Women Across Cultures

A Global Perspective

Fifth Edition

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Preface

The cross-cultural study of women's issues and women's movements, the focus of this book, is fascinating and educational. It tells of the disadvantage of women and girls relative to boys and men and how that disadvantage arises from the greater male rights and privilege embedded in cultures, institutions, groups, and minds. Unfortunately, this truth can be disturbing at times. But I promise you that this book is also uplifting because it is equally about hope, resilience, and the power of people to fight and right social injustices. Throughout the book are many examples of actions to address women's issues and promote gender equality—ranging from the small grassroots effort addressing local women's issues to the use of international law for improving women's status. And while there is a long way to go, I have seen remarkable progress since the first edition of *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective* was published in 2000.

The global study of women is also about diversity and intersectionality and their importance for understanding the gendered human experience. Gendered discriminations are often heightened by their interaction with other discriminations such as those based on race, class, sexual orientation, age, and gender identity. The experiences and issues of women vary widely based on these and other intersections. Women's experiences as women are also strongly shaped by the particular political, social, and cultural contexts where they live, leading to diversity in women's lives and issues, and in their advocacy and activism. This diversity is true not only in our own country, but also globally. Documenting, studying, and appreciating this variety are hallmarks of global women's and gender studies and one of the major aims of this book.

I have many hopes for this fifth edition of *Women Across Cultures: A Global Perspective.* I hope my readers find the global study of women as captivating and inspiring as I do. I hope that after reading the book they not only better understand how the world works but that they also feel compelled to do their part for gender equality. I hope that readers will be struck by the scope of gender injustice but equally struck by the scope of women's resistance and the possibilities for change. I hope that the book helps readers better understand and appreciate feminism, diversity, and intersectionality, as they are so often caricatured, ridiculed, and negatively stereotyped. I hope that the book reflects and honors internationally oriented women's and gender studies scholarship and the many women's movements actors and organizations that advocate and serve women.

Pedagogy

There is a lot of information in the book from a variety of fields. As a long-time teacher and writer, I am sensitive to students' concerns about how to read and master textbook content. I strive to create a reader-friendly experience. To this end, I have included a number of pedagogical elements. Headings alert readers to upcoming content. Important terms and concepts appear in boldface in the text and appear in a glossary at the end of the book. To liven up and illustrate the often technical and factual textual material, many examples, thought-provoking quotes, and bits of women's history appear in the margins. Figures graphically depict text concepts to help students pull out key themes. Each chapter includes boxed examples of feminist thought and action from all over the world, including activist profiles of individuals and groups. Study questions are listed at the conclusion of each chapter. Students may use these to make sure they understand the major points of the chapter and to structure the study of text material. Discussion questions and activities follow the study questions. These are intended to stimulate critical and creative thinking and discussion. Instructors may use these as assignments or for class discussion. The book's chapters are organized by issues rather than by country or region, but an appendix provides an overall sense of women's status on a country-by-country basis using economic, educational, and health indicators. Students can use this information as the basis for country or regional reports on the status of women. This information may be enhanced by use of the end-of-chapter informational and activist organization websites.

Changes from the Fourth Edition

Our understanding of gender inequalities and progress toward gender equality is dynamic, so each chapter was updated to provide current examples, statistics, resources, and scholarship. For example, in this fifth edition, you will find a more comprehensive examination of sexual harassment, climate change, and the use of social media in women's activism. The study of global women's issues and equality is also complex and often technical, so I often rewrote and reorganized to promote readers' engagement and comprehension. Chapter 6, "Women and Development," for instance, was rewritten to better explain development concepts, and women's experiences in low-income countries.

Acknowledgments

This book is dedicated to my late colleague and global women's and gender studies mentor, Patrice Engle. Patrice was a shining example of the scholar-activist, and she literally saved lives through her work on maternal and child health. She left us far too soon. I must also thank all those who are working to bring about women's equality and all the great scholars (and journalists) whose work appears on the pages here—these are my heroes, and I feel I have been in the presence of greatness by reading their work and studying their efforts.

Writing a book is a time-consuming endeavor. It is also something that few of us can do without support. That includes the practical support provided by Emily Parrish, who recently completed her Master's in Library and Information Science. Emily did much of the research to update the statistics throughout the text, including the Appendix. I am also grateful to the reviewers who provided thoughtful feedback for this fifth edition, and I hope that they feel their suggestions were honored. These instructor-reviewers were Umme Al-wazedi, Augustana College; Habiba Boumlik, CUNY LaGuardia Community College; Ronald Carter, Northeast Community College; Marie Cartier, California State University Northridge; Jana Knibb, Community College of Rhode Island; Donnalynn Scillieri, William Paterson University of New Jersey; and Mandy Webster, Columbia Gorge Community College. Thanks also to Elisa Odoardi and Lisa Bruflodt (my editors at McGraw Hill), Susan Raley (my editor at MPS North America), and the team at MPS Limited.

Authors also benefit from emotional support, so an extra-big thank you to my husband, the always supportive and entertaining Gene Courter, and my son, the brilliant and talented artist Kane Lynch. I so appreciate their support of me, my writing, and their support for gender equality and feminism. And to my sister, Kevyn Burn, and my other women friends (special shout-out to Lois Petty), thank you for the support, the fun, and the sisterhood.

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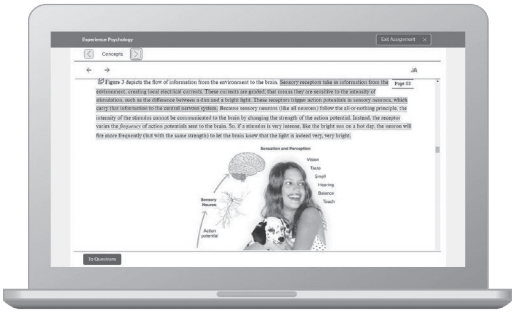

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- Jordan Cunningham, Eastern Washington University

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Introduction to Global Women's Studies

We must be courageous in speaking out about the issues that concern us; we must not bend under the weight of spurious arguments invoking culture or traditional values. No value worth the name supports the oppression and enslavement of women.

—Dr. Nafis Sadik, Fourth World Women's Conference, 1995

The global study of women emphasizes how women's issues and activism are similar cross-culturally, yet different due to contextual and intersectional factors. Richard Ross/ Getty Images

This global women's and gender studies book is about women's issues and gender equality cross-culturally. The study of global women documents women's status worldwide. A key area of focus is the understanding of **gender inequality**, the disadvantage of girls and women relative to boys and men. Unfortunately, gender inequality is still extensive with enormous implications for women and girls everywhere. Global women's and gender studies links gender inequality to cultural practices that are embedded in social, economic, political, and legal systems and describes how these are targets of change. Considerations of diversity, and the intersections between gender and other variables such as region, race, class, and sexual orientation, are essential to global women's studies. An interdisciplinary endeavor, global women's and gender studies draws on research and theory from psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, religion, political science, medicine, public health, geography, public policy, history, philosophy, and law.

The global study of women is rich and rewarding because it requires learning about different customs, religions, and forms of government and provides insights into women's diverse lives. Studying women's lives in other cultures also inspires a profound appreciation for women. The great strength possessed by women, and what they accomplish despite their customary lower status and power, are truly amazing. That said, the cross-cultural study of women is at times very difficult, shocking, and disturbing. You may be horrified, surprised, depressed, and angered at some of the gender-based abuses that continue today—in your own country as well as others. You might find that the material triggers a personal gender journey as you focus a gender lens on your own life and culture. The saying, "The truth will set you free, but first it will make you mad" (and I would add, sometimes sad), applies to the subject matter of this book. Fortunately, the bad news is tempered by courageous stories of activism and resistance, and evidence of hopeful progress. This is not just a tale of the victimization of women and girls. On the contrary, it is a tale of empowerment, activism, and change.

To provide you with a finer sense of what global women's studies is about, here are four key themes that characterize the field. These themes are illustrated throughout the book.

"The feminist movement challenges the very root of patriarchy, the idea that one person can be humanly superior to others and entitled to superiority over them."
Marilyn French

"Man was not made a tyrant by nature, but had been made tyrannical by the power which had, by general consent, been conferred upon him; she merely wished that woman might be entitled to equal rights, and acknowledged as the equal of man, not his superior."
Lucretia Mott, speaking at the Women's Rights Convention at Seneca Falls, New York, 1848

Theme 1: Global Women's and Gender Studies Sees Gender Inequality as a Historical, Sociocultural Phenomenon

It is hard to understand why girls and women are so disadvantaged economically, politically, legally, and socially relative to boys and men. Why, despite women's respected role as the bearers of children and caregivers, and their many cultural, historical, and economic contributions, are they often treated as second-class citizens? Why is gender equality so hard to achieve? Global women's and gender studies scholars typically answer these questions with materialist and sociocultural explanations.

Materialist explanations for gender inequality view the oppression of women as a social, historical, but alterable phenomenon (Khan, 2006). Family and

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

"The oppression of women in any society is in its turn a statement of an economic structure built on land ownership, systems of inheritance and parenthood, and the patriarchal family as an inbuilt social unit."
Nawal El Saadawi

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695) was a brilliant Mexican poet and intellectual. To avoid marriage and to continue her self-education, Juana entered a Catholic convent. When told by a bishop to give up her writing, she spiritedly defended the right of women to engage in intellectual pursuits, saying in a 1681 letter, "Who has forbidden women to engage in private and individual studies? Have they not as rational a mind as men do?" Ultimately, she lost her battle and was forced to give up her writing and her books.

social institutions that arose out of material forces such as the ownership of private property led to men's dominance and women's subordination and these materialist forces maintain gender inequality. For example, many societies and cultures are structured such that women are economically dependent on men, and this makes it difficult for them to leave situations of abuse. The idea that gender inequality is embedded in family, cultural, economic, and political social structures is sometimes referred to as **patriarchy**, and social systems that serve men's dominance over women are referred to as **patriarchal**. Materialist theorists, such as historian Gerda Lerner (1986), trace the development of patriarchy to the Neolithic period when agriculture developed and the labor of children was needed to increase production and further surpluses. At that point women came to be viewed as commodities—resources to be acquired, traded, and controlled.

Like materialist explanations, **social constructivist** and **sociocultural explanations** emphasize how gendered power relations are socially constructed. These explanations also assume that gender is *dynamic*—active and changing rather than permanently fixed. Sociocultural perspectives on gender inequality also explain *how* gender relations became embedded in culture and are passed on socially. The sociocultural approach also distinguishes between **sex**, which refers to inborn biological differences between girls/women and boys/men relating to reproduction and sex organs, and **gender**, which refers to the socially constructed roles, behavior, activities, and attributes a given society considers appropriate for girls/women and boys/men.

The sociocultural approach does not deny the relevance of differences in the bodies of girls/women and boys/men. Indeed, these differences create unique issues and inequalities for girls/women. For example, menstruation, pregnancy, and childbearing impact the lives of girls and women in important ways. Many girls worldwide lack access to safe and clean ways to manage their periods and experience educational disadvantage because they miss weeks of school, or drop out altogether. Where affordable contraception is scarce, women face unplanned pregnancies, which may lead to unsafe or expensive abortion. When women give birth without the presence of skilled medical professionals, they can experience lifelong disability resulting from obstetric fistula. Employment absences due to pregnancy and childbirth often affect women's salaries and career progression.

Some anthropologists and historians see gender inequality as originating in biological differences between women and men. Think about it this way. At one time, all cultures lacked reliable birth control and had no infant formula or convenient ways to manage menstruation. This, along with men's greater size and strength, made some types of work more suitable for women since they spent much of their adult lives pregnant, nursing, and menstruating. Women's work became concentrated in the **private sphere** or domestic domain of the home, and men performed the labor in the **public sphere** outside the home because they were not constrained by child care (Sanday, 1974). In other words, a gendered division of labor arose, and women ended up doing the work that was compatible with the unavoidable female life course of bearing and nursing children (Chafetz, 1990; Lerner, 1986). Once societies based on money evolved, men's labor appeared to have more value because it was more likely to be used in exchange for money

or goods. Money-based economies also increased women's dependence on men because women's ability to make money was limited given their responsibilities in the private sphere. Men's dominance in the public sphere led to them having greater property rights and economic and political power, which they then used to further consolidate their power over women. Political and economic systems were constructed based on these traditional gender-role arrangements.

The sociocultural approach explains the mechanisms by which we learn to "do gender." Once a gendered division of labor arose and women and men had different roles (**gender roles**), people then constructed **gender stereotypes** (beliefs about the qualities of each gender) and **gender norms** (social rules regarding what is appropriate for each gender to do) that supported these divisions. These were passed on culturally through **gender socialization** (the process by which societal beliefs and expectations about gender are instilled in us). Parents, peers, myths, literature, media, religion, and so on teach children what is expected of them based on their gender in order to prepare them for adulthood and help them get along in society. Conformity to gender norms and gender roles is maintained by granting social status and approval to conformers and by ostracizing violators. A desire for social approval and fear of social rejection are partly why people choose gender conformity and may not rebel against gender-unequal cultural practices.

There is also a reciprocal relationship between gender stereotypes and gender roles—in other words, gender stereotypes lead to gendered roles but gendered roles also lead to gender stereotypes. This idea comes from social psychology's **social roles theory** (Eagly, 1987). People develop gender stereotypes about women and men from seeing them in different (gendered) roles, because we assume that if men and women are doing different things it must be because they are truly different. For example, if there are few women in leadership positions, people assume this is because women aren't suited for leadership.

According to social roles theory, once people develop gender stereotypes, these beliefs operate as expectations regarding appropriate roles for people from those groups—in this way gender stereotypes lead to gender roles. For example, if stereotypes suggest men are more suitable for leadership because they are more assertive and dominant than women (a gender stereotype), then men are more likely to be groomed and hired for leadership roles. These processes appear to operate in all cultures and explain how gender is socially constructed and maintained. Social roles theory maintains that because gender is socially constructed, it is dynamic and can be changed if gender stereotypes or gender roles change. For example, the stereotype that women aren't suitable for leadership roles is eroded when people see more women in leadership roles. Conversely, as this stereotype wanes, the number of women in leadership roles increases.

Cross-cultural and temporal (across time) variations in women's treatment testify to the large part culture plays in gender inequality. In many parts of the world, gender roles have changed rapidly, and as Rosenthal and Rubin (1982, p. 711) once said, these changes have occurred "faster than the gene can travel." Also, anthropological evidence tells us that gender inequality hasn't always been so. For example, today's anthropologists generally agree that in the foraging societies of early history, which covered much more time than the 120,000 years or so

"Female subordination runs so deep that it is still viewed as inevitable or natural rather than as a politically constructed reality maintained by patriarchal interests, ideology, and institutions."
Charlotte Bunch

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

from the Neolithic to the present, the genders were probably complementary and of equal importance (Ehrenberg, 1989). Even today there are some cultures with egalitarian gender relations (Bonvillian, 2001). Gender-egalitarian cultures were also common to hunter-gatherer and horticultural societies prior to colonization (Sanday, 1981), and there is some evidence from ancient times of matriarchies, societies in which women had greater power than men (cf. Bachofen, 1967; Diner, 1975; Gimbutas, 1991; Gross, 1996).

As you will see throughout the book, there is good evidence that gender inequality is in fact socially constructed and embedded in our legal, economic, political, and cultural practices. Our hope for change lies in our transformation of these human-created systems, beliefs, and practices.

Christine de Pizan (approximately 1365–1430), a Frenchwoman, was the most successful female writer of the Middle Ages. Furthermore, in her 1405 book *The City of Ladies*, she became one of the first to argue in writing against women's inferiority.

Theme 2: Global Women's and Gender Studies Is About Activism and Empowerment

Although global women's and gender studies seeks a scholarly understanding of gender inequality cross-culturally, this is not an end in itself; the hope is that this will serve change toward gender equality and contribute to women's **empowerment** (their ability to advocate for their rights and have decision-making power in their public and private lives). The task of global women's studies is a positive one rather than a negative one. It is less about women as victims and more about what women (and their male allies) do to solve the unique problems faced by women due to their gender. It will quickly become apparent to you that wherever women's rights are violated, there are women that resist and rally for change, even in the face of social rejection and physical danger. Global women's studies illustrates that gender equality activism is not exclusively the domain of Western women. In fact, there is a long history of struggle for women's equality in the Middle East, Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, and Africa. You will read about these efforts worldwide to increase the status of women throughout the book. Box 1.1 provides an example from Afghanistan.

"The women we honor today teach us three very important lessons: One, that as women, we must stand up for ourselves. The second, as women we must stand up for each other. And finally, as women we must stand up for justice for all." *Michelle Obama, First Lady of the United States at the International Women of Courage Awards, which honored women from Afghanistan, Guatemala, Iraq, Malaysia, Niger, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Yemen who have stood up for women and human rights.*

Global women's and gender studies is a feminist endeavor and conceives of feminism as a commitment to changing the structures that keep women lower in status and power (Sen & Grown, 1987). That said, not all gender equality activists and organizations addressing women's issues identify as feminist (see Chapter 10). Also, despite general agreement that feminism is about social transformation and acting for gender equality, the truth is that feminist ideologies, identities, issues, strategies, and actions vary considerably. A truly **global feminism** recognizes this diversity and acknowledges diverse meanings of feminism, each responsive to the needs and issues of women in different regions, societies, and times. As you'll see later in this chapter (and throughout the book), acknowledging and appreciating this diversity is a key part of global women's studies.

"I'm a little grayer than I was eight years ago, but this is what a feminist looks like." *U.S. President Barack Obama speaking in spring 2016*

Despite what some people say, we do not yet live in a post-feminist world where gender equality renders feminism obsolete. If you are not yet convinced of this, Chapter 2 highlights some important women's issues and gender disparities that will likely persuade you that there is still much to be done to achieve gender

Sixty percent of American women and thirty percent of American men self-identify as feminist. *Washington Post/Kaiser Foundation Survey*

BOX 1.1 *Activism Profile: Women's Human Rights Defenders in Afghanistan*

Afghan women's rights activists have been fighting for women's human rights for decades. In 1992, when the Taliban took over, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) drew international attention to the Taliban's oppression of women and ran secret schools to educate girls. In 2001, with the help of the United States, the Taliban was overthrown but it has battled the government forces ever since and still control parts of the country. Although the government is not under Taliban-control, many laws and cultural practices discriminate against women and girls. Despite danger, Afghan women's rights activists fight for women's rights to maternal health care, employment, and inheritance, and to increase girls' access to education. They fight against forced and underage marriage and violence against women and girls. In 2021, a campaign (#WhereIsMyName) started by Daughters of Rabia (named for Afghanistan's most famous poet), got a law passed requiring the inclusion of mothers' names on their children's birth certificates, which gives women parental rights that they didn't have. Activism has led to improvements in the twenty years since the Taliban were overthrown, but women's human rights defenders fear that their progress will soon be undone. Left out of peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban, they demand inclusion in peace talks and that women's rights not be bargained away.

equality, even in your own country, and despite notable progress. Box 1.2 talks about how feminism is often negatively stereotyped and misunderstood by those that seek to reduce its transformative power.

Global women's and gender studies emphasizes the important role of **nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)** and other collective action as agents of women's empowerment and equality. Governments can enact and enforce policies and laws that promote gender equality and address women's issues (a topic of this book), but they don't usually do this without sustained pressure from women's activism. Even once laws are in place, more action is usually needed to ensure their implementation and enforcement, and to educate women so they may exercise their rights. Much of the work of transforming women's legal and human rights into reality is done by women's nongovernmental organizations. For example, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) notes that laws to protect women's property rights now exist in most countries, and owning property is often a woman's ticket out of poverty. But many women don't know how to exercise their property rights. ICRW works with other NGOs to help women assert their legal rights to assets and property.

NGOs range from small, local grassroots organizations to large international organizations, including **WINGOs (women's international nongovernmental organizations)** and **GRSOs (women's grassroots support organizations)**. The activities of NGOs are varied. They include advocating for legal, societal, and cultural change to bring about gender equality. Some NGOs foster women's knowledge of their legal and human rights and empower women to advocate for themselves. Many NGOs provide services, resources, and programs to serve women's

BOX 1.2 *The "F" Word*

Are you hesitant to call yourself a feminist even though you believe in equal pay for equal work, gender equality in education, that sexual violence is a problem, that child marriage should be ended, that women should be able to control the number and spacing of their children, and that we need family-friendly employment policies? These are some of the things feminism is about. But because feminism is about challenging the privilege of some people relative to others, and because it's about transforming some long-held and cherished cultural practices and beliefs, efforts to discredit feminists and feminism abound. Type "anti-feminist" into a search engine and you'll find memes, quotes and even a "Men's Movement" suggesting that feminists are unattractive, whiny hypocritical manufacturers of self-imposed victimhood who discriminate against men. Given such stereotypes, it can take courage to identify as feminist.

All over the world, people call feminists "man-haters," "anti-family," and "lesbian." In some places, people cast suspicion by insisting feminism is a culturally insensitive Western import. In others, it's dismissed as only about the issues of privileged women. Given negative stereotypes of feminism, it's unsurprising that many activists, organizations, and movements working on women's issues don't embrace the feminist label (see Chapter 10).

An American study found women that endorse feminist beliefs often hesitate to describe themselves as feminists because of negative stereotypes of feminists, such as "man-hating" (Anderson, Kanner, & Elsayegh, 2009). Ironically, that study found women that identified as feminists reported lower levels of hostility toward men than did nonfeminists.

Canadian research participants asked to provide adjectives describing feminists most frequently said: man-hating, lesbian, unhygienic, angry, behaves like a man, and unattractive (Bashir et al., 2013). The Canadian researchers also found these negative stereotypes led people to avoid affiliating with feminists and advocating for feminist causes. The researchers explained that people avoid association with stigmatized others so that they don't become targets of prejudice and social rejection. Fortunately, in my experience, once people learn more about gender inequality and feminism, their negative and inaccurate views fall away, and they are inspired to act on behalf of gender equality.

economic, health, and safety needs. WINGOs form international coalitions of women's NGOs to represent the interests of women and girls in intergovernmental agreements and policies. Websites of gender equality and women's issues NGOs are provided at the end of every chapter, beginning with Chapter 2. Also starting with Chapter 2, you will find a feature called "Action Opportunities," so that you can take action on issues that move you. Many of the websites listed at the end of each chapter also provide ways to help.

Theme 3: Global Women's and Gender Studies Takes a Multicultural, Intersectional, Contextualized Approach

The cross-cultural study of women and gender inequality requires a multicultural approach. **Multiculturalism**, or interculturalism, emphasizes helping people to understand, accept, and value the cultural differences between groups, with the

ultimate goal of reaping the benefits of diversity (Ferdman, 1995). The goal is to both celebrate differences and emphasize the dimensions of commonality or inclusion that supersede these differences (Devine, 1995). Although it sounds contradictory, women are both the same and different cross-culturally and intra-culturally (within the same culture, country, or region), and this matters for our global study of women.

The Importance of Similarity

In some ways, women all over the world have a lot in common. Most live in patriarchal societies and cultures with legal, political, economic, and cultural structures that support gender inequality (see Chapter 2). The majority of women everywhere work extremely hard in both paid and unpaid labor, get married to men, structure their lives according to their children's needs, worry about unplanned pregnancies, experience gender discrimination, and are at some risk for gender violence such as rape, sexual assault, or domestic violence. The majority of women live in heteropatriarchal cultures where heterosexuality is expected and where bearing and caring for children are a chief source of status and identity for women. The shared biology of women also gives rise to commonalities such as menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering that affect women everywhere.

Women's commonalities are an important topic of this book and create connection between diverse women as well as form the basis for **transnational feminist movements** and networks spanning across multiple nations. At the core of these movements is the belief that women are entitled to the same rights as men, regardless of where the women live, and their ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and social class. These movements involve the coming together of feminist NGOs to work across regional or international borders in coalitions and campaigns (Porter, 2007). However, transnational feminisms recognize diversity and acknowledge that there are diverse meanings of feminism, each responsive to the needs and issues of women in different regions, societies, and times. Diversity and difference remain central values in transnational feminisms, values to be acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances (Mohanty, 2003).

"We…find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously." *Combahee River Collective, a group of Black American feminists*

The Importance of Difference

Although women undoubtedly share certain experiences due to their gender, their experiences as women vary widely depending upon their race, class, ethnicity, social class, nationality, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, region, and religion, whether they are refugees, immigrants, or natives, and so on. The interplay of these different social categories is referred to as **intersectionality** (Cole, 2009). Gender is "intersectional" because the way it is enacted and experienced depends on the way it interacts with other social categories and identities. Awareness of intersectionality is critical to an inclusive study of women globally, and global women's studies embodies an intersectional approach to gender.

"I am a Black feminist. I recognize that my power as well as my primary oppressions came as a result of my blackness as well as my womanness, and therefore my struggles on both fronts are inseparable." *Audre Lorde*

"The more diversity is affirmed, the more difficult inclusivity becomes, simply because human diversity is almost infinite."
Rita Gross

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."
Chimanda Adiche

In addition to awareness of intersectionality, it is also important to appreciate the role of context. To **contextualize** women's issues and activism means that to fully understand them, you have to consider the material contexts in which they are situated—cultural, social, political, historical, and economic. It also means that what's required for change and forms of activism varies greatly. For instance, gender inequality in politics is an important feminist issue, because worldwide men continue to hold the majority of political power. However, as Chapter 9, "Women and Politics," illustrates, the path to increasing women's political representation depends on a number of contextual variables, such as the electoral system specific to a country and the age and origins of its democracy.

Acknowledging intersectionality and contextualizing no doubt complicates global women's and gender studies. But a failure to do so ultimately restricts our understanding of women and reduces the usefulness of our study to promoting gender equality. Throughout this book, you will see that there are many differences in the issues facing women across countries and within countries (often based on intersectionality and context). Ideally, global women's and gender studies describes and reflects this diversity. However, you should understand that this is a small book that can't fully convey the diversity of women's lives worldwide or speak for all women everywhere. Given the enormity of the task and the fact that data is lacking on women in many parts of the world, the best this book can do is give you a sense of the great diversity of women's issues and activism and the contextual and intersectional influences on them.

Box 1.3 illustrates the concepts of intersectionality and context in understanding menstruation as a women's health issue.

The Challenge of Multiculturalism

As some of the more dramatic instances of women's lower status and power are chronicled, you should not become complacent about gender inequalities in your own country or feel that your culture is superior. Those cultural aspects that do not result in the oppression of women or others deserve our respect. Admittedly, multiculturalism is not always easy. It goes against our natural human tendencies to reject people and cultures that are different from our own and to defend our own cultural traditions. Humans have a general discomfort of diversity that is driven by a natural inclination to categorize people as one of "us," or one of "them," and to prefer those that are similar to us (social psychologists call this "ingroup-outgroup bias"). We like to believe that our culture's way of doing things is "right," and we like those things that are familiar to us. People are often **ethnocentric**—quick to think their culture's way is the right and only way, and quick to judge and reject the way other cultures do things. Our bias means that we may have trouble acknowledging the ways in which our own culture permits discrimination and suffering among identifiable groups of people and that we may be quick to negatively stereotype other cultures.

We have to override these tendencies because a multicultural approach to women's studies is not about judgment, cultural superiority, or the imposition of our ways on other cultures (what is sometimes called "cultural imperialism"). On the contrary, it is about understanding the influence of culture on women's issues and women's experiences while taking a critical look at our own culture. It

BOX 1.3 *Intersectionality and Context: The Case of Menstruation*

Coping with menstrual cramps, bloating, and messiness, and managing periods to avoid embarrassment, is something most girls and women worldwide can relate to. Healthy menstrual management for girls and women everywhere requires available, safe, and affordable materials, good sanitation and washing facilities, positive social norms, and safe and hygienic disposal (PATH, 2016). Despite these commonalities, intersectionality and context give rise to important differences in women's menstrual experiences across and within cultures. Here are some examples.

In some low-income regions, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is so challenging girls miss entire weeks of school and sometimes drop out altogether. In Uganda, schoolgirls often lack access to sanitary menstrual products, bathroom privacy is lacking, and the means to wash up and discreetly dispose of used materials are often absent (Sommer & Mmari, 2015). This context means that addressing the MHM needs of Ugandan girls and women is not only about increasing access to affordable, hygienic materials, but also about addressing sanitation and water needs.

Whether a woman is from an urban or rural region, and whether she is of low, middle, or high income, may also affect her MHM. Families in rural Kenyan settlements are less likely to have private toilets, increasing women's risk of rape during menstruation. Rural Kenyan women and girls have little to no access to affordable commercial MHM products and use strips of cloth, cotton wool, pieces of mattress, mud, ash, or leaves, whereas middle and upper-middle class urban girls and women use premium, commercially made disposable menstrual pads (FSG, 2016).

In the United States, the high cost of period products creates a greater burden on homeless, incarcerated, and low-income girls and women. This is called "period poverty." A recent study found one in ten college women struggle to pay for menstrual products, with even higher rates for Black, Latina, immigrant, and first-generation college students (Cardoso et al., 2021). Activists and feminist legislators in the United States work to provide free tampons and pads in schools, jails, and other public restrooms, and to allow the use of flexible spending accounts (i.e., food stamps/welfare) for feminine hygiene products (Weiss-Wolf, 2016).

The restrictions placed on a menstruating woman also depend on religion and culture. For example, in parts of India and Nepal, norms require menstruating girls and women to avoid cooking, religious practices, bathing, and sexual intercourse while menstruating (PATH, 2016). Reproductive health NGOs are developing educational programs to reduce period stigma and promote MHM.

To some extent, menstruation is taboo everywhere, and in 2015 women started to speak out (Weiss-Wolf, 2016). For example, responding to a Hindu religious leader that said he looked forward to the day when a machine could ensure that no menstruating women came into temples, Indian college student Nikita Azad launched a social media campaign (#Happytobleed) intended to challenge Hindu period taboos (Panday, 2015).

is about bringing change in our own societies as we support the efforts of women's activists and organizations in other cultures.

We have to find ways to be critical of practices that are harmful to women, but understand that the issues of greatest concern to women in our country (or group) may not be the major issues of concern to women in other countries (or groups). While talking about women's lives in different cultures, we also must take care to acknowledge the wide range of women's experiences within any given culture. We want to be culturally sensitive and avoid assuming that our way is the right way and that the path to gender equality is the same regardless of culture. As

"Sisters are doing it for themselves."
Annie Lennox, singer/songwriter/feminist

outsiders, we typically lack the understanding of the sociopolitical context that is crucial for effective action. We want to support gender equality movements everywhere while respecting the rights of women within particular countries to initiate their own movements in ways that work for them in their cultures.

Theme 4: Global Women's and Gender Studies Views Women's Rights as Human Rights

"It is good to swim in the waters of tradition but to sink in them is suicide."
Mahatma Gandhi

Some people suggest that cross-cultural women's studies cannot be done honestly because our own cultural biases inevitably lead to distortion. Others are uncomfortable with people from one culture making value judgments about the treatment of women in another culture when those judging cannot possibly understand the cultural context in which the treatment occurs. These concerns have some validity, and caution is clearly required. But sometimes people mistakenly assume that respecting cultural diversity requires that we accept all cultural practices (the idea that right and wrong are culturally determined is called **cultural relativism**). And yes, while it is true that just because a culture is different from our own does not mean that it is wrong, global women's and gender studies takes the position that culture should never be used to justify gender inequality.

Global women's and gender studies scholars and activists typically favor a human rights framework to help us determine when we should respect cultural practices and when we should work for their change. They approach women's rights from a human rights perspective. The idea behind the **women's rights as human rights perspective** is to wed women's rights to human rights, which are protected under international law and are monitored and enforced by the United Nations. This lends legitimacy to political demands because most governments already accept the protection of human rights, and there are established protocols for dealing with abuses (Friedman, 1995). Whether used in political lobbying, in legal cases, in grassroots mobilization, or in broad-based educational efforts, the idea of women's human rights has been a rallying point for women across many boundaries and has facilitated the creation of collaborative strategies for promoting and protecting the rights of women (Bunch & Frost, 2000). Coalitions of NGOs and local activists lobby governments, corporations, international financing institutions (like the World Bank), and regional and international intergovernmental bodies, to create the necessary political, economic, and human rights conditions for equality, sustainable human development, and social justice (Tripp, 2006). Throughout the book, you will see the women's rights as human rights approach in action.

At the heart of the women's rights as human rights approach is showing that women's rights follow from **universal human rights**. According to the concept of universal human rights, everyone has certain inalienable rights simply by virtue of being human. This means that all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights, which no one, including governments, can deny them. In theory then, women have the same economic, political, civil, and social rights as men, and culture cannot be used to deny anyone these basic rights. The **Universal Declaration**

of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by United Nations (UN) member nations in 1948 is the foundational document of human rights. The **United Nations (UN)** is an international organization with 193 participating countries. Its purposes are international peace and security, human rights, and the correction of international economic, social, environmental, and humanitarian problems. Many UN agencies figure prominently in this book because of their work on behalf of gender equality.

The UDHR stipulates that by virtue of being human, we are all entitled to full and equal rights (Articles 6 & 7); everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person (Article 3); no one should ever be tortured or held in slavery (Articles 4 & 5); everyone has the right to freedom of movement (Article 13); everyone has the right to own property and to participate politically (Articles 17 & 21); and everyone has the right to an education, to work for pay, and to be compensated fairly (Articles 22 & 23). Many of the situations described in this book are framed as violations of these and other basic human rights. For instance, domestic violence is a form of torture, and rape violates women's freedom of movement and their right to security. Although the principle of women's equality and nondiscrimination on the basis of sex was inscribed in the United Nations from the beginning through the UN Charter in 1945, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, this was the result of transnational feminist activism. Four women delegates attending the UN Charter Conference worked together with forty-two NGOs to ensure inclusion of sex in the antidiscrimination clause as well as to change "equal rights among men" to "equal rights among men and women." A similar effort was necessary in the drafting of the UDHR (Bunch, 2007; Jain, 2005).[1]

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

One of the most important human rights documents pertaining specifically to women is the United Nations' **Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, basically an international bill of rights for women. The 1979 treaty defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil, or any other field." CEDAW consists of a preamble and thirty articles defining what constitutes discrimination against women and setting up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination. It is the only human rights treaty that affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces shaping gender roles and family relations (DAW, 2009). It requires ratifying nations to eliminate discrimination against women in employment, education, and politics and to provide proof of progress (sadly, the United States, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, and Tonga have not yet ratified CEDAW).

UN **conventions** are treaties, or legally binding agreements between countries; **declarations** are agreements that are not binding.

[1] The four women were Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Bertha Lutz (Brazil), Wu Yi-Fang (China), and Virginia Gildersleeve (United States).

Every four years, nations that have ratified the treaty are supposed to submit reports on their progress to the **CEDAW Committee**, a group comprised of twenty-three women's rights experts who monitor compliance with CEDAW and issue recommendations. NGOs are also encouraged to submit reports on their country's compliance with CEDAW, and many develop "shadow reports" documenting the gap between official government statements and the actual status of women (Hawkesorth, 2006). The UN offers technical report assistance to those countries that seem to have trouble meeting the report requirement. The Optional Protocol to CEDAW, adopted by the General Assembly in 1999, offers two mechanisms to hold governments accountable for their obligations under CEDAW: (1) a communications procedure that provides individuals and groups the right to lodge complaints with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee), and (2) an inquiry procedure that enables the CEDAW Committee to conduct inquiries into serious and systematic abuses of women's rights. These procedures apply only to countries that have ratified the Optional Protocol. The Optional Protocol to CEDAW has been ratified by 109 nations as of May 2017. This is significantly less than the number ratifying CEDAW. This may be due to the Protocol's emphasis on accountability. It is one thing for governments to support women's rights in theory, but it is another thing for them to agree to take responsibility for women's rights violations in an international venue.

CEDAW is the most far-reaching convention specific to the rights of women, but there are other international human rights agreements that address women's rights. The **Beijing Platform for Action**, the product of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing, China, in 1995, is another important international agreement. The Platform, negotiated by 5,000 delegates from 189 countries, identifies "critical areas of concern" such as the feminization of poverty, inequalities in education, politics, and the economy, violence against women, and persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child. It is called the Platform for Action because for each critical area of concern, it specifies strategic objectives and actions to be undertaken by governments. Throughout the book, you will read about these and other international conventions, declarations, and agreements that speak to women's rights.

"The human rights of women and the girl-child are an inalienable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights. Gender-based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation, including those resulting from cultural prejudice and international trafficking, are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person, and must be eliminated."
Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993

Human rights are supposed to be protected under international law and monitored by the United Nations and human rights organizations, but human rights are also tools of activism. The potential of these tools can only be realized through vigorous leadership, difficult political dialogue among different groups of women, and women's political activity at all levels—from the global to the local. Throughout the book, you will see how women's rights activists work to ensure that women's rights are included in human rights instruments and mechanisms and how they use these to challenge gender inequalities. This is important because describing a particular discriminatory act as a human rights violation gives it more value than simply calling it unfair (Tomasevski, 1993). Once a government has signed on to an international human rights convention or declaration, activists can use that agreement to hold their government accountable for harms done and to pressure them to adopt, enforce, and implement consistent policies, programs, and laws. For example, women's rights activists use CEDAW as a tool to press

their governments to adopt gender equality legislation and constitutional amendments and to petition courts for change. They use their country's CEDAW reviews to press for change. In Brazil (1988) and Colombia (1991), feminists used CEDAW to shape new national constitutions recognizing women's rights, and in India (1992), a group of women's NGOs successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to draft a sexual harassment law by arguing that the lack of one was in violation of CEDAW (Hawkesworth, 2006). Educating women about their human rights also motivates and empowers grassroots challenges to gender inequalities.

Framing discrimination against women as a violation of their human rights is not easy. In the United States, political conservatives object to international agreements like CEDAW, claiming they will give the UN too much power over U.S. laws. The notion of universal human rights (universality) is frequently undermined by the belief that respect for cultural and religious diversity provides exceptions to human rights law. Claims for universality are also sometimes rejected as imperialistic and as a way to uphold Western economic interests (Chinkin, 1999). This claim that international human rights are incompatible with respect for cultural diversity must be carefully considered. Cultural diversity and human rights must be balanced. Cultural diversity should not be used to excuse human rights violations; nor should a claim for universal values be used to justify the eradication of unique cultural practices that do not violate human rights. This issue is particularly acute in international law, which is concerned with transnational standards (Charlesworth, 1994).

Rhonda Copelon (1944–2010) was a U.S. law professor and international human rights activist. She pioneered the use of international law to prevent and prosecute crimes against women such as war rape.

Cultural relativists and human rights activists often disagree on women's rights, and at every international conference discussing women's rights, feminists and cultural relativists have battled (Coomarswamy, 1999). The most radical cultural relativists argue that there are no legitimate cross-cultural human rights standards and that the human rights endeavor, arising as it did out of the European Enlightenment, is, by its very nature, inapplicable to non-Western cultures (Coomaraswamy, 1999). In regard to women's rights, these cultural relativists suggest that Western condemnations of gender discrimination in other regions are insensitive and ethnocentric and are a version of cultural imperialism (Mayer, 1995a). This, however, ignores the long tradition of women's human rights writing and activism in non-Western cultures (Canetto & Burn, 2020).

Other cultural relativists are more selective, taking issue with only some of the rights specified in human rights documents or their interpretation (Coomaraswamy, 1999). For instance, cultural relativists often emphasize that the treatment of women is prescribed by a culture's religious practices; therefore calls for change are instances of religious intolerance (Jaising, 1995). Many of the countries that have ratified CEDAW did so only after registering "reservations" to those elements that they felt were contrary to important cultural or religious practices (indeed, CEDAW breaks the record for the most reservations recorded for an international human rights instrument). This problem for CEDAW symbolizes a problem that plagues the women's rights as human rights endeavor.

It is true that we shouldn't reject cultural practices just because they are not our own and that we should not presume to understand the experiences of those in another culture. And it is true that many cultural practices are nothing more than what Rachels (1993) calls "social conventions," which, objectively speaking, are neither right nor wrong and about which we should keep an open mind. But should

"Diversity and difference are central values here—to be acknowledged and respected, not erased in the building of alliances."
Chandra Talpade Mohanty

"Isn't it revealing that women's human rights need to be discussed?"
Isabel Allende

"The role of [Western] feminists is not to be in front, leading the way for other women, but to be in back supporting the other women's struggles to bring about change."
Kenyan Anthropologist Achola Pala-Okeyo

we accept cultural practices that obviously result in serious harm to large segments of a society out of respect for the existing culture or tradition? If this had been the case in the United States, slavery would not have been abolished, women would not have been allowed to vote, and civil rights legislation would not have been passed. As Rachels says, moral progress cannot occur if we take cultural relativism too far.

Another problem with the cultural relativist's position is that it implies that there is a homogeneous culture upon which there is agreement. However, "culture is not a static, unchanging, identifiable body of information," but rather is a "series of constantly contested and negotiated cultural practices" (Rao, 1995). For instance, Mayer (1995b) points out that contrary to the view of a monolithic Islamic position on human rights, Muslims actually espouse a wide range of opinions regarding international human rights. These range from the assertion that international human rights are fully compatible with Islam to the claim that international human rights are products of alien, Western culture and represent values contrary to Islam. Also, the claim that women's rights are in opposition to cultural rights overlooks the power dynamics that give men the right to define and defend their culture in ways that protect patriarchy (Canetto & Burn, 2020).

Some people doubt that it is possible to universalize feminism given the wide variety of women's experiences, and they question the usefulness of the international legal approach to women's rights. However, supporters of the international human rights approach point out that regardless of differences, women worldwide share the experience of patriarchy and the devaluing of women and all that experience encompasses (such as violence against women). They say we can respect cultural diversity *and* promote human rights as long as we recognize that cultural and class differences affect women's experience and how male domination can be contested. It is important to emphasize the separate identities and histories of groups of women based on religion, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and economic position while at the same time avoiding a dangerous fatalism of unbridgeable differences among women (Chowdhury et al., 1994). As Walter (2001) explains, culture determines the specifics of international human rights violations. For instance, she says that dowry violence is an Indian manifestation of the international problem of domestic violence. To address the problem, both the specific cultural context and the fact that they are a violation of women's human rights must be addressed. As noted throughout the book, this consideration of the cultural context is something that is best done by people in their own cultures. We can agree on human rights standards, but to be empowered and effective, people must be the architects of change within their own cultures.

In sum, advocating for women's human rights internationally and valuing cultural diversity are not mutually exclusive. Global women's and gender studies and transnational feminism require that we do both. The way to accomplish this is to recognize the cross-cultural variation in the challenges women face and to let women be the architects of change in their own countries. The best way to respect cultural diversity and advocate for women's rights is to focus on those practices of concern to women in their own countries and to support their efforts to do something about them. Besides, going into another country and telling people what to be concerned with and what to do about it almost always backfires; either because

we lack the cultural understanding necessary to effectively bring about change, or because our efforts are met with accusations of cultural imperialism, which lead to a backlash (especially likely in countries with a history of colonization by western countries). Research shows that most credible advocates of gender equality are almost always members of the community whose practices are being challenged (Alexander & Welzel, 2015).

Of course that doesn't mean we can't be of service outside of our own culture and communities. We can contribute money to women's NGOs, respond to their "action alerts" in requested ways, network and share change strategies, help call international attention to abuses, lobby for international organizations to classify violations of women's rights as human rights violations, compare stories of struggle, and respect the rights of women to be the architects of change in their own cultures and societies. We must also remember that taking action that affects another society requires consulting local organizations regarding the advisability of a proposed strategy, its timing, how it is framed, and to make sure that it is guided by accurate information; otherwise, efforts may be disrespectful, ineffective, or even hurtful (Tripp, 2006). We must agree that regardless of culture, it is unacceptable to deny women their equal rights, yet we must acknowledge the diversity of women's experiences to make our efforts relevant. We must respect those cultural features that do not lead to the oppression of women (and others) so as to preserve and respect cultural diversity.

Overview of the Book

Chapter 2 begins the book with an overview of women's status in the world today. The chapter provides a summary of women's lower status and power, both politically and economically, and provides data on key women's issues globally. A major theme in the chapter is violence against women, women's sexual objectification, and how these relate to women's economic and political power.

The topic of Chapter 3 is reproductive health and reproductive rights. Reproductive health conditions are the leading cause of death and disability in women of childbearing age worldwide. Reproductive rights refer to the right to reproductive health care and the right to reproductive self-determination. These rights include women's ability to control the number and spacing of their children and their access to a range of birth control methods from which they may freely and knowledgeably choose. The relationship between women's reproductive rights and their status, power, economic situation, and health is emphasized in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 is on the topic of sexuality and sexual rights. Women's sexual rights are important to gender equality—how free can people be if they cannot determine their sexuality? Unfortunately, a woman's sexuality is often defined in terms of men's sexual pleasure, and her family and community's honor. Sexual double standards and men's control of sexual decision-making affect women's health. Sexual rights also include rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These are important intersectional variables because they affect women's experiences as women, and because most societies discriminate against lesbian, bisexual, and transwomen. Chapter 4 also includes the topic of activism on behalf of women's sexual rights.

Using a feminist economic lens, Chapter 5 investigates the topic of women's work, both paid and unpaid, and in the formal and informal economic sectors. The ways in which women often experience discrimination in the world of work are highlighted with an examination of the gender pay gap, glass ceiling, and sexual harassment along with an examination of maternity protections and child care. The challenges that women face in balancing work and family are explored. Self-employed women are another focus. The undervaluing of women's unpaid labor and its relationship to women's status and power are key chapter themes as well.

Feminists generally believe that economic development should be an agent of women's empowerment. Chapter 6 takes a close look at women in low-income countries. The chapter begins by describing the lives and labor of women in low-income countries, and how traditional economic development approaches affect them. The chapter also explores feminist efforts to bring gender into the development process, and the important role of women in environmentally sustainable development—development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the future. The role of women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in bringing about change is also featured.

Chapter 7 describes how a world economy dominated by transnational corporations affects women. The chapter begins by explaining what globalization is and how it impacts women. One major chapter topic is women's work in transnational factories (most are sweatshops). Another topic is women's migration to other countries to alleviate poverty and provide for their families. Migrant women's work in domestic service, sex work, and nursing and home health work are discussed, along with the phenomenon of "marriage migrants." The trafficking of women and girls into prostitution as part of the global sex industry is also presented as one of the effects of globalization.

Chapter 8 tackles the subject of women and religion. Many feminists view religion as part of the social systems that perpetuate gender inequality. The chapter provides feminist critiques of religion and includes an overview of women in the world's major religions. Of course, religion is profoundly important to many women, including many feminist women. Feminist efforts to reform existing religions or to create new women-centered religions are a major topic in Chapter 8.

Feminists agree that women's political activity is one key to their equality, and Chapter 9 examines women in national politics. This chapter explores women's representation in political parliaments, congresses, and cabinets and the factors that lead to greater numbers of women in formal politics. The chapter provides an analysis of women as heads of government—how do they come to occupy these positions and how does their leadership differ from that of men? Are they more likely to promote domestic policies favorable to women and children, and do they typically pursue feminist agendas? The chapter concludes with a discussion of women's political activity in social protest movements. When we consider this form of political activity, it is evident that women are more political than they might appear at first glance.

Chapter 10 investigates women's movements from the local to the global. The chapter begins by noting the many forces that operate against women's activism and how, despite these, women still frequently protest gender injustice. One of the main

points of the chapter is that women's movements assume a variety of forms. In most countries you will find women's rights activist groups that focus on national policy, women's research groups that attempt to document the status of women and raise public awareness, and women's grassroots organizations that help women on a local level by providing shelter for battered women, providing credit for women-owned businesses, and so on. The chapter also includes transnational feminist movements spanning across multiple nations and how feminist NGOs work across regional or international borders in coalitions and campaigns.

Throughout each chapter, you will find quotes from women scholars and activists, as well as examples of "sheroes" and women's history. Bolded terms appear in the glossary toward the end of the book (there is also a list of glossary terms and concepts at the end of each chapter). In addition to the action opportunities and websites mentioned earlier, the end of each chapter provides study questions and discussion questions and activities. The study questions are intended to help you structure your studying of the information provided in the chapters. The discussion questions and activities are provided to stimulate your critical thinking on chapter topics. Finally, an appendix at the end of the book provides some key statistical indicators on women's status in the world's countries. These data remind us of the great diversity of women's status worldwide. However, information on the status of women is often hard to come by, as many governments do not compile accurate statistics, or, if they do, they may only release them periodically. This means that these statistics should be regarded cautiously, and it means that throughout the text, you will frequently find statistics that are several years old. You can also find *Women Across Cultures* on Facebook, where current news on women's issues and rights is posted.

Glossary Terms and Concepts

Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women)
CEDAW Committee
Contextualize
Cultural relativism
Empowerment
Ethnocentric
Feminism
Gender
Gender inequality
Gender norms
Gender roles
Gender socialization
Gender stereotypes
Global feminism
Global women's studies
GRSOs (women's grassroots support organizations)
Intersectionality
Materialist explanations
Multiculturalism
Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
Patriarchy
Patriarchal
Private sphere
Public sphere
Sex
Social roles theory
Sociocultural explanations (social constructivist)
Transnational feminisms
United Nations (UN)
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
Universal human rights
WINGOs (women's international nongovernmental organizations)
Women's rights as human rights perspective

Study Questions

1. What are the four key themes that characterize global women's studies?
2. According to materialist approaches, what is the source of gender inequality?
3. What are the main features of sociocultural explanations for gender inequality?
4. What is the core idea behind feminism? How is global women's studies about action and empowerment?
5. What does it mean to say that women worldwide are "both the same and different"? What does this mean to the study of women cross-culturally?
6. What is intersectionality? What does it mean to contextualize our study of global women? Why are these so important to global women's studies?
7. What is multiculturalism? Why is it important to avoid ethnocentrism and to take a multicultural perspective when studying women cross-culturally? How does global or transnational feminism exemplify a multicultural approach?
8. What is the women's rights and human rights perspective? What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? What is CEDAW? Why are these and other international agreements important for gender equality?
9. What is the nature of the cultural relativist criticism that international human rights are incompatible with a respect for cultural diversity? How do "universalists" respond to cultural relativists' criticisms of the human rights approach?
10. How can we respect cultural diversity and advocate for women's rights internationally?

Discussion Questions

1. Do you call yourself a feminist? Why or why not? Do you agree with the chapter's claim that many people have a negative view of feminism but that most people agree with the aims of feminism? Does it matter whether we call ourselves feminists as long as we're doing our part to promote gender equality? Would we be more effective if we distanced ourselves from the feminist label?
2. Intersectionality is discussed as critical to global women's studies. Women's experiences vary widely because our experience of gender and the gender issues we experience depend on how gender intersects with other important social categories and identities such as race, religion, class, and sexual orientation. Thinking about this, how is your experience as a man or woman affected by intersectionality?
3. The chapter emphasizes multiculturalism when studying women cross-culturally but at the same time says that regardless of culture, women have basic human rights. Make a list of any cultural practices in regards to women in other countries that you are critical of. Should you override your ethnocentrism in regards to these, or are they violations of basic human rights?

4. According to the chapter, one of the risks of looking at some of the more dramatic instances of women's lower status and power is that it can foster feelings of cultural superiority. Why is this wrong, or is it?
5. The chapter makes the point that we should be careful in telling women in other cultures what to be concerned about and what they should do about it. What criticisms might an "outsider" make of your culture's treatment of women, and how would you feel about this outsider demanding change?

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2 Women's Lower Status and Power

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

—Peggy Antrobus, Caribbean feminist activist and scholar, founding member of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) and the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA)

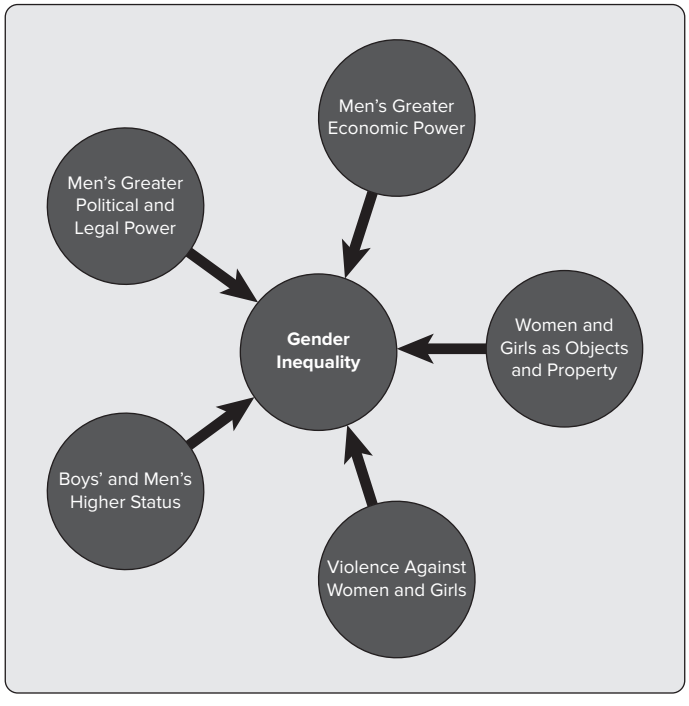
All over the world, women act to reduce the sexual and domestic violence faced disproportionately by women and to assist women that experience it. This violence against women is only one indicator of women's lower status and power relative to men. otnaydur/Shutterstock

If you're uncertain that global women's and gender studies and global women's rights are worthwhile pursuits, then perhaps this chapter will dispel your doubts. It provides an overview of key global women's issues as well as some explanations for women's lower status and power. As you will see, worldwide, girls and women are generally lower in status and power relative to boys and men (see Figure 2.1). In other words, there is gender inequality. In the sections that follow, pay attention to the material conditions that gave rise to and perpetuate gender inequalities and how societies are often patriarchal (structured in ways that foster and condone gender inequality).

Men's Greater Economic Power

Money and property typically enhance status and power, and many feminists view men's greater economic power to be at the heart of women's lower status and power. Where women have little economic power, gender inequality is typically great (and vice versa). Although there is widespread variation worldwide, men control more economies, own more property, make more money, and occupy more positions of

FIGURE 2.1 *Evidence of Gender Inequality*



In China, women earn on average 36 percent less than men doing similar work.
Catalyst, 2020

In the United States, women earn on average 81 cents for every dollar men make, and the gender pay gap is even greater for women of color.

Women spend around 2.5 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men, and do three times more of it than men do.
UN Women, 2021

"When women participate in the economy, everyone benefits."
Hillary Clinton, former U.S. Secretary of State

power in business and banking. And, in most countries, women earn on average only 77 percent of men's wages; the global average is women earn 23 percent of what men earn (UN Women, 2018[1]). Only part of this **gender wage gap** can be explained by differences in educational attainment, job experience, and part-time work. Women are also less likely to receive retirement pensions and to work in secure jobs (ILO, 2018). They are more likely than men to be unemployed, to work part-time, or to work in family businesses for no pay (ILO, 2018). All this translates into large lifetime economic gender inequalities for many women and increases women's vulnerability to poverty, especially widowed, separated, and single women with children (UN Women, 2018). Chapter 5, "Women's Work," discusses women's paid and unpaid labor in detail.

Men's greater control of economic resources and property relative to women matters because it increases women's dependence on men and gives men more power over them. Women's economic power is positively related to having a say in household decisions, their ability to leave situations of domestic violence, and their control over sexual relations (ICRW, 2016; UNICEF, 2006[2]). Children's nutrition, health, and education also improve when women have more economic power (UN Women, 2020).

Men's economic power also provides them with greater control of legal, justice, and political systems where gender inequality is often enshrined. For example, nineteen countries have laws requiring married women to obey their husbands, and in fourteen countries, married women do not have property ownership rights equal to their husbands (UN Women, 2020). Gender biases in property and inheritance laws leave women at greater risk for poverty, particularly when marriages end, or a husband dies (Open Society Foundations, 2016). Chapter 6, "Women, Development, and Environmental Sustainability" and Chapter 7, "Women and Globalization," discuss women's poverty in more detail. Redressing women's socioeconomic disadvantage is key to achieving gender equality (UN Women, 2020).

Men's Greater Political and Legal Power

In Liberia, one of the first laws passed following the election of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was a law criminalizing rape and making it a nonparole offense.

Men's greater political and legal power provides more evidence of their higher status and power. Most of the world's politicians and lawmakers are men. That matters because it means our representative democracies are not so representative and because most men lawmakers are not inclined to think about sexual assault, domestic violence, women's reproductive rights and health issues, and women's labor in and out of the home. Equality before the law is critical for gender equality, but in many places, women have fewer legal rights than men and the law does not protect them from gender-based discrimination and violence. Even when gender-equal laws are in

[1]UN Women is the United Nations organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

[2]UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) works for children's rights, survival, development, and protection.

BOX 2.1 *Kuwaiti Women's Fight for Political Rights*

Kuwait, an oil-rich, predominantly Muslim country, is located in the Persian Gulf in the Middle East. By law Kuwaiti women are assured equal rights, but they were not granted the right to vote and run for political office until 2005, after almost a decade of women's activism. Kuwaiti women courageously smuggled food, weapons, and information to resistance fighters during the occupation by Iraq in 1990 and 1991. They expected that postwar they would be rewarded with their political rights. But there was fierce opposition from those that argued "the man speaks for the family" and politics "will take women away from their home and children." To win their rights, women demonstrated outside parliament chanting "Women's rights now!" and carried signs saying, "Our democracy will only be complete with women." The activists wore blue T-shirts with slogans like "Half a democracy is not a democracy." Wearing their blue shirts, they attended parliamentary sessions.

Although women won the right to vote, they are significantly underrepresented in elected office. Since 2006, approximately 25 women have run in each parliamentary election and in spring 2009, women finally won four seats (6.2% of seats) in parliament, despite Islamists (fundamentalist Muslims) who encouraged people not to vote for women candidates. Islamists then tried to oust women who did not wear traditional dress but were overruled. In the most recent election (2020), only one woman was elected (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2021). In Kuwait, women cannot marry a partner without a male guardian's permission; the law requires obedience to husbands; a man who kills his wife, sister, or daughter for adultery receives only small fine or a maximum three-year prison sentence; a husband can prohibit his wife from employment and can marry up to four wives; and gender non-conformity is punished with heavy fines and jail time (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Kuwaiti law does not criminalize domestic violence but in 2020, after years of activism by Kuwaiti women, a law was passed to create domestic violence shelters and other services for abuse survivors.

place, male-dominated police and justice systems do not enforce them. Informal justice systems (also known as indigenous or traditional justice systems), which include forums of community representatives that decide on local disputes, usually consist of men that uphold customs and religious laws favoring men (UN Women, 2013).

In 2021, less than 10 percent of the world's countries had a woman heading their government as president or prime minister (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2021). Women are also underrepresented in parliaments and congresses, comprising only 25.5 percent of lawmakers in parliaments and congresses (Inter-parliamentary Union, 2021). Despite their somewhat poor representation in formal politics (parliaments, congresses, heads of state), women are often very political. In later chapters you will see that much of women's political influence comes from their activities in grassroots organizations that place pressure on formal political institutions. Increasing women's political participation and representation has long been a focus of women's activists. In the twentieth century, the focus was gaining women the right to vote (called **women's suffrage**). Saudi Arabia (2012) and Kuwait (2005) were the last countries to grant women suffrage. Box 2.1 discusses the efforts of Kuwaiti women to gain the vote and increase the numbers of women in parliament (Saudi women were awarded this right by the late King Abdullah).

"The concept of democracy will only assume true and dynamic significance when political policies and national legislation are decided upon jointly by men and women with equitable regard for the interests and aptitudes of both halves of the population."
Interparliamentary Union, 1994

Chapter 9 focuses on women in politics and how women gain political power. Another focus for activists is the reform of the legal and justice systems that allow the violation of women's human rights. This includes working for the passage and implementation of laws and constitutions that give women legal standing and guarantee women equal rights, increasing women's **legal literacy** (knowledge of their legal rights), improving women's access to legal advice and the courts, and reforming law enforcement institutions such that they are responsive to crimes against women such as sexual assault and domestic violence.

The Higher Status of Boys and Men

In many ways and in many places, boys and men are still more valued than girls and women and enjoy a higher social standing. Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist and one of the first scholars to pay serious attention to the activities of women, noted, "Whatever the arrangements in regard to descent or ownership of property, and even if these formal outward arrangements are reflected in the temperamental relations between the sexes, the prestige values always attach to the activities of men" (1935, p. 302). Likewise, anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo (1974) said it is striking that male activities, as opposed to female activities, are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultures bestow authority and value on the activities of men.

"Industries where women predominate tend to involve lower-paid and lower-status work than men. But, if you look historically at trends, it's not that women enter into low-paid, low-status professions. It's that, the more women populate a profession, the more low-paid and low-status it becomes." *Raina Brands, Professor of Psychology at London Business School*

Job prestige is one example of women's lower status. Jobs held predominantly by women are typically lower in status and pay than jobs traditionally held by men. Women's significant unpaid household and care labor is often overlooked or devalued. In most societies, high-status jobs such as those in science, engineering, and math (STEM) are stereotyped as male occupations with barriers to women's entry. Although the number of women in professional jobs has improved, and approximately one-third of managers are women, women are more likely to be employed in occupations considered "low-skilled" and to face worse working conditions than employed men (ILO, 2020). Even in athletics, boys and men's sports receive more funding, support, and media coverage than girls and women's sports. Semiprofessional and professional men athletes are typically paid far more than women athletes, and are admired more (Brewis, 2016).

"The most gifted and beautiful girl is not as desirable as a deformed boy." *Ancient Chinese proverb*

Not only are male activities valued over female ones, but also in many countries, sons are valued over daughters in what is known as **son preference**. When Americans were asked in a 2018 Gallup poll, "Suppose you could have only one child. Would you prefer that it be a boy or a girl?," men preferred a boy by a 43 to 24 percent margin, whereas women showed no preference (Newport, 2018). Son preference is common globally, but in some South Asian, East Asian, Western Asian, and Central Asian countries, son preference is so strong that it means that significantly more boy babies are born and survive due to **gender-biased sex selection**. Gender-biased sex selection is sometimes classified as a form of violence against women and girls.

Prenatal sex selection, a form of gender-biased sex selection, involves using prenatal technologies to prenatally choose boys (it can also be used to choose girls, but this is less common). Methods include ultrasound, amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling, blood or urine tests, and preimplantation genetic testing and sperm sorting prior to in vitro fertilization (IVF) (WHO, 2011). Parents are more likely to use prenatal sex selection after the first child or second child if they want a fixed number of children and have no sons (Jha et al., 2006; Zhu, Lu, & Hesketh, 2009). The highest rates of prenatal sex selection are found in countries where there is strong son preference, access to prenatal gender diagnosis, and low fertility (families have fewer children) (Bongaarts & Guilmoto, 2015). However, the practice of prenatal sex selection varies widely within countries. There are typically regional differences, rural versus urban differences, ethnic differences, and socioeconomic and religious differences (UNFPA, 2012).

Postnatal sex selection, which leads to higher death rates for girls under the age of five, is a nontech, passive method of sex selection. **Girl neglect**, where girls receive less food, supervision, and medical attention, is the most common form of postnatal sex selection (outright female infanticide is now rare). Child mortality data find evidence of girl neglect in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Egypt, India, Jordan, Nepal, and Pakistan (UNFPA, 2020).[3] Fortunately, girl neglect has declined by as much as 50 percent since 1990 (when it was about 2 million annually). However, this is believed to be partly the result of increased access to prenatal sex selection (Bongarrts & Guilmoto, 2015).

"Daughters are not for slaughter."
Indian women's movement slogan

Understanding gender-biased sex selection requires a consideration of context. Poor economic conditions leading to a desire for smaller families is a contributing factor in Eastern Europe. In China, restrictive family planning regulations limiting families to one or two children increased the practice of sex selection (Zhu et al., 2009). Son preference is often rooted in traditional patriarchal practices and customs that vary between and within countries. In the Hindu and Buddhist religions, for example, sons have added value because they perform important rituals for deceased parents and for ancestors. These rituals are seen as essential for a good afterlife.

In some cultures, sons carry an economic advantage. When property inheritance is patrilineal (through the male line), male descendants are important to families. Where the family line and family name are carried on through sons, son preference is fueled. In many Asian cultures, custom requires that sons provide for elder parents. In contrast, daughters are expected to marry, leave the family, have children, and care for parents-in-law. Consequently, they do not have the potential to enhance the family's economic or social position the way sons do.

Son preference and the perception that daughters are an economic liability are aggravated in cultures with large dowry requirements (UNFPA, 2005). A **dowry** consists of money or goods paid by the bride's family to the groom or his

[3]The UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) works to ensure universal access to family planning and sexual health.

family, mostly in the countries of Southeast Asia. Hundreds of years ago, dowries were property of the bride and provided her economic protection within the marriage. Women could not inherit land from their parents, and dowry was viewed as their inheritance. Dowry inflation is a problem in many countries, particularly in India, where some families with sons view dowries as a way to increase family wealth and acquire material things (Srinivasan & Bedi, 2007). One study in rural south India (Srinivasan, 2005) found that the expectation of a large dowry payment tops the list of causes for the undesirability of daughters.

At the family and individual level, son preference means that women often experience intense pressure to bear a son (Barot, 2012). Bearing sons affects a woman's status in the family, and a failure to produce sons sometimes carries the threat of violence or abandonment (Nanda et al., 2013). At the macro level, son preference has resulted in over 140 million "missing" women globally, a majority from China and India (Bongaarts & Guilmoto, 2015; UNFPA, 2020). There are 32.9 million more men than women in East Asia (mostly in China); 61.2 million more in South Asia (mostly from India); and 13.3 million more in West Asia (mostly from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) (United Nations DESA, 2019). Distorted sex ratios at birth attributed to son preference are most profound in Azerbaijan, China, Vietnam, Armenia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Nepal (UNFPA, 2020).

Sex selection and consequent imbalanced sex ratios due to son preference are also linked to violations of women's human rights and higher levels of crimes against women (Edlund et al., 2013; UNFPA, 2012). Rather than increasing their status and power, a scarcity of women for marriage appears to put women at greater disadvantage for violence, forced marriage, polyandry (where brothers share wives), and trafficking (the recruitment, transportation, harboring, or receipt of people for the purposes of slavery, forced labor, and servitude) (WHO, 2011).

At the 1994 United Nations International Conference on Population and Development, representatives from 180 of the world's governments signed an agreement that included a commitment to "…eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child and the root causes of son preference, which result in harmful and unethical practices regarding female infanticide and prenatal sex selection" (paragraph 4.16 of the 1994 Programme of Action). Some countries have made efforts to eliminate the practice. Due to Indian women's activism, a national law was passed in 1994 banning the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques for sex selection, and an amended law was passed in 2002 prohibiting the determination and disclosure of the sex of the fetus, outlawing advertisements related to preconception and prenatal determination of sex, and prescribing punishments for violators. Other countries that ban sex selection include China, Great Britain, Australia, South Korea, Canada, Belgium, Spain, France, and Germany.

Four countries (China, Kosovo, Nepal, and Vietnam) ban sex-selective abortion (Citro et al., 2014). In the United States, concerns about sex selection in immigrant communities combined with anti-abortion sentiments have led to bans on abortions for purposes of sex selection in the states of Arizona, Kansas, Minnesota, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota,

BOX 2.2 *Reducing Son Preference in South Korea*

In the 1980s, sex-selection technologies became widespread in Korea, and by the early 1990s, Korea had one of the most lopsided sex ratios at birth in the world. Starting in 1991, Korea instituted a ban on physicians telling parents the gender of their unborn child (physicians could lose their medical license). Although physicians still found ways to skirt the law, for example, by using gender-stereotyped adjectives to describe the fetus, the law was more effectively enforced than similar laws in other countries (the ban was lifted in 2008).

A massive public awareness Love Your Daughter media campaign also focused on changing norms (WHO, 2011). Following campaigns from the women's movement, family laws were changed to give women rights and responsibilities in their birth family even after marriage, and recognizing women-headed households. An old-age pension system reduced parents' financial dependence on sons in old age. By the mid-2000s, surveys showed a decline in son preference, and the sex ratio returned to normal (Chung & Das Gupta, 2006).

Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Texas, and Wisconsin (Guttmacher Institute, 2016, 2020). Because these state bans do not prohibit other sex-selection methods, such as preimplantation genetic testing prior to IVF, and because the need for them is questionable, they have not led to changes in sex ratios in those states (Citro et al., 2014; Guttmacher Institute, 2020). Sex-selection abortion bans are of concern because providers have no reliable way to determine a woman's reasons for abortion and because they may cause women to seek clandestine, unsafe abortions (Citro et al., 2014; WHO, 2011).

Laws banning prenatal sex selection have limited effectiveness because they are difficult to enforce and don't address the root causes of sex selection (WHO, 2011). For example, couples from countries where it is banned sometimes travel to clinics in countries where pregenetic screening for purposes of sex selection is legal. Clinics in the United States, Thailand, and Mexico all cater to parents from other countries seeking sex selection for "family balancing" in a practice known as reproductive tourism (see for example gender-baby.com, a website for a clinic in California). Box 2.2, on prenatal sex selection in South Korea, illustrates that reducing son preference requires multipronged approaches that include targeting son preferential social norms and changing laws and customs that make sons more economically advantageous.

Women and Girls as Objects and Property

"The sexual control of women has been a cornerstone of patriarchal power." *Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings*

When people are thought of as objects, commodities, or property, they are diminished and dehumanized and do not have the power to make their own life choices. In many ways, and in many places, girls and women are treated as objects to be ogled, traded, sold, and controlled.

StopStreetHarassment.org collects research studies and women's personal reports from all over the world as well as documenting and promoting activism (also see http://www.ihollaback.org).

"I am a social worker and I do my best to strive for a fair and free society. To me, wearing the veil does not mean being enslaved by a man. On the contrary, it means reappropriating the body and femininity."
Nawal Afkir, 25, Belgium

"Whether it's burkas or bikinis, the humiliation of women as property or sex objects is an affront to human dignity. It creates a market for women and girls who are traded like commodities."
Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

One common form of women's objectification is **sexual objectification**, the reduction of women to bodies existing for men's pleasure. The sexual objectification of women and girls is evident in media (Galdi, Maass, & Candinu, 2014). It's also experienced daily by many women and girls in the form of **street harassment** (a form of sexual harassment involving unwanted sexualized comments, gestures, and actions forced on women in public places) and **objectifying gaze** (visual inspection of a woman's body by another person, including "leering," or looking a woman "up and down"). Street harassment and the objectifying gaze are common experiences for women worldwide.

Sexually objectifying environments are most likely where there is a male-favored power differential and when cultures prime men to view women as sexual objects. In more extreme cases, the sexual objectification of women leads to extreme restrictions on women's dress. For example, the Taliban of Afghanistan require women wear a *burqa*, a cumbersome garment that covers women from head to toe. Women in Saudi Arabia aren't allowed to wear clothes or makeup that shows their beauty, and most are expected to wear an *abaya* (a long cloak) and a headscarf (*hijab*). Religious police harass women that don't adhere to the dress code. (*Note:* Many women choose to wear the *abaya* and/or *hijab* as a personal expression of their religious faith. This is different than being required to and explains why bans imposed on the *abaya* and *hijab* in Western countries like France are often resisted by Muslim women and aren't supported by global feminists.)

Sexual exploitation involves sexual abuse for others' sexual gratification or financial gain, as in the case of prostitution and pornography. It is also considered a form of sexual violence. Barry (1995) summed it up well when she said that sexual exploitation objectifies women by reducing them to sex; this sexual objectification incites violence against women and reduces them to commodities for market exchange: "In the fullness of human experience, when women are reduced to their bodies, and in the case of sexual exploitation to sexed bodies, they are treated as lesser, as other, and thereby subordinated" (Barry, 1995, p. 24).

Prostitution is plainly about the sexual objectification of women, and it is clearly driven by economics. Although some women choose sex work as a profession and are not subservient or enslaved to their customers or to pimps (Chuang, 2005), the majority of women involved in prostitution are sexually exploited; this is a reflection of their lower worth in the world (Parrot & Cummings, 2006). Prostitution is most often about females as commodities to be bought and sold and about how poverty leads to prostitution. Activists say that cultural attitudes that consider prostitution a victimless crime, or that suggest women are sexual objects, must be changed.

Barry (1995) argues that prostitution is a form of sexual slavery because women and girls are held over time for sexual use and because getting out of prostitution requires escape. Although the prostitute herself typically earns barely enough to survive, an extended network of people profit from her body and her labor: The police and other government officials fine prostitutes or receive bribes to look the other way; pimps, bar, brothel, and hotel owners get a cut of her wages; airlines, travel agencies, and foreign customers also benefit. It is estimated

that pimps control 80 to 95 percent of prostitution. These pimps find naive and needy young women, manipulate them into prostitution, and then take the majority of their money (Barry, 1995). The **trafficking of women and girls** for labor or sex is another instance of women as objects and property and is discussed in Chapter 7, "Women and Globalization."

"I have often heard men say that I had a choice, and I did, it was either work as a prostitute or starve to death."
Dawn, who became a prostitute at age 16 (Canada)

Another example of women and girls as objects and property is that in many cultures, an unmarried woman has no choice about who she is to marry; this decision is made for her, without her input. Known as **forced marriage**, it occurs when one or both of the partners cannot give free or valid consent to the marriage. Forced marriage is sometimes classified as a form of sexual violence since many brides are too young to provide sexual consent and many brides are forcibly raped.

Forced marriages involve varying degrees of force, coercion, or deception, ranging from emotional pressure by family or community members to abduction and imprisonment. For example, in the Central Asian country of Kyrgyzstan, up to a third of ethnic Kyrgyz women are wedded in nonconsensual **bride kidnappings**, although the practice is illegal. A man seeking a wife abducts a woman he wants to marry with the help of other men and takes her to his home, where hours are spent pressuring her to accept the marriage. Women relatives of the prospective groom try to cover her head with a white scarf, symbolizing that she is ready to wed her kidnapper. Because a woman is considered impure once she's entered the man's home, around 84 percent of kidnapped women agree to marriage to avoid shame (Hayashi-Panos, 2013). In Tanzania, among the highly patriarchal Sukama tribe, the abduction, rape, and forced marriage of girls is so normal and men's entitlement to girls' bodies so accepted that no one even intervenes when they witness abductions (this is an example of what feminists call a rape culture). Rather than calling the police, parents seek out the "groom" so they can obtain a bride price and benefit from their daughter's marriage (Ellison, 2016).

Approximately 12 million girls are married in childhood every year.

Over 650 million women alive today were married before their eighteenth birthday, compared to 115 million boys and men (UNICEF, 2020). Over a 125-year period, child marriage rates (marriage before age 18), have declined 5 percent, to a global prevalence of about 21 percent (UNFPA, 2020). The highest rates of child marriage are in West and Central Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern and Southern Africa, and South Asia (30–40 percent) (UNICEF, 2020). However, while child marriage is more common in the least developed countries of the world, it also occurs in other parts of the world. Box 2.3 explains how recent activism has led to half of U.S. states enacting minimum marriage age laws.

"I was on my way home from school. Together with three men, this boy caught me and tied me up. They carried me to the boy's house and locked me in a small room for three days. His parents brought alcohol and money to my brother's house. My brother accepted the price and I became the boy's wife."
12-year-old May, a member of the Hmong ethnic group from northern Vietnam's mountainous Ha Giang province

Forced child marriage is most common when families are poor. To families living in poverty or financial difficulty, a daughter's early marriage may reduce financial strain. Indeed, poverty is the best predictor of early marriage. Forced marriages are also common where there is poverty in combination with **bride price** (sometimes called *bridewealth* or *lobala*). Bride price involves the groom giving money, goods, or livestock to the parents of the bride in return for her hand. Common in many African ethnic groups and parts of Papua New Guinea, India, and Afghanistan, it provides a financial incentive for parents to marry off their young daughters. Forced marriages of girls can also be used to settle men's debt.

"I am a poor man, and this is how I can feed my large family. What else could I do? Many others are doing the same thing."
Afghan man that sold his 9- and 10-year-old daughters to wealthy opium poppy growers

BOX 2.3 *Child Marriage in the United States*

Americans are often horrified by child marriage in other countries but what they don't know is that it occurs in the United States. The *Tahirih Justice Center* and *Unchained At Last* are U.S. nonprofits (NGOs) working to prevent child and forced marriage in the United States and help women and girls leave such marriages. In the United States, over 200,000 children were married before the age of eighteen between 2000 and 2015, most of them girls married to adult men. Until 2016, child marriage was legal in 49 states with parental consent and no states required a determination of whether the child was pressured or coerced, a victim of human trafficking, or whether the marriage was statutory rape disguised as marriage. Only nine states had specific laws to prevent or punish forced marriage. Activism, led by the Tahirih Justice Center and Unchained At Last, has since led to the enactment of minimum marriage age laws in 25 states.

Sources: Portnoy, 2016; Tahirih Justice Center, 2020; Unchained At Last, 2016

"Choosing when and whom to marry is one of life's most important decisions. Child marriage denies millions of girls this choice each year."
UNFPA's Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin

"I was 16 and never missed a day at school. I had to leave it all as my parents had bartered me for a girl my elder brother was to marry."
Komal, a child bride in Madhya Pradesh/ Rajasthan, India

In Afghanistan, Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and the tribal territories, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa, girls are sometimes forced to marry in order to settle the debt of a father or brother.

Child marriage denies girls their childhood and is a human rights concern. According to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, Article 16, "Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses." Other human rights agreements, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), also specify that all people have the right to freely choose a spouse and to marry only with their full and free consent, that the minimum age of marriage for women be eighteen, and that governments take action to eliminate child marriage (UNICEF, 2015).

Child marriage is a human rights concern, but it is also a health and safety concern. Because girls tend to have little power compared to their husbands and in-laws, child brides are vulnerable to physical and sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS (McFarlane et al., 2016). They are more likely to experience early pregnancy, which is associated with a greater risk of child mortality and the mother's death or disability (pregnancy and childbirth complications are the leading cause of death for girls aged 15–19 globally) (WHO, 2019). Early marriage is also associated with the curtailment of girls' education (ICRW, 2011; Singh & Anand, 2015).

Efforts to curb child marriage are underway. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW, 2011) evaluated programs designed to reduce child marriage and identified five successful strategies: (1) Increase girls' access to quality education; (2) Educate families and community elders on the effects of child marriage; (3) Provide incentives and economic support to girls and their families (such as loans or income-generating skills) so the economic need to marry girls

is reduced; (4) Encourage supportive laws and policies; and (5) Empower girls with information, skills, and support networks to advocate for themselves and aspire to alternatives to early marriage. On International Women's Day in 2016, the United Nations (the UNFPA and UNICEF) launched the Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage, which focuses on twelve countries with high rates of child marriage (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Yemen, and Zambia).

"Cultural practices such as bride price, child engagements (where children are engaged before birth), exchange marriages (between girls from two separate families) and giving girls in baad (to solve a communal dispute), contribute to the high prevalence of child marriage and low value assigned to girls in Afghan society." *GirlsNotBrides.org,* an international partnership of over 1,000 organizations from more than 100 countries dedicated to ending child marriage.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Violence is often "gendered" in that some types of violence, such as rape and domestic violence, are experienced disproportionately by women and girls because of their gender. The United Nations *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* (1993) defines violence against women (VAW) as any act of gender-based violence resulting in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, but we now use the term **violence against women and girls (VAWG)** to acknowledge sexual violence as a problem for both girls and women. VAWG has its roots in historical and structural inequalities in power relations between males and females and males' abuse of that power (UNICEF, 2013). Men's violence against women is neither natural nor inevitable. It arises from traditional gender stereotypes, norms, and roles that support male dominance, the sexual objectification of women, and that approve of, minimize, or ignore, violence against women and girls.

"You cannot say: 'I will kill my wife, I will beat her to a pulp because that is culture.' We say because of culture we will allow that?" *Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Head of UN Women, 2016*

Figure 2.2 shows some of the many forms VAWG (also known as gender-based violence) may take. Keep in mind, however, that these often overlap. For example, **sexual assault** and physical and emotional battery may occur in the context of intimate relationships, forced marriage, sex trafficking, and conflict-related VAWG.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2013) estimates that over 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a nonpartner. The fact that VAWG is common, accepted (or at least ignored), and that police and legal systems frequently fail to intervene, is an indication of women's lower status and power.

The OHCHR is the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The OHCHR represents the international community's commitment to promote and protect all human rights.

Violence against women and girls occurs in every segment of society, but it is influenced by intersectionality. Race, class, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and religion all affect a woman's experience of gendered violence. Multiple intersecting forms of discrimination mean that some groups of women and girls experience higher rates of VAWG than do other women in the same country, region, or community. For example, migrant and refugee women, indigenous women, and lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women experience higher rates of gendered violence (OHCHR, 2016; UNICEF, 2013).

VAWG is recognized as a major public health problem since it results in injuries and deaths and negatively affects mother and child health, women's sexual and reproductive health, and women's psychological and emotional health (WHO, 2013). Women's ability to stay employed and their ability to care for their family are also impacted by VAWG (UN Women, 2016). VAWG is recognized as a violation of women's and girls' human rights and a form of gender discrimination.

FIGURE 2.2 *Some Forms of Violence Against Women and Girls*

VAWG prevents women and girls from enjoying rights and freedoms equal to men and boys and denies them fundamental freedoms such as the right to life; the right not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to liberty and security of person; and the right to equal protection under the law (OHCHR, 2016).

Studying violence against women shows us how women's social, political, and economic subordination are interrelated and influential in a variety of women's issues. For example, women's lack of political power means that legal and police protections against domestic and sexual violence are often absent or minimal. Women's lack of economic power means some are unable to leave abusive situations. Women's lower status and cultural norms lead to an acceptance of violence against them by families, communities, and authorities.

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

Domestic or Intimate Partner Violence

Domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV) occurs in the context of an intimate relationship and may include physical violence (such as hitting, slapping, beating, burning), sexual violence (such as rape or being forced to engage in undesired sexual acts), and emotional abuse (such as being humiliated, insulted, intimidated, threatened). It may also include the destruction of property as means of coercion, control, revenge, punishment; other controlling behaviors, such as limiting a woman's ability to see family and friends and monitoring her whereabouts; stalking; control of a person's reproduction or sexual health; and cyber violence. According to the World Health Organization (2017), close to one-third of women who have been in a relationship have experienced IPV.

According to the United Nations Broadband Commission Report, *Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls* (2015), almost three of every four women and girls online have been exposed to some form of cyber violence.

IPV exists in all regions, classes, and cultures, and women experience it at much higher rates than men. For example, in the United States, about 25 percent of women and 10 percent of men have experienced sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner (CDC, 2021). Globally, 17.8 percent of ever-partnered women aged 15 to 49 have experienced IPV in the last year (UN Women, 2020). Box 2.4. shows the regional incidence of physical and sexual IPV.

People often ask, "Why don't victims of domestic violence just leave?", but it's important to understand that leaving isn't that simple. Psychological, social, legal, and economic chains often shackle women to abusive relationships. Abusers' psychological violence decreases women's confidence and self-esteem and convinces them they deserved the abuse and cannot survive outside the relationship. Many societies are structured such that women cannot leave because laws and cultural norms make it difficult for them to leave, they cannot support themselves and their children, and they have nowhere safe to go. Shame and embarrassment prevent women from seeking help where it's common to blame women for their abuse and violence against women is seen as justifiable. According to UN studies, acceptance of wife beating is the highest in Africa, Asia, and Oceania, and lower in Latin America and the Caribbean and developed countries (UN Women, 2016).

"Violence by men against women is tolerated in Japan, and this is particularly true of sexual violence. The whole of society has become so anesthetized to this that pornographic and other sexual items that many people overseas might find shocking are lined up even on the shelves of convenience stores, and so on, and nobody bats an eyelid."
Hiromi Nakano, whose nongovernment organization Shiawase-namida (Happy Tears) provides support for victims of sexual violence

As women's status and power increase and a country progresses toward gender equality, IPV usually decreases. But in gender-unequal societies, women have few alternatives to staying in abusive relationships, legal and justice systems don't hold perpetrators accountable, and cultural beliefs, attitudes, and messages create a climate where VAWG is allowed.

In many countries, neither government laws nor the police protect women from IPV, as it is viewed as a private family matter and a husband's right. Activists work to get domestic violence laws passed, and they are making progress: 155 of 190 countries (81.6%) now have domestic violence laws, and 78 countries now have marital rape laws (World Bank, 2020). Most of these laws were enacted in the last twenty years, and they are only the beginning. Without activism and changes in patriarchal social norms, laws are often inadequate and unenforced. Papua New Guinea, a nation in the South Pacific near Australia and Indonesia, is a recent example. It's a patrilineal society where women have few resources of their own and husbands' paying of bride price is viewed by many as giving husbands the right to treat wives however they wish. Approximately two-thirds of women are victims of domestic violence, and rates of VAWG are estimated to be some of the highest and

"If he beats you, he loves you."
Well-known Russian proverb

BOX 2.4 *Regional Percentages of Women and Girls (Aged 15–49) Experiencing IPV in the Last Year*

Region	Countries Included in Sample	Average
Oceania	Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu	34.7
Central and Southern Asia	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Kazakhstan, Maldives, Nepal, Tajikistan	23.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe	21.5
Northern Africa and Western Asia	Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cyprus, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Turkey	12.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	Bolivia, Columbia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay	11.8
Eastern and Southeastern Asia	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Mongolia, Palau, Philippines, Vietnam	9.0
Europe and North America	Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, United Kingdom	6.1

Notes: Some country samples did not include the full age range, not all used the same definition of IPV, and some country samples only included married women.
Source: Data from UN Women (2020).

the most vicious in the world outside of a conflict (war or civil unrest) zone (Doctors Without Borders, 2016). A 2013 family protection bill criminalizing domestic violence was passed in 2013, but women still have few options for the legal, social, medical, and protection assistance (Human Rights Watch, 2015b).

IPV is higher in countries with restrictive divorce laws that make it difficult for women to leave or keep their children (UNFPA, 2009; WHO, 2017). In the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Muslim men can initiate divorce by simply saying, "I divorce

These countries have no laws against domestic violence or sexual harassment: Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Kuwait, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Micronesia, Myanmar, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen.

you" three times. But Muslim women can only initiate divorce if they can prove physical abuse (to do this a woman must provide at least two male witnesses, or a male witness and two female witnesses to attest to the injury). Alternatively, she can petition the Shari'ah court and pay compensation or return her dowry to her husband (in the UAE dowry is the woman's property). If she remarries, she may have to forfeit her children. Israeli women must be granted a *get*, a Jewish divorce writ that can only be granted by husbands; many will demand that she forfeit property, alimony, and child support in exchange. Activists in countries like these work to change these and other family laws that are discriminatory to women.

Women's economic dependence on the men in their lives also increases their risk and tolerance of domestic violence (Bornstein, 2006), as does women's social dependence on men (Carillo, 1992). In many cultures, women are socially dependent on men because women's status is tied to marriage. Unmarried, divorced, and even widowed adult women have very low status, and leaving one's husband, regardless of circumstances, is socially unacceptable. In patrilineal societies where women cannot own or inherit property and are excluded from the economic and political power bases of their society, their class position is tied to their relationships with men (Lerner, 1986). This increases women's dependence upon marriage and their husband's power over them.

Without a safety net, women cannot easily leave abusive situations. Shelters play a critical role in women's ability to leave IPV situations and most are started and run by women's NGOs. Women frequently need psychological services as they recover from trauma. They need legal, financial, and social services so they may become self-sufficient and do not have to return to their abusers. A safe secret place to stay is also required since many believe that their abuser will kill them or their children, or stalk them if they leave. This is not an unfounded fear. Globally, about two-thirds of victims of intimate partner homicides are women, and 34 percent of murdered women are killed by an intimate partner (UNODC, 2019). In 2017 alone, 50,000 women were killed by intimate partners or family members (UNODC, 2019).

On one day alone in 2014, 2,497 shelters in 46 countries reported serving 53,320 women and 34,794 children fleeing domestic violence. However, 7,337 women and 4,410 children were turned away due to limited resources and space (Global Network of Women's Shelters, 2015). Many shelters continuously struggle to stay open because they are dependent on voluntary contributions and insufficient and unreliable government funding that may be reduced due to economic downturns or changes in political leadership. Box 2.5 shares the story of Marina Pisklakova, founder of *Anna*, a Russian women's rights organization dedicated to preventing domestic violence and serving domestic violence victims in Russia.

Although women everywhere experience domestic violence, culture may shape the form that IPV takes. **Dowry violence**, for example, is a type of IPV that occurs in the Southeast Asian countries of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan when husbands or in-laws use emotional, physical, or sexual violence to get a wife to extract more dowry from her family. In extreme cases, they murder the wife and stage it to look like suicide or an accident, in what is known as **dowry murder** or **dowry death**. Dowry murders usually occur when a woman's family is unable to provide the agreed upon dowry or the husband wants to remarry for another dowry or to produce a son. One of the most common methods is to splash a

"We spoke to woman after woman who told us really harrowing accounts…Too often police were simply ignoring their claims or telling them they should go back to their husbands."
Elaine Pearson, Human Rights Watch about women in Papua New Guinea

"Every woman thinking of leaving worries about finances. Women find themselves forced back into abusive marriages because they can't earn a living."
Ritsuko Nomoto, Japanese woman that opened a restaurant to give battered women jobs

"Survivors of gender-based violence need safe spaces, protection, empowering support, and access to justice."
Women Against Violence Europe

Help and services for domestic violence are available. The U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline number is: 1–800–799–SAFE.

To find a gender-violence shelter or hotline in Europe, go to: https://www.wave-network.org/find-help/women-s-helplines-list

BOX 2.5 *Activist Profile: Russia's Marina Pisklakova*

It's estimated that 12,000 Russian women die every year from domestic violence. Although a law in 2016 made beating relatives a criminal offense, an amendment passed in 2017 decriminalized domestic battery as long as it isn't premeditated and the harm was unintentional. Despite the efforts of women's activists, there are still no specific laws criminalizing IPV or providing protections to victims.

In the early 1990s, Marina Pisklakova was coordinating a national survey on women's issues for the Russian Academy of Sciences when she practically stumbled upon the hidden problem of domestic violence. Soon after, she encountered a beaten wife, the mother of a school friend of her son's, who confessed that although her husband beat her, she would not leave as she had nowhere to go and no means of support. Pisklakova realized there were no services she could refer her to and in response, founded *ANNA* (Association No to Violence), an NGO devoted to the prevention of domestic violence in Russia. It became her life's work.

Before *ANNA*, there were no hotlines, shelters, laws, or advocacy campaigns in Russia, so she began a national domestic violence hotline, opened shelters, and created a media campaign to expose IPV and educate women about their rights. ANNA operates a network of 170 crisis centers across Russia and the former Soviet Union. Pisklakova continues to lobby for legislation banning domestic abuse (since the early 90s, over 50 proposed laws have been rejected), and to bring aid to victims and prosecution to criminals. In 2004 Pisklakova received the Human Rights Global Leadership Award. Although Pisklakova once said, "I am not an extraordinary person. Any woman in my position would do the same," the results of her action are truly extraordinary. ANNA has assisted over 100,000 women.

Sources: Gentleman, 2015; OpenDemocracy, 2020; Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, 2016; Sebastian & Mortensen, 2017; Speak Truth to Power, 2016.

woman with kerosene, light her on fire, and then claim it was a cooking accident. According to the Indian government (National Crime Records Bureau, 2020), over 7,000 dowry murders occur every year (nearly twenty a day) in India, but it's estimated that the actual number may be three to four times higher since dowry deaths are often hard to prove (*Times of India*, 2013).

"The purpose of honour crimes is to maintain men's power by denying women their basic rights to make autonomous decisions about marriage, divorce, and sexuality." *MADRE*

Honour-based violence (HBV), another form of IPV, occurs in cultures where a woman's virtuous behavior is believed to affect the honor and prestige of her male relatives who are in charge of her. The most extreme form is **honour killing**, a tradition whereby it is seen as morally justifiable to kill a wife, daughter, or sister for doing something that brings shame on her family or male relatives. Dishonorable acts include having premarital sex, being raped, engaging in marital infidelity (or suspected infidelity), seeking divorce, flirting, wearing makeup or nontraditional dress, dating or marrying without parental approval, or being lesbian. Honour killing differs from other forms of domestic violence in that it occurs in cultures where honor and morality are viewed as a collective family matter, and it frequently involves multiple family and community members that conspire to kill a woman because she has dishonored the family through disobedience and "immoral" behavior

(Chesler, 2009).[4] Gender-related killings of women and girls, like honour killings and dowry deaths, are sometimes referred to as "femicide."

The United Nations estimates that 5,000 women are killed each year in the name of honor, but this is likely an underestimate because they are often reported by families as accidents or suicides (Chesler, 2009; WHO, 2008). The highest incidence of honour killing is believed to be in Jordan, but honour killings also occur in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey, and Palestine. Honour killings also occur in North American and European countries like Canada, the United States, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, where immigrants have engaged in the practice, typically because their daughters have become too "westernized" and disobedient.

Before 1993, honour killings received little public attention or government action (Khan, 2006). Activists work to bring attention to the issue (see for example, the *Honour Based Violence Awareness Network*, founded by singer/filmmaker/activist Deeyah). They also work for the passage and enforcement of laws criminalizing honour killing. For example, in Palestine, Iraq, Pakistan, and Jordan, men that kill women in the name of honour receive short sentences, if they're even prosecuted. Women's rights groups also seek justice for slain women and open shelters for potential victims. After the 2016 honour killing of Pakistani social media star Qandeel Baloch by her brother, an international campaign was launched, Pakistani women's activists marched. They petitioned the government to close a legal loophole which allowed families to forgive perpetrators and avoid prosecution. A bill was finally passed but has yet to result in any convictions.

Pakistani activists estimate that there are about 1,000 honour killings every year.

"The right to life of women is conditional on their obeying social norms and traditions."
Hina Jilani, Pakistani lawyer and women's rights activist

"There is no honour in killing."
Kurdish Women's Action Against Honour Killing

Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is any type of sexual contact or behavior without explicit consent of the recipient. Sexual violence is identified as a violation of women's and girls' human rights in many human rights documents. Its elimination is a target goal of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Women routinely experience sexual violence in ways that have no immediate parallels for men (Chowdhury et al., 1994). Figure 2.3 shows some of the forms of sexual violence identified by the World Health Organization (2014) and experienced disproportionately by girls and women. This is further evidence of gender inequality. If women and men were equal, rates of gendered sexual violence would be lower and legal and social consequences for offenders would be greater. More effort would be made to provide safe physical and social environments. Survivors would also have better access to support services.

Following the rape of her daughters by Roman soldiers, Boudicca Queen of Iceni (first century A.D.) rebelled and led a coalition of tribes on a revenge mission that destroyed ancient London.

"Everyone has a right to say no, regardless of the situation or the point in time. Even if a woman previously kissed the offender or has or used to have a sexual relationship with him, she has the right to say no at all times. In the event of rape, this right of girls and women is ignored. It is for this reason that the responsibility lies solely with the perpetrator."
The bff (the German association of rape crisis centers and women's counseling centers)

Rape

The defining feature of **rape** is the lack of choice by a woman to engage in sexual intercourse (Koss, Heise, & Russo, 1994). **Non-normative rape** is rape that is both

[4]I use *honour crimes* instead of *honor crimes*, because this is the spelling and terminology used in the countries where these crimes are more common.