which underscores a backlash against feminism.
- The small number of feminists in public office.
- Poor media coverage, resulting in a lack of awareness of international initiatives and of how far the United States has fallen behind other countries.

In the following chapters, we explore the organized activism of people seeking to change the gendered context of their lives. A look at waves of feminist activism in Africa cautions us to remember that one size does not fit all and that the effects of gender in other regions and nations—or even within a nation by race/ethnicity, sexuality, or social class—is likely quite different. Comparing feminism in the United States and in Africa should also remind us of another important issue in this text: the tendency of people from the global North to think about themselves as providing a model to which the rest of the world needs to catch up. Activism by women in Africa and other places today tells us that we will find models of equality all over the world and that the United States may sometimes be a leader but not always. Considering that the United States ranks 49th in the world in terms of gender equality, it would benefit by looking at solutions that have been developed in other parts of the world (World Economic Forum 2017).

What do you think of this contrast between the United States and African nations? What issues remain especially salient in both places (you may need to do a little research to answer this question)? What can we learn from each other? What do you think of the list of reasons for why the United States has slowed and even reversed progress toward gender equity? Which reasons are most important? Are there others not listed that account for the reversals? Are "waves" the best way to think about feminist history?

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM

As is the case for masculinities and femininities, it is best to think of feminism in a plural sense and to note the ways in which feminism*s* are constantly evolving. One of the more recent feminist perspectives to emerge is transnational feminism. The critique of white Western feminism stimulated the growth of **transnational feminism**, based on networks of women in the global South who are critical of the hegemony of the global North and of its capitalist economies and militarist policies. Transnational feminists emphasize the ways gender intersects with other inequalities not only within nations but also between nations, especially those inequalities that grew from the practices of colonialism, imperialism, and neocolonialism (Grewal and Kaplan 2000; Mohanty 2013; Nadkarni 2017).

In 2007, Connell wrote a book called *Southern Theory* in which she discusses why we need to be mindful of our place in the world as we seek to understand and challenge gender inequities. She explains that her experience living and teaching in Australia while studying American and European theorists—whose historical experiences differed greatly from those of Australia and nations of the global South—led her to question how ideas are produced in imperial centers and exported to the rest of the world. Upon reflecting on the classics of sociological theory (Durkheim, Weber, and Marx) and on contemporary theorists (Giddens, Coleman, and Bourdieu), Connell began to see how the origins of their theories were rooted in the history and problems of colonialism.

The questions they asked, the problems they critiqued, and the conclusions they formed were shaped by their place in the centers of the colonial empires.

For fourteen years Connell searched the literature and queried scholars from the global South for alternative theories about social life from the point of view of the colonialized. She found intellectually powerful ideas and writings from people such as Paulin Hountondji, Ali Shariati, Sonia Montecino, and Veena Das, which focused on the problems posed by colonialism and postcolonial societies. Her discoveries, for example, include theoretical considerations regarding land, a topic not considered relevant by European theorists and not often covered in Eurocentric theory, but which is enormously important to indigenous people whose land was stolen by European and American colonialists.

In this book, we ask you to shift your vision to a more global view of gender. Connell's work reminds us that a global view must consider not only those looking at the world from the centers of the empire but also those looking at it from the point of view of the colonialized.

Finding a Path to Gender Justice

The United Nations (UN) is often criticized because of its undemocratic process for making decisions. Although all of the members have a vote, veto power is held by five nations that make up the permanent security council: the United States, Russia, France, China, and the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, many people view the UN as an important platform for shaping opinions, forming international policies and agreements, and seeking ways to address the world's problems. Feminists have been working for seven decades, since the founding of the UN, to promote gender justice. The **Commission on the Status of Women** (**CSW**), established in 1946 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council to advocate for the rights of women in political, economic, civil, social, and educational fields, successfully lobbied the UN General Assembly to designate 1975 as **International Women's Year**. In that year, the UN sponsored the first of a series of international women's conferences in Mexico City. The conference participants recommended that the UN declare 1976–1985 the Decade for Women, during which the UN would address the needs of women in the "first world" (the United States and its allies), "second world" (the Soviet Union and its allies), and "third world" (the nonaligned nations).

The second conference in 1980 took place in Copenhagen. In 1985, the Nairobi conference reviewed the achievements of the Decade for Women and created a ten-year action plan for the advancement of gender justice in critical areas: poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision making, the media, the environment, and girl child (which refers to the particular problems women under 18 face such as child marriage, access to education and genital cutting). The Platform for Action was approved at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. In addition to efforts at the UN, increasing numbers of NGOs are assisting women in both the global South and North. Yet, as subsequent chapters will show, women and gender nonconformists throughout the world remain marginalized, poor, and under threat of violence to an

alarming degree. Will feminists and their allies be able to build and sufficiently sustain their movements to make them effective in continuing to address social injustices?

Political theorist Nancy Fraser (2009) argues that a feminist movement first arose in the context of **welfare-state capitalism**, toward which it directed compelling critiques of androcentric labor and welfare policies. But these critiques were largely ignored or ridiculed in a backlash against feminist thought and activism. Fraser points out that feminism now has become an acceptable piece of the dominant political economy of neoliberal capitalism. Does this mean that feminism is no longer a significant challenger to global power structures? Has feminism toned down its critiques to accommodate **neoliberalism**? If so, does feminism need to find its edge again?

Before you answer these questions, you should know that neoliberals support free (unregulated) markets and the privatization of state welfare provisions. They believe that corporations should have total freedom to pursue profits around the globe, that trade unions should be curbed, and that the social safety net should be greatly reduced or eliminated. As neoliberalism has become policy, first in the global South and increasingly in the global North, social programs providing protections such as welfare grants, unemployment insurance, and free education have been slashed, and others, such as Social Security, have come under attack.

Even though the new labor force of neoliberal, **transnational capitalism** is a largely female labor force (see Chapter 6), most feminists have not developed extensive critiques of this system from the standpoint of gender. Nor have they envisioned a broad struggle of women and men for economic and political justice. Instead, "dreams of emancipation," asserts Fraser, "[are] harnessed to wage labor" (240). In other words, there is no movement against capitalism, but only struggles to find accommodation within it. Fraser maintains that feminism must reconnect with its former critique of capitalism under **Marxist feminism** and with its roots as a movement for gender justice. "I am suggesting," she concludes, that "we have an opening now in which to reclaim [our best ideas]. In seizing this moment, we might just bend the arc of the impending transformation in the direction of justice—and not only with respect to gender" (226). In other words, Fraser believes that it is time to look beyond capitalism to a new social order.

As you read through this book, think about Fraser's viewpoint. She may be correct about feminisms of the global North, but what about the critical work of transnational feminists working through the United Nations, the African Union, and international and local NGOs)? Perhaps the momentum of feminist movements is now located in the global South. By the time you reach the last chapter of this book, you will have some of the tools you need to evaluate the theories and evidence you are about to encounter here.

Our world is filled with injustice, inequality, and pain. It is also filled with the hope and promise that grows from the many who resist injustices, promote equality, and create a world that supports the potential and pleasure of all the world's people. We dedicate this book to furthering those ends.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. The text states: "At the core of sociology is the idea that, although individuals make choices about their destinies, they make them within the limits of the society in which they live." What does this mean in regard to gender? Can you think of examples in your own life that illustrate the kinds of constraints you encounter when you try to break out of gender norms? How might we rethink "choice" and "agency" given these constraints?

2. Look at the numbers in the table on the global gender gap. Which of the rankings surprise you? Why did you think certain nations might rank higher or lower than they do? What do you think now that you see the rankings?

3. With which categories of gender, race/ethnicity, social class, and nation do you identify? How does the theory of intersectionality help you make sense of the social categories with which you identify and where you are situated in larger structures of inequality?

4. How does the example of the Indonesian tsunami illustrate the social character of gender? How does it illustrate the political character of gender?

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2 CHAPTER

Isn't It Just A Matter of Male and Female?

FIGURE 2.1: Caster Semenya from South Africa winning the women's 800-meter world championship for the second time (2009 and 2017). Semenya challenged the International Association of Athletics' (IAA) attempts to restrict women's participation by testosterone level—requiring hormone testing, policing of women's bodies, and the rejection of variation by instituting narrow definitions of "normal." On May 1, 2019, the Court of Arbitration for Sport ruled against Semenya, citing that restrictions on hormone levels were discriminatory but necessary in "female competition" (Longman and Macur 2019). What does this ruling mean for women's "privacy and human rights"? How does this ruling reflect both long held anxieties about women's bodies and women's bodies as a source of social control?

In 1985, Maria Patino got the surprise of her life when she traveled to Kobe, Japan, to compete in the World University Games. Since 1966, women who compete in international games have been required to take a sex test to prove they are not really males in disguise. In the first years, the women were required to parade naked before a gynecologist to prove they were "female." Eventually, a new procedure called the buccal smear was developed to test the women athletes. A lab technician scrapes a few skin cells from the inside of a woman's cheek, stains the tissue sample, and examines it under a high-powered microscope. If the cells have two X chromosomes—the mark of a genetic female—then the technician will see a dark spot, called a Barr body, inside the cells' nuclei. If only one X is present, as is the case with genetic males, no dark spot appears.

Patino was not concerned about the test because she had no reason to believe she was not a woman. She had spent her life living and training as a woman, and her body appeared to herself and to everyone else as female. The genetics test at the games, however, showed that she had only one X chromosome, while the other was a Y, which meant that, according to Olympic guidelines, she was male. Patino found out she was androgen insensitive, which means that before she was born, her body was not able use the hormone androgen to transform her XY genetics into a "male" body with a penis and scrotum. Instead, she was born appearing female, and as her body matured, she had a vagina and she grew breasts. She did not have a uterus, though, and she had two hidden testes (Peel 1994). Patino was disqualified from the games in 1985, although she was later reinstated. International athletic organizations, however, are still making decisions about how to define a "female" as we saw in the case of Caster Semenya, shown in the photo opening of this chapter (Levy 2009; Longman and Macur 2019) The arguments of athletic organizations are shaped by what we call **the standard story**.

Introduction

What is the standard story? What are its effects on how we think about ourselves and others? And how are activists and scholars challenging

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Be familiar with the idea of the standard story and how it has been critiqued by scientific, historical, and anthropological evidence.
- Understand the diversity in sex beyond a male and female binary and the sources of that variation.
- Define intersex and describe the historical treatment of intersex people and contemporary efforts to challenge the medical practices that identify intersex as a problem.
- Define transgender and articulate the connection between transgender rights and challenges to gender inequity.
- Distinguish among the terms *sex*, *gender*, and *sexuality*.

the standard story? This chapter is organized around these questions. We begin by examining the claim that our chromosomes, hormones, and genitalia work together to clearly define "female" or "male" bodies. We review the ways biologists and geneticists, as well as feminist and queer theorists, dispute the idea that bodies are this neat. We also look at the devastating consequences of forcing everyone into a **two-sex system**—male or female—by reviewing the history of surgical intervention on intersex children. Recent changes in hospital, medical organization, and state policies regarding intersex surgery suggest we are in the middle of shifting ideas about bodies, biological sex, and gender identities.

We explore historical and anthropological evidence that shows how, in other times and other places, people perceived sexed bodies differently and treated them differently from the way we do today. These variations across places and times provide further evidence that the standard story, though powerful, is invalid. It does serve a purpose, though. That purpose is to prop up popular beliefs of male superiority and **heteronormativity**—the idea that heterosexuality is a natural given and that anything other than heterosexuality is deviant and defective.

Intersex and transgender activists are key players in changing ideas and policies regarding sex and gender. Instead of considering ambiguously sexed bodies mistakes of nature that modern medical science should try to correct, intersex people call into question beliefs that "sex categories are binary, that there are only males and females, and that anything not clearly one or the other is abnormal" (Dreger 1998, 8). The transgender community calls on us to acknowledge variation in gender, to support their rights to live authentic lives, and to move away from explanations of disordered personalities. As a result of this activism and the accompanying scholarship, we are seeing the emergence of a **paradigm shift** (Kuhn 1996) in the way we understand sexed and gendered bodies and selves. How do you see people discussing sex and gender in the news and on social media? What are the liberating possibilities of a paradigm shift?

THE STANDARD STORY

Most people believe there are clear and undeniable connections between sex, sexuality, and gender. Every human is born either a male or a female. An infant with a female body (her sex) will grow up to be a woman who possesses inherent feminine qualities (her gender) and who is (or at least should be) sexually attracted (her sexuality) to men. An infant with a male body (his sex) will become a man who possesses inherent masculine qualities (his gender) and who is (or at least should be) sexually attracted (his sexuality) to women. Judith Butler (1990) calls this way of thinking the **heterosexual matrix**—an often invisible norm around which we organize institutions, interpersonal relationships, and our own identities. See Box 2.1: Talking About the Heterosexual Matrix to get a better idea of how it works.

BOX 2.1: Talking About... The Heterosexual Matrix

The 1999 film, *The Matrix*, revolves around a war between machine overlords and the humans whom they have enslaved. People don't know they are prisoners of The Matrix, despite being plugged into a reality that oppresses them. The character Morpheus explains: "The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window, or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes."

How does the heterosexual matrix similarly operate all around us? Why is it that most of us don't notice it? Are we prisoners of the heterosexual matrix, and how might we break free?

The standard story contains three flawed assumptions (Oyama, Griffiths, and Gray 2001):

- *Biology is destiny.* Underlying social behavior (gender) and sexual choice (normatively heterosexuality) is the substratum of nature. One's biological sex determines one's sexual and gender identity and one's sexual needs and desires.
- *There are only two sexes, male and female.* All babies can be identified as one or the other, and from that identification comes our gender and sexual identity. A person with a penis and testes is a male who will become a heterosexual man with "masculine" tendencies; a person with a vagina and ovaries is a female who will become a heterosexual woman with "feminine" tendencies.
- *The two-sex order is universal, a fact of nature.* Deviations from this natural order are mistakes of nature or of culture. These deviations require intervention to restore order, lest we subvert nature's plan.

These assumptions are not based on scientific evidence, as we will see in this chapter. They are powerful ideas nonetheless, having consequences for how we organize our social world and how we live in it.

THE INTERPLAY OF SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

Today, a growing number of scholars are convinced that the standard story is not supported by **empirical evidence**—scientific research—and they are trying to disentangle the complex interplay of sex, gender, and sexuality. In this chapter, we begin by

BOX 2.2: Talking About... "Where Do You Fit?"

Gender identity is how you think about yourself: as a woman, a genderqueer person, a transgender person, or a man, for example.

Gender expression is how you demonstrate your gender to others: ranging from feminine through androgynous to masculine (and all of these have a range of definitions. There are many "femininities" and many "masculinities").

Biological sex refers to your physical characteristics, including hormones, genes, genitals, and reproductive organs. Your body might be categorized upon birth by physicians as male, female, or intersex.

Sexuality includes behaviors, fantasies, and identities. To whom are you sexually attracted? With whom have you been sexually engaged? You might be LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning) or heterosexual or asexual. This list shows four ways people might categorize themselves: by their gender identity, their gender expression, their biological sex, and their sexual orientation. The standard story tells us that there are only two natural categories: heterosexual, masculine-behaving, biological males who identify as men; and heterosexual, feminine-behaving, biological females who identify as women. Real people often do not fit into these two slots, and the slots themselves are difficult to define: all four of the factors have a range of possibilities.

Where do you fit in each of the factors? Or don't you fit in at all? How have you defined the various possibilities? Have you changed categories over time?

looking at the problems with the assumption that people come in only two sexes, male and female. Box 2.2 Talking About "Where Do You Fit?" helps you work through your relationship to these different categories and what this might mean for recognizing human variation. But first, let us explain some terms:

Following Judith Lorber (2005b, 9), we use the terms *sex*, *gender*, and *sexuality* in the following ways:

- **Sex**, Lorber explains**,** is "a complex interplay of genes, hormones, environment, and behavior with loopback effects between bodies and society." We use the adjectives *male*, *female,* and *intersex* when referring to apparent biological—chromosomal, gonadal, or genital—features of sex. Biologist Ann Fausto-Sterling (2000b) suggests that there are five sexes, not three. But ultimately, we could argue that any number of categories doesn't really capture the diversity of sex in humans.
- **Sexuality** involves "lustful desire, emotional involvement, and fantasy" (Lorber 2005b, 8). We use the terms *LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning), gay, lesbian, heterosexuality, bisexuality, omnisexuality,* and

asexuality when referring to sexuality. Studies of sexuality suggest that there are no hard-and-fast divides among individuals regarding the objects of their sexual desires. In fact, if we think about sexuality as sexual identities, desires, and actions, it becomes clear that sexuality is a continuum (Kinsey). Furthermore, an individual's sexual identities, desires and actions need not be fixed for life nor mutually exclusive. We explore these ideas further in Chapter 3.

- **Gender** is "a social status, a legal designation, and a personal identity" (Lorber 2005b, 8). It is also a display—or performance/everyday "doing" (Butler 1990; West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender divisions and their accompanying norms and expectations are part of our identities, our relationships, and our major social institutions. We most often use the terms *women* and *men* and *boys* and *girls* when referring to gender. These terms are limiting, though, and don't capture the extent to which people play with and appropriate gender rules and scripts; they certainly don't capture genderqueer and transgender identities. **Transgender** can refer to those people who do not live as the sex and gender to which they were assigned at birth.

CHROMOSOMES, HORMONES, AND GENES

What sex are you? How do you know? Chromosomes provide one way you could categorize yourself, as we saw in the opening scenario about Maria Patino and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) sex-testing rules. Beginning in the 1960s, the IOC policed female competitors to make sure no males competed in women's events. The IOC based its action on the idea that a person is either a male or a female, an XX or an XY, and that those with an XX would be genetically advantaged. However, biologists and geneticists have since found that sex is more complicated than this single either/or test suggests. Patino, for example, does not fit so easily into this two-sex system. As Fausto-Sterling describes her, Patino had breasts, a narrow waist, and broad hips. She was raised as a woman and identified as a woman. Despite her Y chromosome, she had grown up female, and by measures other than chromosomes, she fit into the category of woman.

Even the IOC has been forced to change its approach to athletes whose chromosomes or appearances seem nontypical, abandoning as unreliable the chromosome testing that led to Patino's disqualification. The problem of defining what is "female" and what is "male" persists, however, for international athletic organizations. As we saw in the opening photo Caster Semenya was removed from competition and then reinstated before a decision was made about her right to compete (Schaffer 2012; Longman and Macur 2019). In Chapter 12, we further discuss sex testing in the Olympics.

In 2012, the Olympic Committee revised its sex verification standards to end genetic tests, but it prohibited from competition women whose testosterone levels reach average "male" levels. Critics explain that this is still a sex text because it has only substituted one

narrow measure, chromosomes, with another narrow measure, hormonal levels (Macur 2012). We tend to forget that everyone, even people with an XY chromosome, has both testosterone and estrogen, and that these levels differ from person to person. It's not a guarantee that someone with more testosterone will have a competitive edge in sports either. In his work on "Testosterone Rules," Robert Sapolsky (1997) unpacks the misconceptions between testosterone and aggression, for example. He shows that, within normal ranges, aggression actually causes testosterone levels to rise, rather than testosterone increasing aggression. Identifying our sex is much more complex than the standard story tells us. In fact, as geneticists and other biological scientists discover more about variation in human bodies, it is becoming increasingly difficult to unearth definitive answers about sex.

The Biology of Sex

Geneticists use chromosomes to make claims about biological sex. Usually, people have twenty-three pairs of chromosomes. One of these pairs is called sex chromosomes. We expect to see either an XX (a female) or an XY (a male). But it is not always this simple. Sometimes a person will inherit only one chromosome, an X. Other people may have an extra X or Y chromosome. The result is that there is a range of solely X-chromosome people (XO, XX, XXX), as well as XYs and XYYs and XXYs. And not all reasons for variations in biological sex are chromosomal. Congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), a condition related to steroid hormone production, masculinizes XX individuals. Androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS), the condition that made Patino and Semenya appear female despite their Y chromosomes, causes XY children to develop vaginas.

Embryonically, we all develop our sex from an unsexed body. In the first six weeks of gestation, an embryo has undifferentiated external genitalia that will usually develop either into a penis, testicles, and scrotum or into a clitoris, labia, and vagina. Some medical experts define intersex as individuals born with the genitalia of both sexes, while others (as with Patino) have genitals that do not match their chromosomal category. Some **intersex** people are born with both ovarian and testicular tissue, and others have the external genitalia of one sex and the internal gonads (ovaries or testes) of the other. Despite these definitions, there is a lot of disagreement about who is intersex. This disagreement highlights the fact that sex is a social phenomenon that people debate and create. Because of these debates and the fact that many people are lied to about their diagnosis, it is difficult to determine how many individuals "count" as intersex. After reviewing the medical literature from 1950 on, some researchers have estimated that intersex babies could account for as many as 2% of live births (Blackless et al. 2000). This is similar to the proportion of redheaded people born in the world.

One of the reasons the standard story of two sexes is so readily accepted is because, until recently and in many places, some of these individuals did not survive intact to adulthood. In the United States, for example, most intersex babies were surgically and hormonally altered at birth to appear more "normal" or fully and unambiguously male

or female. Despite the fact that the physical condition of nearly all infants born intersex is not life threatening or even unhealthy, it has often been labeled a medical problem and intersex babies have been subjected to surgery and hormone therapy. How do these interventions reflect our anxieties about the myth of the two-sex system and our dedication to it?

In contemporary Western societies, our bodies are cultural projects and extensions of ourselves. We act on our bodies to remake ourselves through makeup, hair dyes, shaving, tanning salons, cosmetic surgery, dieting, nutrition, transplants, workouts, tattoos, piercings, and a host of other practices. In some ways, the project to transform ambiguously sexed infants and children into members of one or the other "natural" sexes is no different from these other body projects. The cultural and medical project of remaking intersex children into "real" girls and "real" boys is a product of historically specific, socially constructed, and institutionalized networks and practices around binary sex difference. There is, however, one critical difference between most other projects of the self and the project to remake ambiguously sexed infants' and children's bodies into acceptably sexed bodies. The project to eliminate intersex has almost always been chosen *for* intersex individuals, not *by* them. That vital difference raises questions that bring these bodies clearly into the realms of politics and ethics.

As recently as 2000, the American Academy of Pediatrics called the birth of a child with genitals outside of the typical male/female binary a "social emergency" and recommended that doctors immediately and carefully explain to parents that the condition is "correctible" and to assure them that their children can become boys or girls, "as appropriate."

No doubt, there are still many physicians and parents who are moved to act out of the fear that intersex children are so psychologically at risk and so physically "abnormal" that anything helping to normalize them is worth the cost. This attitude has long justified what Alice Dreger (1998) calls **monster ethics**, which accepts treatment of intersex in ways that would be considered unethical (monstrous) under any other circumstances: lying to patients, performing risky procedures without follow-up, and failing to obtain informed consent.

Thanks to the work of scholars and activists, it is becoming less routine and more controversial for intersex infants to undergo surgical and hormonal sex assignment, (Davis, 2011; Nakhal et al., 2013). One important change is the shift in language from labeling intersex "disorders of sex development" to "differences of sex development" (Davis 2015). This shift implies that instead of being a medical problem that needs fixing, intersex is just one aspect of biological variation. If we challenge ourselves to think about sex differently, then it becomes more difficult to justify non-consented surgeries on babies and kids. This is the focus of the activist group, Interact: Advocates for Intersex Youth. Interact is working with California senator, Scott Wiener, on State Resolution 110, which asks physicians to protect youth "subject to irreversible sex assignment, involuntary sterilization, involuntary genital normalizing surgeries" (Sa'id 2018). The work of the

Sociologist, activist, and president of InterACT: Activists for Intersex Youth, Georgiann Davis, talks with Katie Couric about the controversies around intersex surgeries on youth and popular opinions on fitting into our binary sex system.

international activist community is not finished, though, as the Human Rights Watch notes that some medical associations still encourage the surgical alteration of otherwise healthy babies (Knight 2018). See Box 2.3: Talking About Intersex Activism for a discussion of surgery for intersex children and the social movements to stop the practice.

A Brief History of Intersex

Until recently, the medicalized management of intersex people rested on the cultural beliefs that living within normative sex and gender categories was the best life strategy. Most, if not nearly all, surgeries and hormonal treatments of intersex infants were performed for cosmetic reasons rather than to correct life- or health-threatening medical conditions. How genitals and secondary sex characteristics might look to others took primacy over assuring the potential of genitalia for pleasure or for reproduction.

BOX 2.3: Talking About... Intersex Activism

Take a look at the Ted Talks by intersex activists Cecelia McDonald (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKEGaSJi3bk) and Kristina Turner and Ori Turner (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-kRzbVxQVJWA) for more on activism to stop surgical reconstruction of intersex bodies.

What problems do the speakers identify with surgery on intersex children? Why do they think intersex people should "come out" to the public? How do intersex people challenge our ideas about the standard story?

Furthermore, appearances overrode the risk of surgeries and hormonal treatments for children (Kessler 1990).

For many years, if a baby was born with a "micropenis" (less than 1.5 centimeters long and 0.7 centimeter wide), the baby was a candidate for sex assignment surgery. Doctors reasoned that such a penis was too small to allow the child to urinate standing up (a condition they believed could lead to psychologically damaging ridicule once the child was in school) and too short to penetrate a vagina during sexual intercourse—assuming and giving primacy to heterosexuality and hetero-sex. Similarly, babies born with large clitorises have been surgically altered to make their sex organs "look right."

Organizations including UNICEF and the World Health Organization have leveled criticism at less industrialized societies in the global South for genital mutilation, while intersex youth with genitals outside of the typical male/female binary in nations of the global North have been routinely treated in a similar manner with little outcry. Wherever it is done—global North or South—excision of the clitoris severely limits a person's ability to experience orgasm. Remaking a boy's penis into a vagina does away with his ability to have biological children. And the physical facts of intersex bodies do not translate directly into the identity of intersex. The concept of "nontypical" sexed bodies can only exist if there is a companion concept of "normally sexed" bodies.

The social category of intersex emerged at the same time we moved away from a single-sex system that defined women as "inverted" males (Laqueur 1990). Around the turn of the 20th century, bodies came under the scrutiny of men of science and medicine, who helped to create sex as a new object of study and to identify sexuality (homosexuality or heterosexuality) as a fundamental personal identity. Experts' strong belief in a two-sex system and the standard story brought intersex people into view as a problem that called for medical intervention. By the late 19th century, the new specialty of gynecological medicine and state-mandated medical supervision of soldiers and sex workers in wartime revealed that there were many nonstandard sexual anatomies. Doctors named the variations they discovered hermaphroditism (after the Greek god Hermaphroditus) and pseudohermaphroditism, and designated them as pathological abnormalities.

The discovery of intersex bodies did not prompt experts to rethink the two-sex system. Instead, they sought to uphold it by remaking individuals with healthy but nonconforming bodies into bodies that appeared to be 100% male or female. By the 1920s in the United States, surgery was being used to bring bodies into line with the belief in a two-sex only system. In the 1950s at Johns Hopkins University, an interdisciplinary team of surgeons, endocrinologists, and psychologists developed what they called an optimum gender of rearing model to eliminate intersex. Their goal was to work with a child's body, mind, and upbringing to create a heterosexual gender identity in an "unambiguously" male or female body. Based on her interviews with thirty-seven intersex adults, Sharon Preves (2005) found that medical efforts to diagnose and "correct" people's sex had led to a deep sense of pain of objectification for many people: "[In] interview after interview,

participants shared stories of feeling scrutinized and sexualized by medical professionals, of being treated as oddities and freaks, of lacking control over their own bodies, and of the resulting shame and secrecy of such experiences." (9)

Preves's participants described how doctors regularly lied to them about their conditions, their surgeries, and their ongoing treatments and withheld vital information from both them and their parents and guardians. These stories show that supposedly normalizing surgeries and body-changing hormone treatments created the children's feelings of abnormality, rather than alleviating them. Participants felt isolated, shamed, stigmatized, abused, and powerless to end treatments. They looked back on childhoods as never-ending visits to doctors, group medical exams, hospitalizations, and surgeries as invasions of their bodies. One participant, Gaby, remembers her regular checkups:

> I was the local dog and pony show. "Come here. You wanna see something interesting?" Yeah, definitely medical traumatization. I probably went about once every three months up 'til a certain age. Then I went twice a year. The worst thing [about] being in a clinic is the dog and pony show. The worst thing is being put in a prone position, half-naked, [and] told to spread your legs while five or six other people look in your crotch and probe. (67)

Making these treatments even more traumatizing was the fact that no one—not parents, not doctors—told the children what was happening to them and why. At the age of 19, another participant, Carol, went to the hospital for what she thought was a checkup and overheard members of the staff discussing her surgery:

> [I said to the doctor] as he was leaving, "Excuse me, the nurse said I'm having surgery." And he said, "Yes, it'll be first thing in the morning." And I said, "For what?" And he said, "Don't worry, everything will be fine." And I said, "Why? Fine from what? Why am I having surgery?" And he said, "Well your condition has gonads that could have abnormal cell growth and we must remove them before it gets out of hand." And I said, "I have cancer, don't I?" And he said, "Oh, don't worry about it. Don't worry about it, you're just fine. No, no, no don't be silly. No, you don't have cancer. Don't worry." I said, "Well, then why do I have . . .?" "Don't worry about it, you're just fine." And I thought, "He's lying; I have cancer." Cause that was the best diagnosis I'd come up with yet. (68)

Real human bodies are variable. And so it would seem that the sensible solution to finding that many people do not fit into one of two "proper" slots would be to question the slots themselves. Instead, as we have seen in these accounts about intersex people, real human bodies and lives have been and continue to be forcibly altered so that they fit into someone's idea about what it means to be human. The stories Preves heard show that a confluence of events and opportunities helped intersex adults reinterpret their biographies, make contact with others like themselves, and build networks, support groups, and political associations that have become the basis of the intersex rights movement.