Third Edition

Gender in Communication

A Critical Introduction

Catherine Helen Palczewski
Victoria Pruin DeFrancisco
Danielle Dick McGeough

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This book honors our mothers:

Maj. Helen Mary Finks Palczewski (1921–1999)

Victoria DeFrancisco Leto (1924–2004)

Adele Eilers Pruin (1929–)

Mary Lu Dick (1956–)

This book also honors Cate's life partner:

Arnold James Madsen (1958–2017)

Arnie was a good man. In this political moment, during which good men committed to gender/sex justice are sorely needed, our loss of Arnie is particularly painful. Be good. Do good.

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Brief Contents

Detailed Contents

Sara Miller McCune founded SAGE Publishing in 1965 to support the dissemination of usable knowledge and educate a global community. SAGE publishes more than 1000 journals and over 800 new books each year, spanning a wide range of subject areas. Our growing selection of library products includes archives, data, case studies and video. SAGE remains majority owned by our founder and after her lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures the company's continued independence.

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Preface

As we worked through the revisions for this third edition throughout 2016 and into the summer of 2017, a number of events transpired that threw into relief the importance of gender in communication: the presidential campaign, the Women's March on Washington, the silencing of Senator Elizabeth Warren, and the scolding of reporter April Ryan and Representative Maxine Waters. All these events have historical antecedents. So first a little more detail on the events.

Events Informing the Third Edition

The 2016 Presidential Election

In the summer of 2016, former senator and secretary of state Hillary Clinton won the Democratic nomination for the presidency, but she later lost the electoral college vote to businessperson and reality TV figure Donald Trump. No single factor explains the election, but research indicated that sexism likely had something to do with the result (Maxwell & Shields, 2017). Although polls indicated many Trump voters prior to the election voiced concerns about Clinton's use of personal e-mail, after the election they indicated they were not concerned about Trump's use of a personal e-mail server, leading one commentator to conclude, "This news proves that Hillary Clinton's loss was about sexism, not her emails" (Strassner, 2017). Even though Clinton testified for more than 11 hours about Benghazi and turned over all her files and nothing was found, criticism persisted. Why?

An experimental study about backlash against female politicians provided one explanation. Male politicians who were perceived as power-seeking were also perceived to be "more assertive, stronger, and tougher" and have "greater competence" while women politicians who were perceived as power-seeking were seen as uncaring and people responded to them with moral outrage (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). General resistance to female candidates has been demonstrated in experiments that found 26% of the population express anger at the idea of a female president (Streb, Burrell, Frederick, & Genovese, 2008).

The findings of these predictive studies were confirmed by research on 2016 voters. University of Arkansas researchers found that "modern Sexism did influence

the 2016 presidential election for many Americans" (Maxwell & Shields, 2017). *Modern sexism*, defined as hostility or resentment toward working women, generally was more pervasive among White U.S. citizens and southerners and was not exclusive to men. The conclusion of the study: Of White Independents and Democrats, 11 million men and 6.5 million women "feel enough animosity towards working women and feminists to make them unlikely to vote for one of them—even from their own party" (Maxwell & Shields, 2017).

Regardless of your opinion of the electoral outcome, gender in communication played a role in the election. But it is important to remember that this was not the first, or only, election in which gender and sex played a role. For every contemporary example of women in politics, a long history of struggle precedes it.

Clinton was not the first woman to run for the presidency. In 1872, Victoria Woodhull ran, even before women had the right to vote. In 1884, Belva Ann Lockwood was the first woman to actually appear on ballots. In 1964, Margaret Chase Smith was the first woman to receive nomination votes at a major party's convention. In 1972, Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress, earned delegates at the Democratic National Convention. Patsy Matsu Takemoto Mink and Linda Jenness ran in 1972, Pat Schroeder in 1988, Elizabeth Dole in 2000, and Carol Moseley Braun in 2004. For any contemporary issue related to gender in communication, a long history precedes it. The same is true for this book. Our ability to write this book, and to cite research about gender in communication, is the product of a history of activism, scholarship, and writing by others.

Many of the arguments for Trump and against Clinton hearkened back to arguments originally used to deny women the right to vote. On at least 12 different occasions, Trump's running mate, Mike Pence, commented on how Trump being "broad-shouldered" qualified him for the presidency. For example, Pence indicated he agreed to run with Trump because "he embodies American strength, and I know that he will provide that kind of broad-shouldered American strength on the global stage as well" (as cited in Chait, 2016). Although Pence denied that the comments had anything to do with masculinity (Griffiths, 2016), the repeated references to shoulders and strength sounded similar to comments from 100 years ago.

One of the main arguments against women voting was that their bodies were too weak to enforce their vote. The New York Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, in a circa 1910 statement presented to both houses of the U.S. Congress, noted: "To extend the suffrage to women would be to introduce into the electorate a vast non-combatant party, incapable of enforcing its own rule" (as cited in Hazard, 1910, p. 88). British-born historian and journalist Goldwin Smith, in his commentary on the question of woman suffrage, explained: "Political power has hitherto been exercised by the male sex . . . because man alone could uphold government and enforce the law" (as cited in "Opinions," 1912, p. 6). Author Rossiter Johnson worried, "To make any party victorious at the polls by means of blank-cartridge ballots would only present an increased temptation to the numerical minority to assert itself as the military majority. . . . If an election is carried by a preponderance of votes cast by women, who is to enforce the verdict?" (as cited in "Opinions," 1912, p. 5). Men's physical strength was foregrounded as central to their political strength. These contemporary comparisons to historical moments did not end with the election.

The Women's March on Washington

On January 21, 2017, the day after the inauguration and 10 weeks after the election, the Women's March on Washington occurred, at which over 470,000 people marched. Across the globe, 999 marches occurred with an estimated 5.6 million people participating, the largest single protest event in history ("Feet," 2017; see also "Sister Marches," 2017). In describing the mission of the March, organizers noted how "the rhetoric of the past election cycle has insulted, demonized, and threatened many of us—immigrants of all statuses, Muslims and those of diverse religious faiths, people who identify as LGBTQIA [lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual], Native people, Black and Brown people, people with disabilities, survivors of sexual assault." The final element of the mission was "HEAR OUR VOICE" ("Mission & Vision," n.d.). For every contemporary example of a march about gender injustice, a long history of marches precedes it.

This was not the first women's march on Washington. On March 3, 1913, the eve of President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, the first national woman suffrage procession occurred. Five thousand women participated, including a contingent of Black women from Howard University who had to fight for their inclusion, as an estimated 100,000 people watched. The march was important, but the crowd's reaction (first verbally and then physically attacking the suffragists) and the police department's failure to respond together catapulted woman suffrage into national attention. According to the *New York Times*, "for more than an hour confusion reigned. The police, the women say, did practically nothing, and finally soldiers and marines formed a voluntary escort to clear the way"; a police officer designated to guard the marchers was overheard shouting, "If my wife were where you are I'd break her head" ("5,000 Women," 1913, p. 5). Suffrage movement organizers described how marchers were "struck in the face by onlookers, spat upon, and overwhelmed by rabid remarks" (Blatch & Lutz, 1940, p. 196). Our ability to write this book is made possible by the work of activists who made clear women's issues were public issues and fought for women's voices to be heard.

The Silencing of Elizabeth Warren

In February 2017, during Senate debate about attorney general nominee Jefferson Beauregard Sessions, Senator Elizabeth Warren read the words of Coretta Scott King criticizing Sessions for suppressing the vote of Black citizens. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell interrupted and prevented Warren from completing the remarks, enforcing a senate rule that prohibits one senator from "impugning" another. Commenting on this moment, Megan Garber (2017), a reporter for *The Atlantic*, wrote:

> There are many ways that American culture tells women to be quiet—many ways they are reminded that they would really be so much more pleasing if they would just smile a little more, or talk a little less, or work a little harder to be pliant and agreeable. Women are, in general, extremely attuned to these messages; we have, after all, heard them all our lives. . . . [W]hen Senate majority

> leader Mitch McConnell intervened to prevent her from finishing the speech—many women, regardless of their politics or place, felt that silencing, viscerally. And when McConnell, later, remarked of Warren, "She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted," many women, regardless of their politics or place, felt it again. Because, regardless of their politics or place, those women have heard the same thing, or a version of it, many times before. (paras. 1–2)

Instead of recognizing the gender politics at play, other Senators reinforced sex roles. Senator Orrin Hatch agreed that Warren should have been silenced because she was criticizing another senator. Hatch's reason: Warren needed to "think of his [Sessions's] wife" (as cited in Crockett, 2017). In response, a meme was born: "Nevertheless, she persisted" adorned T-shirts, hashtags, and profile pages. For every contemporary example of persistence in the face of gendered opposition, a long history of persistence precedes it.

It is important to remember that in 1917 representatives of the National Woman's Party would be the first group to protest at the White House directly. Even when the United States entered World War I, the Silent Sentinels kept up the protests in front of the White House only to face arrest, violent crowds, and police violence after arrest. Nevertheless, they persisted.

The Scolding of April Ryan and Maxine Waters

At a March 2017 press conference, Press Secretary Sean Spicer thought it was appropriate to tell American Urban Radio Networks' veteran White House correspondent April Ryan to "stop shaking your head" (as cited in Silva, 2017). The same day, Fox News host Bill O'Reilly answered criticisms of Trump made by Representative Maxine Waters by snidely commenting: "I didn't hear a word she said. I was looking at the James Brown wig" (as cited in Taylor, 2017).

These events motivated educator and activist Brittany Packnett to create the hashtag #BlackWomenAtWork, under which Black women noted the range of ways their nonverbal communication and bodies were disciplined in the workplace, for example, by being told their hair was unprofessional or not being recognized as being the owner or manager. Packnett explained:

> This idea that a black woman's presence is to be policed or politicized in the workplace is what we're talking about. The idea that Sean Spicer can tell April Ryan what to do with her face, irrespective of her years in journalism, the idea that Maxine Waters' voice is less important than her hair, is what black women are experiencing every single day. (as cited in Taylor, 2017)

For every contemporary example of Black women fighting for their rights, a long history of struggle precedes it.

It is important to remember that when the U.S. Congress was debating whether to extend voting rights to women, congressmen argued that the vote should not be extended to women because, while the South had figured out ways to suppress the

Black man's vote, they would not be able to suppress Black women's vote. Representative Clark (1918) explained that Black women would not be as easily cowed as Black men and would be "fanatical on the subject of voting" and "much more insistent and vicious" in their "demands for social recognition which will never be accorded them" (p. H90).

Why Studying Gender in Communication Is Important

The examples of Clinton, Warren, Ryan, Waters, and the March illustrate four points.

First, gender matters. To be able to understand and explain current events and analyze communication, you need to be able to name and articulate the way in which gender operates in communication. Trump was performing a particular type of masculinity just as much as Clinton and Warren were disciplined for not performing femininity appropriately. Additionally, people's perceptions of the candidates were refracted through expectations tied to the candidate's sex. More than actual differences in communication patterns, perceptions and expectations of other people's behaviors are gendered. In *Same Difference: How Gender Myths Are Hurting Our Relationships, Our Children, and Our Jobs*, psychologist Rosalind Barnett and journalist Caryl Rivers (2004) critiqued social myths of gender differences. They argued that the belief in gender differences has created a self-fulfilling prophecy in which people's stereotypes actually create the differences.

Second, race matters. One is never just a gender, and the communication challenges Black women, Latinas, Asian woman, and Native American women face are distinct from those that White women face. The challenges Black men, and other people of color, face are distinct from those that White men and women face.

Third, masculinity matters. Gender is as much about masculinity as it is about femininity. And being held to a gender binary, masculine *or* feminine, limits all people.

Fourth, protest matters. People using their voices to advocate for issues about which they are passionate makes a difference. The 2017 Women's March on Washington was not the first time women marched for rights in the capitol of the United States, Elizabeth Warren was not the first person to persist in the face of being silenced, and the #BlackWomenAtWork hashtag was not the first attempt to make clear the unique challenges Black people face as a result of how their race and sex intersect. Social change regarding gendered expectations and sex roles does not happen overnight; instead, repeated acts of communication—of public protest, of interpersonal interactions, of small-group discussions—are needed to make change.

Because gender is a constantly evolving concept in individuals' gender identity, in the larger culture's predominant notions about gender, and in continuing research, absolute claims are not possible and would be irresponsible. Instead, our intent is to better equip readers with tools you can use to examine and make sense of gender in communication. As such, this book is not simply a review of communication

research but is rather an attempt to place the research in the context of larger theoretical, social, and political issues that influence, and are influenced by, gender in communication. We have attempted to write this book as an extended conversation in which we interact with research and popular discussions of gender in communication that have most excited our own scholarly imaginations.

We study the variety of ways in which communication of and about gender and sex enables and constrains people's identities. We believe that people are social actors and create meaning through their symbolic interactions. Thus, our emphasis is not on how gender influences communication but on how communication constitutes gender. We believe people are capable of being self-reflexive about communication processes and creative in generating new ways to play with symbols.

Core Principles

To study how people construct, perform, and change gender and what factors influence these performances, we draw on seven principles:

1. *Intersectionality*. You cannot study gender or sex in isolation. How a particular sexed body performs gender always intersects with other identity ingredients, including race, ethnicity, social class, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, and more. People are who they are, and act the way they act, not just because of their sex or gender. People are wonderfully complex and form their gendered identities at an intersection of influences from multiple identity ingredients, and the social structures in which people operate are never formed solely along sex lines. Dominance and power also are best understood through an intersectional analysis. Thus, to more accurately study gender, we study gender in the context of other social identities.

2. *Interdisciplinarity*. We seek to fuse and balance social scientific, humanistic, and critical methods. Thus, we cite quantitative, qualitative, rhetorical, critical, and creative scholarship. As coauthors, we have the benefit of drawing on three fields of communication studies that often operate independent of each other but that are inextricably interlinked: rhetoric, social science, and performance studies. Palczewski, trained as a rhetorical scholar, was a college debate coach for 15 years and studies political controversies and social protest. DeFrancisco, trained as a social scientist, uses qualitative research methods to study how gender and related inequalities and acts of resistance are constructed through interpersonal relationships and individuals' identities. Dick McGeough, trained in performance studies and qualitative methods, uses creative approaches to explore scholarly questions. Most texts on gender in communication focus on social science studies of gendered interpersonal interactions and, thus, fail to recognize how broader public discourse can influence gender.

Not only do we bridge methodological chasms within our own discipline, but we do so among disciplines. We purposely reviewed each topic from multiple disciplinary and activist perspectives. Throughout the text, we honor the contributions of Black womanist theory, we celebrate the challenges offered by third-wave feminisms, we gratefully include lessons taught by queer and trans theory, we integrate the insights of men's studies scholars, and we happily navigate the tensions between

global and postmodern feminisms. The result is a richer, fuller understanding of the topic that stretches the boundaries of what is commonly considered relevant for a communication text.

We do not present research consistent with our view only. People learn most by stepping outside their academic or personal comfort zones to consider other perspectives. We value engaged and vital disagreement because we believe readers are able to glean more from our presentation of substantiated arguments than they could if we presented the research as if it were all consistent and value free. We express our views of the material, and we hope this encourages you to do the same. Know up front that we believe agreement is neither a necessary nor a preferred requirement for learning from this book, and disagreement is not a sign of disrespect.

3. *Gender diversity, not sex differences*. We do not subscribe to typical conceptualizations of gender as a form of difference. Instead, we problematize the differences view by showing how it engages in essentialism, ignores power, reinforces stereotypes, fails to account for intersectional identities, and is inconsistent with statistical analyses demonstrating that sex does not consistently account for differences in communication. However, our rejection of the differences approach does not mean that we deny differences exist. Instead, we seek to recognize differences within genders as a result of intersectionality. We reject binary ways of thinking. We embrace a gender diversity approach. Research embracing this approach continues to grow, and we make a concerted effort to recognize multiple femininities and multiple masculinities and complex mixtures of them.

4. *Gender is performed*. Gender is something a person *does*, not something a person *is*. Gender is not something located within individuals; it is a social construct that institutions, groups, and individuals maintain (and challenge). Thus, we examine the microlevel (how an individual might perform gender), the mesolevel (how groups within institutions communicate about gender), and the macrolevel (how social understandings of gender are performed on individuals).

5. *Masculinity*. The study of gender is not exclusively the study of women. However, the study of gender has traditionally been considered a "women's issue," hence researchers and textbooks often have focused almost exclusively on women and femininities, underemphasizing men and masculinities. Thanks to the recent growth in men's studies, we have at our disposal a rich literature base that considers gender and masculinity.

6. *Violence*. To study gender in lived experiences means to study the darker side of gender: oppression and violence. In this textbook, we do not shy away from this uncomfortable reality. Ours is not a narrative that says, "We are all just different, and isn't that nice?" To tell the whole story one must go deeper, making visible connections to the realities of gendered violence. This does not mean we are bashing men or that we presume all men have the potential to be violent and all women are victims. Rather, we recognize violence as systemic. That is, who can be violent and who can be a victim and who can be viewed as violent and who can be viewed as a victim are all part of a socially constructed system to maintain differences and inequalities. Gendered violence includes domestic abuse, rape, violence against LGBTQ people, street trafficking, and cyberbullying.

In each chapter, we make visible the connections between presumably innocent gendered practices and a range of specific social injustices connected to the topic. By linking gendered practices to more overt forms of gendered violence, we move beyond superficial generalizations about gender differences and make visible the struggles many people face in their unique contexts.

7. *Emancipation*. Even as we recognize how gendered norms are linked to gendered violence, we also seek to make visible the emancipatory potential of gendered practice. To focus only on the negative would be to reinforce stereotypes and ignore the ways people challenge gendered norms to create spaces for diverse individual and group choices. Gender identity need not be oppressive and limiting. We offer examples of how diverse groups of people have created strategies to free themselves of stereotypical gender restrictions and other cultural expectations.

We do not shy away from complex and controversial subjects. We reject the sex binary of male and female, instead recognizing the existence of intersex, transgender, and gender non-conforming people. We reject the binary-differences approach to studying gender as masculine *or* feminine, instead finding people to be wonderfully diverse and competent at adjusting their behavior according to situational needs. We reject the false assumption that the norm is to be cisgender (meaning one's sex and gender are consistent according to social dictates), instead recognizing most people are far more complex. We reject heteronormativity, instead seeing heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, and queer sexualities as equally valid sexual orientations.

Organization of the Book

The book is divided into two parts. "Part I: Foundations" includes five chapters that describe the fundamentals of studying gender in communication: definitions and explanations of key terms, theoretical approaches, gender in conversation, gendered bodies, and language. These chapters provide a foundational vocabulary that enables you to study gender in communication with more subtlety and nuance. "Part II: Institutions" includes an introductory chapter to explain a focus on social institutions, followed by five chapters on the institutions that make evident the intersections of gender and communication: family, education, work, religion, and media. Each chapter examines how individuals experience and enact gender within the institution and how institutional structures and predominant ideology influence the experience and performance of gender. The concluding chapter highlights links among the preceding chapters and presents visions for future study.

New to This Edition

The third edition of this textbook is revised and updated to make it accessible to undergraduate students while still challenging them. Graduate students will still find it a strong critical introduction to the study of gender in communication.

The chapters on voices, work, education, and family have been completely rewritten to reflect major shifts in the state of knowledge. New sections on debates over bathroom bills, intensive mothering, humor, swearing, and Title IX have been added. The sections on trans and gender non-conforming people have been expanded and updated to reflect changes in language. All other chapters have been updated with new examples, new concepts, and new research. Over 500 new sources have been integrated. In an effort to be more inclusive, we have replaced the pronouns *his* or *her* with *they* in most cases even if the reference is singular.

We hope our third edition challenges the way in which readers think about gender and sex, as well as how gender and sex intersect with race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and nationality. Instead of providing simplistic answers, we hope we provide guidance on how to ask good questions. We also hope this book will inspire researchers to contribute to the study of gender in communication, further stretching the boundaries of culturally gendered perceptions.

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This book could not have been written without the assistance of our colleagues. People too numerous to list have helped us as we wrote this book, but a few deserve special note for the extra time they spent sharing resources, reading chapters, and providing invaluable research assistance. The chapters would not have been as grounded in current scholarship, and the examples would not have been as rich, had it not been for the excellent contributions of graduate research assistants and students over the years: Derk Babbitt, Ruth Beerman, C. A. Brimmer, Kiranjeet Dhillon, Danelle Frisbie, Tristin Johnson, Ashley Jones, Christian Kremer-Terry, Jessany Maldondo, Megan Mapes, Emily Paskewitz, and Eric Short. Colleagues, students, friends, and staff served as resources, offering ideas, examples, and other support: Rob Asen, Judith Baxter, Harry Brod, Dan Brouwer, Patrice Buzznell, April Chatham-Carpenter, Jeanne Cook, Melissa Dobosh, Valeria Fabj, Jennifer Farrell, Patricia Fazio, John Fritch, Susan Hill, Kelsey Harr-Lagin, Stephanie Logan, Karen Mitchell, Amymarie Moser, Harrison Postler, Jennifer Potter, Alimatul Qibtiyah, Martha Reineke, Kyle Rudick, Colice Sanders, Montana Smith, Mary Beth Stalp, Leah White, and Nikki Zumbach Harken. We thank the UNI library staff, especially Christopher Neuhaus and Rosemary Meany. We recognize that no book is created in isolation. We thank Julia Wood *(Gendered Lives)*, Diana Ivy and Phil Backlund *(GenderSpeak)*, and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell *(Man Cannot Speak for Her)* for helping pave the way in gender/sex in communication textbooks. We thank our life partners, Arnie Madsen, David Pruin, and Ryan McGeough, for honoring our work.

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Social Acknowledgments

Not only is it important to recognize the individual people in our lives who helped make this book possible, but it also is important to recognize the historical and contemporary movements that made our lives as professors, and the ideas presented in this book, possible. Communication scholars Karma Chávez and Cindy Griffin (2014) were right when they pointed out women's (and gender) studies in communication is "a field of study that emerges from activist efforts and grassroots social movements" (p. 262). We need to acknowledge the contributions of those movements and activists.

This book would not be possible were it not for decades, if not centuries, of social movements and protests that have made clear that gender, sex, and sexuality are public issues and not merely personal expressions. For this reason, we have integrated examples of social movements that have influenced understandings of gender/sex throughout our chapters (e.g., social protest about sexual harassment, fat activism, gender-inclusive bathroom activism, LGBTQ social protests, woman suffrage, equal pay activism, farm worker's rights). We could write an entire book about protests and movements for sex and gender justice, but this is a not a textbook about social movements.

Instead, we want to make clear how this book, about this topic, written by three people who identify as women, was made possible as a result of social activism by those who came before us—activism that challenged sex-based restrictions on who could be educated, who could speak in public, which topics could be spoken about in public, and what evidence counted in debates over those topics. The historical centering of some communicators (e.g., White educated men), and the marginalization of others (e.g., White women, women and men of color, poor people, and LBGTQ people), informs contemporary practices. An understanding of that history can help you understand contemporary communication practices and research.

We could not write a book about gender in communication were it not for activists who struggled for centuries to create space for women to speak publicly as knowledgeable experts. We recognize the work it took in Western countries for

anyone other than a White land-owning man to be given the chance to speak. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1989), in her germinal two-volume *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, outlined the history of exclusion that women speakers faced even as "public persuasion has been a conscious part of the Western male's heritage from ancient Greece to the present" (Vol. I, p. 1). For decades in public address classes, the speeches of great men were studied, from Pericles's funeral oration to the most recent presidential state of the union. Unfortunately, "women have no parallel rhetorical history" (Vol. I, p. 1). In fact, for much of Western history, women were explicitly prohibited from speaking publicly by social mores and law.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995), in *Beyond the Double Bind*, collected some of the religious, cultural, and legal statements prohibiting women's speech. We reproduce only a few of them here to make clear how communication, when it emanated from bodies coded as female, was disciplined. Public punishment was used against the speaking woman: "In seventeenth-century colonial America, the ducking stool held a place of honor near the courthouse alongside the pillory and the stock. After being bound to the stool, the 'scold,' 'nag,' 'brabling *(sic)*,' or 'unquiet' woman was submerged in the nearest body of water, where she could choose between silence and drowning" (pp. 80–81). Philosophers, such as Søren Kierkegaard, proclaimed in 1844, "Silence is not only woman's greatest wisdom, but also her highest beauty" (as cited in Jamieson, 1995, p. 80). Biblical injunctions, repeated through the early 1900s, reinforced these social restrictions: "I am not giving permission for a woman to teach or tell a man what to do. A woman ought not to speak, because Adam was formed first and Eve afterwards, and it was not Adam who was led astray but the woman who was led astray and fell into sin. Nevertheless, she will be saved by childbearing" (1 Timothy 2:12–15). To even conceive of a book about gender in communication, pathbreakers had to create the possibility of people other than White men communicating.

Even as we write about how silence was the right speech of White womanhood, we want to recognize that silence was resisted. Scholar and educator bell hooks (1989) cautioned against reading the history of silence as universal:

> Within feminist circles, silence is often seen as the sexist "right speech of womanhood"—the sign of woman's submission to patriarchal authority. This emphasis on woman's silence may be an accurate remembering of what has taken place in the households of women from WASP backgrounds in the United States, but in black communities (and diverse ethnic communities), women have not been silent. Their voices can be heard. Certainly for black women, our struggle has not been to emerge from silence into speech but to change the nature and direction of our speech, to make a speech that compels listeners, one that is heard. (p. 6)

hooks's warning about reading history in too absolute a way also encourages a rereading of the history of women. Just because women have been exhorted to silence, and punished for speaking in public, does not mean they actually have been silent. A book that recognizes that gender is diverse and intersects with ethnicity,

class, citizenship, religion, and other identity ingredients would not be possible were it not for the work of people of color who have made clear that gender norms concerning what it means to be a good woman and a good man have long assumed only White women and White men.

In the early 1830s, Maria Miller Stewart, an African American woman, became the first U.S. woman to speak to audiences in the United States that included both women and men (Sells, 1993). In the mid-1830s, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, daughters of a slave-owning family, began writing about abolition and spoke to small groups of women in parlor meetings (Japp, 1993; Vonnegut, 1993). As their renown as abolitionists grew, they began to speak to mixed-sex audiences and expanded their advocacy to include women's rights. All three faced rebuke and scorn because of their speaking. Yet they paved a pathway for others to follow: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Mary Church Terrell, Ida B. Wells, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, Lucy Parsons, Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, to name only a few. Our voices in this book would not have been possible were it not for the voices of those who opened space for people other than White men to speak.

We could not write a book about gender in communication were it not for activists who struggled for centuries to challenge the sexualization of women in public. Sex and sexuality were intertwined with the admonitions against women's public communication. Jamieson (1995) argued that "since silence and motherhood were twinned, a corollary assumption was formed of the alliance: Public speech by a woman is the outward sign of suspect sexuality" (p. 14). Although women's actual public participation is far more rich and complex than the narrative of men's and women's separate spheres would indicate (Eastman, 2009; Matthews, 1992; Piepmeier, 2004; Ryan, 1992), women faced discipline for violating social dictates concerning separate spheres. As strange as it might now sound to contemporary ears, the very term *public woman* was synonymous with *prostitute* through the 1800s in the United States. Thus, if a woman ventured outside the private sphere into public spaces, the assumption was that she was sexually available.

Two stories illustrate this. First, in May of 1862, the commander of the Union forces in New Orleans issued the following General Order:

> As the officers and soldiers of the United States have been subject to repeated insults from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans . . . it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall, by word, gesture or movement, insult or show contempt for any officer or soldier of the United States, she shall be regarded and held liable to be treated as a woman of the town plying her vocation. (as cited in Ryan, 1992, p. 3)

Second, in December of 1895, New York City police arrested young, White, working-class Lizzie Schauer for engaging in disorderly conduct. Her crime? She was out in public at night and asked for directions from two men. She was what was then considered a "'public woman,' or prostitute" (Matthews, 1994, p. 3). We want to make clear the centuries of work that people completed just to carve out a public

space where women could communicate and not fear loss of their virtue. As these examples make clear, it is impossible to talk about gender in communication without also talking about sex and sexuality.

We could not write a book about the multiplicity of genders, and the way people are never just a sex, were it not for the activists who made clear the importance of ethnicity. In 1866, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper challenged White woman suffrage activists when they argued against enfranchising Black men before White women, saying "the white women all go for sex, letting race occupy a minor position" (as cited in Bacon, 1989, p. 35). In 1974, the Combahee River Collective Statement made clear,

> There have always been Black women activists—some known, like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frances E. W. Harper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, and thousands upon thousands unknown—who have had a shared awareness of how their sexual identity combined with their racial identity to make their whole life situation and the focus of their political struggles unique.

Gender is never only about sex. Feminist scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003) wrote, "To define feminism purely in gendered terms assumes that our consciousness of being 'women' has nothing to do with race, class, nation, or sexuality, just with gender. But no one 'becomes a woman' . . . purely because she is female" (p. 55). Arguments against essentialism and for intersectionality are not new, although the language to talk about them might be.

In 1863, poor women made clear that neutral government policies did not affect everyone equally. As the Civil War raged, and the Union forces needed public support for conscription, poor women protested because the draft impacted them more because "the loss of a male wage earner was the most devastating fate to befall the poor wives and mothers of New York, a sure sentence to poverty given the dearth of women's employment opportunities and the paltriness of their wages" (Ryan, 1992, p. 149). These women, along with men, engaged in riots to protest the forced conscription of working men on whom families depended. In response, the city of New York suspended its draft and only reinstated it after it had set aside $2.5 million to purchase exemptions for the poorest families (Ryan, 1992, p. 150). Studying gender only by thinking about its relationship to sex would offer an incomplete analysis.

We could not write a book about gender in communication were it not for activists who struggled to make clear gender is not biologically determined. Even after achieving some degree of legal recognition of equality, activists had to struggle for social equality. To do that, they had to challenge the idea that men and women were naturally different. The work of activists in women's movements made clear that many of the differences between men and women were the result of socialization, not an innate characteristic. The work of activists in the Civil Rights Movement, the Red Power Movement, and the United Farmworkers Movement made clear that many of the differences between White people and people of color were the result

of socialization and unequal social relations, not an innate characteristic. We honor the work of the Black Women's Club Movement of the 1890s, the Woman Suffrage Movement whose work spanned from 1848 to 1919, and the feminist and Civil Rights movements of the 1960s through the 1970s.

To be able to write a book that explores gender diversity requires not only that gender not be biologically determined, but also that we could imagine a range of ways to do gender. Trans activist Leslie Feinberg (1998) used the metaphor of poetry to explain the possibilities of gender:

> That is why I do not hold the view that gender is simply a social construct—one of two languages that we learn by rote from early age. To me, gender is the poetry each of us makes out of the language we are taught. When I walk through the anthology of the world, I see individuals express their gender in exquisitely complex and ever-changing ways, despite the law of pentameter. (p. 10)

Although there are prosaic constraints on how each person performs gender, we hope this book allows the poetry of each person's individual gender artistry to sing.

We could not write a book about gender in communication were it not for activists in the trans and intersex communities who have pushed scholars to think about gender *and* sex in more complex and nuanced ways. Feinberg (1998) made clear the need to consider gender, and not just sex, when fighting for liberation: "Women's oppression can't be effectively fought without incorporating the battle against gender oppression. The two systems of oppression are intricately linked. And the population of women and trans people overlap" (p. 17).

We could not write a book about gender in communication were it not for activists who struggled to make clear the importance of sexuality to understanding sex and gender and the reality that families come in many forms. The Mattachine Society (founded in 1950) and the Daughters of Bilitis (founded in 1955) laid the groundwork so that when in 1969 the police again harassed the Stonewall Inn, the patrons there, including drag queens and trans people of color who high kicked their way against the police line, would catalyze a wave of activism (Duberman, 1993; Vaid, 1995). The innovative protest actions of ACTUP in the 1980s continue to guide contemporary protest (Westervelt, 2017) and marriage equality was not realized until the 2015 Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. The political imagination of lesbian, gay, and queer people offered new ways of world-making and expanded the understanding of gender beyond the masculine/feminine binary.

We could not write a book about gender in communication were it not for activists who struggled to make clear we need new ways to think about able-bodiedness, neuro-typicality, and gender. To write a book that celebrates diversity requires that we think about those who are disabled and able-bodied, about those who are neuro-typical and neuro-atypical. Alison Kafer (2013), in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, offered the idea of "crip futurity" as a way to imagine new futures "that might be more just and sustainable. In imagining more accessible futures, I am yearning for

an elsewhere—and, perhaps, an 'elsewhen'—in which disability is understood otherwise: as political, as valuable, as integral" (p. 3). In thinking about the way in which able-bodiedness and contemporary conceptions of femininity intersect, Kafer began to question "the naturalness of femininity" and then to "question the naturalness of disability, challenging essentialist assumptions about 'the' disabled body" (p. 14).

We could not write a book about gender in communication were it not for the masculinity studies scholars who made clear gender is never just about women and femininity. Those people who have, across time, challenged the way in which all people were confined by the limits of binary gender restrictions made clear gender in communication is as much about masculinity's expectations placed on men as it is about femininity's expectations placed on women.

We could not write a book about gender in communication about and in education were it not for those who worked to make education accessible to people of color and women. Women's right to receive an education was not freely given, but had to be fought for. After Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695), a Mexican nun, poet, and theological writer, distributed an essay, she was chastised by a bishop. Her response, *La Respuesta*, defended women's rights to education, presaging the U.S. women's demands for educational and social equality by almost a century.

In the United States, after White women were given access to education, African American enslaved people were denied education and even the right to meet, not just in public but also in private. The Virginia Revised Code of 1819 declared

> that all meetings or assemblages of slaves, or free negroes or mulattoes mixing and associating with such slaves at any meeting-house or houses, &c., in the night; or at any SCHOOL OR SCHOOLS for teaching them READING OR WRITING, either in the day or night, under whatsoever pretext, shall be deemed and considered an UNLAWFUL ASSEMBLY; and any justice of a county, &c., wherein such assemblage shall be, either from his own knowledge or the information of others, of such unlawful assemblage, &c., may issue his warrant, directed to any sworn officer or officers, authorizing him or them to enter the house or houses where such unlawful assemblages, &c., may be, for the purpose of apprehending or dispersing such slaves, and to inflict corporal punishment on the offender or offenders, at the discretion of any justice of the peace, not exceeding twenty lashes.

Thus, even before those who were not land-owning White men could participate in movements for abolition of slavery, workers' rights, equal suffrage regardless of race, or equal suffrage regardless of sex, they had to create conditions whereby their communication would not be met with punishment.

We could not write a book about gender in communication about and in work were it not for a history of women who blazed the way into workplaces and challenged unfair practices. Women mill workers in the early 1800s were, according to historian Glenna Matthews (1992), "pioneers of changing gender roles" because they were the first group of women to live away from home for work (p. 97). They

also "went on strike and publicly protested what they deemed to be unjust treatment by their bosses" (p. 98). In 1834, 800 women struck, one of the first all-woman strikes in U.S. history. By 1860, cotton textile manufacturing companies in New England employed more than 60,000 women. Although many originally were native-born, starting in the 1850s most were immigrant women. Women have worked for as long as the United States has existed. The fact that women can work at paid labor can be traced to the pioneering efforts of others who entered the realm of work and made clear paid labor is "women's work."

As these vignettes should demonstrate, there was never one single "women's movement" that flowed along one single path in three waves. Instead, a broad range of social forces ebbed and flowed, reshaping the contours of how we understand sex and gender, and how sex and gender interact with communication. We acknowledge the importance of all these, and other, movements that made it possible for us to do this work.

PART I

Foundations

CHAPTER 1

Developing a Critical Gender/Sex Lens

Gender, the behaviors and appearances society dictates a body of a particular sex should perform, structures people's understanding of themselves and each other. Communication is the process by which this happens. Whether in a person's communication or in how others interpret and talk about the person, gender is "always lurking" in interactions (Deutsch, 2007, p. 116). Gender is present in an individual's gender performance and in other messages that create, sustain, or challenge gender expectations. To illustrate this, consider an example from popular culture: the seemingly innocent custom of assigning infants pink or blue based on the baby's biological sex.

- When parents announce the birth of a child, typically what is the first question asked? "Is it a boy or girl?" or "Is the baby healthy?" "Is the baby eating and sleeping well?" "Is the birth mother okay?"
- What do birth celebration cards look like? Spend some time in the greeting card section of a store, and you will find two main choices: pink or blue, and the pink cards are decorated with flowers and docile girls while the blue cards are decorated with animals or transportation vehicles (planes, trains, automobiles, and ships) and active boys.
- What mistake tends to cause people the most embarrassment when complimenting new parents on the birth of their child? What happens if you say, upon seeing a baby boy, "Isn't she pretty" instead of "He is so big"? Or what happens if you say, upon seeing a baby girl, "Wow, what a bruiser" instead of "She is so cute"?

At the moment of birth (before, if sex identification happens *in vitro*), people differentiate children on the basis of sex and begin to impose gendered expectations on them with clothing, activities, and interactions (Zosuls, Miller, Ruble, Martin, & Fabes, 2011).

In case you think pink and blue color designations have been practiced forever or exist across cultures, consider this:

- Color segregation on the basis of sex is primarily a U.S. and Western European custom, although Western commercialization spread it globally.
- Sex-based color assignments did not appear until the early 1900s. When first assigned, the generally accepted rule was pink for the boy and blue for the girl. Pink was thought to be a more decisive and stronger color while blue was seen as delicate and dainty (*Ladies Home Journal*, June 1918, as cited in Frassanito & Pettorini, 2008).
- The colors assigned to babies did not switch until the 1950s. No one seems to know why. Advice books and magazines targeted at White, upper-class people in the United States stipulated pink was for girls and blue was for boys.
- Although sex-segregated colors lessened in the 1970s, by the 1980s their dominance returned, as is evidenced by the fuchsia pink and cobalt blue aisles of toys at major retailers (McCormick, 2011; Paoletti, 2012).

The color-coding of children inspired artist JeongMee Yoon's "The Pink and Blue Project." Noting the international sex-targeted marketing, Yoon photographed children in the United States and South Korea. The results were visually astounding. Rooms awash in blue for boys and pink for girls (visit "The Blue Project" *Jake and His Blue Things*, 2006 and "The Pink Project" *Dayeun and Her Pink Things*, 2007 at http://www.jeongmeeyoon.com/aw_pinkblue.htm).

If you look at babies dressed in blue or pink, you may see an unremarkable cultural practice. But if you look at the practice through a *critical* gendered lens, you might begin to ask some questions: Why do we need to assign sex to infants? What does it mean that pink is seen as passive and blue is seen as strong? Why does it seem that a cultural choice is made to appear as a biological necessity?

Obviously, the colors are not biologically caused or universally gendered the same way. The color designations result from the communication practices of specific time periods in commercialized cultures and a particular set of political beliefs about differences between women and men. Further, the color designations indicate how people are conditioned to differentiate between sexes and genders. Although babies may now wear green, yellow, and purple, few parents are daring enough to dress a boy baby in pink or a girl baby in blue. The symbols people use to describe the sexes (pink or blue, pretty or strong), and the way they interact with others on the basis of their sex, matter.

This example reveals that gender is communicated in a variety of forms, even those as mundane as greeting cards. Communication scholar Bren Murphy (1994) made this clear in an analysis of holiday cards targeted at children, noting cards are "part of a social discourse that constructs everyday gender patterns and perceptions" (p. 29). A variety of cultural texts "construct our understandings of gender and gendered relationships" (Keith, 2009, p. iv). Thus, to study gender in communication, you need to study not only how gendered bodies communicate, but also how gender is constructed through communication in cultural texts.

Figure 1.1 Screenshot From *Lloyd in Space* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvIpiGLAK9k)

Source: Lloyd in Space. Disney.

Tellingly, many people do not know how to talk to or about a person without first categorizing that person as female or male. This very conundrum was the focus of one episode of the Disney Channel's animated series *Lloyd in Space*, about the adventures of a group of teenage aliens (see Figure 1.1).

In the ninth episode of season three, "Neither Boy Nor Girl," the main characters argue over the relative merits of two bands, the girls advocating for Aurora and the boys for Total Cosmic Annihilation. They decide the tie-breaking vote belongs to the new kid: Zoit. After Zoit's answer praising both bands, the boys and the girls each claim Zoit was their sex. Given this is a world populated by aliens, you might assume the human sex binary no longer applied, but it did. As this screen shot illustrates, even alien bodies can be marked in ways that sex and gender them. Body size and shape, hair length, clothing, lip coloration and plumpness, eyelashes, and posture mark some of the bodies as boy and others as girl, except for Zoit. Zoit is purple, does not wear clothes, and has expressive eyes. Visually, no explicit clues are provided about sex.

Demonstrating the obsession with categorizing people by sex, the remainder of the episode is spent trying to box Zoit into one sex. The characters try observing Zoit's preference in notebook design (Zoit likes monsters *and* rainbows), whether Zoit rides a "boy bike" or "girl bike" (Zoit rides a unicycle), and which restroom Zoit uses after imbibing an extra-large 640 fluid ounce drink (Zoit claims to be absorbent). Like many, the characters conflate sex and gender, assuming that by observing things Zoit says and does, they can figure out Zoit's biological designation.

Eventually, the boys and girls decided to ask Zoit: "OK, we gotta know. What the heck are you, a boy or a girl?" Zoit explained that their species is neither boy nor girl until their 13th birthday, when they are free to choose either. On Zoit's 13th birthday, Zoit decided but kept it to themselves, again sending the friends into a flurry of questions, concluding with: "So we'll never find out if you're a boy or a girl?" To this, Zoit replied: "You'll find out some day when I get a crush on one of you." Here, another conflation occurred: between sex and sexual orientation.

To say that most gender and sex differences are socially constructed rather than biological does not mean that no differences exist or that perceived differences do not matter. Our argument throughout this textbook is that a range of differences exists. We celebrate human beings' wonderful diversity. To limit one's understanding of diverse human communication to only two choices, feminine or masculine, reinforces stereotypes. Still, that is often how people think about gender in communication—as a description of the differences between how women and men communicate. If you start from the assumption that women and men communicate differently, then you tend to see only differences between them rather than the more common similarities (Dindia, 2006).

More than actual differences in communication patterns, cultural and individual *perceptions* of women's and men's behaviors are gendered. People see baby girls and baby boys as different because people code them that way; girls are pink, sweet, and pretty, and boys are blue, agile, and burly. This leads people to interact differently with babies, coddling ones they think are girls and playing more roughly with ones they think are boys (Frisch, 1977; Rubinstein, 2001). Emphasizing sex differences reinforces separate expectations about how women and men should behave. In doing so, it restricts what is considered acceptable behavior for all people, and it puts rigid limitations on children's potential.

In *The Truth About Girls and Boys: Challenging Toxic Stereotypes About Our Children*, journalist Caryl Rivers and psychologist Rosalind Barnett (2011) argued that gendered social myths are growing out of control, supported by popular media and consumer demand. As a result, a new biological determinism is emerging supported by questionable data that human beings are born with "brains in pink and blue" (p. 10). This social myth creates a self-fulfilling prophecy to which parents and teachers contribute by maintaining assumptions of sex-based gender differences. Instead, "human beings have multiple intelligences that defy simple gender pigeonholes. Unfortunately, the real (and complex) story line is generally missing from the popular media. It is buried in scholarly peer-reviewed journals and articles that seldom see the light of day" (p. 2). We exhume some of the complexity in this textbook.

Although the predominant culture continues to assume that women and men are different, and therefore communicate in different ways, actual research does not support this (e.g., Anderson & Leaper, 1998; Burleson & Kunkel, 2006; Edwards & Hamilton, 2004; Holmstrom, 2009). Researchers have found that gendered behavior variances *among* women and *among* men are actually greater than those *between* women and men (Burleson & Kunkel, 2006; Dindia, 2006; Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2014; Hyde, 2005, 2007; Mare & Waldron, 2006; Ye & Palomares, 2013). Many other factors affect behavior, such as social roles, ethnicity, individual differences, and

purpose of the interaction (Aries, 2006; Deutsch, 2007; Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2014). The focus exclusively on sex differences is too simplistic. Consider the following question: Do all women around the world and across ethnic groups and generations communicate the same way? Do all men?

People believe in universal sex and gender differences for a variety of reasons. For starters, sex is a primary way in which people categorize themselves and others, and people have a great deal invested in maintaining these categories. Because society expects everyone to be heterosexual unless proven otherwise, early on, girls and boys are encouraged to see each other as the "opposite" sex and to vie for the other's attention. Heterosexual dating is a primary means to popularity for many in U.S. middle and high schools. And heterosexual weddings are the ultimate heterosexual social ritual (Ingraham, 2008), so much so that some states amended their constitutions to bar marriage among gays and lesbians. It took the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* to make clear that the Constitution requires states to recognize marriage between same-sex individuals.

The continued cultural insistence on differences despite a massive amount of research that disconfirms this view is *political.* Subscribing to a differences perspective maintains the status quo, and in that status quo particular groups are privileged (heterosexuals, men, Whites) while others are marginalized and subordinated (homosexuals, women, people of color). This is not to blame individual White men or individual heterosexuals for power differentials but to recognize *all* people are complicit in the process when they fail to question it. Linguist Mary Crawford (1995) explained that if communication problems were due solely to gender differences and not to group power or status, women and men could borrow each other's communication styles with similar effectiveness. Instead, the same communication styles do not perform equally well for all people. What style works depends on the situation, the social status of the speaker, and the power relations between the speaker and listener.

Another reason why the culture continues to embrace (empirically disproved) gender and sex differences is that it sells. If you are not convinced, check out how retail sellers target specific sexes in toy aisles, cosmetics, wedding planning, sports, music, and gaming. Yoon's (n.d.) "The Pink and Blue Projects" provides visual evidence of "the influence of pervasive commercial advertisements aimed at little girls and their parents."

In this book, we summarize research on gender in communication and equip you with critical analytical tools to develop your own informed opinions about that research, society's gender expectations, and prevailing cultural views. To accomplish this, it is necessary to understand how predominant cultural views about gender and sex create a gendered lens through which people view reality. This lens can become so embedded that people do not realize how it limits their perceptions of reality. We hope to help you construct a more *critical* gendered lens by providing analytic tools with which you can examine common assumptions about gender, sex, and communication.

A precise vocabulary is needed to develop a critical gendered lens; intersectionality, communication, and systemic violence are the central components of that vocabulary. Together these concepts provide a more complete understanding of

gendered cultural identity and how one does gendered identity work through communication.

Generally speaking, the term **identity** refers to how people see themselves, *and* how others see them, as individuals and as members of groups. *Identity* includes concepts such as personality; the multiple group identities one holds—for example, gender, sex, ethnicity, class, sexuality, nationality; and contextual role identities—for example, friend, lover, student, supervisor, community member. A person's identity has multiple interacting, and sometimes contradicting, facets (Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006; Tracy, 2002). For example, the social expectations of a person who identifies as a man may seem to contradict with the role that person plays as a teacher or day care provider.

Although people may prefer to box others into set categories, identity is not fixed and unchanging. Rather it is constantly negotiated through intrapersonal communication with oneself, interpersonal communication with others, and public communication circulating in mass media and popular culture. This does not mean that people can change their identities on a whim. Although identity is in constant flux, it is perceived as stable. As such, individuals and groups have some control over their identity construction, but much of the predominant cultural assumptions extend beyond one's awareness or control (Butler, 2004; Tracy, 2002).

Intersectionality

Gender and sex are woven into a person's identity and are axes along which social power is organized. But writing a book that focuses only on gender in communication would be reductive. It is impossible to separate gender/sex from other facets of identity or other social categories along which power is organized. Communication scholar Bernadette Marie Calafell (2014) explained: "Like many women of color before me, I have never been able to be just a woman. . . . My womanhood is messy" (p. 267).

Ethnicity, class, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship status, religion, and gender all intersect to form a person's identity and to inform social relations. Before you can understand gender in communication, you first need to understand that how a person's gender identity is performed is not separable from the person's ethnicity, class, sex, sexual orientation, citizenship status, and religion. Additionally, to study how gender is an arena in which power is exercised, you need to understand how gender intersects with other axes along which social power is exercised.

Intersectionality is a theory of identity *and* of oppression. Women's and gender studies professor Vivian M. May (2015) explained that intersectionality "approaches lived identities as interlaced and systems of oppression as enmeshed and mutually reinforcing" (p. 3). Thus, intersectionality enables analysis of communication both at the "micropolitical level of everyday life and at the macropolitical level of social structures, material practices, and cultural norms" (p. 5). An intersectional approach should inform how people understand interpersonal communication, organizational cultures, pay inequity, and mass-mediated messages.

Legal scholar and critical race feminist Adrien Wing (1997) explained the theory of intersectionality as the idea that identity is "multiplicative" rather than additive (p. 30). Instead of understanding identity as the addition of one independent element to another and another, like in a pop-bead necklace, identity makes more sense if you think of each element as inextricably linked with the others. An intersectional approach makes clear that all facets of identity are integral, interlocking parts of a whole.

African American women were the first to make this point clear. Activists in the late 1800s and early 1900s, such as Sojourner Truth, Frances E. W. Harper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, all noted how sex and race intersected in a way that made Black women's social location and struggles unique. Recognizing the contribution of their foremothers, a group of Black feminists wrote the Combahee River Collective Statement in 1974 in which they outlined how "the major systems of oppression are interlocking." In the Statement, they explained:

> We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression.

Author Audre Lorde (1984) offered a description of how an intersectional approach is necessary to fully understand and accept your own identity:

> As a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present that as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self. But this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live. My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without the restrictions of externally imposed definition. Only then can I bring myself and my energies as a whole to the service of those struggles which I embrace as a part of my living. (p. 120)

Lorde's metaphor *ingredients* is useful when explaining intersectionality. For example, a cake is an object with ingredients such as flour, eggs, oil, sugar, and milk that can exist separately from each other but, once combined, each element influences the others. Even though the cake contains all the ingredients, none are recognizable in their separate forms. A cake is not just flour and eggs and sugar and oil and milk. A cake is a cake only when the ingredients are so fused together that they cannot be separated again. Like a cake, human identity is the result of a fascinating alchemic process in which ingredients are fused in such a way that each is influenced by the others, to the point where you

cannot extricate the flour from the cake once it is baked. The flour is not simply flour (and gender is not simply gender) once fused with other ingredients.

Because identity ingredients interact, you cannot understand how a person does gender unless you also consider how that person's gender, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national identity, and socioeconomic class interact to demand a particular gender performance. Researchers who take only gender into account do not recognize that identity actually occurs as a complex, synergistic, infused whole that becomes something completely different when parts are ignored, forgotten, and unnamed (Collins, 1998).

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), a lawyer and legal scholar, was the first to use the word *intersectionality* to describe how the oppression faced by Black women was distinct from oppression solely from race or sex. Crenshaw analyzed how employment nondiscrimination law that used the discrete categories of sex and race (as well as color, religion, and national origin) failed to protect Black women who face forms of discrimination that emanate from the intersection of race and sex. Crenshaw's insights allowed scholars to articulate how "major axes of social divisions in a given society at a given time, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and age operate not as discrete and mutually exclusive entities, but build on each other and work together" (Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 4). The interactions matter.

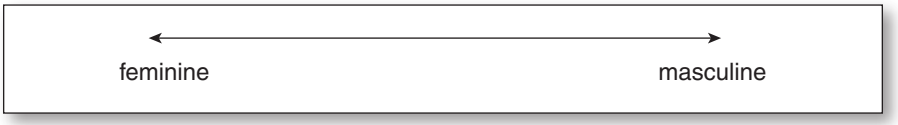
Intersectionality as a theory of identity is helpful because it prevents reducing complex identities down to a single ingredient, and then attributing to the ingredient causal power to explain why a person acts in a particular way. Intersectionality as a theory of power is helpful because it shifts attention away from "preoccupations with intentional prejudice and toward perspectives grounded in analysis of systemic dynamics and institutional power" (Chun, Lipsitz, & Shin, 2013, p. 922). With this overarching understanding of intersectionality, we now turn to a consideration of the ingredients.

Gender and Sex, Gender/Sex

If you have ever filled out a survey, you likely have been asked about your gender and then given the options of male or female. In this example, the words *sex* and *gender* are used interchangeably, even though they refer to two analytically distinct things. ***Sex*** refers to biological designations (e.g., female, male, intersex, trans), while *gender* refers to the social expectations attached to how particular bodies should act and appear and, thus, is socially constructed. It is important to understand the distinction between the two terms while, at the same time, recognizing their inextricable interconnection.

Before the 1970s, most people assumed people's sex determined their behavior; no concept of gender as distinct from sex existed. In the late 1970s, researchers began using the term *gender* as distinct from *sex* to identify personal attributes of women and men (Unger, 1979). Gender referred to one's identity and self-presentation—that is, the degree to which a person associated themselves with what society had prescribed as appropriate behavior given their sex. You can probably brainstorm expected sex-specific stereotypical gender attributes. Feminine attributes are to be emotional, a caretaker, sensitive, compassionate, revealingly dressed; masculine attributes are to be rational, independent, tough, aggressive, comfortably dressed

Figure 1.2 Gender Continuum



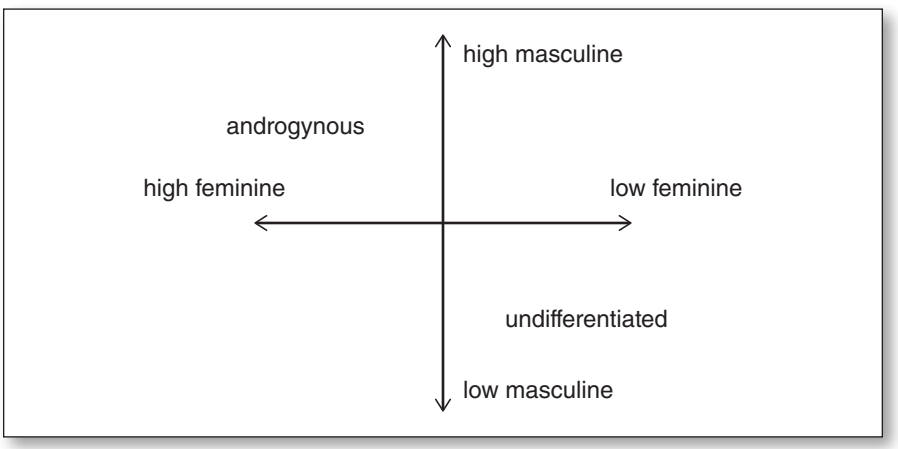
(Coates, 2004; Eagly & Koenig, 2006; Eliot, 2009b; Lorber & Moore, 2007). When researchers embraced the concept of gender, sex and gender were seen as distinct; one's sex did not determine one's gender, but social structures linked particular gender presentations with particular sexed bodies.

These early understandings of gender placed variances in human identity on a continuum rather than casting them as two binary or opposite categories where one is *either* male/masculine *or* female/feminine. The continuum helped make visible that instead of two independent categories, degrees of gender are possible (see Figure 1.2).

One could be more masculine (and less feminine) or more feminine (and less masculine). Because researchers saw gender as socially prescribed rather than biologically caused, they assumed that people identify to varying degrees with masculinity *and* femininity rather than just one *or* the other. This was heralded as an important breakthrough. No longer were authors saying all men acted one way and all women another, based solely on their biological sex. However, the continuum still set up masculine and feminine as opposites and as trading off with each other; as you were more of one, you were less of the other.

Further developing this idea, psychologist Sandra Bem (1974) coined the term **androgyny** by combining two Greek words: *andros* meaning "male" and *gyne* meaning "female." Bem developed a questionnaire called the Sex-Role Inventory (SRI) to identify a person's gender orientation on a continuum from highly feminine to highly masculine, androgynous (high in both), or undifferentiated (low in both masculine and feminine traits). Androgynous persons are believed to have more behavioral flexibility. Instead of seeing masculinity and femininity as a zero-sum tradeoff on a continuum, Bem believed one could exhibit characteristics of both (see Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Gender Diversity



Now, people talk not just about one form of femininity and one form of masculinity, but about femininit*ies* and masculinit*ies*. Many ways to be feminine and masculine exist, and many ways express gender that are neither masculine nor feminine.

W. Kamau Bell, comic and host of *United Shades of America*, reflected on their early career in comedy:

> Black comedy clubs . . . felt like public school but grown up. It's like, these are the same kids when I was a kid where I felt like I was being made fun of because I wasn't listening to the right music or I wasn't being a black man in the right way. (as cited in Gross, 2017)

Although focusing on gender instead of sex was meant to be a step away from overgeneralizing people's identities based on their sex, masculinity and femininity are still stereotypes, prescribing how women and men are supposed to behave (Crawford & Fox, 2007). Because of this criticism, researchers have dropped the terms *masculine* and *feminine*, relying instead on measures of dominance, nurturance, orientation toward self versus others, and so forth, but the stereotypical inferences are still present. There is no ideal social science means to study gender identity that avoids reinforcing the very characteristics it is trying to study.

If you use the term *gender* when you mean *sex*, you are not alone. Researchers and popular media often do not use the concept of gender correctly or consistently (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011). If you read published research, many claim to have found gender differences or similarities, when in actuality they never asked for or assessed the participants' gendered self-identities. They merely asked participants to label themselves as biologically female or male and then assumed that by studying females they could determine what was feminine and that by studying males they could determine what was masculine. Most people unintentionally conflate *sex* and *gender*.

However, some intentionally rethink the relationship between sex and gender, claiming sex, too, is socially constructed. Gender theorist Judith Butler (1990a) posited that "perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (pp. 9–10). Butler's argument is that the only way a person can come to understand anything, even biology, is through language and cultural experience. The understanding of the body and its relationship to identity is always mediated by the words and symbols people use to talk about the body. In the words of Butler (1993), "There is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body" (p. 10). Thus, sex is as much a social construction as gender, and bodies have no meaning separate from the meaning language gives them. The argument that people's biological sex is influenced by communication is not to deny the existence

of a material body "but to insist that our apprehension of it, our understanding of it, is necessarily mediated by the *con*texts in which we speak" (Price & Shildrick, 1999, p. 7; italics in original).

When the predominant culture names the sex of a body female *or* male (and nothing else), the culture engages in an act of communication that has "normative force" because it recognizes some parts of a person but not all (Butler, 1993, p. 11). Even as the body is referenced, a particular formation occurs—a formation of the body as *either* female *or* male. Butler identified the binary linguistic framing of bodies as an act of power because it refuses to recognize the existence of those who do not fit into the male/female binary. The reality, however, is that many bodies do not fit the binary of female *or* male.

As early as 1993, developmental geneticist Anne Fausto-Sterling argued that people should recognize at least five sexes, with an infinite range in between: "Biologically speaking, there are many gradations running from female to male; and depending on how one calls the shots, one can argue that along that spectrum lie at least five sexes [female, ferm, herm, merm, male]—and perhaps even more" (p. 21). If language names only two sexes, then only two will be seen and any body that does not fit into the two sexes will be forced to fit, or be considered an "it"—not human. The power of language to construct social reality is illustrated by what has been done to those bodies.

Intersex "is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male" (Intersex Society of North America, 2008). Lest you think this is an extraordinarily rare medical phenomenon, from 1,000 to 15,000 intersex babies are born a year in the United States (Greenberg, 2012, p. 7). In a study that reviewed medical literature from 1955 to 2000, the authors concluded that intersex babies may account for as many as 2% of live births (Blackless et al., 2000).

An infant born who did not fit into the male/female binary used to be considered a "medical emergency" (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 45) and, until new policies were proposed in 2005, in European countries, parents were told to decide within the child's first day of life if the baby will be male or female (Pasterski, Prentice, & Hughes, 2010). The rate of infant genital surgery is still high, and a tendency persists to surgically alter infants' genitals to female because the vagina is supposedly easier to construct surgically. Butler (2004) pointed out that this practice shows how narrowly defined "normal" is in society, and the failure to recognize that intersex persons are part of the human continuum prevents them from being treated humanely.

Despite the biological reality of more than two sexes, the way U.S. society talks about and legislates sex constantly reinforces the idea that there are only two sexes (and that one's sex determines one's gender). Law professor Julie Greenberg (1999) explained how "despite medical and anthropological studies to the contrary, the law presumes a binary sex and gender model. The law ignores the millions of people who are intersexed" (p. 275). The language of law has structured the reality of sex and gender in such a way that the grand diversity of human existence is stifled.

In addition to the recognition that sex is as socially constructed as gender, scholars recognize that social constructions (like gender) can be as difficult to change as things people consider biological. Butler (2004) argued that gender is often as immutable as sex, given how social institutions and language constantly reiterate and reinscribe it. One of the primary ways sex and gender discipline bodies is through the enshrinement of **binary** views (meaning you have either one choice or another) of one's sex, gender, and sexuality. A person who did not fit in the sex/gender binary (wherein you are *either* a man *or* a woman and men are masculine and women are feminine) was unintelligible; people lacked the language to name and understand them. This is why new terms have entered into vocabulary, such as **genderqueer,** a term used to "defy all categories of culturally defined gender"; it is "gender free" or "gender neutral," claiming an identity "outside gender" (Ehrensaft, 2011, p. 531). New terms enable people to think outside the binary. English professor Jordynn Jack (2012) offered *copia*, the classical rhetorical concept of inventing as many terms as possible for a concept, as an alternative to the binary and the continuum. Included in Jack's copia: "*genderqueer*, *transgende*[*r*], *femme*, *butch*, *boi*, *neutrois*, *androgyne*, *bi-* or *tri-gender*, *third gender*, and even *geek*" (p. 3).

We see gender and sex as something you *do*, not something you *are*, and gender is done by you, between individuals, and by institutions. Gender scholar A. Finn Enke (2012) explained that "there is no natural process by which *any*one becomes woman, and . . . *every*one's gender is made: Gender, and also sex, are made through complex social and technical manipulations that naturalize some while" making others seem unnatural (p. 1). Linguist Lal Zimman (2012) complicated the term *gender* even further based on research with transgender men, suggesting distinctions between gender assignment at birth, gender role socialization, the gender identity one claims at any given time, gender presentation, and the variety of ways an individual may perform their gender in a given context "rather than treating gender as a simple binary or even a singular continuum" (p. 161).

If sex and gender are something you do rather than something you *are* or *have*, they can be done in a wide variety of ways. If, in your doing, you are performing social scripts, then gender and sex are never just individual quirks, but instead are social institutions. To be able to see how gender and sex are done by and to people, you first need to recognize neither is natural or biologically determined. Gender and sex are not things that belong to an individual. Rather, gender and sex are done by people interacting in accordance with institutional and cultural demands. Gender and sex are social institutions that individuals express. People experience their gender and sex together, and sex and gender are both socially constructed, and hence changeable, while at the same time being difficult to change.

We use the term **gender/sex** in this textbook to emphasize the interrelation between the concepts of gender and sex. When we discuss gender in communication, we always discuss sex in communication because communication that is about gender, that is influenced by gender, and that differentiates gender also always is about sex, is influenced by sex, and differentiates sex.

To summarize, researchers in the field of communication studies began by focusing on sex, visualizing it as a binary. They progressed to using the term *gender*

as two culturally imposed opposite identities located on one continuum. This approach was nuanced to recognize gender as not necessarily a zero-sum game; androgynous people could have characteristics of both masculinity and femininity. This allowed the recognition of more variances of behavior and identity (Slesaransky-Poe & García, 2009). However, even as scholars studied gender, they sometimes conflated it with sex. As scholars began to theorize gender as cultural, they also began to theorize sex as cultural. Thus, the distinctions between sex and gender were intentionally complicated. Now researchers are moving toward a much more diverse, realistic portrayal of gender/sex.

Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming

Transgender or **trans** is "used to describe individuals whose gender expression and behavior do not match the usual expectations associated with the male-female binary system" (Gherovici, 2010, p. xiii). Susan Stryker (2008), in *Transgender History*, noted how the term only came into "widespread use" in the last 20 years and is "still under construction," but refers to

> people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (*trans-*) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender. Some people move away from their birth-assigned gender because they feel strongly that they properly belong to another gender in which it would be better for them to live; others want to strike out toward some new location, some space not yet clearly defined or concretely occupied; still others simply feel the need to get away from the conventional expectations bound up with the gender that was initially put upon them. In any case, it is *the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place*—rather than any particular destination or mode of transition—that best characterizes the concept of "transgender." (p. 1)

Trans and gender non-conforming people include those who identify as trans men (people assigned female at birth, AFAB, who identify as men); identify as trans women (people assigned male at birth, AMAB, who identify as women); reject the gender/sex binary or see themselves as nonbinary; choose to take hormones or not; or have surgical sexual organ changes or not. Thus, *trans* refers to "a constellation of practices and identities variably implicated in sexual and gender normativities" (West, 2014, p. 10).

The concept of *normativity* is helpful because it makes clear that some things are treated as the norm, or as normal, when they are statistically or diagnostically neither. Often that which is labeled *normal* is not really the most common; instead, it is normative, meaning it is the standard by which people are judged. Communication scholar Gus Yep (2003) defined **normativity** as the "process of constructing, establishing, producing, and reproducing a taken-for-granted and all-encompassing standard used to measure goodness, desirability, morality, rationality, superiority, and a host of other dominant cultural values" (p. 18).

Normativities tied to the sex/gender binary result in those who do not fit the binary being labeled as bad, undesirable, immoral, irrational, and inferior. So the sex binary has been normalized, made to appear right, even though it is not the only way to organize understandings of sex.

The cultural disciplining of transgender persons is an example of the way the sex/gender binary constructs sex and gender. Until 2012, the standard diagnostic manual used by U.S. mental health practitioners identified persons who desire to be "another sex" or participate in the pastimes of the "other sex" as having a disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, pp. 576–577). Gender identity disorder was the label given to this "dysfunction." It was also used for individuals with homosexual or bisexual tendencies, and some practitioners attempted to alter the individuals' gender identities. However, psychotherapy rarely changes gender identity (Gherovici, 2010; Reiss, 2009; Unger & Crawford, 1992). Intersex and transgender activists raised the question of how medical professionals can ascertain a person's "real" gender/sex identity. They argued that gender should be a matter of personal choice (Schilt, 2011). As a result of this activism, the American Psychiatric Association decided in 2012 to change its diagnostic manual so that it no longer referred to gender identity disorder but instead to gender dysphoria (Lennard, 2012). In the most recent revision, *DSM-5*, gender dysphoria is diagnosed when there is incongruence between a person's assigned sex and their gendered behaviors, and it causes significant distress (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

To provide a language that lets people think outside the binary, activists have introduced new terms, like *genderqueer*, *genderfluid*, and *trans,* into the public vocabulary. The *New York Times* added the sex/gender-neutral Mx. as an alternative to Mr. and Ms. (Curkin, 2015). To provide a term parallel to *trans*, *cis*, short for *cisgender* or *cissexual*, was introduced in 1994 and popularized in the first decade of the 2000s (Enke, 2012, pp. 60–61). ***Cis*** refers to those whose gender self-identity and gender expression match the sex they were assigned at birth. However, even those who introduced this term still worry that it reinforces the very binary that trans folk challenge (Enke, 2012).

Transgender studies scholars note the importance of language and communication to trans people. Susan Stryker (2015) explained:

> Transsexuals such as myself were then still subordinated to a hegemonic inter-locking of cissexist feminist censure and homosexual superiority, psycho-medical pathologization, legal proscription, mass media stereotyping, and public ridicule. The only option other than reactively saying "no we're not" to every negative assertion about us was to change the conversation, to inaugurate a new language game. (p. 227)

To make trans people intelligible, to make them recognizable, new language was required.

Existing language also has been stretched because old terms have seen their meanings shift. For example, in 2015 the *Washington Post* changed its style guide to allow the singular third person pronoun *they* (which typically was used when referring to more than one person) and in 2016 the American Dialect Society named the

singular *they* as its word of the year (Guo, 2016). Why? It is an alternative to *he* or *she*, terms that unnecessarily tend to sex/gender people.

Sexuality and Romantic Attraction

Sexual orientation describes the gender/sex of the people to whom you are physically attracted. *Heterosexual* refers to people who are sexually attracted to a person of the other sex. *Homosexual* refers to people who are sexually attracted to others who share their sex. *Bisexual* refers to people who are sexually attracted to both sexes. You might notice that these sexual orientations depend on a sex binary (same or other); if there are five sexes, which is the "other" sex? Again, the sex/gender binary limits human understanding, in this case, an understanding of sexuality.

New language has emerged, such as *pansexual*, which refers to those who are capable of being attracted to a person of any sex/gender. Celebrity Miley Cyrus declared they were pansexual, explaining, "I don't relate to being boy or girl, and I don't have to have my partner relate to boy or girl" (as cited in Petrusich, 2015).

Sexual orientation is about physical attraction while romantic orientation is about emotional attraction. Recognizing this distinction makes it possible to recognize those who are *asexual* and *aromantic*. **Asexual** (Ace) refers to those who are not sexually attracted to others; approximately 1% of the U.S. population identifies this way (Emens, 2014). **Aromantic** (Aro) refers to people who are not romantically attracted to others, meaning there is no desire to form an emotional relationship (Bogaert, 2015).

The way culture communicates about sexual orientation constructs and maintains the sex/gender binary and maintains heterosexuality as the norm (Rich, 1980). **Heteronormativity** describes how social institutions and policies reinforce the presumption that people are heterosexual and that gender and sex are natural binaries (Kitzinger, 2005). Persons who are discriminated against due to their sexual orientation are subordinated because they are perceived as sexual deviants. Sociologist Gayle Rubin (1984) stated, "The system of sexual oppression cuts across other modes of social inequality," such as racial, class, ethnic, or gendered inequality, "sorting out individuals and groups according to its own intrinsic dynamics. It is not reducible" (p. 293). Conversely, discussions of gender and sex are intricately tied to sexual orientation and sexuality. They are not separable. In the study of gender/sex, people must recognize the role of heteronormativity, sexual identity, and romantic identity.

Race and Ethnicity

We want to be clear from the outset: Race is a social construction. Biologically, there is only one race: the human race. However, humans have long used race as a social construct to divide people from one another, to place them in categories and claim one category is better than another. Scientists have known for some time that race is not an accurate means by which to categorize human beings in terms of ancestry or genetics (Blakey, 1999; Long & Kittles, 2003; "Race," 2011).

Society holds on to this false assumption that race is a meaningful category because believing in such differences is easy and it benefits those in power. We use the term *race* to recognize that many people self-identify with a particular ethnic identity and take great pride in it. However, to be clear, when we use the term *race*, we mean the *social construction* understood as race; we do not mean *race* as some biological designation.

Race, like gender/sex, has a socially constructed meaning that has real consequences. Sociologist Estelle Disch (2009) explained why and how we use the term in this book:

> The term race is itself so problematic that many scholars regularly put the word in quotation marks to remind readers that it is a social construction rather than a valid biological category. Genetically, there is currently no such thing as "race" and the category makes little or no sense from a scientific standpoint. What is essential, of course, is the meaning that people in various cultural contexts attribute to differences in skin color or other physical characteristics. (p. 22)

To illustrate, consider that Germans, Irish, Italians, and Russians are now considered White in the United States, but after the great migration of the early 1900s up to the 1960s, they were considered "colored or other" (Foner & Fredrickson, 2005).

Ethnicity, too, is a contested term; identifying one's ethnic origins is not as clear as researchers once thought, given the increasingly transnational world and how cultural labels are subject to change. **Ethnicity** is a term commonly used to refer to a group of people who share a cultural history, even though they may no longer live in the same geographic area (Zack, 1998).

One way to more clearly see the power of arbitrary social constructions of groups is to consider White identity. Whiteness is a socially constructed racial and ethnic category even if society typically does not recognize it as such. The central position of Whiteness in predominant U.S. culture allows it to be normalized to the extent that it almost disappears; it is deraced and nonethnic. Many who identify as White do not even recognize it is a category. They can readily list characteristics of other peoples, such as the expectation that Asians should be smart and that African Americans should be good at sports, but they have difficulty naming a quality that applies to Whites (Nakayama & Krizek, 1999). When race is conceptualized as natural rather than as culturally created, the power of this category is hidden (Kivel, 2002).

It is important to recognize Whiteness in the study of gender because, if one does not, race remains a concern only for those considered non-White, and gender, when studied alone, remains implicitly an identity belonging solely to Whites. What is important to remember is that, like gender/sex, when society constructs arbitrary racial and ethnic categories, these categories are rarely different and equal. Rather, race and ethnicity are tools of social oppression.

Throughout this book, we capitalize *Black* and *White* to clarify that we are referring to socially constructed racial categories and the politics of skin color rather than to hues on the color wheel. We hope to move beyond thinking just about differences, whether gender or ethnic differences, and instead induce thinking about

power. As Patricia Hill Collins (1995) explained: "Difference is less a problem for me than racism, class exploitation, and gender oppression. Conceptualizing these systems of oppression as difference obfuscates the power relations and material inequalities that constitute oppression" (p. 494). Thus, when it comes to thinking about the category called *race*, our question is not "How are the races different?" but instead "Who benefits from the belief in difference?"

National Identity

National identity refers to a person's immigration status, citizenship, and country allegiance. Interdisciplinary feminist scholars and global human rights activists were the first to explore how national cultural identities are gendered/sexed and how citizens tend to experience their national rights differently based on gender/sex (Enloe, 1989; Moghadam, 1994; Yuval-Davis, 1997, 2003). International studies scholar Tamar Mayer (2000) posited that "control over access to the benefits of belonging to the nation is virtually always gendered" and that "the ability to define the nation lies mainly with men" (p. 2). The feeling of belonging to a nation and the privileges and oppressions contained therein are gendered/sexed in unique ways according to cultural norms, histories of religion, ethnic and class conflicts, economics, and much more.

Gender/sex issues around the world *are* extremely relevant to any study of gender in communication. Placing the study of gender in the context of national identity prevents assuming universal differences between women and men or, worse yet, assuming that research primarily conducted in the United States represents gendered lives around the world. Gender and ethnic studies scholar Nira Yuval-Davis (1999) explained, "Essentialist notions of difference . . . are very different from the notions of difference promoted by those of us who believe in the importance of incorporating notions of difference into democracy. In the first case notions of difference replace notions of equality—in the second case they encompass it" (p. 131). Recognizing national identities is an important part of a gender diversity approach to the study of gender/sex in communication.

When national identity is included in the study of gender/sex, the focus has usually been on citizens of economically disadvantaged countries. The influence of the United States as a nation has not been a primary focus in gender/sex in communication research. Instead, most of the research has focused on the one-to-one relationship level, as if it existed independently of national identity. Yet U.S. national identity and its economic power have had a profound influence on carving out gender identities worldwide. Gender/sex and national identity are related, not just for persons in economically disadvantaged countries, or in countries with more visible internal violence, but for U.S. citizens as well (Mayer, 2000; Mohanty, 2003).

Socioeconomic Class

In the United States, **socioeconomic class** refers to the social position people enjoy as a result of their income, education, occupation, and place of residence. The class to which a person belongs influences the expectations of how gender should

be performed. When children are told to "act like a lady" or "act like a gentleman," the underlying message is usually about class. They are being told to act like a particular type of gender/sex, one that knows the upper-class gentile norms of politeness and identity performance. The message goes even further when children of color receive this message. They are being told to act like White upper-class people do. This command carries class-prescribed expectations of gendered/sexed behaviors that White upper-class people have controlled.

The field of communication studies has been slow to examine the ways in which class may affect communication in the United States. Yet it is clear class often determines how much leeway one is allowed in gender performance. For example, historian Glenna R. Matthews (1992) explained how working-class women were able to enter the public realm as labor activists more easily than upper-class women prior to the 1930s because they were already present in the economic sphere. Economic necessity required them to work and, hence, to violate the social demands of the time requiring that wealthy White women remain domestic. Being politically active presented no unique violation of gender/sex expectations for the working-class women. As a result, the history of labor activism is full of women leaders: Mary Harris "Mother" Jones (Tonn, 1996), Emma Goldman (Kowal, 1996; Solomon, 1987), Voltairine de Cleyre (Palczewski, 1995), and Lucy Parsons (Horwitz, 1998).

Class affects how gender is performed and how gender/sex is perceived. Men of lower classes face the stereotype that they are less intelligent, immoral, and prone to criminality. Women of lower classes are stereotyped as sexually promiscuous, easily duped, and dependent on state assistance. This discrimination and related stereotypes help maintain oppression (Ehrenreich, 1990), which can be multiplied by oppressions due to racism and sexism.

Intersectionality Conclusion

An intersectional approach has many implications for the study of gender. First, intersectionality prevents scholars from falling into a specific type of generalization called essentialism. **Essentialism** is the presumption that all members of a group are alike because they have one quality in common. If researchers study only the fragment of a person called *gender* or *sex*, they reduce a person's complex identity to one dimension. Sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and class also must be considered.

Second, intersectionality recognizes assumptions about gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, and class influence the way individuals view the world and the social realities and inequalities they produce (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Thus, the study of gender in communication is not about quirks of personality but is about the way broad social patterns privilege some people and disadvantage others. Intersectionality makes clear how oppressions of groups interrelate. Just as any analysis of gender in communication is incomplete without taking one's intersectional identity into account, so, too, is any analysis of the cultural tools used in power and privilege (Davis, 2008). Educator-consultant Heather Hackman (2012)

explained that one cannot accomplish social justice by addressing one form of oppression in isolation. Oppressions are not independent. A part of the power of oppressions is the ways they intersect, supporting each other.

Third, intersectionality recognizes that *all* people are labeled with and internalize multiple group identities: "It is not just the marginalized who have a gender, race, and so on" (Harding, 1995, p. 121). Whiteness is part of identity, as is heterosexuality and being a man. People do not always recognize these ingredients because they are considered the norm. So even as intersectionality enables the understanding of complex forms of subordination, it also makes visible how dominant groups have an ethnicity, sex, gender, and class.

Intersectionality renders a more complex, realistic portrayal of individuals' gendered/sexed experiences. Sociologist Leslie McCall (2005) termed it the "intracategorical approach to complexity" that "seeks to complicate and use [identity categories] in a more critical way" (p. 1780). Like McCall, we seek to "focus on the process by which [categories of identity] are produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life" (p. 1783). As you explore your own intersectional identity, your list of ingredients can be quite lengthy, including religious or faith affiliation, age, physical and mental abilities, immigration status, marriage status, and region of country. Keep in mind that gender, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national identity, and socioeconomic class influence your perceptions, but they are not innate, permanent, or universal categories.

Intersectionality of identities and oppressions highlights the way cultural identities and inequalities are embedded in political systems and social structures, not only in people. Philosopher Sandra Harding (1995) explained that sexual and racial inequalities "are not *caused* by prejudice—by individual bad attitudes and false beliefs." In fact, Harding believed that focusing on "prejudice as the cause of racial (or gender, class, or sexual) inequality tends to lodge responsibility for racism on already economically disadvantaged whites who might hold these beliefs." It keeps the focus on individuals rather than on the larger culture in which their attitudes were created. Clearly, prejudice does contribute to racism, sexism, and other forms of inequity, but Harding argued that people should view inequalities as "fundamentally a political relationship" that manifests itself through cultural strategies or norms that privilege some groups over others (p. 122).

Communication

Communication constructs, maintains, and changes gender/sex. It is how group and individual differences and inequalities are created and sustained. Fortunately, because of its dynamic nature, communication also makes social change possible. For these reasons, it is particularly beneficial to focus on communication when examining gender.

We define **communication** broadly as a meaning-making process, consistent with a social construction perspective (Gergen, 1994). People are not passive receivers of meanings but are actively engaged in the meaning-making process.

As the title of this book suggests, one of those meanings being continually constructed through and *in* communication is gender (Taylor, personal correspondence, January 2003). For us, communication is an action (not a reflex). Given gender is communicated, it, too, is an action or something people do.

If we had to summarize the thesis of this entire book in one sentence, it would be this: Communication creates gender, gender does not create communication. Instead of examining how gender influences communication, we explore how communication constrains, perpetuates, stimulates, ignores, and changes gender (Rakow, 1986). We hope to spotlight the profound role communication plays in the construction of gender/sex identities.

Focusing on communication offers important benefits. First, it reminds you that individual gender identities and cultural assumptions about gender change over time. Second, it clarifies that gender does not simply exist on the individual level. Rather, gender is a cultural *system* or *structure* of meaning constructed through interactions that govern access to power and resources (Crawford, 1995). Third, it reveals that individuals play an active role in maintaining and/or changing gender constructions.

A communication approach helps prevent essentializing gender because it treats gender as a verb, not a noun. Gender is a process, not a thing or a universal product. Accordingly, in this book we examine how people "do" (West & Zimmerman, 1987) or "perform" (Butler, 1990a) gender. Gender emerges in the seemingly apolitical, routinized daily behaviors you enact in conscious and nonconscious ways. This, however, does not mean that your performance is without gendered intent or goals. Communication is goal driven. Through repeated stylizations such as gender performance, the communication may become automatic, but it is no less strategic (Brown & Levinson, 1978; Kellerman, 1992). We use the word *strategic* in its broadest sense to refer to how people use components of communication in an attempt to accomplish their multiple, simultaneous interactional goals.

Our reference to cultural *systems* and *structures* highlights the point that communication never happens in a void. It always takes place in multiple contexts, including physical, relational, cultural, and temporal. Cultural systems and values play major roles in constructing meanings. Studying gender as a cultural system or structure makes visible how gender is constructed on at least three communication levels covered in this textbook: individual, interpersonal, and societal (Crawford, 1995).

At the individual or intrapersonal communication level, a person develops personal gendered identities. At the interpersonal communication level, people influence each other's gender identities. At the societal level, social institutions contribute to the construction of gender/sex—both by imposing gender expectations and by liberating persons from them. This is why we dedicate the second half of the textbook to an analysis of the ways in which family, education, work, religion, and media contribute to the construction of gender/sex.

Individuals experience these communication levels simultaneously. For example, rape is an attack on the individual, but it happens in an interpersonal context,

and the reason for the sexual assault, the meaning it is given, and even the laws that define the attack as a crime are gendered. (Note, for example, that not until 2012 did the FBI definition of rape recognize the possibility that men could be raped.) Rape is a crime of gendered and sexual power and domination. It is not a coincidence that women as a group have historically been the most frequent victims of rape, that men as a group have historically been the most frequent aggressors, and that when individual men are the victims, they are emasculated intrapersonally, interpersonally, and culturally. A phrase from the 1960s U.S. women's movement makes the three levels of gender in communication clear: "The personal is political." This maxim explains that what happens to people on a *personal* level is inherently tied to social norms supported by *political* social structures, such as norms about masculinity and femininity. In the study of gender/sex, analyses of communication enable close examination of how gender/sex is socially constructed, maintained, and changed.

The most comprehensive way to study gender in communication is to study all three of these levels—individual, interpersonal, and societal. Doing so makes it easier to recognize how the gender/sex norms that influence individual and interpersonal communication also influence the range of rhetorical choices available to people in public contexts. Similarly, the way politicians or popular culture stars communicate in public contexts may influence one's expectations of how people will interact in daily life.

Systemic Gendered Violence

You cannot adequately study gender in communication without addressing its dark side: violence, including interpersonal physical and emotional violence as well as structural violence. A full understanding of violence requires an understanding of how it is gendered/sexed (Johnson, 2006). Around the world, violence disproportionately affects women and gender non-conforming people.

Regarding women and girls, a United Nations report, *The World's Women 2015*, found:

> In all societies, to varying degrees, women and girls are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse that cuts across lines of income, class and culture. . . . In some cases, violence against women can lead to death; about two thirds of the victims of intimate partner/family-related homicide are women, in contrast to all cases of homicide, of which 20 per cent of the victims are women. Whereas other forms of homicide have shown significant declines over time, rates of intimate partner/family-related female homicide have remained relatively stable. (UN Statistics Division, 2015, pp. 139–141)

Women and girls, as a result of living in systems that devalue them, face violence as a result of their sex.

Figure 1.4 UN Statistics on Violence Against Women

Source: UN Statistics Division, 2015. "The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics" by United Nations (CC By-NC 4.0_, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0).

Homosexual people, and people who are gender non-conforming, also are targeted for violence. A 2015 report from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees found:

> In addition to "street" violence and other spontaneous attacks in public settings, those perceived as LGBT remain targets of organized abuse, including by religious extremists, paramilitary groups and extreme nationalists. LGBT and gender non-conforming youth are at risk of family and community violence. Lesbians and transgender women are at particular risk because of gender inequality and power relations within families and wider society. Violence motivated by homophobia and transphobia is often particularly brutal, and in some instances characterized by levels of cruelty exceeding that of other hate crimes. (pp. 7–8)

The reality is that regardless of the sex of the victim, masculine men tend to be the perpetrators of violence. Typically, those targeted for violence tend to be gendered feminine (or at least not masculine). The term *systemic gendered violence* makes clear that across cultures, gender is a predictor of who is likely to be a perpetrator, and who a victim, of violence.

Gendered/sexed violence is institutionalized. Systems or social structures maintain the notion that being violent is a legitimate part of heterosexual masculinity,

whether through war between nations or verbal aggression between individuals. Violence becomes a normalized, accepted behavior for men. Predominant expectations of masculinity tend to enable men to dominate other men, women, children, animals, and their environment. Men's studies scholar Harry Brod (1987) explained,

> Whether learned in gangs, sports, the military, at the hands (often literally) of older males, or in simple acceptance that "boys will be boys" when they fight, attitudes are conveyed to young males ranging from tolerance to approval of violence as an appropriate vehicle for conflict resolution, perhaps even the most manly means of conflict negation. From this perspective, violent men are not deviants or *non*conformists; they are *over*conformists, men who have responded all too fully to a particular aspect of male socialization. (p. 51)

If violence is equated with proving one's masculinity, it becomes difficult for young men to be nonviolent and maintain their masculinity. Worse yet, society struggles to recognize boys and men as victims of psychological or physical abuse by other men, let alone by women. Men who are victimized are emasculated. Furthermore, when women are violent (e.g., suicide bombers or murdering their spouses or children) society struggles to recognize the acts as violence. They are typically explained as acts of self-defense (Johnson, 2006; Stuart, Moore, Hellmuth, Ransey, & Kahler, 2006), acts of martyrdom, or a form of mental desperation. They are viewed as unusual or unnatural acts for women.

Gendered violence cannot simply be explained by examining an individual person's violent behaviors. Placing blame only on individual men ignores the social structures that enable and even encourage such behavior. People are taught from an early age to view men's violence as the natural effect of testosterone. But if the hormone causes aggression, all people with higher levels of testosterone would be violent, and they are not. In actuality, men are socialized to act aggressive to become men. There is a hierarchy of masculinity, and those at the bottom due to factors such as body size, racism, sexual orientation, or classism must work harder to prove their masculinity (Kimmel, 2012b).

Countless social practices contribute to a culture that normalizes the violence committed by many men against others. These practices include the seemingly innocent standard that girls and women should be more polite, ladylike, and willing to smile and that they should take sexist remarks, street calls, and whistles as innocent jokes or flattery (Kramarae, 1992). Those who speak up risk criticism or physical retaliation. Such gendered social practices also include the expectation that all men should be aggressive, sexually active, and unemotional or risk abuse of some kind.

We introduce you to the interconnections between gender/sex and violence in this chapter, but this is only the start of the conversation. Throughout the rest of this book, we return to this theme by exploring, for example, domestic violence in family settings, bullying in educational settings, sexual harassment in work settings, and sexualized violence in media.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates why a gender diversity approach is necessary. Gender does not exist in isolation from other identity ingredients, nor does it exist in isolation from social pressures and structures that maintain it. Anthropologist Nancy Henley and communication scholar Cheris Kramarae (1992) explained that "cultural difference does not exist within a political vacuum; rather, the strength of difference, the types of difference, the values applied to different forms, the dominance of certain forms—all are shaped by the context" (p. 40). When two people communicate, there are never just two parties present in the interaction; instead, multiple social groups (ethnicity, class, and gender) are represented, each with varying degrees of privilege and oppression.

Given people's intersectional identity, it makes sense that there are far more than two gendered styles of communication. And given the intersections of forms of dominance, a study of gender in communication also requires the study of diverse social categories' relative power. Studying gender diversity in communication calls for an analysis of more than just masculine and feminine styles of communication.

In many ways, this textbook is a "how to" book. It explains *how* to study gender/sex more than it explains what already has been discovered in gender/sex research (although we do a good bit of that as well). Given that researchers' understandings and people's performances of gender/sex continually evolve, it is more important to know how to read, hear, understand, and critique gender in communication than it is to know what has already been discovered. Our goal is not to tell you the way things are, for the state of knowledge changes. Instead, our goal is to teach *how* to see *why* things are the way they are. That way, you can consciously choose to embrace that which is liberatory and work against that which denies the full measure of your wonderfully unique, distinct, and idiosyncratic humanity.

KEY CONCEPTS

androgyny 11
aromantic 17
asexual 17
binary 14
cis 16
communication 21
essentialism 20
ethnicity 18
gender 3
genderqueer 14
gender/sex 14
heteronormativity 17
identity 8
intersectionality 8
intersex 13
normativity 15
race 18
sex 10
sexual orientation 17
socioeconomic class 19
trans 15
transgender 15