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Gender Socialization, Sexual Orientation, and Inequality

Chapter Outline

Newlyweds Donna and Mike suspected that family and friends might have a problem with their decision, but they did not expect quite the reaction they received, according to a story reported in *USA Today* (Friess, 2007). Soon after vowing their commitment to each other for life, they were introduced to the crowd as "Mr. and Mrs. Salinger." Some of their guests clapped politely, some laughed, and others looked confused. Surely, this was a mistake. Mike couldn't have taken on his bride's maiden name as his own last name. For the remainder of the reception, Donna and Mike had a lot of explaining to do.

The Salingers had broken an ingrained, patriarchal tradition that many Americans, men and women alike, support. Social norms generally assume women will adopt their husband's family name—not the other way around. However, this tradition has begun to fall by the wayside as couples sometimes hyphenate their last names, integrate each last name in a new combination known as name blending, retain their family name, or reverse the tradition altogether with husbands and wives assuming a matriarchal alternative.

Even so, only 18% of women keep their surname (Kopelman, Shea-Van Fossen, Paraskevas, Lawter, & Prottas, 2009). In a national survey, 71% of Americans believe that women (not men) should change their names upon marrying, and half of those surveyed reported that the practice of name changing for women should be legally required (Hamilton, Geist, & Powell, 2011).

The issue of name change is only one reflection of a much bigger and complex social problem. **Sexism** or discrimination toward individuals based on sex or gender has major implications on women's (and sometimes men's) economic, legal, social, political, and educational opportunities, rights, and protections. Closely aligned with sexism is the social problem of heterosexism, or the expectation that heterosexuality is normative and preferred and that all other sexual orientations are aberrant and unacceptable. Understanding why sexism and heterosexism exists is one of the purposes of this chapter, along with potential remedies for minimizing such prejudices. We begin by examining both prejudices as social problems and determining the extent or implications of these problems on society.

5.1 Sexism and Heterosexism as Social Problems

People are socialized from early childhood to meet social expectations of gender. While **institutional sexism** creates challenges for both sexes, women are impacted the most. Institutional sexism occurs when the law, local custom, or tradition supports or sanctions discrimination based on sex or gender. For example, the custom of wives assuming their husband's surname favors men's lineage over women's, and yet, in spite of the inequality, the custom persists. In small and large ways, women have yet to achieve social, political, and economic equality. Similarly, gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals also continue to face discrimination. The majority of people across the globe are heterosexual, making heterosexuality the norm. **Heteronormativity** or **heterosexism** describes an expectation that heterosexuality is the norm and any other type of sexuality is deviant or wrong. To what extent have these individual problems of sexuality and gender identity become social problems?

Sexism and Heterosexism as Social Patterns

In order to determine if sexism and heterosexim constitute a social pattern, we can look to the pervasiveness of such discrimination. Sexism is endemic to every known society in the world. It affects employment, educational, economic, legal, political, and social opportunities. Women, on average, make less money than men do, and fewer women serve in legislative roles than men. In addition, women remain excluded from certain high-profile social groups. For instance, IBM CEO Ginni Rometty has yet to receive an invitation to join the all-male Augusta National Golf Club like her CEO predecessors and sponsors. The pattern of heterosexism is equally pervasive in society. Like women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered individuals (**LGBT**) are subject to similar kinds of discrimination. Examples of heterosexism in the United States include the lack of legal protection for gays in the workplace, laws that prevent marriage equality or protect parental rights, and hate crimes against and open hostility toward LGBTs.

Zhang jusheng/Imaginechina/AP Images

Sexism still affects women who are in high-profile corporate positions, such as IBM's CEO Ginni Rometty.

Sexism and Heterosexism and Core Values

While sexism and heterosexism have been around for a very long time, tolerance for such discrimination has changed in recent years. Today people are more accepting of women's rights and alternative lifestyles. Women have gained the right to vote, to own property, to maintain employment during pregnancy, to serve on juries, and to hold political office. Only recently has the majority of Americans begun to accept homosexuality and to hold favorable attitudes toward gay rights. Gays may now serve openly in the military, with some states beginning to recognize gay and lesbian marriages and adoption rights. Further, some workplaces offer health benefits to domestic partners of gay and lesbian employees. Violence against LGBTs is now considered a hate crime, punishable by enhanced penalties. Our distaste for discrimination is increasingly applied to women, gays, and lesbians.

Sexism, Heterosexism, and Power Structure

The struggle to gain power and influence in society has a long history for women and homosexuals. Male and heterosexual dominance have remained widespread throughout the world and continual throughout time. Modern women and gay rights movements as recently as the 1960s have made substantial inroads into the redistribution of power for women and gays. Even so, women continue to fight for reproductive rights, political representation, and equal pay for equal work, among others. And gays and lesbians

are increasingly promoting social equality, encouraging political activism, and forming gay-straight alliances. Unwilling to perceive themselves as powerless and marginalized, LGBT individuals are organizing and campaigning to change people's stereotypes and prejudices about being homosexual, bisexual, or transgendered. They are calling on local, state, and federal governments to legislate and enforce such social change.

Societal Remedies for Sexism and Heterosexism

While consensus is difficult to achieve and unlikely to happen for any social problem, a simple majority may bring about greater willingness to reach compromises and forge change. President Barack Obama, campaigning for a second term in office, attacked the GOP's ostensible "war on women" by fighting to protect women's reproductive rights, access to affordable health care, and equal pay. The same administration, however, resisted pressure from gay and lesbian groups to support their "freedom to marry" so as not to alienate a number of independent and African American voters. Should a sufficient majority of Americans disagree with the president and side instead with gays and lesbians, the president's position might evolve into support for such legislative freedoms. As of this writing, the momentum is building to declare such political support for the rights of gays and lesbians to marry.

The social problems of sexism and heterosexism are evolving. As women and LGBT individuals gain power and respect in society, tolerance for discrimination is becoming less acceptable. An analysis of sexism and heterosexism as it exists today is an important prerequisite to understanding how such problems might be further resolved.

5.2 Gender Identity

When a baby is born, people typically ask, "Is it a boy or a girl?" The answer will influence nearly all aspects of that baby's life. It will impact

- how people interact with the baby,
- the colors the baby will wear,
- the toys the baby will play with,
- the friends the child will have,
- the sports the child will play,
- the major the young adult will choose in college,
- the job the adult will hold,
- the amount of money the adult will make,
- how long a person will live, and much more.

People sometimes use the terms *sex* and *gender* interchangeably, but sociologists make a distinction between **sex** based on biological differences and **gender** based on social and cultural meanings assigned to those differences. **Gender identity** refers to how individuals perceive and accept themselves as belonging to male or female groups. Sociologists call this process of assigning meaning to males or females the social construction of reality (Ryle, 2012). Feminine females, for instance, may describe themselves as nurturing,

emotional, sensitive, and flirtatious, while masculine males may see themselves as aggressive, competitive, strong, and rebellious. The extent to which males and females identify with their stereotypic masculine or feminine traits illustrates their affiliation and conformity with that group. At the same time, we all know women who assume traditionally masculine roles and men who take on feminine roles. This overlay of meaning for gender varies from society to society.

The problem with gender identity as a social construction of reality is the belief that the gender categories are real, and thus, expressions of gender are constrained by one's biological sex. As you will see in this chapter this social construction of gender manifests in numerous illustrations of privilege, oppression, and inequality. Neither men nor women are immune from these social constraints. When you discover that the biological basis for gender identity is questionable, the social construction of what it means to be male and female and the implications of those social constructions become even more problematic.

The Biological Basis for Gender Identity

The process of gender socialization begins at birth when an examination of an infant's genitalia informs the physician of the baby's sex—male or female. Identifying sex this way is common and easy to do. As soon as the sex label is assigned, parents, siblings, and others begin to respond to the infant as feminine or masculine, socializing the child to her or his respective gender identity. Clearly, then, we can see how sex and gender are inextricably related (Ryle, 2012).

The problem of gender identity, however, arises when the genitalia do not obviously indicate one sex or the other. In cases of ambiguous external genitalia, physicians move on to other criteria to determine infant sexuality, including the presence or absence of internal sexual organs (ovaries and testes), the baby's DNA or chromosomal patterns, and amazingly enough, the size of the penis. For example, a penis shorter than 2.5 centimeters is considered too small to classify the infant as a male. Why 2.5 centimeters? This benchmark rests on the belief that an organ larger than 2.5 centimeters is needed in order to urinate standing up and to successfully engage in vaginal penetration (Fausto-Sterling, 2000).

As you can see, these methods of sex identification can be problematic, particularly for *intersexed* infants or those born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't readily or easily fit into being female or male. Typically, intersexed infants require some kind of genital reconstruction, and because it is easier to construct vaginas than penises, most of these infants become female. Apparently, then, sex assignment can be somewhat arbitrary and subjective. Gender identity, as a function first of sex and then of socialization, may not line up all that perfectly with our biology (Ryle, 2012).

Realigning Sex with Gender Identity

With medical intervention, people whose assigned biological sex fails to match their perceived gender identity can change their bodies to align their sex with their self-perceptions. **Transsexual** refers to people who have sex reassignment operations to change their sex organs, such as females who remove their breasts or males who remove their penises. Hormone treatments alter human physiology such as where the body grows hair and retains fat. Such medical procedures and treatments are expensive and unavailable to many.

Transgender is a broader term that includes people who choose to live as the opposite gender, often without sex reassignment surgery. Transgendered people choose clothes, mannerisms, and names to indicate a gender identity that does not match their biological sex assignment. For example, a man who transitions to a woman may grow his hair long, wear dresses, high heels, and make-up long before undergoing sex reassignment surgery, if at all.

In recent years, public awareness of transsexual and transgender people has increased dramatically. Even so, transgender identity remains a social problem. Chaz Bono, who was named Chastity at birth, the daughter of pop singers Sonny and Cher, appeared on *Dancing with the Stars* in 2011 as the first transgender person to ever compete on the television show. Backlash immediately ensued, with parent and religious groups inviting boycotts of the season's episodes, citing concerns that Chaz's performance as a male partner would be confusing for children. This type of public outrage illustrates how Chaz's gender identity threatened some viewers' core values of what males and females are supposed to be like. To get some idea of the controversy generated by Chaz's appearance on the show, take a look at this ABC online video: http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/chaz-bono-paying-attention-dwts-controversy/story?id=14454987

Beck Starr/Getty Images

Chaz Bono brought increased public attention to transgender and transsexual people after appearing on *Dancing with the Stars* in 2011.

The Gender of Sexual Orientation

Part of gender identity is one's **sexual orientation**, or to which sex one is physically and emotionally attracted. **Heterosexuals** are attracted to the opposite sex, while **homosexuals** are attracted to people of the same sex and often refer to themselves as gay or lesbian. Still others are **bisexual** and are attracted to both sexes. The expectation of heterosexuality or heteronormativity is reflected in the simple question posed by sociologist Robin Ryle (2012, p. 203): "When did you know you were straight?" The authors do not assume that all readers of this chapter are heterosexual, but for those who are, the answer to this question may be difficult. Moreover, the question itself is disarming. And yet, as Ryle points out, gays and lesbians are often asked when did they know they were homosexual.

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual is pervasive in Anglo-European societies. The most obvious example of heteronormativity can be found in the institution of marriage, limited to only those who are heterosexual in most states here in the United States. Marriage affords heterosexual couples legal rights, status, and privileges not similarly available to homosexual or bisexual couples. More subtle examples can be found in preponderance of media portrayals of opposite-sex relationships—almost to the exclusion of same-sex couples. In the workplace, desk photos of heterosexual partners are

perfectly acceptable, but pictures of same-sex partners may not be. To be heterosexual, then, privileges individuals and couples in all sorts of ways, while marginalizing those who are not.

Gender and Socialization

How we learn gender is a function of what sociologists call **gender socialization**. Generally, socialization refers to the way we learn how to learn to become a member of a particular group. When it comes to gender, we are socialized to learn particular **gender roles** that dictate our behavior, attitudes, and activities as males or females. We learn the norms of how women and men are supposed to behave. This socialization process over time informs our gender identity. Women learn how to be feminine, and men learn how to be masculine. The primary agents of socialization are family, friends, school, and the media.

Messages about gender identity begin as soon as children are born, beginning with naming, clothing, and interacting with others. We have boy names and girl names, boy toys and girl toys, and boy sports and girl sports. By the age of 3 or 4, children have internalized a fairly rigid conception of what it means to be male or female (Tobin, Menon, Menon, Spatta, Hodges, & Perry, 2010). Children glean more subtle messages about gender identity from what they read or what they watch on television. Studies examining children's books from the 1940s through the 1960s, for example, found that authors tended to portray female characters as helpless and needing to be saved by strong, aggressive males. Even contemporary coloring books reflect gender stereotyping (Fitzpatrick & McPherson, 2010). While acknowledging that children's literature and other entertainment media have begun to portray females in more differentiated and powerful roles, the media continue to underrepresent females and stereotype females and males (Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006). Recent analysis of best-selling children's books published in 2010 finds boys' gender identity as more differentiated as well, depicting them as nurturing, fearful, and vulnerable, with girls' overall representation improving somewhat (Paynter, 2011).

Social norms that are promoted, learned, and reinforced in the United States about men and women reflect stereotypes of men prioritizing individualism and success and women valuing personal relationships and connections. Important to being a woman are qualities of compassion, nurturance, and support. As a result, women often share their experiences with each other to show compassion for another's difficulties. They might also avoid criticizing, outdoing, or belittling another in their efforts to be polite, show respect, and act courteous. In contrast, men learn the social norms of competition, assertiveness, and control. To be masculine, men must be successful, a good provider, and in command of their environment. Adult men are expected to have jobs, and a failure to do so is a threat to their masculinity (Ryle, 2012, p. 373).

AP Images

Advertising aimed at women often focuses on achieving youth and beauty.

For men, jobs are core to their gendered identity. When asked about their identity, most men first describe what they do for a living. Women might mention their jobs as well, but they are more likely to tell you about their interests and family obligations (Rubin, 1994).

The media play a large role in delivering messages about gender identity and sexuality. In particular, advertising has historically portrayed women as housekeepers, mothers, and sexual temptresses (Komisar, 1971). Women are more often targets of objectionable gendered messages than men. In response to media speculation (and criticism) that she had plastic surgery, actor Ashley Judd pushed back with her editorial posted on the Daily Beast website. You can read her response online at http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/04/09/ashley-judd-slaps-media-in-the-face-for-speculation-over-her-puffy-appearance.html.

In her *Killing Us Softly* video series (1979, 1987, 2000, 2010) Jean Kilbourne demonstrates that advertising shows women as physically flawless with no lines or wrinkles, no scars or blemishes, and no pores. Current ads portraying women reinforce sexism, eating disorders, and sexual violence. Kilbourne's most recent video is available at http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=241

Moreover, advertising has historically limited the definition or image of what it means to be a man. Men were rarely shown with families, with children, or in partnerships with others. An analysis of ads targeted at men typically showed them as …

> in charge, self-contained and often alone. When shown with other men, they seem ready to unleash their aggression at any moment. When shown with women, they must be dominant. The male body can be used to sell any product, but whatever the fashion, the air of aloofness and barely controlled power is palpable. (Nakayama, 1989)

More current representations of men in the media show them as classic icons of The Joker (dumb or goofy), The Jock (strong, tough, and a winner), The Strong Silent Type (being in charge, acting decisively, and containing emotion), The Big Shot (confident, successful, and wealthy), and The Action Hero (strong, angry, and violent) (Boys to Men, 1999). A number of recent television sitcoms depict men as "inept, overweight, and immature" who happen to be married to "smart, witty, and attractive" women (Walsh, Fürsich, & Jefferson, 2008).

While gender socialization may make it easier for women and men to define and understand their respective roles, at the same time the process has also served to undermine the status and restrict the roles of both men and women. The messages we receive from others about our gender, whether it is from the media, family, work colleagues, or peers, influence the way we think about how men and women should act, think, and feel.

5.3 Sexism

Although the United States recognizes legal equality for women, gender socialization supports inequality in practice. U.S. Census Bureau data reveals that women make up 51% of the population; however, because women have less social, economic,

and political power sociologists refer to women as a minority group. The resulting patriarchy or society where men have more power than women, permits gender socialization that promotes **sexism**, a way of thinking that claims one sex is superior to the other. Authority, status, and power are more often afforded to males in patriarchal societies. Males are identified as heads of household, assume professional roles in the workplace, and hold major positions of legal and judicial power. While women are making inroads into positions of power, the patriarch remains dominant in the United States. Within a patriarchal system, the standard for comparison is maleness. When women take on traditional male roles by becoming judges, lawyers, doctors, they are likely perceived as less competent or effective—when compared to men in similar positions.

Feminism, one response to sexism, calls for the end of patriarchy and thus, the end of male privilege, socially, economically, and politically. Feminists believe that all people are created equal and insist on equal opportunities and rights for women and men. The division of labor in the household, women's reproductive rights, and women's suffrage all emanate from this core value and belief. The idea of a superior sex, male or female, is antithetical to feminism. Sexism, from a feminist's perspective, then, would have no place in society.

Social Inequality

Social inequality of women is evident in everyday experiences in the home and community. In 2011, statistics show that more women than men worked outside the home (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2011). Even though men have taken on more of the tasks traditionally seen as "women's work," such as cooking, cleaning, and child care, women still tend to do more of this type of unpaid labor than men. In fact working women do about double the amount of housework as working men (Belkin, 2008; BLS, 2010a). Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2003) calls this social phenomenon the "**second shift**" for women.

The basis for the so-called "mommy wars" rests with the assumption that women who stay at home to raise children enjoy lesser status than women who work outside the home. Democratic pundit Hilary Rosen's indictment of Ann Romney (Mitt Romney's wife) incited quite a stir. She referred to Ann as a "woman who has never worked a day in her life." Even though a number of "mommies" rejected Rosen's accusation outright, the status of full-time parenting has always been considered as somehow less important or less meaningful than working full time and earning a wage (Mayer, 2012).

Educational Inequality

Women have made great strides in achieving educational equality. Women have surpassed men in numbers going to college and graduating with bachelor's and master's degrees; however, men lead women in doctoral and professional degrees (*Statistical Abstract*, 2012a). More women than men choose fields such as arts, humanities, and applied sciences, which provide fewer career opportunities and lower pay preventing these gains in educational equality from translating to economic power for women (*Statistical Abstract*, 2012b). Gender socialization influences the subjects girls are encouraged to study in school leading to women being underrepresented in the STEM disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and math in college and later careers.

Thinkstock

More women than men are earning bachelor's degrees and master's degrees.

Legislation has helped women gain educational equality. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination in schools in either academics or sports. It states "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (20 United States Code, §1681). Title IX covers access to the following:

- higher education
- athletics
- career education
- education for pregnant and parenting students
- employment
- learning environment
- math and science
- sexual harassment
- standardized testing
- technology (titleixinfo)

One of the better-known impacts of Title IX relates to gender equity in athletics. While only 1 in 27 girls participated in high school sports before the passage of Title IX (TitleIX.info) the number has increased to almost 1 in 2 girls in high school athletic programs since (Stevenson, 2007). However, the percentage of girls participating varies by state and by the enforcement of Title IX (Stevenson, 2007). To find out more about the global gender gap, view this video at http://am.blogs.cnn.com/2011/11/01/global-gender-gap-2011-report-released-shows-us-improves-on-gender-equality/

A Closer Look: Title IX

You can find more information about Title IX and information on why such legislation remains necessary at http://www.titleix.info/Default.aspx

Next, check out the Title Nine company's website and read their "Who We Are" page at http://www.titlenine.com/category/who+are+we.do

Does the company appear to support equality for women and want to empower women? What do you think of the last sentence of their About Us statement: "We like dessert"? What message does that send?

Employment Inequality

Since the early 1900s, the number of women in the paid labor force has grown, with women in 2011 comprising slightly more than half of the workforce (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2011). However, women earn about 80% of what men earn (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Despite being more educated than men, women are less likely to have high-paying jobs, making up 69% of the low wage work force (GAO, 2011). At the opposite end of the wage spectrum, only 14% of senior executives at Fortune 500 companies are women, and that number has remained stable since 2005 (Korkki, 2011). At the same time, highly educated women executives are becoming a premium; female CEOs are out earning their male cohorts by an average of 43% (Rosin, 2010). The increasing availability and use of gender-neutral flextime in the workplace reflect the kind of change that allows parents, and women in particular, to thrive at home and at work. Figure 5.1 provides data illustrating the increasing number of women in management and professional occupations—as compared to men (BLS, 2009).

Figure 5.1: Employment of men and women in management, professional, and related occupational groups for 2008
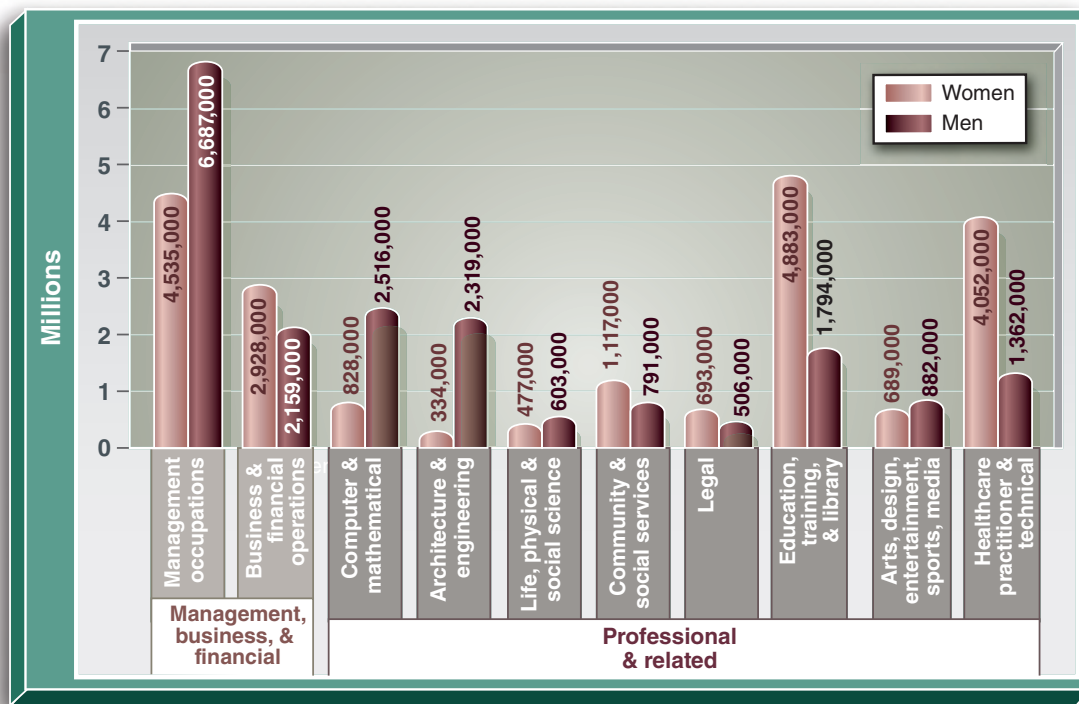
Women dominate occupations related to education, training, library services, and health care.

Maury Aaseng
Source: Based on data from the United States Department of Labor
http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2009/ted_20090807.htm

The **glass ceiling** is a term for barriers that make it difficult for qualified women to be promoted to the highest levels in some organizations. Ironically, when men do work in traditionally female-dominated fields, they may experience a **glass escalator** effect, which promotes men to senior positions faster than women. For example, in the field of education, male teachers are more likely to become administrators than females. As the gender gap in education increases with even more women seeking advanced degrees necessary for employment in the emerging economy, this historical economic gender gap may shrink.

The U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau defines a nontraditional occupation as one in which 25% or less of the workforce is comprised of a particular gender. Occupations can be **gender-typed** when society labels the work as either women's work or men's work. Pink-collar work refers to occupations traditionally populated by women such as secretarial and retail jobs. Blue-collar work, including factory and construction work, and white-collar work, consisting of managerial positions, both traditionally employ men and pay more than pink-collar jobs. Take a look, for instance, at the top 20 leading occupations for employed women in 2010 in Table 5.1. Almost all would be considered pink-collar jobs with low pay.

Table 5.1: Twenty leading outcomes of employed women, 2010 annual averages (employment in thousands)				
Occupation	Total employed women	Total employed (men and women)	Percent women	Women's median weekly earnings
Total, 16 years and older (all employed women)	65,638	139,064	47.2	$669
Secretaries and administrative assistants	2,962	3,082	96.1	657
Registered nurses	2,590	2,843	91.1	1,039
Elementary and middle school teachers	2,301	2,813	81.8	931
Cashiers	2,291	3,109	73.7	366
Retail salespersons	1,705	3,286	51.9	421
Nursing, psychiatric, and home health aides	1,700	1,928	88.2	427
Waiters and waitresses	1,470	2,067	71.1	381
First-line supervisors/managers of retail sales workers	1,375	3,132	43.9	578
Customer service representatives	1,263	1,896	66.6	586
Maids and housekeeping cleaners	1,252	1,407	89.0	376
Receptionists and information clerks	1,187	1,281	92.7	529 *(continued)*

Table 5.1: Twenty leading outcomes of employed women, 2010 annual averages (employment in thousands) *(continued)*				
Occupation	Total employed women	Total employed (men and women)	Percent women	Women's median weekly earnings
Childcare workers	1,181	1,247	94.7	398
Bookkeeping, accounting, and auditing clerks	1,179	1,297	90.9	628
First-line supervisors/managers of office and administrative support	1,035	1,507	68.7	726
Managers, all others	1,014	2,898	35.0	1,045
Accountants and auditors	989	1,646	60.1	953
Teachers assistants	893	966	92.4	485
Personal and home care aides	838	971	86.1	405
Office clerks, general	837	994	84.2	597
Cooks	790	1,951	40.5	381

Source: http://www.dol.gov/wb/factsheets/20lead2010.htm

Recent trends reveal men and women increasingly choosing gender typed nontraditional occupations. Nursing, a relatively high-paying profession, is attracting an increasing number of men (Lorenz, 2007). By one estimate, men will make up 25% of nurses in the United States by the year 2020 (Male Nursing Statistics, 2011).

Just as increasing numbers of men choose to become nurses, rising numbers of women seek employment in traditionally male-dominated fields such as law enforcement, politics, and the military. The U.S. military now consists of approximately 85% men and 15% women (Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc., 2010). At the federal level, women make up about 20% of law enforcement officers, and at the state and local levels, the number of women officers varies according to the size of the agency. About 7% of state-level officers are women, while in the largest local agencies women account for an average of 18% of all law enforcement officers (Langton, 2010). A number of additional factors may contribute to continuing inequalities for women in the workplace. For example, women who work in nontraditional occupations face numerous challenges such as few female colleagues or mentors with whom they can relate as women, performance expectations designed to "prove" they are qualified for the position, and assumptions about women's priorities that may require sacrificed time at work to complete responsibilities at home (GMP, 2010).

Women also experience challenges to employment due to reproductive functions. Since men are unable to bear children, women carry this responsibility alone requiring them to take at least some time off from work to give birth, recover, and care for their newborn.

Even if fathers choose to stay at home with their children or outside daycare is used, women must still perform the task of pregnancy and all that it physically requires.

Additionally, discrimination and sexual harassment make it difficult for women to achieve equality in the workplace. **Sexual harassment** is defined by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as "unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature" (Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964). Women are more likely than men to be victims of sexual harassment, which may affect their work performance, cause them to be denied promotion, or force them to quit in order to avoid the abuse of a hostile work environment (Settles, Harrell, Buchanan, & Yap, 2011). Victims of sexual harassment are typically limited in their options to compliance, resistance, reporting, or litigation.

Bloomberg/Getty Images

Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo, is one of the few female senior executives of a Fortune 500 company.

A Closer Look: EEOC

Click on this link http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/index.cfm to read through the various types of laws and regulations the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission enforces.

In what ways has the EEOC improved the working lives of women? Do you think the EEOC has done enough to protect equal opportunity in the workforce? Why or why not?

Political Inequality

Political equality is essential to achieving all other forms of equality. Political inequality refers to the lack of egalitarian representation, voice, and influence over legislation and policy.

Historically, women have not enjoyed the same access to legislative power as men in the United States. After years of political struggle, the 19th Amendment granted women the right to vote in 1920. While women exercise their voting rights at higher rates than men, they remain underrepresented in political office. In 2011, 17 of the 100 members of the Senate were women, while the House of Representatives included 72 women, or about 17% of the 435 members. At the same time, 6 of the 50 state governors were women. From 2007 to 2011 Nancy Pelosi served as the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives in the 110th and 111th Congresses and remains the highest-ranking female politician in U.S. history.

A Closer Look: Women Fighting Political Violence

Of the more than 100 people awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, only 15 have been women (Cowell, Kasinof, & Nossiter, 2011). Most recently, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the 2011 prize to three women for their peace-building efforts:

- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2005 became the first female to be elected president of an African nation. After 14 years of civil war in Liberia, this 72-year-old Harvard educated economist greatly improved peace and security for the nation.
- Leymah Gbowee, a 39-year-old peace activist who works alongside President Sirleaf as the head of the Women's Peace and Security Network, received the prize with Sirleaf for their work uniting Christian and Muslim women against Liberia's warlords.
- Activist Tawwkkul Karman, a 32-year-old mother, won for her efforts as head of the human rights group, *Women Journalists without Chains*. Known as "the iron woman" and "the mother of the revolution," Karman led uprisings against Yemen's recently ousted President, Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Women, War & Peace is a five-part PBS television series challenging the traditional ideas about gender and war. For examples of women involved in the struggle for peace around the world, watch the full episodes at http://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/category/full-episodes

Why might it be inspiring for young girls to read publicity about Nobel Peace Prize–winning women? How important is raising awareness about violence against women in the global peace process?

Only three secretaries of state have been women, including Hillary Clinton during Barack Obama's presidency. In 1981, Sandra Day O'Connor became the first woman appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 2012, three of nine justices were women: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan. The Democrats were the first party to nominate a female vice presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro, in 1984. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have ever nominated a female presidential candidate, despite the efforts of Hilary Clinton in 2008.

A Closer Look: Women's Status in Saudi Arabia

Gender roles in Saudi Arabia are based on *Sharia*, or Islamic law. A principal aspect of gender socialization is the separation of adult men and women, known as *purdah*. *Sharia* law dictates all aspects of social life, both public and private.

In public, men and women are segregated with businesses having separate entrances, as well as men and women being forbidden to sit together in restaurants, on buses, trains, and at weddings or funerals. Western companies such as McDonald's and Starbucks have segregated sections in their establishments. Even homes have separate entrances, and women are expected to confine themselves to the kitchen and bedrooms while public rooms such as the living room are the realm of men.

In addition to having their movements regulated, women must also follow rules dictating their appearance. Most Saudi women cover themselves to varying degrees with some wearing a hijab, *(continued)*

A Closer Look: Women's Status in Saudi Arabia *(continued)*

veil or head covering, while others also wear a niqab, which covers the face. Still others go further by donning a burka, which covers the entire body.

Although there is great gender discrimination in Saudi Arabia, the political climate is changing. According to the *New York Times*, in September of 2011 King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia granted women the right to vote and run in future municipal elections (MacFarquhar, 2011). Under the new law, however, women may find it difficult to participate in the political process because of their ingrained socialization and the attitudes of the men around them. For example, the prohibition against women driving makes it difficult, if not impossible, for them to run for political office.

To learn more about the protests against laws prohibiting women from driving in Saudi Arabia, watch "Could Saudi Women's Driving Protest Usher in Social Reforms?" At http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social_issues/jan-june11/womendriving2_06-17.html

Are there any similarities between the status of women in the United States and women in Saudi Arabia? Women tend to be the fiercest advocates for wearing the hijab, niqab, or burka: Why do you think that is? Is it fair for Western nations to question cultural norms in countries like Saudi Arabia? Why or why not?

5.4 Heterosexism

Like other institutional "isms" of race and sex, heterosexism reflects antigay sentiment and resulting prejudice. Heterosexism is a form of prejudice that situates heterosexuality as "normal" and thus "superior" to other sexual orientations. Heterosexism gives more power, status, and control to heterosexuals while stigmatizing and oppressing others.

Many Americans hold negative beliefs regarding homosexuality including that it is morally wrong, unnatural, and ultimately unacceptable. Only recently have Americans' acceptance of homosexuality crossed the 50% threshold at just 52% (Saad, 2010). Gallup's annual survey reveals a steady but slight increase in favorable attitudes toward and acceptance of gay rights since 2006. Americans remain split over legalizing gay marriage. While increased acceptance of gay and lesbian relations is evident, heterosexism continues to be considered the norm in the social, legal, and political institutions of the United States.
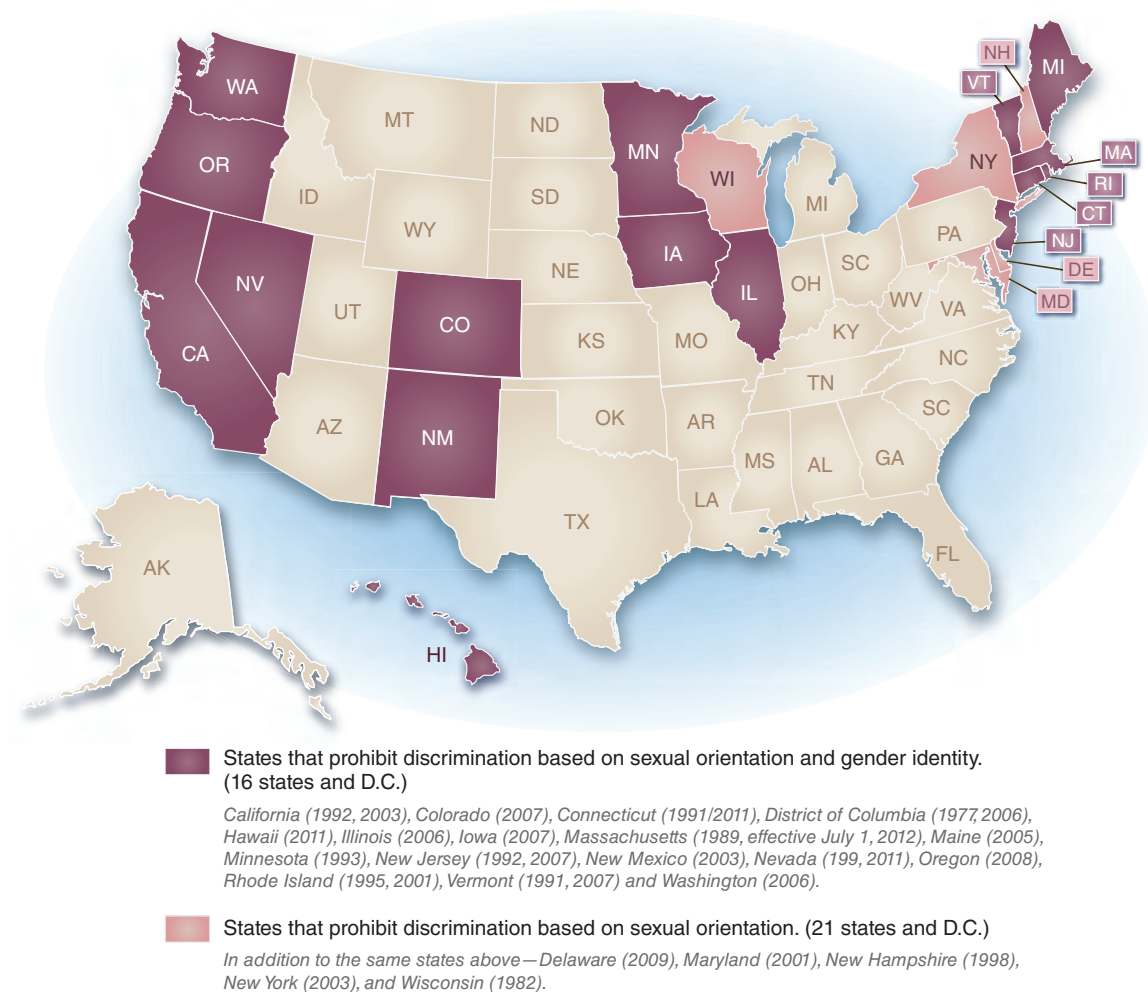
Gay Rights

Discrimination toward lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (LGBTs) is rooted in almost all categories of society, including the privileges denied to them in employment, marriage, military service, and parental rights. The privileges and opportunities that heterosexuals take for granted are only recently becoming available to others.

Employment

Historically, gays and lesbians have been offered little or no legal protection from discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Even though 89% of Americans believe that gays, lesbians, and bisexuals should be treated with equal respect at work, only 21 states and the District of Columbia prohibit discrimination against sexual orientation; of those states, only 16 protect the rights of both sexual orientation and gender identity (Human Rights Campaign, 2012). Figure 5.2 identifies states that offer protection and those that do not.

Figure 5.2: How states define employment discrimination

■ States that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. (16 states and D.C.)

California (1992, 2003), Colorado (2007), Connecticut (1991/2011), District of Columbia (1977, 2006), Hawaii (2011), Illinois (2006), Iowa (2007), Massachusetts (1989, effective July 1, 2012), Maine (2005), Minnesota (1993), New Jersey (1992, 2007), New Mexico (2003), Nevada (199, 2011), Oregon (2008), Rhode Island (1995, 2001), Vermont (1991, 2007) and Washington (2006).

■ States that prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation. (21 states and D.C.)

In addition to the same states above—Delaware (2009), Maryland (2001), New Hampshire (1998), New York (2003), and Wisconsin (1982).

Fewer than half of all states offer protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation, and only 16 states offer protection against discrimination based on gender identity as well.

Maury Aaseng

Source: Based on data from the Human Rights Campaign www.hrc.org/state_laws

A Closer Look: BFOQs

Normally, only **bona fide occupational qualifications (BFOQs)** can be used when making employment and retention decisions. That is, only those aptitudes, qualifications, or skills essential to a given task or business can be considered when hiring or firing. Consequently, race, sex, religion, age, and potentially other characteristics are considered discriminatory—and illegal. After examining the map in Figure 5.2, select the state in which you currently reside. What protections from such discrimination might you expect? How is it possible that states can hire, fire, and deny promotion based on one's sexual orientation or gender identity? How does such discrimination "square" with civil rights employment laws? What BFOQ does sexual orientation serve?

Even with legal protection, LGBTs may find the work environment challenging. The experience or even fear of discrimination on the job can create a stressful and at times hostile work environment for anyone. For homosexuals, disclosing this personal information at work brings the risk of prejudicial responses from coworkers, employers, and clients. Facing either real or perceived discrimination in hiring, promotion, scheduling, and firing decisions can affect employee satisfaction, performance, absenteeism, mental and physical health, and turnover rates.

Marriage

As recently as 2011 only about 1% of all couple households were comprised of same-sex couples (Lofquist, 2011). In spite of the relative infrequency of such households, much debate remains about whether or not same-sex marriages should be legally recognized. One recent poll found public opinion in the United States to have reached a 53% majority for the first time in favor of the legalization of same-sex marriages (Newport, 2011). Other polls suggest that only 45% believe gays and lesbians should be allowed to legally marry (Pew Research Center, 2011a). Clearly, though, American opposition to gay marriage is decreasing.
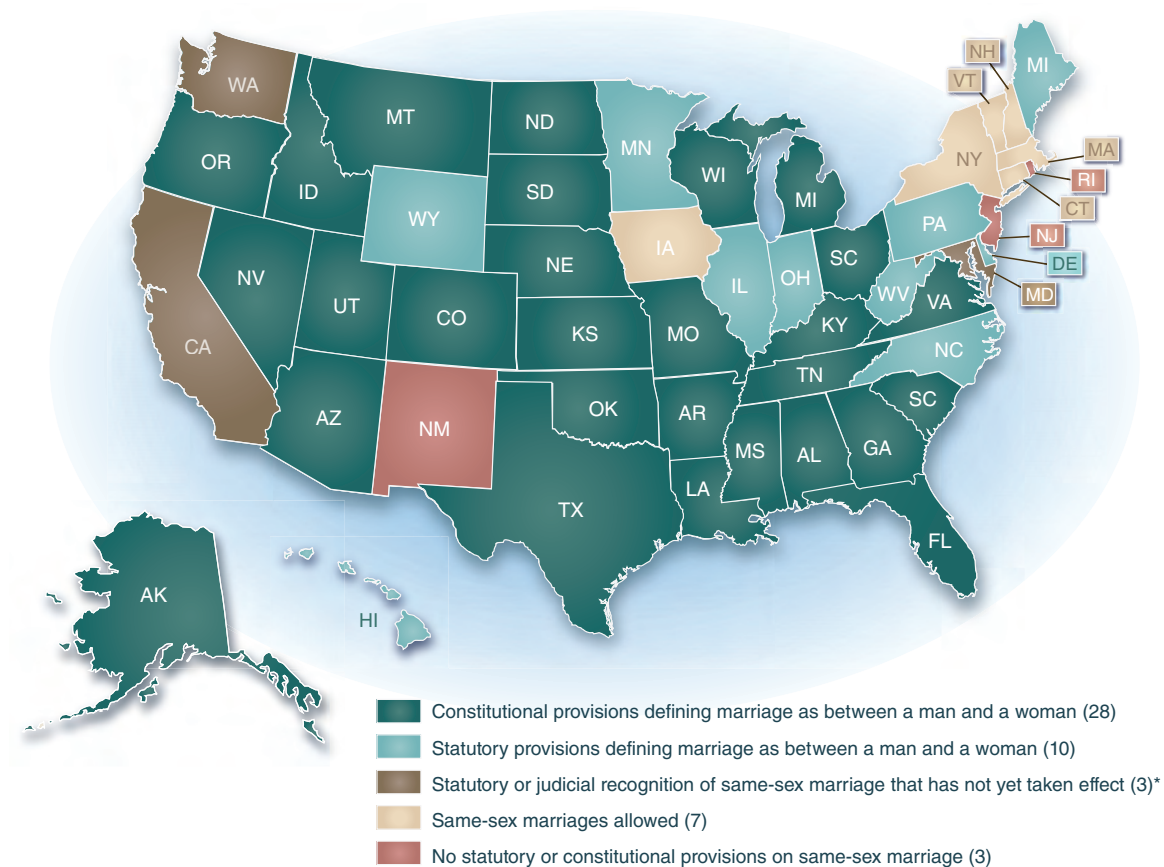

Boston Globe/Getty Images

Despite growing acceptance of homosexuality, Americans remain split over the legalization of gay marriage.

Legal institutions, however, are slower to respond to changes in public opinion. In July 2000, Vermont became the first state to permit civil unions. As of 2011, Delaware, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, and Rhode Island grant civil union status to gay couples providing them with many, but not all, of the same rights and privileges of married couples. Six states, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, and Vermont in addition to Washington, D.C., grant marriage licenses to gay couples. Even so, gay marriages performed in one state are not similarly recognized in other states.

Some proponents for gay marriage advocate for a federal mandate allowing same-sex marriages nationwide. In 1996 Congress passed, and President Bill Clinton signed, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman, that permits states to deny same-sex couples the right to marry. Thirty-nine states have embraced the Act by limiting marriages constitutionally or legislatively to one man and one woman. However, in 2011 President Barack Obama ordered the Department of Justice to cease enforcing DOMA against lawsuits challenging it as violating the United States Constitution. Figure 5.3 provides a quick look at where each state stands on this issue (NCSL, 2012).

Figure 5.3: How states define marriage

Constitutional provisions defining marriage as between a man and a woman (28)

Statutory provisions defining marriage as between a man and a woman (10)

Statutory or judicial recognition of same-sex marriage that has not yet taken effect (3)*

Same-sex marriages allowed (7)

No statutory or constitutional provisions on same-sex marriage (3)

Laws concerning same-sex marriage vary from state to state.

Maury Aaseng

Source: Based on data from NCSL (2012, February 24). Defining marriage: Defense of Marriage acts and same-sex marriage laws, http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/human-services/same-sex-marriage-overview.aspx

Same-sex marriage has become increasingly accepted outside the United States as well. In 2001, the Netherlands was the first country to legalize gay marriage. Over the last decade

Belgium, Canada, Iceland, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Argentina, and Portugal have also legalized same-sex marriage. Other countries that permit civil unions and registered partnerships include Uruguay, Austria, Brazil, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, parts of France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, New Zealand, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Military Service

In the U.S. military, sex between homosexuals has been grounds for discharge since the Revolutionary War. The Uniform Code of Military Justice passed by Congress in 1950 and signed by President Harry S. Truman established modern-era policy. According to the code, homosexuality was incompatible with serving in the military, and any people who engaged in homosexual acts or stated they were gay or bisexual would be discharged.

A surge of gay political organizations occurred during the 1970s, resulting in the inclusion of nondiscrimination law protecting gays and lesbians in the 1980 national Democratic Party platform. By the late 1980s, the national "coming out" day was established, encouraging gays and lesbians to make their sexual orientation public (Levy, 2009). According to a 1993 RAND report, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) documented nearly 17,000 men and women who were discharged from the armed services on the grounds of homosexuality in the 1980s (RAND, 1993, p. 8). By 1992, the military ban against homosexuals became a political issue, with then presidential candidate Bill Clinton promising to repeal the ban against gays serving in the military.

In a 1993 compromise, the Clinton administration issued a directive that applicants to the military could not be asked about their sexual orientation but could be dismissed if they were discovered to be gay. The policy was known as Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT), a phrase coined by Charles Moskos, a military sociologist at Northwestern University. The policy became an issue again in the 2008 presidential campaign, when Barack Obama promised to repeal DADT and prohibit discrimination against gay men and women in the military. Subsequently, President Obama signed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 in December 2010, which took effect the following year. For video news coverage of this historic event, see http://www.cbsnews.com/2100-201_162-20108690.html

Parenting

Attitudes toward gay parents are changing as well. A recent overview of more than 100 research studies on the impact of gay parenting on children shows that children in such families are as emotionally and socially healthy as peers raised by heterosexual parents (Goldberg, 2009).

Psychologist and author Abbie Goldberg describes children of gay parents: "They do just as well in school, they're just as popular, and they have just as many friends. And all the research indicates that they're very well adjusted. They're more likely to be tolerant of differences, because their parents are teaching them certain values that are positive" (Goldberg quoted in an interview with Wilson, 2009). Research evidence continually demonstrates that children raised in households with LGBT parents suffer no negative effects and that they fare no better or worse than those from heterosexual households (Patterson, 2009; Peplau & Beals, 2004; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001).

A large number of respected national medical organizations have reinforced this research stating, "A parent's sexual orientation is irrelevant to his or her ability to raise a child," including the American Psychological Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, and American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (Human Rights Campaign, 2011–2012).

Because of these findings, fewer Americans in 2012 (35%) agree with the statement that gay and lesbian parenting "is a bad thing for society" (Pew Research, 2011). In fact, in the previous 5 years there was a substantial increase in the number of people surveyed who believed that it "makes no difference" (from 34% to 48%).

Gay and lesbian couples are increasingly adopting children, although they still encounter daunting legal hurdles. Two states (Utah and Mississippi) outlaw such adoptions, and many other states require a marriage license that may be impossible to obtain in states that prohibit same-sex marriage. Regardless, the number of gay couples adopting children has tripled in the last 10 years. In 2009 alone, nearly 22,000 same-sex couples adopted children (Williams Institute, 2011).

David Friedman/Getty Images

Research demonstrates that children raised by LGBT parents are well adjusted and more likely to be tolerant of differences in others.

Hate Crimes Against Gays

LGBT individuals are more easily targeted as victims of **hate crimes** and violence than heterosexuals because of their minority status. Hate crimes or bias crimes occur when a person targets another simply because of the victim's membership in a particular group, such as race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation (FBI, n.d.). Hate crimes involve sexual or physical assault, bullying, murder, threats, harassment, arson, and/or vandalism.

Of the 8,208 hate crimes documented by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2010, almost 20% were found to be motivated by bias toward sexual orientation amounting to 1,528 LGBT victims in 1 year alone. Motives for those crimes include

- 57.3% anti-male homosexual bias,
- 27.5% anti-homosexual bias,
- 11.8% anti-female homosexual bias,
- 1.4% anti-heterosexual bias,
- 1.9% anti-bisexual bias (FBI, 2010).

Even though gay men are more likely to be victims of sexual violence or assault, lesbians perceive the same level of risk for potential victimization (Otis, 2007). Transgender people and lesbians/gays of color, however, are most at risk with disproportionate occurrences of murder, assault, intimidation, and discrimination (NCAVP, 2011). Hate crimes are most

likely to occur in individual residences or on the street with young heterosexual men ranging in age from 19 to 39 years the most likely offenders. The 2010 data reveal that of all offenders, 41.5% were white, 35.3% were black, and 14.6% were Latino (NCAVP, 2011).

5.5 Theoretical Perspectives on Sexism and Heterosexism

The functionalist, conflict/feminist, and symbolic interactionist theoretical perspectives each focus on different aspects of the problem. In combination, these various theoretical perspectives help to explain the causes and effects of these social problems.

Functionalist Perspective

Functionalists argue that sexism and heterosexism serve a purpose in maintaining social order by supporting and stabilizing the functional roles of males and females in society. Sexism is the natural result of the differential roles of men and women. Early sociological thinking (Parsons, 1954) promoted such sex-role differentiation within the family arguing that learning traditional, socially acceptable, and expected patterns of behavior (roles) were essential to the functioning of the family and the larger society. Males engaged in more instrumental behaviors important to providing for the family, while females were expected to be more expressive in their roles as wife, mother, or daughter. Such highly sex-role scripted behaviors restricts the development of more egalitarian attitudes toward sex roles.

In preindustrial societies men were often compelled to use their physical strength and ability to hunt and engage in combat in order to provide food and security for their families while women adept at managing multiple tasks simultaneously were responsible for providing and preparing food, caring for children and the ill, making clothing, and providing for all other household needs. Industrialization changed these functional roles requiring men and women to engage in similar activities. In fact, with more and more women assuming the roles of "heads of household" at home and management or leadership positions at work, the traditional patriarchal view of sex roles might be considered outdated, irrelevant, or biased.

Functional theorists explain heterosexism by examining one role or purpose of heterosexual relationships in society—to reproduce and raise children. Fewer homosexual relationships serve that function, although as noted previously the number of homosexual families is increasing. Still some believe that homosexual relationships threaten to undermine the reproductive role central to society. Others feel that homosexuality threatens traditional gender-role expectations and religious values important to the status quo.

For those who believe that homosexuality is a choice, individuals who reject traditional gender roles interfere with the smooth functioning of society. Heterosexism provides necessary "push back" to those who do not conform to the traditional gender socialization defining what it means to be male and female. Hate crimes are an extreme reaction to that perceived dysfunction arising from **homophobia**, or an intense fear or hatred of gays and lesbians.

A Closer Look: Cultural Homophobia

Cultural homophobia refers to social standards and norms that dictate that being heterosexual is better than being lesbian, gay, or bisexual. These standards and norms are reinforced each day in television shows, movies, and print advertisements where virtually every character is heterosexual and every sexual and social relationship involves a female and a male, or in the assumption made by most adults that all children will eventually be attracted to and marry a person of the opposite sex. Often heterosexuals do not realize that these standards exist, while lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are acutely aware of them. This results in lesbians, gays, and bisexuals feeling like outsiders in society.

In day-to-day life, the following are examples of homophobic behaviors and attitudes:

- thinking you can "spot one";
- using words like *poof*, *dyke*, *fag*, *gay*, and *lezzo* as an insult;
- thinking that a same-sex attracted friend is trying to "pick you up" if they are friendly toward you;
- not being supportive of gay friends when they break up with their partner;
- making unnecessary or rude comments about or feeling repulsed by public displays of affection between same-sex partners;
- feeling that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people are too outspoken about civil rights;
- assuming that everyone you meet is heterosexual;
- assuming that a lesbian is just a woman who couldn't find a man or that a lesbian is a woman who secretly wants to be a man;
- assuming that a gay man is just a man who couldn't find a woman or that a gay man is a man who secretly wants to be a woman;
- assuming bisexual people are confused or want to "play the field";
- not confronting a homophobic remark for fear of being labeled as gay.

Were you aware that cultural homophobia existed? How many of these assumptions have you made about friends or colleagues? Do these points change your thoughts on heterosexuality or heterosexism? How do these assumptions lead to institutionalized homophobia?

Source: Definitions of homophobia. (n.d.). Not so straight. Retrieved from
http://notsostraight.com.au/homophobia/

Conflict and Feminist Perspectives

Conflict theorists examine gender inequality and heterosexism from a power perspective, with men and women competing for power and heterosexual and homosexual groups doing the same. Feminist theorists further help to understand inequality between the sexes by going beyond biological differences between men and women and focusing on the cultural and structural forces of society that maintain discrimination. Think about both of these problems of inequality and heterosexism this way: Men and heterosexuals have social, economic, and legislative power and intend to keep it; women and non-heterosexuals struggle to gain an equal share of that power. These opposing forces create tension and conflict essential for social change.

Susan Walsh/AP Images

The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act is a law named after Lilly Ledbetter, a supervisor at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company in Alabama.

Gender inequities are evidenced in the well-known gender pay gap with women earning about 77.4 cents for every man's dollar (NCPE, 2012). Such wage disparity remains across age, level of education, and type of occupation with increasing disparity for ethnic minorities. How and why does this happen? One explanation is that men deserve more pay than women simply because they are the superior sex physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Alternatively, men are socialized to be better salary negotiators than women who resist the interpersonal conflict necessary to such interactions. Those who negotiate higher salaries and compensation packages, even if the negotiation yields seemingly minor increases, accumulate a substantial financial and professional advantage over time. Sociologists call this disparity of accumulated advantage for men and accumulated disadvantage for women the *Matthew effect* (Merton, 1968).

In response to such pay inequities, President Obama's first legislative signing was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (1999), a law named after a supervisor of a Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in Alabama who complained that she had been paid less than her male counterpart. While she won the pay discrimination lawsuit in lower court, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled the case, arguing that she should have filed her suit within the first 180 days that her initial paycheck reflected less pay. The new law expands workers' rights to sue, relaxing the statute of limitations to 180 days after each paycheck (Stolberg, 2009).

A Closer Look: Gender Pay Gap

For graphic illustrations of the gender pay gap, check out these links:

http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/the-gender-pay-gap-by-industry/

http://www.womensmedia.com/new/Lips-Hilary-gender-wage-gap.shtml

http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=125998232

Were you surprised by any of the statistics represented in the figures? Where do you see the most progress? What areas still require improvement?

Feminist scholars point out that our patriarchal society undervalues the work of women not only in the home but also in the workplace. Until 1978, it was legal in the United States

to fire a woman for being pregnant. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the practice in 1974 and 1976, and in 1978 Congress passed the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which prohibits a business from firing or denying benefits to a pregnant woman. It is also illegal for an organization to refuse to hire a woman *because* she is pregnant.

Sexual minorities have struggled to gain acceptance and equality—with the most glaring example of social change occurring as recently as 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality as some kind of *mental disorder* or abnormality (Bayer, 1987). Greater acceptance of gays and lesbians is evidenced in the 21st century with several countries around the world, including Norway, Canada, and South Africa, recognizing their marital rights. Major corporations like Microsoft, Starbucks, Vulcan, and NIKE have signed on to support same-sex marriage in the State of Washington, justifying their support as *good for business* (Garber, 2012). In response, the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) has launched a fierce battle against such legislation in their efforts to retain the exclusivity of heterosexual marriages (NOM, 2012). Apparently, NOM views marriage as a resource entitled to only one select group (heterosexuals). From the conflict perspective, we can see how others competing for this resource generates a social problem. Similarly, from a feminist perspective, legal, social, and cultural barriers to same-sex marriages undermine the whole notion of equality and therefore remains socially problematic.

Symbolic Interactionism

Even though biology determines sex, symbolic interactionists argue that socialization heavily influences the socially constructed meanings assigned to sex. Symbolic interactionists point to messages about women and men that promote stereotypes establishing a hierarchy of importance. Women are labeled as emotional, passive, manipulative, and weak, while men are labeled logical, controlled, assertive, strong, and in charge.

According to symbolic interactionism, women who conform to these and similar labels are contributing to an ongoing social perception that this is how women are. As women conform, these roles are likely to be confirmed and reinforced. The same is true for men. But what happens when women need to assume masculine behaviors instead—behaviors that might be essential for negotiating higher salaries, managing staff, coaching a team, or making a point? First, they might not know how to engage in such behaviors. Second, they might feel anxious or insecure about trying out masculine behaviors. And third, they might receive resistance for illustrating sex-inappropriate roles.

Consider the pushback that Georgetown law student Sandra Fluke received after testifying before Congress about affordable contraception for women's health care. Conservative, popular radio talk-show host and provocateur Rush Limbaugh lost a dozen media advertisers and felt the need to apologize for these remarks:

> What does it say about the college coed Susan Fluke [sic], who goes before a congressional committee and essentially says that she must be paid to have sex? What does that make her? It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute. She wants to be paid to have sex.

> She's having so much sex she can't afford the contraception. She wants you and me and the taxpayers to pay her to have sex. What does that make us? We're the pimps.

> The johns, that's right. We would be the johns—no! We're not the johns. Well—yeah, that's right. Pimp's not the right word.

For a comprehensive video and analysis of this exchange, visit http://edition.cnn.com/2012/03/05/us/rush-limbaugh-controversy/?hpt=us_t3.

How might symbolic interactionists explain Limbaugh's initial response to Fluke? What provoked his on-air comments about Fluke? Why do you suppose Limbaugh thought his listeners might find his comments funny or enlightening? Limbaugh coined the term *feminazis* to mock those women who violate traditional gender role expectations. Why do a number of Americans find this label as funny? Symbolic interactionists would characterize Limbaugh's remarks and labels about women as stereotypic and contributing to ongoing prejudices about women. As people like Limbaugh engage in such dialogue, ongoing sexism is promoted, defended, and normalized. Derogatory jokes and name-calling about women become normative, expected, and supported by the culture.

Labels have also been used to discriminate against sexual minorities. Labels, such as those mentioned in the feature box on cultural homophobia, that express disdain or disrespect toward sexual minorities strongly shape the way people think and act toward LGBTs supporting and lending authority to discriminatory attitudes and behavior. **Internalized homophobia** is a sense of self-loathing one develops in response to being gay or lesbian and being negatively labeled by society. Living in a homophobic or anti-gay society creates undue stress and anxiety for LGBT individuals who feel they must hide their sexual orientation for fear of retribution, rejection, and ridicule. Research documents the negative consequences of internalized homophobia, ranging from low self-esteem, shame, guilt, and feelings of inadequacy to illegal drug use and abuse, prostitution, and even suicide (Weber-Gilmore, Rose, & Rubenstein, 2011).

Tyler Clementi was a 2010 suicide victim whose story illustrates one of the most serious consequences of internalized homophobia. Clementi, a freshman at Rutgers University, was being intimate with another man while his roommate, Dharum Ravi, secretly watched by web cam from next door. Shortly after Clementi discovered the web peeping, he jumped to his death from the George Washington Bridge. What were the circumstances of Clementi's death? Do you think his roommate is to blame for his death? How might symbolic interac-

Mel Evans/AP Images

Tyler Clementi's suicide illustrates one of the serious consequences of homophobia.

tionism be used to convince a jury that Ravi should be convicted—or not? Was Ravi solely at fault? Check out this web link for the full story: http://www.nydailynews.com/news/crime/spying-tyler-clementi-roommate-texted-pal-gays-article-1.1033292.

5.6 Remedies for Sexism and Heterosexism

Gender inequality and heterosexism remain pervasive nationally and worldwide, violating the human rights of women and sexual minorities. Efforts to change individual and institutionalized attitudes, beliefs, and policies include social support groups, political action groups, lobbyists, foundations, and concerned individuals committed to the dignity and equality of all people. Strategies include local initiatives, legislative policies, and communication and education campaigns.

Local Initiatives

Grass roots organizations and community centers offer educational, social, political, and/ or financial support for women and LGBT individuals. For example, Girls Helping Girls, an organization run by girls, for girls internationally, was founded in Fremont, California, by then 15-year-old Sejal Hathi with the purpose of empowering young women all over the world (GHG, n.d.). Camfed (Campaign for Female Education) operates community-based programs to "fight poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa by educating girls and empowering women to become leaders of change" (Camfed, n.d.). Like so many other community-based organizations, Camfed raises funds to provide school fees and supplies to girls and business training and grants to women. Research and education organization BPW (Business and Professional Women's Foundation) collaborates with U.S. employers to redefine workplaces to embrace work-life balance, gender equity, and diversity (BPW, n.d.). Rape Crisis Centers all over the country provide support services to sexual assault victims and their families (RCC, n.d.).

Gay-Straight Alliances, a by-product of Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), consist of teenage student clubs all over the United States whose goal is to "assure that each member of every school community is valued and respected, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression" (GLSEN, n.d.b). Bay View Garden and Yard Society, a nonprofit organization located in the Bay View neighborhood of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, promotes social opportunities for LGBT and gay-friendly individuals to work alongside one another while maintaining public gardens (BVGYS, n.d.). The Utah Pride Center provides information, advocacy, and support services to the LGBT community living in and around Salt Lake City (UPC, n.d.). Ski Bum boasts the world's largest LGBT ski and snowboarding club (Ski Bum, n.d.). Log Cabin Republicans is a grassroots and national organization of straight and gay members who advocate the principles of equality and inclusiveness (Log Cabin Republicans, n.d.). Gay Line of Montreal offers troubled LGBT individuals a telephone hotline to provide "active listening," advice, and professional counseling (Gay Line, n.d.).

What other local initiatives or grass roots organizations can you identify? What gender inequality or heterosexism issues in your community might stimulate the growth of these and other groups?

Legislative Action

Important legislative initiatives promoted by organizations like the Center for Reproductive Rights and Planned Parenthood have gone a long way toward championing women's causes making contraception accessible and affordable, decreasing maternal mortality rates, and ensuring women's right to an abortion.

Other organizations, like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU, n.d.), the National Organization for Women (NOW, n.d.), and the Southern Poverty Law Center actively write and support legislation dedicated to fighting all hate, bigotry, and discrimination. These organizations engage policymakers and secure legal victories in the courts.

The following are some examples of legal decisions in these areas:

- 1974 decision making it illegal for public employers to force pregnant women to take unpaid medical leaves after the first trimester of pregnancy;
- Supreme Court decision in 1975 making it illegal for states to ban advertising for abortion clinics;
- 1987 decision making it illegal for men's business and professional clubs to prohibit women members;
- 1993 decision requiring the state-funded, all-male military academy, the Citadel, to admit women students (ACLU, 2002).

With a long history of defending the rights of sexual minorities, the ACLU brings more initiatives and cases supporting LGBT civil rights than any other advocacy group (ACLU, n.d.). Still undecided, the *Glossip v. Missouri Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol Employees' Retirement System* case involves the death of a state trooper killed in the line of duty. His domestic partner is suing the state of Missouri to obtain the same survivor benefits available to married heterosexual spouses (ACLU, 2011).

Other examples of legal decisions include the following:

- 2006 Arkansas State Supreme Court decision overturning a state law preventing gays and lesbians from fostering children;
- 2009 court decision mandating a cash settlement and diversity training for McDonald's restaurant management in 33 Louisville, Kentucky, area restaurants after staff hurled a series of anti-gay slurs toward customers;
- 2010 settlement requiring a Mississippi high school to pay damages, attorney fees, and expenses as well as create a school policy protecting sexual minorities from discrimination after refusing to allow a lesbian teenager to attend the prom with her girlfriend and wear a tuxedo. (For details on these and other active and settled discrimination cases, see http://www.aclu.org/hiv-aids-lgbt-rights/lgbt-aids-project-case-profiles).

Additionally, the Transgender Civil Rights Project provides assistance to legislatures, enforcement agencies, and other groups working to pass transgender-friendly policies and protections (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011).

What additional legislation can you identify that has made a difference in eliminating discrimination against women and sexual minorities? What court decisions appear to have "set back" these civil rights movements?

Communication and Education

Brian Dowling/AP Images

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network is a group offering support to LGBT individuals.

While local initiatives and legislation can go a long way toward changing gender inequality and heterosexism, communication and education campaigns are most critical to socializing people to issues of equity, fairness, and respect. Such campaigns are designed to persuade people to rethink the ways they have traditionally responded to women and sexual minorities and to adopt new attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Virtually every specialized advocacy organization offers educational outreach programs to support their constituents. For example, the National Organization for Women posts online a series of special topic blogs called Say It, Sister! designed to promote awareness and discussion of a number of feminist issues, such as eating disorders, sexist Super Bowl advertisements, marketing gender-appropriate toys, and the unemployment rate for women. Other postings include call-outs of media instances of gender discrimination called NOW's Media Hall of Shame (NOW, n.d.).

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) provides educational resources and curriculum to teachers in their own communication efforts to be more inclusive of LGBT children and to teach their students to do the same. GLSEN offers lesson plans, for example, in its "Back-to-School Guide for Creating LGBT Inclusive Environments" and a "Safe Space Kit" that provides concrete strategies to teach children about anti-LGBT bias (GLSEN, n.d.a).

In its fight to end heterosexism, the Gil Foundation focuses much of its work on "educational programs aimed at winning over hearts and minds," reasoning that "an informed and enlightened populace is one that is more than likely to support equality" (Gil Foundation, n.d.).

A Closer Look: A call for Global LGBT Rights

On December 7, 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton spoke to ambassadors and dignitaries all over the world gathered in Geneva at the United Nations. For over 30 minutes, Clinton decried the worldwide discrimination leveled toward LGBT individuals. "Gay rights are human rights," she exclaimed, "and human rights are gay rights." As you might expect, many in the audience responded to her speech with "stony faces and rushed out of the room" (AP, 2011) as soon as Secretary Clinton finished. You can see the video of her speech online at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MudnsExyV78. Do you think Clinton's speech was historic? Why or why not? What was her goal? Did she achieve it with this audience? Given our own U.S. history of discrimination toward LGBTs, do you find her presentation hypocritical?

What programs and campaigns are you aware of on your campus that promotes gender equality and/or respect for the LGBT community? Have you accessed or participated in those programs or events? Why or why not? What might prevent some students from participating? What makes these communication and education campaigns effective or ineffective?

5.7 Using Sociological Tools to Address Sexism and Heterosexism

Claudia Buchmann, a sociologist at Ohio State University, examines a fairly recent and peculiar advantage for women graduating from college. Analysis of trend data reveals that until the early 1980s, males' college completion rates were higher than females. Since then, women have been outnumbering men in college with the gender gap predicted to widen in the 21st Century. Dr. Buchmann focuses on the possible causes or explanations for this gender reversal in education. In her article in the *American Sociological Review* (2006; with Thomas DiPrete of Columbia University), she argued boys and girls have not always shared the same support from their parents, with greater family resources focusing primarily on sons rather than daughters. With the decline of sex-role discrimination, she reasoned that parents' investment in their children have begun to shift toward girls. A test of this theory failed to support this interpretation; instead, the absence of fathers or the presence of low-educated fathers served to disadvantage boys. Moreover, the surge of female college completion rates was due primarily to college women's superior academic performance: They simply outperformed their male counterpart. For more details on this research, you can access this paper online at http://www.sociology.ohio-state .edu/cub/Buchmann&DiPreteASR.pdf.

Sociologist Karin Martin of the University of Michigan investigates the sexual socialization of children. In a recent article (available at http://asr.sagepub.com/content/74/2/190 .short) published in the *American Sociological Review* (2009), Dr. Martin looked at the ways mothers communicate with their young children to promote *heteronormativity*—"the mundane, everyday ways that heterosexuality is privileged and taken for granted as normal and natural" (p. 190). In a web-based survey of more than 600 mothers of 3 to 6 year olds, she discovered that in conversations with their children about love and marriage, mothers automatically presumed their children to be heterosexual, socialized them to believe that heterosexual relationships were normal, and that one day, they, too, would fall in love and marry someone of the opposite sex. Mothers' "heteronormative presentation of the world," Martin explains, "may erase gays and lesbians from their social worlds," making alternative lifestyles unknowable and alien (p. 204).

Using the Sociological Lens: The Origins of Gender

For decades, parents have experimented with to what extent their children's gender is learned and whether gender-bending or gender-neutral choices made at key points in childhood … affects their development and personality.

Whether gender is purely a social construct or a set of innate, universal characteristics intrinsically linked to sex is of great debate. Theories differ over whether typically female and male   *(continued)*

Using the Sociological Lens: The Origins of Gender *(continued)*

qualities, preferences, and behaviors are learned from a young age—for example, when girls are encouraged to play with dolls and wear pink, or when boys are encouraged to play with trucks, and wear blue—or if there is something natural, collective, or even genetic that goes into determining male and female qualities. Gender is decidedly different from sex, a biological term that describes body features or parts. Gender might be understood as the significance those body parts have on the long-term development of a person's behaviors, tastes, and identity.

For decades, parents have experimented with to what extent their children's gender is learned, and whether gender-bending or gender-neutral choices made at key points in childhood—such as letting boy children wear dresses, allowing girl children to play with trucks, or encouraging both boys and girls to play house or tackle sports—affects their development and personality.

In 2011, a Canadian couple became famous for their experiment with gender identity when they refused to reveal the sex of their infant, Storm. Storm was born to Kathy Witterick and David Stocker, who have two other children, Jazz and Koi, both boys. Witterick and Stocker became interested in the idea of raising a genderless baby after resenting the way in which their other two sons seemed forced to conform to gender-specific behaviors that conflicted with their natural personalities. Their experiment became the center of a sociological debate over the nature and purpose of gender, and whether it is useful or harmful to try and raise a child in its absence.

Free from the Confines of Gender

In the following perspective, Kathy Witterick defends her and her husband's decision to keep hidden their baby's gender in an effort to afford him or her a gender-neutral childhood. Witterick explains she was in part motivated by a desire to let the child discover its personality and identity on its own, rather than being compelled to become a boy or a girl, and adopt the behaviors and preferences that come automatically programmed with each gender. As she put it, "In not telling the gender of my precious baby, I am saying to the world, 'Please can you just let Storm discover for him/herself what s(he) wants to be?!'" (quoted in Leonard, 2011).

Witterick was motivated to keep Storm's gender a secret in part by the experience of raising her 5-year-old son, Jazz. She and her husband tried to let Jazz choose his own clothes and toys from either the girls' or the boys' section of stores, and they never assigned him any objects or hobbies based on his gender. As a result, Jazz's tastes include wearing pink dresses, keeping his hair in long braids, painting his fingernails, and wearing an earring. Jazz is often mistaken for a girl, and even at the young age of 5, resents that people find his tastes strange or inappropriate for his gender. He chose not to go to school but rather be homeschooled by his parents, because other children often make fun of him.

While pregnant with their third child, Witterick and Stocker came up with the idea to keep their baby's gender secret after considering the ways in which a child might be freed from social expectations if they had no outwardly discernable gender. They were inspired by academic works, including psychologist Cordelia Fine's 2010 book, *Delusions of Gender*, which argues that gender is entirely socially constructed and forcing people to conform to gender roles can harm them. They were also inspired by Lois Gould's 1978 book, *X: A Fabulous Child's Story*, which is about raising neither a girl or boy child, but a child simply known as X. In response to critics who warned that baby   *(continued)*

Using the Sociological Lens: The Origins of Gender *(continued)*

Storm will grow up maladjusted, sexually confused, and no more free from gender roles than anyone else, Storm's mother explains in the following perspective why she believes removing Storm's gender offers the child the chance to be whomever he or she wants.

Kathy Witterick, "Baby Storm's Mother Speaks on Gender, Parenting and Media," *Edmonton Journal*, May 30, 2011. http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/Baby+Storm+mother+speaks+gender +parenting+media/4857577/story.html

Gender Differences Are Innate and Cannot Be Denied

In the following perspective, columnist Jonathan Kay weighs in on whether it is irresponsible for Kathy Witterick and David Stocker to keep their child's gender a secret. Although Witterick and Stocker claim to want to free their child from the impositions of socially constructed gender roles, Kay argues they have merely succeeded in drawing inordinate attention to their baby's gender at the risk of his or her developmental health.

Debate over the Stocker's choice has raged, with many observers calling their gender experiment cruel, foolish, and reckless. Gender is a key factor in a person's identity, although there is disagreement over whether gender and all of its accompanying characteristics are innate or socially taught. Writer Mitch Albom thinks that in trying to deny the existence of their baby's gender, Storm's parents have actually limited the child. "Calling a boy a boy is not making a choice for your child. But calling a boy genderless is," he noted in the *Detroit Free Press* (2011), where he argued that denying or ignoring gender is to dangerously divorce a child from important social and biological realities. "When your child asks, 'Am I a boy or a girl?' and you answer, 'Whatever you want,' you're not being wise, hip, progressive or nonjudgmental, you're just being a fool."

Developmental experts reacted to Witterick and Stocker's decision with similar disdain, with many warning that raising a genderless baby will scar the child for life and might even be tantamount to child abuse. According to child psychiatrist Dr Harold Koplewicz, gender is an innate quality that is part and parcel of every human, not something that can be removed without consequence. "When children are born, they're not a blank slate. We do have male brains and female brains," he said. "There's a reason why boys do more rough and tumble play; there's a reason why girls have better language development skills" (quoted in Leonard, 2011). Agreeing with the perspective that gender is an innate, undeniable quality is Eugene Beresin, a child psychiatrist at Massachusetts General Hospital. "To raise a child not as a boy or a girl is creating, in some sense, a freak," warned Beresin. "It sets them up for not knowing who they are" (quoted in Leonard, 2011). This is the perspective put forth in the following article, in which Kay argues that gender-free parenting is well intentioned but wrong.

Jonathan Kay, "Take It from Me—'Gender-Free' Parenting Doesn't Work," National Post, June 1, 2011. http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2011/06/01/jonathan-kay-take-it-from-me- %e2%80%94-gender-free-parenting-doesnt-work/

Critical Thinking and Discussion Questions

1. Do you think gender is more likely socially constructed, or more likely an innate, undeniable part of who a person naturally is?
2. In raising Storm as neither a boy nor a girl, which of society's core values have the Stocker's challenged?   *(continued)*

Using the Sociological Lens: The Origins of Gender *(continued)*

3. What kind of relationship do gay, lesbian, and transgendered individuals have with gender? Do they share the same qualities as heterosexuals of the same gender? What is different, or is it impossible to generalize? In your opinion, is sexuality linked to gender, and are either one the product of how a person was raised?

4. In what ways does it strengthen society if girls or boys identify with typically female or male traits, behaviors, and preferences? In what way does it weaken society?

For Further Consideration

The End of Gender

Weeks, L. (2011, June 27). *The end of gender*. National Public Radio. Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/2011/06/27/137342682/the-end-of-gender

Free of Gender, Full of Harm

Timson, J. (2011, May 26). The genderless baby? Well-Intentioned but wrong. *Globe & Mail*. Retrieved from http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/relationships/news-and-views/judith-timson/the-genderless-baby-well-intentioned-but-wrong/article2036155/

An Unfair Social Experiment

Rochman, B. (2011, May 25). Gender-Free baby: Is it OK for Parents to keep their child's sex a secret? *Time*. Retrieved from http://healthland.time.com/2011/05/25/gender-free-is-it-okay-for-parents-to-keep-their-babys-sex-a-secret/

Summary & Conclusion

Sociologists distinguish between sex, which is based on biological differences between males and females, and gender, which are the social and cultural meanings we give to those differences. Gender identity refers to the extent to which individuals perceive and accept themselves as belonging to a particular group: male or female. Our sexual orientation defines, in part, our gender identity. Indeed, heteronormativity or heterosexism refers to society's expectation that heterosexuality is the norm and any other type of sexuality is deviant and unacceptable.

Even though a number of Americans find homosexuality unnatural and unacceptable, we find a steady increase in their acceptance of gay and lesbian relations. Regardless, heterosexism remains endemic to our social, legal, and political institutions. At work, gays and lesbians are offered little or no legal protection from discrimination and harassment. Only recently have Americans begun to favor the legalization of same-sex marriages and gay parenting, and yet, many states restrict legal marriages and adoption to heterosexual couples only. Sexual minorities continue to be victims of hate crimes committed primarily by heterosexual men.

Socially, we find women working outside the home and doing double shift by caring for the home and family. Even though women today are more likely than men to obtain

advanced education, they choose to earn their degrees in the so-called "feminine" fields of arts, humanities, and applied sciences, resulting in fewer career opportunities and lower pay. Economically, women today comprise slightly more than half of the workforce but earn only about 80% of what men earn. When women choose to work in higher-paying, male-dominated jobs, they often face numerous challenges. Politically, women have not enjoyed the same access to legislative power as men in the United States, seriously affecting their lack of egalitarian representation, voice, and influence over legislation and policy.

Three theoretical perspectives give insights into why gender inequality and heterosexism persists. Functionalists explain that heterosexual relationships exist to reproduce and nurture children; homosexual relationships do not. Conflict and feminist theorists explain that men and heterosexuals have social, economic, and legislative power and intend to keep it; women and non-heterosexuals struggle to gain an equal share of that power. Symbolic interactionists point to messages about women and sexual minorities that promote an inferior stereotype and messages about men and heterosexuals that connote a superior stance. Such messages legitimize and sustain discriminatory behavior.

Those committed to the dignity and equality of all people take action to solve the problem of sexual discrimination through local initiatives, legislative policies, and communication and education campaigns.

Key Terms

bona fide occupational qualifications (BFOQs) Aptitudes, qualifications, or skills essential to a given task or business that are considered when hiring or firing.

bisexual People who are sexually attracted to both sexes.

feminism One response to sexism that calls for the end of patriarchy—the end of male privilege socially, economically, and politically.

gender Social and cultural definitions attached to being female or male.

gender identity How individuals perceive and accept themselves as belonging to female or male groups.

gender roles Social norms that dictate behavior, attitudes, and activities as females and males.

gender socialization Learning to become either a female or male member of a particular group.

gender-typed Labels of either male or female distinction society places of specific roles such as occupations.

glass escalator Mostly invisible pathways that promote men to senior positions faster than women in some organizations.

glass ceiling Mostly invisible barriers that make it difficult for qualified women to be promoted to the highest levels in some organizations.

hate crime Criminal act or violence that targets another because of that person's membership in a particular group.

heteronormativity Social and cultural expectation of heterosexuality.

heterosexism Antigay sentiment that results in prejudice.

heterosexual People who are attracted to those of the opposite sex.

homophobia Intense fear or hatred of gays, lesbians, or bisexuals.

homosexual People who are attracted to those of the same sex.

institutional sexism Occurs when the law, local custom, or tradition supports or sanctions discrimination based on sex or gender.

internalized homophobia Sense of self-loathing one develops in response to being gay, lesbian, or bisexual and being negatively labeled by society.

LGBT Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender.

second shift Housework done in the home after returning home from a full-time job.

sex Biological differences attached to being female or male.

sexism Discrimination toward individuals based on sex or gender.

sexual harassment Unwelcome verbal or physical sexual advances.

sexual orientation The sex of those to whom one is physically and emotionally attracted.

transgender People who choose to live as the opposite gender, often without sex reassignment surgery.

transsexual People who choose to have sex reassignment operations to change their sex organs.

Critical Thinking and Discussion Questions

1. Discuss patriarchal traditions and how they differ from matriarchal ones. What are some cultural examples? Do you have any personal experience with either tradition?
2. Consider gender roles in different countries. Do they depict patriarchal or matriarchal value systems?
3. Define and discuss glass ceiling and glass elevator effects and how they contribute to economic inequality.
4. How is the United States heterosexist? What benefits or harms do you see in this social value system?
5. Why were Rush Limbaugh's remarks about Sandra Fluke invalid? How did he equate health care services with prostitution? Could this be construed as sexual harassment?