CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO GENDER

We are surrounded by gender lore from the time we are very small. It is ever-present in conversation, humor, and conflict, and it is called upon to explain everything from driving styles to food preferences. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural. The world swarms with ideas about gender – and these ideas are so commonplace that we take it for granted that they are true, accepting common adage as scientific fact. As scholars and researchers, though, it is our job to look beyond what appears to be common sense to find not simply what truth might be behind it, but how it came to be common sense. It is precisely because gender seems natural, and beliefs about gender seem to be obvious truths, that we need to step back and examine gender from a new perspective. Doing this requires that we suspend what we are used to and what feels comfortable, and question some of our most fundamental beliefs. This is not easy, for gender is so central to our understanding of ourselves and of the world that it is difficult to pull back and examine it from new perspectives.[1] But it is precisely the fact that gender seems self-evident that makes the study of gender interesting. It brings the challenge to uncover the process of construction that creates what we have so long thought of as natural and inexorable – to study gender not as given, but as an accomplishment; not simply as cause, but as effect; and not just as individual, but as social. The results of failure to recognize this challenge are manifest not only in the popular media, but in academic work on language and gender as well. As a result, some gender scholarship does as much to reify and support existing beliefs as to promote more reflective and informed thinking about gender.

Sex and gender

Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we *have*, but something we *do* (West and Zimmerman 1987) – something we *perform* (Butler 1990). Imagine a small boy proudly following his father. As he swaggers and sticks out his chest, he is doing everything he can to be like his father – to be a *man*. Chances are his father is not swaggering, but the boy is creating a persona that embodies what he is admiring in his adult male role model. The same is true of a small girl as she puts on her mother's high-heeled shoes, smears makeup on her face and minces around the room. Chances are that when these children are grown they will not swagger and mince respectively, but their childhood performances contain elements that may well surface in their adult male and female behaviors. Chances are, also, that the girl will adopt

1 This kind of stepping back is easier for people who feel that they are disadvantaged in the social order,

and it is no doubt partially for this reason that many recent theories of gender have been developed

primarily (though not exclusively) by women.

that swagger on occasion as well, but adults are not likely to consider it as cute as her mincing act. And chances are that if the boy decides to try a little mincing, he won't be considered cute at all. In other words, gendered performances are available to everyone, but with them come constraints on who can perform which personae with impunity. And this is where gender and sex come together, as society tries to match up ways of behaving with biologically based sex assignments.

Sex is a biological categorization based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex. Not surprisingly, social norms for heterosexual coupling and care of any resulting children are closely intertwined with gender. But that is far from the full story. Gender builds on biological sex, but it exaggerates biological difference, and it carries biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant. There is no biological reason, for example, why women should mince and men should swagger, or why women should have red toenails and men should not. But while we think of sex as biological and gender as social, this distinction is not clear-cut. People tend to think of gender as the result of nurture – as social and hence fluid – while sex is the result of nature, simply given by biology. However, nature and nurture intertwine, and there is no obvious point at which sex leaves off and gender begins.

But the sharp demarcation fails because there is no single objective biological criterion for male or female sex. Sex is based in a combination of anatomical, endocrine and chromosomal features, and the selection among these criteria for sex assignment is based very much on cultural beliefs about what actually makes someone male or female. Thus the very definition of the biological categories *male* and *female*, and people's understanding of themselves and others as male or female, is ultimately social. Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) sums up the situation as follows:

> labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender – not science – can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place. (p. 3)

Biology offers up dichotomous male and female prototypes, but it also offers us many individuals who do not fit those prototypes in a variety of ways. Blackless *et al*. (2000) estimate that 1 in 100 babies are born with bodies that differ in some way from standard male or female. These bodies may have such conditions as unusual chromosomal makeup (e.g., 1 in 1,000 male babies are born with two X chromosomes as well as a Y, hormonal differences such as insensitivity to androgens (1 in 13,000 births), or a range of configurations and combinations of genitals and reproductive organs. The attribution of intersex does not end at birth – for example, 1 in 66 girls experience growth of the clitoris in childhood or adolescence (known as late onset adrenal hyperplasia).

When "anomalous" babies are born, surgical and/or endocrinal manipulations may be used to bring their recalcitrant bodies into closer conformity with either the male or the female category. Common medical practice imposes stringent requirements for male and female genitals

at birth – a penis that is less than 2.5 centimeters long when stretched, or a clitoris[2] that is more than one centimeter long have commonly been subject to surgery in which both are reduced to an "acceptable" sized clitoris (Dreger 1998). As a number of critics have observed (e.g. Dreger 1998), the standards of acceptability are far more stringent for male genitals than female, and thus the most common surgery transforms "unacceptable" penises into clitorises, regardless of the child's other sexual characteristics, and even if this requires fashioning a nonfunctional vagina out of tissue from the colon. In recent years, the activist organization, the Intersex Society of North America,[3] has had considerable success as an advocacy group for the medical rights of intersex people, and the medical profession has become more sensitive to both physical and psychological issues associated with gender assignment and surgery (e.g. Lee et al 2006).

In those societies that have a greater occurrence of certain kinds of hermaphroditic or intersexed infants than elsewhere,[4] there sometimes are social categories beyond the standard two into which such babies can be placed. But even in such societies, categories that go beyond the basic two are often seen as anomalous.[5]   And even where sex assignment seemed

2 Alice Dreger (1998) more accurately describes these as a "phallus on a baby classified as male" or a "phallus on a baby classified as female".

3 The website of the Intersex Society of North America (http://www.isna.org) offers a wealth of information on intersex. [The publisher has used its best endeavors to ensure that the URLs for external websites referred to in this book are correct and active at the time of going to press. However, the publisher has no responsibility for the websites and can make no guarantee that a site will remain live or that the content is or will remain appropriate.]

4 For instance, congenital adrenal hyperplasia (which combines two X chromosomes with masculinized external genitalia and the internal reproductive organs of a potentially fertile woman) occurs in 43 children per million in New Zealand, but 3,500 per million among the Yupik of Southwestern Alaska (www.isna.org).

5 There are cultures where what we might think of as more than two adult gender categories are named and otherwise institutionally recognized as well: the berdache of the Plains Indians, the hijras in India. Although details vary significantly, the members of such supernumerary categories are outside the "normal" order of things, and tend to be somewhat feared or devalued or otherwise socially disadvantaged. Nonetheless, there is apparently considerably more tolerance for nonstandard gender categories in some societies than in the western industrial societies most likely to be familiar to readers of

straightforward at birth, an individual may develop a gender identity different from the one initially assigned on the basis of anatomical criteria. Transgender people may embrace the other of the two options standardly on offer or they may resist gender dichotomies altogether. Kate Bornstein, a trans woman who finds gender deeply problematic, sums up this resistance nicely in her 1995 book title, *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*[1].

It is commonly argued that biological differences between males and females determine gender by causing enduring differences in capabilities and dispositions. Higher levels of testosterone, for example, are said to lead men to be more aggressive than women; and left-brain dominance is said to lead men to be more rational while their relative lack of brain lateralization should lead women to be more emotional. But the relation between physiology and behavior is not simple, and it is all too easy to leap for gender dichotomies. And the physiology itself is more complex than is usually acknowledged. It has been shown that hormonal levels, brain activity patterns, and even brain anatomy can be a result of different activity as well as a cause. For example research with species ranging from rhesus monkeys (Rose *et al*. 1972) to fish (Fox *et al*. 1997) has documented changes in hormone levels as a result of changes in social position.

Work on sex differences in the brain is very much in its early stages, and is far from conclusive (Fausto-Sterling 2000). Men's supposedly smaller corpus callosum, larger amygdala, larger premammillary nucleus, are among the questionable structural differences that are supposed to account for gender differences from men's greater visual-spatial skills to their tendency to stare at breasts[2]. Much of the popular work on gender differences in the brain are based on shaky evidence, and are commonly exaggerations and even distortions of what appears in the scientific literature. And the scientific literature itself is based on very small samples, often from sick or injured populations. In addition, not that much is known about the connections between brain physiology and behavior or cognition – hence about the consequences of any physiological differences scientists may be seeking or finding. And above all, the brain is very plastic, changing in response to experience. Thus the causal relation between brain physiology and activity is completely unclear (Eliot 2009). Nonetheless, any results that might support physiological differences are readily snatched up and combined with any variety of gender stereotypes in some often quite fantastic leaps of logic. And the products of these leaps can in turn feed directly into social, and particularly into educational, policy, with arguments that gender equity in such "left-brain areas" as mathematics and engineering is impossible.

(For additional critiques of sex difference science, see Kaplan & Rogers 2003), Fine 2010), and Jordan-Young 2010). Deborah Cameron (2009) refers to the search for gender differences in biology as "the new biologism", and points out that the linguistic traits that scientists are trying to explain biologically (such as women's greater language ability) are not even themselves supported by serious linguistic study. Furthermore, those pushing for

this book. An early discussion of social groups with more than two sex and/or gender categories is

provided by Martin and Voorhies (1975), ch. 4, "Supernumerary sexes." More recent contributions on this

topic from both historical and cross-cultural perspectives appear in Herdt (1996).

[1] See also Bornstein 1998 and Bornstein & Bergman, eds. 2010.
[2] Mark Liberman has a series of blogs on shaky brain science - see e.g.
http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=2208;
http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=2576

biologically based explanations of sex differences ignore the fact that the very same linguistic differences that they see beetween the genders also correlate with race and social class, and many of the sex differences they cite as biologically based actually vary historically and cross-culturally (e.g. Keenan 1974; Kulick 1993,1994).

The eagerness of some scientists to establish a biological basis for all gender difference, and the public's eagerness to take these findings up, points to the fact that we put a good deal of work into emphasizing, producing, and enforcing the dichotomous categories of male and female. In the process, differences or similarities that blur the edges of these categories, or that might even constitute other potential categories, are backgrounded, or *erased*, including the enormous range of differences among females and among males

The issue here is not whether there are sex-linked biological differences that might affect such things as predominant cognitive styles. What is at issue is the place of such research in social and scientific practice. Sex difference is being placed at the center of activity, as both question and answer, as often flimsy evidence of biological difference is paired up with unanalyzed behavioral stereotypes. And the results are broadcast through the most august media as if their scientific status were comparable to the mapping of the human genome. To make things worse, the use of fancy scientific technology, such as fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) often lends a patina of scientific rigor to generalizations based on meaninglessly small and uncontrolled samples. (see Liberman 2007 for some nice examples). And speaking of the genome, in a review of the extensive research on sex-related differences in genetic effeccts for traits and common diseases, Patsopoulos et al (2007) found that many of these studies were spurious. More than half the reported gene-sex interactions had failed to reach statistical significance, when significance was found it tended to be quite weak, and even the best studies had rarely been corroborated. Sarah Richardson (forthcoming) points out that sex difference is an easy target in genetic studies since sex is one category that is marked in all genetic databases, making for easy and convenient statistical study.

The mere fact of this shows clearly that everyone, from scientists to journalists to the reading public, has an insatiable appetite for sensationalist gender news. Indeed, gender is at the center of our social world. And any evidence that our social world maps onto the biological world is welcome evidence to those who would like an explanation and justification for the current gender arrangements or, indeed, those of the past.

To whatever extent gender may be related to biology, it does not flow naturally and directly from our bodies. The individual's chromosomes, hormones, genitalia, and secondary sex characteristics do not determine occupation, gait, or use of color terminology. And while male pattern baldness may restrict some adult men's choice of hairdo, there are many men who could sport a pageboy or a beehive as easily as many women, and nothing biological keeps women from shaving their heads. Gender is the very process of creating a dichotomy by effacing similarity and elaborating on difference, and where there are biological differences, these differences are exaggerated and extended in the service of constructing gender. Society's fascination with women's breast size is a particularly striking example now that breast augmentation surgery is readily available. In 2007, 346,524 breast augmentation surgeries were

performed in the United States[3], surpassing all other cosmetic procedures (liposuction came in second at 301,882 cases).

Actual differences between males and females tend to be scalar rather than dichotomous, with many women and men occupying the same positions on the scale. Consider our voices. On average, men's vocal tracts are longer than women's, yielding a lower voice pitch. But individuals' actual conversational voice pitch across society does not simply conform to the size of the vocal tract. At the age of four to five years, well before puberty differentiates male and female vocal tracts, boys and girls learn to differentiate their voices as boys consciously and unconsciously lower their voice pitch while girls raise theirs. In the end, one can usually tell whether even a very small child is male or female on the basis of their voice pitch and quality alone, regardless of the length of their vocal tract. The importance of the social in voice pitch apparently reaches into infancy, as Philip Lieberman (1976) found that a 10 month old boy babbled to himself when alone at 430 Hz, but lowered to 390 Hz when with his mother and to 340 Hz with his father. While this says more about the human tendency to mirror their interlocutors than about gender, it does make it clear that pitch differences become salient at a very early age.

Relative physical stature is another biological difference that is elaborated and exaggerated in the production of gender. Approximately half of the women and half of the men in the USA (Kuczmarski *et al*. 2000) are between 64 and 70 inches tall. With this considerable overlap, one might expect in any randomly chosen male and female pair that the woman would run a good chance of being taller than the man. In actuality, among heterosexual couples, one only occasionally sees such a combination, because height is a significant factor in people's choice of a heterosexual mate. While there is no biological reason for women to be shorter than their male mates, an enormous majority of couples exhibit this height relation – far more than would occur through a process of selection in which height was random (Goffman 1976). Not only do people mate so as to keep him taller than her, they also see him as taller than her even when this is not the case. Biernat, Manis, and Nelson 1991 (cited in Valian 1998) presented college students with photos of people and asked them to guess the people's height. Each photo had a reference item like a doorway or a desk, making it possible to compare the heights of people across photos. Although photos of a male of a given height were matched by photos of a female of the same height (and vice versa), the judges saw the males as taller than they actually were and the females as shorter than they actually were.

This book will focus on gender as a social construction – as the means by which society jointly accomplishes the differentiation that constitutes the gender order. While we recognize that biology imposes certain physiological constraints on the average male and female, we treat the elaboration and magnification of these differences and the erasure of differences among males and among females as entirely social. This does not mean that individuals are helpless pawns shaped by external social forces: the social emerges as individuals develop their own perspectives, react to others, and interpret others' reactions to them. Nor does it mean that someone's gender identity (or sexual orientation) can just be freely chosen. While no adult is literally "born this way" (newborn infants don't, e.g., yet have a sense of themselves as gendered or as sexually attracted to certain kinds of people), everyone is constrained both by their initial biological endowment and by the social environment in which they mature.

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[3] Statistics from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons:
http://www.plasticsurgery.org/Media/Press_Kits/Procedural_Statistics.html

Readers will come to this book with their own set of beliefs about the origins and significance of gender. They may have certain understandings of the implications for gender of biological and medical science. They may subscribe to a particular set of religious beliefs about gender. The notion of the social elaboration of sex is not incompatible with belief in a biological or divine imperative – the difference will be in where one leaves off and the other begins. All we ask of our readers is that they open-mindedly consider the evidence and arguments we advance. Our own thinking about gender has developed and changed over many years of thinking about these issues, and it will undoubtedly continue to change as we continue to explore gender issues in our research and in our lives. We have written this account of gender from a broadly feminist perspective. As we understand that perspective, the basic capabilities[4], rights, and responsibilities of women and men are far less different than is commonly thought. At the same time, that perspective also suggests that the social treatment of women and men, and thus their experiences and their own and others' expectations for them, is far more different than is usually assumed. In this book we offer evidence that these differences in what happens to women and to men derive in considerable measure from people's mutually developed beliefs about sexual difference, their interpretations of its significance, and their reliance on those beliefs and interpretations to justify the unequal treatment of women and men.

Learning to be gendered

Dichotomous beginnings: It's a boy! It's a girl!

In the famous words of Simone de Beauvoir, "Women are not born, they are made." The same is true of men. The making of a man or a woman is a never-ending process that begins before birth – from the moment someone begins to wonder if the pending child will be a boy or a girl. And the ritual announcement at birth that it is in fact one or the other instantly transforms an "it" into a "he" or a "she" (Butler 1993), standardly assigning it to a lifetime as a male or as a female.[6] This attribution is further made public and lasting through the linguistic event of naming. In some times and places, the state or religious institutions disallow sex-ambiguous given names. Finland, for example, has lists of legitimate female and legitimate male names that must be consulted before the baby's name becomes official. In English-speaking societies, not all names are sex-exclusive (e.g. *Chris*, *Kim*, *Pat*), and sometimes names change their gender classification. For example, *Evelyn* was available as a male name in Britain long after it had become an exclusively female name in America, and *Whitney*, once exclusively a surname or a male first name in America, is now bestowed on baby girls. But these changes do nothing to mitigate the fact that English names are gendered.

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[4] Rudman & Glick 2008 observe that again and again, sex differences in performance on various measures emerge as very small with large overlap between the sexes.

6 Nowadays, with the possibility of having this information before birth, wanting to know in advance or

not wanting to know can become ideologically charged. Either way, the sex of the child is frequently as

great a preoccupation as its health.

Thus the dichotomy of male and female is the ground upon which we build selves from the moment of birth. These early linguistic acts set up a baby for life, launching a gradual process of learning to be a boy or a girl, a man or a woman, and to see all others as boys or girls, men or women as well. There are currently no other readily available ways to think about ourselves and others – and we will be expected to pattern all kinds of things about ourselves as a function of that initial dichotomy. In the beginning, adults will do the child's gender work, treating it as a boy or as a girl, and interpreting its every move as that of a boy or of a girl. Then over the years, the child will learn to take over its part of the process, doing its own gender work and learning to support the gender work of others. The first thing people want to know about a baby is its sex, and social convention provides a myriad of props to reduce the necessity of asking – and it becomes more and more important, as the child develops, not to have to ask. At birth, many hospital nurseries provide pink caps for girls and blue caps for boys, or in other ways provide some visual sign of the sex that has been assigned to the baby. While this may seem quite natural to members of the society, in fact this color coding points out no difference that has any bearing on the medical treatment of the infants. Go into a store in the US to buy a present for a newborn baby, and you will immediately be asked "boy or girl!?" Overalls for a girl may be OK (though they are "best" if pink or flowered or in some other way marked as "feminine"), but gender liberalism goes only so far. You are unlikely to buy overalls with vehicles printed on them for a girl, and even more reluctant to buy a frilly dress with puffed sleeves or pink flowered overalls for a boy. And if you're buying clothing for a baby whose sex you do not know, sales people are likely to counsel you to stick with something that's plain yellow or green or white. Colors are so integral to our way of thinking about gender that gender attributions have bled into our view of the colors, so that people tend to believe that pink is a more "delicate" color than blue (and not just any blue, but baby blue). This is a prime example of the naturalization of what is in fact an arbitrary sign. In America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) reports, blue was favored for girls and bright pink for boys.

If gender flowed naturally from sex, one might expect the world to sit back and simply allow the baby to become male or female. But in fact, sex determination sets the stage for a lifelong process of gendering, as the child becomes, and learns how to be, male or female. Names and clothing are just a small part of the symbolic resources used to support a consistent ongoing gender attribution even when children are clothed. That we can speak of a child growing up *as a girl* or *as a boy* suggests that initial sex attribution is far more than just a simple observation of a physical characteristic. *Being a girl* or *being a boy* is not a stable state but an ongoing accomplishment, something that is actively *done* both by the individual so categorized and by those who interact with it in the various communities to which it belongs. The newborn initially depends on others to *do* its gender, and they come through in many different ways, not just as individuals but as part of socially structured communities that link individuals to social institutions and cultural ideologies. It is perhaps at this early life stage that it is clearest that gender is a collaborative affair – that one must learn to perform as a male or a female, and that these performances require support from one's surroundings.

Indeed, we do not know how to interact with another human being (or often members of other species), or how to judge them and talk about them, unless we can attribute a gender to them. Gender is so deeply engrained in our social practice, in our understanding of ourselves and of others, that we almost cannot put one foot in front of the other without taking gender into consideration. People even, it seems, apply gender stereotypes to computer-generated speech depending on whether they perceive the computer's voice as male or female (Nass et al 1997).

Although most of us rarely notice this overtly in everyday life, most of our interactions are colored by our performance of our own gender, and by our attribution of gender to others.

From infancy, male and female children are interpreted differently, and interacted with differently. Experimental evidence suggests that adults' perceptions of babies are affected by their beliefs about the babies' sex. Condry and Condry (1976) found that adults watching a film of a crying infant were more likely to hear the cry as angry if they believed the infant was a boy, and as plaintive or fearful if they believed the infant was a girl. In a similar experiment, adults judged a 24-hour-old baby as bigger if they believed it to be a boy, and finer-featured if they believed it to be a girl (Rubin, Provenzano and Luria 1974). Such judgments then enter into the way people interact with infants and small children. People handle infants more gently when they believe them to be female, more playfully when they believe them to be male.

And they talk to them differently. Parents use more diminutives (*kitty*, *doggie*) when speaking to girls than to boys (Gleason *et al*. 1994), they use more inner state words (*happy*, *sad*) when speaking to girls (Ely *et al*. 1995), and they use more direct prohibitives (*don't do that!*) and more emphatic prohibitives (*no! no! no!*) to boys than to girls (Bellinger and Gleason 1982). Perhaps, one might suggest, the boys need more prohibitions because they tend to misbehave more than the girls. But Bellinger and Gleason found this pattern to be independent of the actual nature of the children's activity, suggesting that the adults and their beliefs about sex difference are far more important here than the children's behavior.

With differential treatment, boys and girls do learn to *be* different. Apparently, male and female infants cry the same amount (Maccoby and Jacklin 1974), but as they mature, boys cry less and less. There is some evidence that this difference emerges primarily from differential adult response to the crying. Qualitative differences in behavior come about in the same way. A study of thirteen-month-old children in day care (Fagot *et al*. 1985) showed that teachers responded to girls when they talked, babbled, or gestured, while they responded to boys when they whined, screamed, or demanded physical attention. Nine to eleven months later, the same girls talked more than the boys, and the boys whined, screamed, and demanded attention more than the girls. Children's eventual behavior, which seems to look at least statistically different across the sexes, is the product of adults' differential responses to ways of acting that are in many (possibly most) cases very similar indeed. The kids do indeed learn to *do* gender for themselves, to produce sex-differentiated behavior – although even with considerable differential treatment they do not end up with dichotomizing behavioral patterns.

Voice, which we have already mentioned, provides a dramatic example of children's coming to perform gender. At the ages of four to five years, in spite of their identical vocal apparatus, girls and boys begin to differentiate the fundamental frequency of their speaking voice. Boys tend to round and extend their lips, lengthening the vocal tract, whereas girls are tending to spread their lips (with smiles, for example), shortening the vocal tract. Girls are raising their pitches, boys lowering theirs. It may well be that adults are more likely to speak to girls in a high-pitched voice. It may be that they reward boys and girls for differential voice productions. It may also be that children simply observe this difference in older people, or that their differential participation in games (for example play-acting) calls for different voice productions. Elaine Andersen (1990, pp. 24–25), for example, shows that children use high pitch when using baby talk or "teacher register" in role play. Some children speak as the other sex is expected to and thus, as with other aspects of doing gender, there is not a perfect dichotomization

in voice pitch (even among adults, some voices are not consistently classified). Nonetheless, there is a striking production of mostly different pitched voices from similar vocal equipment.

There is considerable debate among scholars about the extent to which adults actually do treat boys and girls differently, and many note that the similarities far outweigh the differences. Research on early gender development – in fact the research in general on gender differences – is almost exclusively done by psychologists. As a result, the research it reports on largely involves observations of behavior in limited settings – whether in a laboratory or in the home or the preschool. Since these studies focus on limited settings and types of interaction and do not follow children through a normal day, they quite possibly miss the cumulative effects of small differences across many different situations. Small differences here and there are probably enough for children to learn what it means in their community to be male or female.

The significance of the small difference can be appreciated from another perspective. The psychological literature tends to treat parents, other adults, and peers as the primary socializing agents. Only relatively recently have investigators begun to explore children's own active strategies for figuring out the social world. Eleanor Maccoby (2002) emphasizes that children have a very clear knowledge of their gender (that is, of whether they are classified as male or female) by the time they are three years old. Given this knowledge, it is not at all clear how much differential treatment children need in order to learn how to do their designated gender. What they mainly need is the message that male and female are supposed to be different, and that message is everywhere around them.

It has become increasingly clear that children play a very active role in their own development. From the moment they see themselves as social beings, they begin to focus on the enterprise of growing up. And to some extent, they probably experience many of the gendered developmental dynamics we discuss here not so much as gender-appropriate, but as *grown-up*. The greatest taboo is being "a baby," but the developmental imperative is gendered. Being grown-up, leaving babyhood, means very different things for boys than it does for girls. And the fact that growing up involves gender differentiation is encoded in the words of assessment with which progress is monitored – kids do not behave as good or bad people, but as *good boys* or *good girls*, and they develop into *big boys* and *big girls*.[7] In other words, they do not have the option of growing into just people, but into boys or girls. This does not mean that they see what they're doing in strictly gendered terms. It is probable that when boys and girls alter the fundamental frequency of their voices they are not trying to sound like *girls* or like *boys*, but that they are aspiring for some quality that is itself gendered – cuteness, authority. And the child's aspiration is not simply a matter of reasoning, but a matter of desire – a projection of the self into desired forms of participation in the social world. Desire is a tremendous force in projecting oneself into the future – in the continual remaking of the self that constitutes growing up.

Until about the age of two, boys and girls exhibit the same play behaviors. After that age, play in boys' and girls' groups begins to diverge as they come to select different toys and engage in different activities, and children begin to monitor each other's play, imposing sanctions on gender-inappropriate play. Much is made of the fact that boys become more agonistic than girls,

7 Thorne (1993) and others have observed teachers urging children to act like "big boys and girls." Very rarely is a child told "don't act like a baby – you're a big kid now."

and many attribute this to hormonal and even evolutionary differences (see Maccoby 2000 for a brief review of these various perspectives). But whatever the workings of biology may be, it is clear that this divergence is supported and exaggerated by the social system. As children get older, their play habits are monitored and differentiated, first by adults, and eventually by peers. Parents of small children have been shown to reward their children's choice of gender-appropriate toys (trucks for boys, dolls for girls) (Langlois and Downs 1980). And while parents' support of their children's gendered behavior is not always and certainly not simply a conscious effort at gender socialization, their behavior is probably more powerful than they think. Even parents who strive for gender equality, and who believe that they do not constrain their children's behavior along gender lines, have been observed in experimental situations to do just that.

Learning asymmetry

While it takes a community to develop gender, not all participants in the community are equally involved in enforcing difference. In research on early gender socialization, males – both children and adults – have emerged as more engaged in enforcing gender difference than females. In the research by Rubin *et al*. cited above, for example, fathers were more extreme than mothers in their gender-based misassessments of infants' size and texture. Men are more likely than women to play rough with boys and gently with girls, fathers use differential language patterns to boys and girls more than mothers, and men are more likely than women to reward children for choosing gender-appropriate toys. There are now books aimed at men who want to become more involved parents than their own fathers were. But the message is still often that parenting a girl is quite a different enterprise from parenting a boy. On a self-help shelf encountered at a tourist shop, *How to Be Your Daughter's Daddy: 365 Ways to Show Her You Care* by Dan Bolin (1993) stood right next to *How to Be Your Little Man's Dad: 365 Things to Do with Your Son* by Dan Bolin and Ken Sutterfield (1993).

It is not only that male adults seem to enforce gender more than female. This enforcement is more intensely aimed at boys than at girls. Adults are more likely to reward boys for choice of gender-appropriate toys than girls – and fathers are more likely to do so for their own sons than for other boys. Boys, in turn, are more rigid in their toy preferences than girls, and they are harder on other boys than on girls for gender-inappropriate play styles. A study of three to five year olds (Langlois and Downs 1980) showed that while girls tended to be neutral about other girls' choices, boys responded positively only to boys with male play styles, and were especially likely to punish their male peers for feminine choices. The outcome is that while activities and behaviors labeled as *male* are treated as appropriate for females as well as for males, those labeled as *female* are treated as appropriate only for females. One way of looking at this is that female activities and behaviors emerge as *marked* – as reserved for a special subset of the population – while male activities and behaviors emerge as *unmarked* or *normal*. This in turn contributes to the androcentric (male-centered) view of gender, which we will discuss in the following section of this chapter.

This asymmetry is partially a function of the cultural devaluation of women and of the feminine. One way or another, most boys and girls learn that boy things and boy activities are more highly valued than girl things and girl activities, and boys are strongly discouraged from having interests or activities that are associated with girls. Even where they do not encounter such views formulated explicitly or even find them denied explicitly, most boys and girls learn that it is primarily men and not women who do important things as adults, have opinions that

count, direct the course of events in the public world. It is hardly surprising then that pressures towards gender conformity are not symmetrical.

This asymmetry extends to many domains. While females may wear clothing initially viewed as male, the reverse is highly stigmatized: western women and girls now wear jeans but their male peers are not appearing in skirts. Even names seem to go from male to female and not vice versa. There are girls named Christopher, but no boys named Christine. A girl may be sanctioned for behaving "like a boy" – particularly if she behaves aggressively, and gets into fights – on the grounds that she is being "unladylike" or "not nice." But there is a tomboy category reserved for girls who adopt a male rough and tumble style of play, who display fearlessness and refuse to play with dolls. And while in some circles this categorization may be considered negative, in general in western society it earns some respect and admiration. Boys who adopt girls' behaviors, on the other hand, are severely sanctioned. The term "sissy" is reserved for boys who do not adhere strictly to norms of masculinity, and is never heard as a compliment.

A child who's told she has to do more housework than her brother because she's a girl, or that she can't be an astronaut when she grows up because she's a girl,[8] is likely to say "that's not fair!" A boy who is told he cannot play with dolls because he's a boy, or that he cannot be a secretary when he grows up, may find that unfair as well. But the boy who is told he can't be a nurse is being told that he is too good to be a nurse. The girl, on the other hand, is essentially being told that she is not good enough to be a doctor. This is not to say that the consequences cannot be tragic for the boy who really wants to play with dolls or grow up to be a nurse. He will be deprived of a legitimate sense of unfairness within society's wider discourses of justice, hence isolated with his sense of unfairness. But gender specialization does carry the evaluation that men's enterprises are generally better than women's, and children learn this quite early on.[9]

Now there are some counterexamples to these general trends, many of them prompted by the feminist and gay rights movements. Men are moving into "women's" jobs and women are moving into "men's" jobs with increasing frequency. And increasing numbers of men are taking over domestic tasks like diaper-changing and everyday cooking that were once women's province. This is certainly moving fast in countries like those in Scandinavia that provide serious

8 These examples may seem anachronistic and indeed they are becoming less and less common, but such explicit messages do persist. The first is reported by some of the young women in our classes at Stanford and Cornell (though certainly not by all or even most). And the second message was relayed to astronaut Sally Ride in 2001 by a girl whose teacher had offered her that discouragement.

9 Even a child whose own mother is a physician is sometimes heard saying "ladies can't be doctors." Of course kids sometimes get it wrong. An anecdote circulated during Margaret Thatcher's time as prime minister told of a young English boy asked "do you want to be prime minister when you grow up!?" "Oh no," he replied, "that's a woman's job."

parental leave for men. But the dominant pattern that restricts men in moving into what are seen as women's realms and thereby devalued is by no means dead.

Separation

To differing degrees from culture to culture and community to community, difference is reinforced by separation. Boys play more with boys; girls with girls. And this pattern repeats itself cross-culturally, in nonindustrial societies as well as in industrial societies (Whiting and Edwards 1988). The extent to which individuals in western industrial countries grow up participating in same-sex playgroups varies tremendously, depending on such things as the genders and ages of their siblings and their neighbors. Some kids spend more time in same-sex groups at one stage of their lives, less at other stages. The fact remains that however much kids may play in mixed-sex groups, there is a tendency to seek out – and to be constrained to seek out – same-sex groups. This constraint is stronger for boys – girls who prefer playing with boys are tolerated, perhaps admired, while boys who prefer playing with girls are not.

Psychological research shows that many American children begin to prefer same-sex playmates as they approach the age of three (Maccoby 1998), which is about the age at which they develop a clear sense of their own gender, and this preference increases rapidly as they age. Eleanor Maccoby notes that this preference emerges in institutional settings – day care, preschool, and elementary school – where children encounter large numbers of age peers. On the same theme, Barrie Thorne (1993) points out that schools provide a population that's sufficiently large for boys and girls to be able to separate, whereas in neighborhoods there may be less choice.

Even though children lean towards same-sex groups in these settings, they often maintain prior cross-sex friendships formed outside the institution (Howes 1988). It is important to note that the preference for same-sex play groups is not absolute, and that in fact children often play in mixed groups. Maccoby and Jacklin's study (1987) of individual children's choice of playmates in a preschool setting shows four and a half year olds playing in same-sex groups 47 percent of the time, mixed groups 35 percent of the time and other-sex groups (i.e., where the child is the only representative of her or his own sex in the group) 18 percent of the time. While these figures show a good deal of mixing, the same-sex groups are far greater than random playmate selection would produce. And at age six and a half, children in the Maccoby and Jacklin study were playing in same-sex groups 67 percent of the time. Maccoby (1998, pp. 22–23) suggests that the choice of playmates in school is a strategy for ensuring safety and predictability in an open setting, as children seek out others with a recognizable play style. This presupposes different play styles to begin with, presenting a complicated chicken-and-egg problem. For if sex-segregated play groups fill a need for predictable play and interaction styles, they are also a potential site for the production and reproduction of this differentiation. It has been overwhelmingly established that small boys engage in more physically aggressive behavior than small girls. However, experimental and observational evidence puts this differentiation at precisely the same time that same-sex group preference emerges. This play style reaches its peak among boys at about the age of four and that it is restricted to same-sex groups, suggesting that there is a complex relation between the emergence of gendered play styles and of same-sex play groups.

The separation of children in same-sex play groups has led some gender theorists to propose a view that by virtue of their separation during a significant part of their childhoods, boys and girls are socialized into different peer *cultures*. In their same-sex friendship groups, they develop different behavior, different norms, and even different understandings of the world. Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borker (1982) argue that because of this separation, boys and girls develop different cultures – different ways of interacting and different norms for interpreting ways of interacting. They argue, further, that this can result in *cross-cultural miscommunication* between males and females. The separation of gender cultures does not necessarily entail male–female misunderstanding, although it describes the conditions under which such misunderstanding could develop. Certainly, if girls and boys are segregated on a regular basis, we can expect that they will develop different practices and different understandings of the world. The extent to which this actually occurs depends on the nature of the segregation – when, in what contexts, for what activities – in relation to the actual contact between boys and girls.

This miscommunication model draws on John Gumperz's work with ethnically distinct subcultures (e.g. Gumperz 1982). It hypothesizes both that male and female understandings of interaction are in fact different, and, critically, that they are unaware of these differences, and believe that they are operating from the same understanding. It is the unawareness that may be the most problematic assumption for this approach to gender-based miscommunication (or conflict), since the gender beliefs that most kids are industriously acquiring in their peer groups and outside them emphasize difference, to the point sometimes of absurd exaggeration. Gender segregation in childhood almost certainly plays some role in the development of gendered verbal practice. But for understanding gender, separation is never the whole picture. Gender segregation in western societies is virtually always embedded in practices that bring the sexes together and that impose difference in interpretations even where there are great similarities in those actions or people being interpreted.

As we move farther along in development, the complexity of explaining gender differences increases exponentially. As kids spend more time with their peers, and as they enter into more kinds of situations with peers, not only does the balance between adult and peer influence change, but the nature of peer influence also changes. Peer society becomes increasingly complex, and at some point quite early on, explicit ideas about gender enter into children's choices, preferences, and opportunities. Whatever the initial factors that give rise to increasing gender separation, separation itself becomes an activity, and a primary social issue. Barrie Thorne (1993) notes that public choosing of teams in school activities constrains gender segregation, hence that games that involve choosing teams are more likely to be same gender, while games that simply involve lining up or being there are more likely to be gender-mixed. Separation can carry over to competitions and rivalries between boys' groups and girls' groups, as in elementary school activities such as "girls chase the boys" (Thorne 1993). These activities can be an important site for the construction of difference with claims that girls or boys are better at whatever activity is in question. In this way, beliefs about differences in males' and females' "natural" abilities may be learned so young and so indirectly that they appear to be common sense. It is not at all clear, therefore, to what extent differences in behaviors and activities result from boys' and girls' personal preference, or from social constraint.

The heterosexual market

Towards the end of elementary school, a highly visible activity of pairing up boys and girls into couples begins to dominate the scene. This activity is not one engaged in by individual children, and it is not an activity that simply arises in the midst of other childhood "business as usual." Rather, it is the beginning of a social market that forms the basis of an emerging peer social order (Eckert 1996). And with this market comes a profound change in the terms of gender separation and difference.In childhood, it is primarily adults who attend to children's behavior. As the peer social order develops, it takes over much of this function as it develops the means to organize its own social control. Heterosexuality is the metaphor around which the peer social order organizes itself, and a heterosexual market (Thorne 1993; Eckert 1996) becomes the center of the emerging peer social order. While up until now, boys and girls may have seen themselves as simply different, and perhaps as incompatible, in the context of the heterosexual market, boys and girls emerge as complementary and cooperating factions.

The market metaphor is not frivolous, for the heterosexual market is the first of a series of social markets that the age cohort will engage in on the way to, for example, the academic market and the job market. It is here that both girls and boys will come to see themselves as having a place in a structured system of social evaluation. Kids participating in the heterosexual market can act as both commodity and as broker – they can be paired up, or they can engage in negotiating the pairing up of others. The matches that are made on this market are initially short-lived – a pair may remain "together" for a few hours, a few days, a week, sometimes longer. It is the rapidity of "trades" on the market that establishes a system of social value. The rapt attention that the market attracts from those participating in it and from nonparticipating observers is part of the establishment of gender norms, as people's worth is recalibrated within the context of heterosexual attractiveness.

It is important to note that for most participants, this activity precedes active heterosexual activity – even dating – by a year or two, as these relationships have little to do with attachments between the members of a pair. The activities establish a system and hierarchy of desirability prior to the actual onset of overt heterosexual desire and activity. One's value on the market is a function of the matches that are made on one's behalf – not so much on the number of matches, but on the people with whom one is matched. The new and enduring status system that forms around this market constitutes the core of the emerging adolescent social order. In this way, the social order is – fundamentally – heterosexual, dramatically changing the terms of the cohort's gender arrangements. What was appropriate for boys and girls simply as male and female individuals now defines them with respect to a social order. Their value as human beings and their relations to others are based in their adherence to gender norms. And the differentiation of these norms intensifies as differentiation of male and female merges with engagement between male and female.

Not everyone is active in the heterosexual market, and not everyone who participates in this market is heterosexual. This market is the means by which the social order comes to *presume* heterosexuality, marginalizing and rendering deviant any who do not eventually participate. Sometimes there are alternative markets on which to claim worth and value – the academic market, for example – but the heterosexual imperative spreads its umbrella very wide,

and because of its central place in the age cohort, it affects all – even those quite averse to any direct participation in it.

There are some cultural contexts where heterosexual coupling is not so early or so central a part of development. Even in the US the heterosexual market was not apparent among such young kids a couple of generations back. In almost all cultures though, eventual marriage is a central social goal that marks adulthood even in cases where the young people themselves do not play a very active role in forging heterosexual links. Most cultures have some kinds of institutions that focus on heterosexual desire among the young and are linked to plans for eventual marriage.

In the US, gender difference and heterosexuality are deeply embedded (and intertwined) in the institution of adolescence and in the formal institution of the high school that houses the age group. Heterosexual couples have a special status in high school – popularity is closely linked to heterosexual alliances, and "famous" couples gain extra visibility and provide theater for their cohort (Eckert 1989). Gender difference and separation have been commonly emphasized by such things as mock elections that have male and female counterparts for "most popular," "most likely to succeed," and similar categories. The message in these polls is that being successful or popular is different for males and females – that the terms of these statuses are themselves gendered. The classic pairing of the cheerleader and the football player emphasizes the role of the female supporting the male, as the latter upholds the honor of the institution. And the institutions of prom and homecoming king and queen emphasize the importance of heterosexual alliances, elevating such alliances to institutional status. In recent years, prom and homecoming have come to be sites for the legitimation of same sex desire in the adolescent social order. 2010 was a banner year for same-sex couples to claim the right to attend prom, successfully in many cases, and the stuff of law suits in others. The American Civil Liberties Union successfully sued a Mississippi school district that denied a lesbian student the opportunity to bring her girlfriend to prom[5]. The school cancelled the prom when the ACLU brought suit, and the student moved to another high school to get away from harassment by fellow students angered that she'd ruined their senior year. And in 2011, a lesbian couple were elected homecoming king and queen at Patrick Henry High School in San Diego.

Developing desire

Throughout gender development until the emergence of the heterosexual market, the emphasis has been on difference – on opposition. The heterosexual market brings an important change in the nature of dichotomous thinking, as suddenly, opposites are supposed to attract. Opposition gains the twist of complementarity, and where before male and female might have been in conflict, now they are collaborators. And with this comes the introduction to gender of the conscious element of desire.

Everywhere we look, we see images of the perfect couple. (For a still compelling discussion of the construction of male and female in advertising along these lines, see Goffman, 1976.) They are heterosexual. He is taller, bigger, darker than her. They appear in poses in which he looks straight ahead, confident and direct; she looks down or off into the distance, often dreamily. Standing or sitting, she is lower than him, maybe leaning on him, maybe tucked under

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[5] For press coverage, see Joyner (2010). An interview with the student can be seen at http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6292187n&tag=api

his arm, maybe looking up to him. And from the time they are very young, most kids have learned to desire that perfectly matched partner of the other sex. Girls develop a desire to look up at a boyfriend. A girl begins to see herself leaning against his shoulder, him having to lean down to kiss her, or to whisper in her ear. She learns to be scared so she can have him protect her; she learns to cry so he can dry her tears. Girls put on large men's shirts to emphasize their smallness. This concentration of desire, or *cathexis* (Connell 1987), is an extraordinarily powerful force in the maintenance of the heterosexual gender order. It leads one not simply to desire those in the other sex class, but to form oneself in a particular mold as an object of desire by those others. Girls come to want to feel small and delicate; boys want to feel big and strong. Or at least these are the dominant socially endorsed images of self, images that sometimes rest uncomfortably with such developments as the explosion of girls and women in competitive sports requiring strength and often height or weight. Even the athletic young woman, however, is instructed to work on making her body desirable to men, as is attested by advertising and features in such publications as *Sports Illustrated for Women*. Diets, hairstyling, shaving legs or heads, appetite suppressants, steroids, tattoos, body piercing, makeup: all these and more are in the service of the desired self.[10] Consumption of all kinds is driven by desire, and this desire is overwhelmingly gendered. Fashion, cosmetics, vehicles, homes, furnishings, gardens, food, leisure activities – are all extensions of the self, driven by desire.

We think of emotion and desire as natural, but in fact both are highly structured and learned. It is generally said that the taboo against men crying or showing fear requires men to learn to control their emotions. This is certainly true, and many boys and men can attest to how difficult such control can sometimes be. Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, many Americans watched obviously brave and tough men from the New York City police and fire departments weeping unashamedly for their friends and colleagues and for the many others who died in the World Trade Center. News media began to speculate that we were moving into a new era in which men no longer need to control their tears. Well, perhaps. More likely is that there will be more acceptance of men's tears in some contexts but there will still be gendered constraints on crying and other expressions of emotional vulnerability. We also tend to have very short memories about things related to gender, emotion and intimacy. John Ibson's book (2006) on the photographic portrayal of men over the past century shows that men during the second

10 Historian Joan Brumberg (1997) has chronicled the historical development of the contemporary extreme focus in the US on the need for young women to work hard at maintaining and improving their bodies (rather than their souls, which got at least as much or more attention in nineteenth-century America). Indeed, even men are beginning to devote more effort to their bodies; there is an increase in plastic surgery among men as well as considerable attention to diet and exercise as urged by the recent spate of "men's" magazines. This is not to say that bodywork is no longer gendered: women and men continue to be steered in different directions in their "body projects," and most women still invest far more time and money in those projects than their male peers.

world war were regularly portrayed together in very intimate poses that would, today, be considered "gay."

The focus on male control of emotion misses the fact that there is also a good deal of socialization involved in women's learning to display their emotions to others, learning when to cry or show fear to an audience. It is appropriate for women to shed public tears, for instance, upon the death of an acquaintance, and it is appropriate for women to show fear in the face of physical threat. In fact, it is appropriate for women to show these emotions in imagined situations, as they read novels or watch movies. There are situations in which girls and women push themselves to shed a tear for something that has not touched them as much as it "should," and perhaps sometimes to convince themselves that it has touched them after all. Acting scared in action or horror movies can be an important female skill. Learning to be immune to fear in these situations, and learning to not be immune, are gendered alternatives. And the choice between these alternatives is further supported by the structuring of desire. People do not simply learn to have the appropriate emotional responses; they learn to want those responses, and to be the *kind of people* who have those responses. Girls and boys envision themselves in situations, and mold themselves to those situations. A common scene in movie theatres is the teenage heterosexual couple on a date.[11] A sad or a scary scene sends the girl into her boyfriend's protective arms, hiding her head in his jacket. Perhaps he pats her head protectively or chuckles knowingly at her weakness. The movie provides the pretext for the girl and the boy to play out their gender roles, and to activate the complex links among romance, heterosexuality, gender, and the theme of fear and protection.

Gender development does not end with childhood or adolescence. Gender continues to be transformed as we move into the marketplace – as we learn to act like secretaries, lawyers, managers, janitors. And it continues to be transformed as our family status changes – as we learn to be wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, grandmothers and grandfathers. As we age, we continue to learn new ways of being men and women: what's expected from the teenage girl is rather different from expectations for a woman in her mid-forties and those expectations differ from those for a woman approaching eighty. Those not caught up in heterosexual alliances are not thereby rendered exempt from gender expectations. Personals looking for lesbian partners, for example, often specify that respondents should be "feminine" in appearance: no "butch" need apply (Livia 2002).

As we've seen above, learning to be male or female involves learning to look and act in particular ways, learning to participate in particular ways in relationships and communities, and learning to see the world from a particular perspective. We are inclined to see many of our habits, preferences, and beliefs as simply the result of our individual history – not as a result of our place in the social order. However, habits, preferences, and beliefs develop in response to experience, and to the extent that the social order structures our experience, there are likely to be patterns to who develops what. This does not mean that women or men are homogeneous groups: some men may cry readily, some women may never shed tears. Not everyone adopts the dominant script. How we develop, however, is never a matter of the straightforward unfolding of individual dispositions but always reflects exposure to norms, expectations, and opportunities that depend on gender and other social categories.

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11 We thank Alejandra Kim for this example, offered in a class assignment at Stanford University.

Of course, gender is by no means the only aspect of social identity that one learns in this developmental story. Gender interacts with other hierarchies based in such socially constructed categories as class, age, ethnicity, and race: we find, for example, sexualized racism and racialized sexism. We could rewrite this entire section, focusing on how kids learn their socioeconomic status, their race, their ethnicity – even their body type and their reading abilities. And we could rewrite this entire section for each possible combination of gender, class, race, and all the other socially significant categories we might list – for of course, it is the intersection of hierarchies (Crenshaw 1989) that people experience, not any abstracted element.

The rewrites would, of course, bring out interesting and important differences between how gender and other categories are structured. Importantly, there is not really an analogue of the heterosexual market and the broader heterosexual imperative, or of the strong gender polarization and notions of gender complementarity it supports. Gender norms try to inculcate the desire for a partner of the other sex, whereas, while there are cases in which race and class do structure aspects of family life, race and class norms do not operate in this way. Indeed, there are strong pressures towards finding a partner of the other sex who is of the *same* race or class; this is one way that gender and race or class interact. And gender and age are categories that systematically structure family life, whereas racial or class diversity within families is relatively rare. As Rudman and Glick (2008, 4) argue, gender relations involve pervasive "intimate heterosexual interdependence," often with "genuine feelings of love and affection between the sexes," feelings that help explain some of the ambivalence characteristic of ideas about gender. Yet although gender differs crucially from other principles of social division and inequality, the important point remains that social hierarchies interact and inflect one another, making talk about any of them in isolation potentially misleading. Certainly, for example, the imperative mentioned above that women be thin is most pronounced in the US in the white middle class, and is not common to all ethnic groups. This developmental narrative has raised several fundamental principles. First of all, it is clear that gender is learned. And because gender involves a restriction of choice – severe constraints on behavior for all, as well as asymmetries – it must be not just learned but taught, and enforced. This leads to the second principle, that gender is collaborative. It is common to think of gender in terms of individual attributes – an individual is male or female, more or less masculine or feminine, is fulfilling male or female roles. This focus on the individual obscures the fact that we cannot accomplish gender on our own. Although gender includes individuals' sense of their own gender identity, it is not primarily an individual matter, but a practice connecting the individual to the social order. As we have noted, children learn gender initially by having other people do gender for them, and eventually take over the responsibility for their own performances and for supporting the performances of others. This support involves some direct coercion, but mostly gender is so built into our ways of doing things that simple actions and interactions usually call forth gendered responses in others with eventually little or no conscious attention to this gendering.

This leads to the third principle, that gender is not something we have, but something we do. Children often do gender quite consciously – it is clear to all that the swaggering boy and the mincing girl are engaged in gendered performances. As they get older, they get better at masking the raw performances they are engaging in, but more importantly, their gendered performances also become second nature. The fact remains that gender requires work, and when aspects of gender are not consistently performed at all levels of society they can wither away. It is this aspect of gender that led to Judith Butler's (1990) theory of *gender performativity*, which we will discuss further in later chapters.

Finally, gender is asymmetrical. However a person may feel about the current gender order, there is no question that male and female are not simply two equal sides of a coin. Inequality is built into gender at a very basic level. Indeed, Kate Bornstein (1998) has said that gender is just a system to justify inequality. In arguing for the universality of beliefs in male superiority, Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (1981, p. 16) put a similar point this way: "[a] gender system is first and foremost a prestige structure." In more recent writings, Ortner (1990, 1996) offers a more complex view of gender, observing that there are generally different axes of social value or prestige operative in a given society, with men ahead on some and women on others (undoubtedly reflecting the ambivalence noted by Rudman & Glick), but that some axes are more deeply embedded in social life and thought than others. A related important point is that power and influence do not always line up directly with prestige. A cartoon from the middle of the twentieth century brought out this point: a man is shown saying to his young son, "I decide all the important issues like whether God is dead or whether the UN should admit Communist China and I let your mother deal with things like which school you should attend or which house we should buy."

Keeping gender: the gender order

One thing that is overwhelming in our narrative of development is the ubiquity of gender. Children get gender from everywhere. Gender consists in a pattern of relations that develops over time to define male and female, masculinity and femininity, simultaneously structuring and regulating people's relation to society. It is deeply embedded in every aspect of society – in our institutions, in public spaces, in art, clothing, movement. Gender is embedded in experience in all settings from government offices to street games. It is embedded in the family, the neighborhood, church, school, the media, walking down the street, eating in a restaurant, going to the restroom. And these settings and situations are all linked to one other in a structured fashion. Gender is so intricately organized at every level of experience that there is something approaching a seamless connection between a girl's desire for a frilly party dress and the male control of the means of production. What we experience as our individual, perhaps whimsical, desires emerge within a far-reaching gender order – an order that both supports, and is supported by, these desires. It is this seamless connection that makes language so important to gender and vice versa. Our smallest interactions can be imbued with gender, and our continual performance in those interactions strengthens their role in supporting gender. Every time a little girl desires a frilly pink party dress, insists on having one, or wears one, she is performing a gendered act that renews the gendered meanings associated with pink, frills, dresses, and party clothes. The little girl who insists on wearing grubby overalls has a different effect. Interestingly, however, people often dismiss what they see as exceptions so that the actions of the nonconforming girl may have less ongoing effect.[12] The purpose of this section is to give some account of the connection

12 Virginia Valian (1998) cites a number of psychological studies showing that we tend to give greater

"weight" to what conforms to our expectations (not only in gender but also in other domains). Barrie

Thorne (1993) reported that in her elementary school study she found herself initially focusing on both

acts and individuals that seemed gender-typical.

between the pink party dress and the male control of institutions – an account of the structuring of gender ubiquity and of male domination.

We begin by reiterating that dichotomous gender is at the center of our social order because we keep it there. Our survival does not depend on males wearing blue and females wearing pink; humans are a reflective species, and we can talk to each other. The continual differentiation of male and female serves not to guarantee biological reproduction, but to guarantee social reproduction – to reaffirm the social arrangements that depend on the categories *male* and *female*. These dichotomous categories are an ongoing human accomplishment, and for this reason, our study of language and gender will treat language not simply as reflecting pre-existing categories, but as part of what constructs and maintains these categories.

Convention and ideology

The gender order is a system of allocation, based on sex-class assignment, of rights and obligations, freedoms and constraints, limits and possibilities, power and subordination. It is supported by – and supports – structures of *convention*, *ideology*, *emotion*, and *desire*. These are so interwoven that it is often difficult to separate gender from other aspects of life. The power of convention, or custom, lies in the fact that we simply learn ways of being and ways of doing things without considering any reasons behind them, and without recognizing the larger structures they fall into. And while convention changes continually, members of society often view individual conventions as timeless and necessary, and as key to order. An important property of convention lies in its apparent timelessness. Indeed, part of the process of conventionalization is an erasure of the actual circumstances under which the particular practice in question came into being. For example, we automatically say, "Mr. and Mrs. Jones" – not "Mrs. and Mr. Jones"; and "husband and wife" – not "wife and husband."[13] While this is a matter of convention, the convention was originally explicitly established that men should be mentioned before women on the grounds of male superiority. As early as the sixteenth century, grammarians argued that male should be mentioned before female: "let us kepe a natural order, and set the man before the woman for maners Sake" (Wilson 1560, p. 189; cited in Bodine 1975, p. 134), for "The Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine" (Poole 1646, p. 21; cited in Bodine 1975, p. 134). Here is a case in which linguistic convention has been overtly determined by gender ideology and, in turn, supports that ideology at least implicitly.

Ideology is the system of beliefs by which people explain, account for, and justify their behavior, and interpret and assess that of others. *Gender ideology* is the set of beliefs that govern people's participation in the gender order, and by which they explain and justify that participation. Gender ideologies differ with respect to such things as the nature of male and female, and the justice, the naturalness, the origins, and the necessity of various aspects of the

13 There is a convention in English that orders word pairs according to phonological shape, and the first

(but not the second) of these pairs conforms to that order. However, it has been shown (Wright and Hay

2002) that once phonological constraints have been taken into consideration, there remains a tendency to

order male names before female names in pairs.

gender order. Ideologies differ on whether difference is fundamental, whether it should be maintained, and whether it can – or should – be maintained with or without inequality. Some accept difference as given, and as justifying, or as the necessary result of, inequality. Some see difference as manufactured in order to support hierarchies. For some, the maintenance of the gender order is a moral imperative – whether because it is of divine origin or simply because it is embedded in convention. For others, it is a matter of convenience – a sense that "if it ain't broke don't fix it." Of course, the sense that it is or ain't broke depends on one's perspective.

"Essences" and the nature of the dichotomy

We begin our discussion of the gender order with a brief description of what we take to be some of the main features of the dominant gender ideology in our own society – the view of gender currently privileged in society at large, the terms in which the male–female dichotomy is publicly understood and frequently justified. Members of any western industrial society are likely to be able to produce the following set of oppositions: men are strong, women are weak; men are brave, women are timid; men are aggressive, women are passive; men are sex-driven, women are relationship-driven; men are impassive, women are emotional; men are rational, women are irrational; men are direct, women are indirect; men are competitive, women are cooperative; men are practical, women are nurturing; men are rough, women are gentle. (Note that some characterize men positively while others seem to tilt in women's favor.) The list goes on and on, and together these oppositions yield the quintessential man and woman. While many (perhaps even most) individuals or groups reject some or all of these both as actual descriptions and as ideals to which to aspire, virtually all our readers will recognize that they are part of a pervasive image of male and female. The dominant ideology does not simply prescribe that male and female *should* be different – it insists that they simply *are* different. Furthermore, it ascribes these differences to an unchanging essential quality of males and females. This view is referred to as *essentialism*.

These oppositions are extremely powerful, both because of their place in gender ideology, and because of the ways in which their representations permeate society. First of all, the oppositions appear to come as a package, explanations for each lying somewhere in the others. When we examine the separate oppositions closely, they are not intrinsically linked, but the web of associations that constitutes gender has tied them together in the popular mind. The links among size, physical strength, and bravery may seem clear (to the extent that we limit our definition of bravery to bravery in the face of physical threat). But the link between strength and aggressiveness is not clear, nor is the link between either of these and emotionality, rationality, directness, and competitiveness – or, for that matter, among any of these. For example, the link between impassivity and rationality assumes an inability for an emotional person also to be rational, implying that emotionality involves lack of reason and control. What kind of view is this of emotionality? The reader would do well to study the possible relations among any of these oppositions, seeking their connections in the dominant ideology.

The ubiquity of the view of male and female as opposites is witnessed in the common English expression *the opposite sex*. Rarely do you hear an alternative expression, such as *the other sex,* much less *another sex*. Gender oppositions focus not simply on difference but on the potential for conflict, incomprehension, and mystification: the *battle of the sexes*, the *gender gap*. But as male and female become collaborating factions in the heterosocial enterprise, opposition

is supplemented by a notion of complementarity. Embedded in expressions like *my better half*, the ideology of complementarity emphasizes interdependent characters and roles, suggesting a kind of ecological necessity. The notion of attraction (*opposites attract*)[14] and that one is necessary to the other suggests that it is this sharp gender differentiation that keeps society on an even keel. The view that gender differences serve central social purposes that keep society functioning is what social theorists refer to as *functionalism*. It is an important component of dominant gender ideology, and one that plays a powerful role in conservative gender discourse.

Gendered oppositions are ubiquitous, permeating our experience by appearing in all kinds of sites and in all kinds of forms. Earlier in this chapter, we commented on the social forces that exaggerate the statistical size difference between women and men, and on the role of images of the man towering over the woman in the media in instilling desire for a particular kind of mate. Although indeed the average height of women is somewhat less than the average height of men, the fact that in only a small minority of heterosexual couples is the man no taller than the woman attests to the ubiquity and the power of gender images.

Another way in which these oppositions are reinforced is in their potential for embedding. The opposition *larger–smaller*, for example, does not only differentiate male from female, but it operates within the male and female categories as well. Men who are small with respect to other men are viewed as less masculine; women who are large with respect to other women are viewed as less feminine. Susan Gal and Judith Irvine (1995) refer to this nesting of the overall opposition within each component of the opposition as *fractal recursivity*. Recursivity provides a particularly powerful force in gender enforcement, as people tend to compare themselves not with people of the other gender, but with people of their own. Men deemed feminine (or effeminate) are seen as inferior men. While women deemed masculine may

14 Psychologist Daryl Bem (1996) has hypothesized a fundamentally oppositional principle for sexual attraction – the exotic becomes erotic – to explain both cross-sex and same-sex desire. Girls and boys constructing themselves as heterosexual see others of the same sex as too like themselves to be desirable, whereas those who develop same-sex desires see themselves as sex-atypical and find sex-typical members of their own sex more desirable than members of the other sex because of the greater "exoticness" of those conforming same-sex individuals. Although Bem's theory has the virtue of trying to explain heterosexual as well as homosexual desire, it has been criticized on a number of grounds. The theory is hard to reconcile with the fact that sex-atypicality is only loosely correlated with same-sex desire. It also would seem to predict a much higher incidence of cross-racial and cross-class attraction than is found. (Stein 1999 offers a good discussion of this and other accounts of the origins of desire, especially same-sex desire.) But Bem's theory does fit with a long tradition of conceiving heterosexual attraction in terms of complementary opposites, each incomplete but together completing each other.

sometimes be seen as inferior women, they are also seen as striving for what is in fact a valued masculine persona. This is one reason that masculine behavior in women is often less stigmatized than feminine behavior in men. The association of gender and heterosexuality also leads to the association of gender-atypical behavior with homosexuality, especially for boys and men. Policing gender is tied very closely in modern western societies with policing sexual preference. The four-year-old boy may be steered away from flowers and towards stripes for his curtains (or teased for even caring what his curtains look like) because his dad doesn't want him to grow up gay.

Division of labor

The traditional gender oppositions listed in the above section are closely tied to a division of labor that permeates society at every level. This is not simply a division of physical and mental labor, but of emotional labor as well. Of course, no division of labor is simply a division of activity, for activity determines such things as patterns of association, movement, and use of space. In turn, the division of labor tends to call for, and even to instill, the gendered qualities that are the terms of the oppositions. Those charged with caring for others' basic needs, for example, can function well in their jobs only if they are other-oriented, attending closely to signals from those others as to the state of their minds and bodies.

To the extent that some activities and spheres have greater power and prestige than others, a division of labor can also be a division of value. Across societies, the gendered division of labor involves differential power and status. Men's activities – those that are guarded the most closely as men's domain – involve greater societal power, through the disposition of goods and services and the control of ritual. Males in most cultures have more access to positions of public power and influence than females. While women sometimes wield considerable influence in domestic settings or in other nonpublic domains, this influence is limited by the domain itself. Since the private sphere is dependent on its place in the public sphere, the domestic woman's ultimate position in the social order is dependent on the place of her male relatives' positions in the marketplace. And her ability to exert power and influence in the private sphere depends on how these men allocate the goods that they gain in the marketplace.

The gendered division of labor in western society relies heavily on the allocation of women's function to the domestic, or private, realm and men's to the public realm. People often connect this division of labor to reproductive roles. Women, as bearers of children, are assigned not only to delivering them, but to raising them, and to the nurturing not only of children but of entire families, and to the care of the home in which families are based. If one were to imagine a division of labor based on sex alone, women would bear and nurse children and men would not. And women would likely be somewhat restricted in their other activities while engaged in child-bearing and nursing. But beyond that, a sex-based division of labor does not follow from reproductive function, which is either quite temporary or nonoccurring within the life span of most women. Nonetheless, the sexual division of labor in all kinds of areas is standardly justified in terms of the different biological requirements for motherhood and fatherhood. Of course, it is not just reproductive potential that is called on to justify the sexual division of labor: women were long kept out of certain jobs because they were deemed too weak to perform them (sometimes even when strength had long since become essentially irrelevant for job performance). Certainly, there might be different sex balances in the allocation of tasks that

would emerge because of different sex balances in the attributes needed for success – certain tasks requiring unusual strength might, for example, fall to people of great strength, many of whom would be men but some of whom would be women. Yet societies around the world have elaborate allocations of activities and responsibilities purely on the basis of assigned gender, with no attention at all to actual reproductive activity or size. And the sexual division of labor in many areas bears little or no relation even to size or reproductive activity. Thus it should not be surprising that while the existence of a division of labor is universal,[15] the details of this division are not. What is considered men's work or role in one society may be considered women's in another.

In the division into private and public, women are generally in charge of caring for people's everyday needs – clothing, feeding, cleaning, caring for children – maintaining people and their living space on an everyday basis. Until recently, this division kept many women out of the public workplace, and while nowadays most women in the west do work outside of the home, many of their occupations are extensions of their domestic role. Traditional women's jobs are in the service sector, and often involve nurturing, service, and support roles: teachers of small children, nurses, secretaries, flight attendants. There is also an emotional division of labor. Wherever they are, women are expected more than men to remember birthdays, soothe hurt children, offer intimate understanding. Men, on the other hand, are more expected to judge, to offer advice and expertise, or to figure out mechanical problems.

It is possible to continue this list ad infinitum: salesmen sell hardware, men's clothing and shoes, and computers. While men may sell women's shoes, they rarely sell dresses or lingerie; but women can sell any items of men's clothing. Saleswomen sell cooking utensils, lingerie, and flowers. Men construct things out of wood and metal while women construct things out of fiber. Men play contact sports; women play individual sports that do not involve physical contact. At home, women cook meals, clean homes, care for children; men do yard work, look after cars, and do house repairs. The reader could expand this list forever, both with current states of affairs and with stereotypes. But we can also see change. Women are taking up boxing, wrestling and kick-boxing; they are becoming fire fighters and police officers in greater numbers and rising to become fire chiefs and police chiefs. And certainly we're seeing more women in positions of responsibility in all areas. But there are still plenty of imbalances and inequities.

On close inspection, connections between the division of labor and the supposed male and female qualities supporting that division prove problematic. The attribution of "nurturing" seems to follow women's activities. A woman preparing food is seen as taking care of her family, while a man barbecuing is not seen in quite the same light. Just as women's activities are often viewed as nurturing even if their intent or effect might not be nurturant, men's activities can acquire prestige simply by their association with men, regardless of their inherent value. While most domestic cooks are women, men still dominate in professional cooking – particularly in haute cuisine. This process of gendered assessment becomes evident when what were once men's jobs lose their associated power and prestige as women begin to occupy them. This was

15 Nonetheless there seems to be much more flexibility in who does what in some societies than in

others. See, e.g., Ortner (1990) for discussion of the Andaman Islanders, who seemed to have had little

difficulty in men's taking on what were classed as women's jobs and vice versa.

amply witnessed in the World War II era, during which military conscription cleared men out of many workplaces, and women were called upon to take their places. Women became bank tellers – a job reserved for men in the prewar era, on the assumption that only men were sufficiently responsible to handle large sums of money. After the war, women remained in teller jobs, which became "women's" jobs and came to be viewed as relatively menial, clerical work. (Of course, in an earlier era, women were considered unfit for clerical work). In the other direction, computer programming was viewed early on as clerical work, and was done primarily by women, while the development of hardware was considered the difficult and manly thing. The ENIAC computer, built in the 1940's, was programmed by six women, and women continued to do most of the programming until the sixties, when it became clear that programming was hard. At that point, the programming profession became masculinized through a variety of overt discriminatory practices. (Ensmenger 2010).

The domestic role also brings an interesting restriction of time. Feeding, cleaning and dressing others, and the other tasks involved in the day-to-day maintenance of a household, are continuously renewed, permeating time. Thus a woman's time is traditionally controlled by the continual needs of other people. The tasks that men traditionally do in the middle-class domestic sphere, on the other hand, are cyclical. Taking out the trash, tending the yard, doing repairs – these are things that can be scheduled in advance, to fit around the rest of one's activities. This difference in demands on their time then makes it more difficult for women to make the same commitment as men to activity in the marketplace.

The woman's domestic role commonly plays out in a restriction to private space, and a male domination of public space. It also extends to a common restriction of women's and girls' activities to the home, both in terms of space and activity, while men and boys have not only more tasks outside the home, but greater mobility and greater access to public places. The exclusion of women from public situations is one of the practices that have historically merged gender with class. In Victorian times in England, "nice" women didn't read the newspaper, go to speeches, or frequent places where public matters were discussed. *Nice*, in this case, is synonymous with *elite*. While the wealthier classes have always been able to leave part of their population idle, families in poorer situations tend not to discriminate in this way. Poor Victorian women went out in the street, worked in the market, knew what was going on in the public world. By virtue of their economic constraints, they were not "nice" by the standards set by the ruling classes. This is an example of what we mentioned earlier in this chapter – that gender does not exist independently of other salient social categorizations, in this case class. Of course, today women of all classes do participate in various ways in the public sphere. It is still the case, however, that they are frequently reminded that they do not belong there and that in many cases they are in physical or social danger.

The public/private dichotomy has consequences even in pursuits considered appropriate for women. While Victorian women were encouraged to pursue the musical and visual arts, they were encouraged to do so privately only. Linda Nochlin (1992), in a study of why there are so few "great" women artists, has shown that in an era in which the "great" artistic subjects were religious, and in which artistry was focused on the representation of the human body, only men were allowed into studios to train from human models (whether male or female). Women, therefore, were unable to develop the skills necessary to produce the kind of images that made Rembrandt famous. Later on, impressionist art focused on subjects in situations that women did not have access to as well – brothels, backstage at the ballet, bars. The two most famous female

artists of this period, Mary Cassat and Rosa Bonheur, focused on domestic scenes – on women and children in their homes – for indeed these were the situations that they had access to. It can be no accident that just these themes were considered unworthy of "great art."

Ideology, belief, and dominance

A woman born into the black working class has a very different life experience from, for example, a man born into the white upper middle class. With this different experience comes different knowledge, different opportunities, different views of the world. Pierre Bourdieu (1977b) used the term *habitus* to refer to the set of beliefs and dispositions that a person develops as a result of his or her accumulated experience in a particular place in society. Depending on where people are in society, they will see and experience different things, know different people, develop different knowledge and skills. And they will engage in different conversations, hear different talk: they will participate in different *discourses*. Discourse is the socially meaningful activity – most typically talk, but non-verbal actions as well – in which ideas are constructed over time. When we speak of *a discourse,* we refer to a particular history of talk about an idea or set of ideas. Thus when we talk about a discourse of gender, or varied discourses of gender, we refer to the working of a particular set of ideas about gender in some segment or segments of society.

Just as each social position has its own perspective, each has its own interests. People's understanding of what is right and proper, what is good for them, for those around them, and for the world, are likely to differ. There is no knowledge, fact, or common sense that is not mediated by position and the interest that goes with it. We spoke earlier of ideology as a system of beliefs used to explain, justify, interpret, and evaluate people and their activities. For some (e.g. Foucault 1972), ideology and discourse are indistinguishable: both are projections of the interests of people in a particular social location. Others reserve the term *ideology* for a discourse that engages a central power struggle.[16] Terry Eagleton (1991, p. 8) argues that "A breakfast-time quarrel between husband and wife over who exactly allowed the toast to turn that grotesque shade of black need not be ideological; it becomes so when, for example, it begins to engage questions of sexual power, beliefs about gender roles and so on." But we slip quite readily from a discourse to an ideology in Eagleton's terms. Discourses of gender unfold not only in explicit talk about gender, but in talk about things (like burnt toast) that may be grafted on to gender. If enough people joke together continually about men's ineptness in the kitchen, women's role as cooks takes center stage, along with men's incompetence in the kitchen. The fact that these themes emerge in joking lends them an established status – a status as old information rather than as a new topic, naturalizing the relation between gender and kitchen activity. The consequences carry well beyond the home kitchen. In an office in which assistants are expected to make coffee, a female assistant who makes bad coffee is likely to be considered more inept at her job than a male assistant. She will be seen as unable to carry out a "natural" function, while he will be excused on the grounds that he has been asked to carry out an "unnatural" task. A man who cooks at home or participates in child care (to say nothing of living as a single parent) often gets more credit (and more help from others) than a woman: she is just doing her job whereas he is seen as doing something above and beyond the expected.

16 For a thorough discussion of the use of the term *ideology*, see Eagleton 1991.

Ways of thinking become common sense when we cease to notice their provenance – and this happens when they occur continually in enough places in everyday discourse. A discourse may have a privileged status in society by virtue of the power of the people who engage in it. It can be heard in more places, get more air time associated with voices of authority – and as it permeates institutions it comes to pass for "knowledge," "fact," or "common sense." Thus, by virtue of the position of its original proponents, a discourse can erase its history as it spreads, masking the fact that it is ideology.

An ideology can be imposed through the top-down exertion of power, as in the case of the Taliban government of Afghanistan, which made extreme subordination of women the law. But this kind of coercion is necessary only when significant parts of the general public recognize the conflict with their own ideologies. A dominant ideology typically owes its success not to brute power and conscious imposition, but to the ability to convince people that it is not in fact a matter of ideology at all, but simply natural, "the way things are." We refer to this process as *naturalization*. This use of the term *naturalization* does not necessarily refer to biological naturalness, but to people's sense of what needs no explanation.

Antonio Gramsci's theory (1971) of *cultural hegemony* focuses on this location of power in everyday routine structures, emphasizing that the most effective form of domination is the assimilation of the wider population into one's worldview. Hegemony is not just a matter of widespread ideas but includes the organization of social life more generally. Adopting and adapting Gramsci's notion, Raymond Williams (1977, p. 109) explains:

> It is in [the] recognition of the *wholeness* of the process that the concept of "hegemony" goes beyond "ideology." What is decisive is not only the conscious system of ideas and beliefs, but the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings and values.

Williams emphasizes that hegemony is never total, and Sherry Ortner (1990, p. 46) draws on this non-totality to talk about "[t]he loose ends, the contradictory bits" of gender hegemonies that can be "examined for their short-and long-term interactions with and for one another."

In this introduction and elsewhere we will often gloss over the "loose ends, the contradictory bits" in order to sketch prevailing hegemonies in our own and similar societies. But the messiness is still there, and we will return to it at various points since it is crucial in challenging and transforming gender.

Institutions

Categories such as age, class, gender, and ethnicity exist on paper, because they are built into our formal institutions, and some of them determine our civil status, our rights and obligations. As society changes, some of the categories increase or decrease in importance, and the way they are inscribed in our institutions may change. Until recently the racial category *negro*, as defined by the supposed presence or absence of African blood, was an official category that defined one's legal status in parts of the US. While the specific status (as well as the name) of this racial category has changed over the years, it continues to have legal status in the monitoring of the population (e.g. the census), and it continues to have informal status throughout American society. This racial category is a social construction even less tied to biological criteria than sex/gender. One cannot identify "African blood," and the real criterion for racial assignment has

always been physical appearance or knowledge of forebears' physical appearance. And of course, the identification of "African" physical characteristics is itself completely subjective. Yet race remains deeply embedded in our discourses of identity and personhood, and what matters is the experience of being "Black" or being "White" or being "Asian".

The *gender regimes* (Connell 1987) of global institutions such as corporations and government constitute a kind of official locus for the gender order. Until the last century, women's participation in both government and corporations was negligible. Women in the US did not vote until 1919, and as women gradually moved into the corporate workplace, they performed very low-level jobs. Even at the turn of the twenty-first century, women constituted only a tiny fraction of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of America's Fortune 500 companies (a fraction that is growing – in the year 2001 only 4 of the 500 CEOs were women; in 2011 there were 12. And while there are 17 women in the US Senate and 77 in the House of Representatives, those are out of 100 and 435 respectively – not yet approaching parity. Large powerful US institutions, in other words, are still dominated and directed by men. And though the details and extent differ, gender asymmetries in institutional authority are found around the globe, even where there are overt ideologies of gender equality. But there is no question that things are changing. In the late sixties, presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey said – on national television – that women were unsuited for presidential office because of the mood swings associated with the menstrual cycle.

Within major institutions, gender emerges not simply in institutional structure, but in the balance of activities that take place on a day-to-day basis. Who gives, and who takes, directives; who answers the phone, and what kinds of conversations do they have? Who leads meetings, who is expected to voice their opinion and who is expected not to? Whose opinions get picked up and cited approvingly by others? The oppositions of gender meanings are strongly embedded in workplace ideologies. The "rational" and "impassive" male has been seen as more suited to managerial work. At the same time, as women move into positions of corporate leadership, their value is viewed as based in the new qualities they bring to the table. Much is said about the value of bringing some of their "nurturing" and "cooperative" ways into corporate culture, and new buzzwords such as "emotional intelligence" have moved into the management consulting business. In other words, the value of women to business has been viewed as directly related to their ability to change and improve the business culture. While it may be true that women are bringing new skills to the workplace that should be highly valued, the focus on "women's special abilities" genders certain skills and reinforces the gendering of women's place in organizations. Linking women's value to the workplace to the new skills they bring effectively erases women's ability to do what men have been doing all along. This has been changing in recent years as women at the top of business and government have started developing reputations for being hard-nosed, and this quality seems to be less stigmatized in women than it was ten years ago. The objection to having women engage in combat has recently been mooted by the impressive performance of military women who have found themselves in combat situations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This may mean that the move towards equality will accelerate – we can only wait and see.

Educational institutions also reproduce the gender order in myriad ways. As prime sites for socialization, schools are key institutions for the construction of gender. Elementary schools not long ago were known for keeping girls and boys separate – lining them up separately to move about the school, pitting them against each other in competitions, separating them for

physical education. More recently,   schools have begun to enforce gender equity, often forbidding single-sex games on the playground, trying to downplay gender difference in the classroom, and sanctioning gender-discriminatory behavior on the part of students. This conscious attempt to foster gender equity is as gendered, of course, as earlier practices that fostered gender difference. Children are often made aware that the teacher has an explicit goal of fostering the mixing of boys and girls, which can have the effect of confirming their preference for same-sex groups.[17]

Since schooling is accomplished primarily through talk, gendered verbal practices abound in the classroom. The gender dichotomy is emphasized each time teachers address a group of children as "girls and boys," and each time gender is used to teach the concept of opposites: black/white, good/bad, boy/girl. When gender is used as a metaphor for learning subject matter, the gendered metaphor is reinforced at the same time that it facilitates the new material. Some teachers have been known to teach children to distinguish between consonants and vowels by attributing masculine gender to consonants, feminine to vowels, reciting "Miss A, Mister B, Mister C, Mister D, Miss E" and so on. These practices are, happily, on the wane as educators become increasingly sensitive to, and concerned about, gender issues inside the classrooom and out.

Throughout the educational system, men are more likely than women to be in top administrative positions. But also, the gender balance of people in teaching positions changes dramatically as one moves from preschool through elementary and then secondary school, and on to university, with women primarily responsible for the education of small children, and men gradually taking over as the pupils get older. The view of women as nurturant is deeply embedded in the common belief that women are more suited than men to teaching small children. And current discussions of the need to increase the number of men in the elementary school classroom are commonly couched in the claim that children (especially boys) need a less nurturing and infantilizing environment. In a fashion analogous to women's entrance into corporate management, men can enter the female educational workplace not because they're capable of being nurturant, but because they can bring important *male* changes to educational practice. A similar gender shift occurs in educational institutions (and workplaces) as the subject matter gets more technical. Men in our society are more likely to teach science, math, and technology while women are more likely to teach humanities and – to a lesser extent – social science. Even within the sciences, women are more likely to be biologists than physicists. The metaphors "hard" and "soft" science bind this intellectual division of labor (along with consonants and vowels) to idealized gendered body and personality types – in this case, men's

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17 This is not intended as a critique of these attempts on the part of schools and teachers, but simply as an observation of the complex outcomes of social engineering. Attempts to foster gender equity in schools sometimes focus on supposedly gendered "ways of knowing" and learning, trying to get more appreciation for what is gendered female. See, e.g., Belenky *et al*. (1986) and Corson (2000). As with the valuing of "women's skills" in the world of work, such efforts have laudable motives but their effects may be problematic.

rationality comes to the fore. In this way, essentialist views of women as more nurturant, and men as rational are embedded in our institutions of knowledge and the ways we talk about them.

In addition to formal institutions, there are informal institutions that are established practices: baby showers, sweet sixteen parties, stag parties. The reader might consider how many such institutions are not gendered. Many institutions are informal but at the same time inscribed in formal arrangements. The complex institutional status of the family is underlined by arguments about what actually constitutes a family. Some insist on marriage as the legal and moral foundation of a family. Marriage, on this view, officially sanctions heterosexual union between one man and one woman; it makes them responsible for rearing any offspring they might have, and the family is then the unit consisting of husband, wife, and children. Others argue that any adult or committed pair of adults living together along with children they might rear constitutes a family, while still others find the family among the very close friends with whom they share their lives though not necessarily their households. The issue of what constitutes the institution of the family is at the core of discussions of gender, since the family is the primary legitimized site for biological and social reproduction. The emphasis on child rearing is typically on the complementary roles of father and mother, and the child's supposed consequent need for one of each[6]

The debate about same sex marriage does not focus primarily on children and families, but on civil rights – on the relationship between two people and the right of same-sex couples to enjoy the legal and fiscal benefits of marriage. The parenting issue began earlier with the right of gay and lesbian couples or single gay men and lesbians to adopt and raise children. Still, the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in its landmark *Goodridge* decision, November 18, 2003, included children's well-being as part of its rationale for rejecting the state's denying marriage to same-sex partners. While observing that "it is the exclusive and permanent commitment of the marriage partners to one another, not the begetting of children, that is the sine qua non of marriage," the Court also held that "it cannot be rational under our laws to penalize children by depriving them of State benefits because of their parents' sexual orientation.[7]"

Masculinities and femininities

Earlier in this chapter, we emphasized that generalizations about gender can all too easily erase the multiplicity of experiences of gender. Inasmuch as gender unfolds in social practice in a wide variety of communities, it is anything but monolithic. Male and female, masculinity and femininity, are not equally dimorphic everywhere. Nor are they experienced or defined in the same ways everywhere.

In his book *Masculinities*, Robert Connell (1995) counters the notion of "true masculinity," emphasizing that masculinity (like femininity) is not a coherent object, but part of

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[6] Biblarz & Stacey 2010 offer evidence that this supposed need is not supported by data. As Judith Stacey said in a January 2012 interview, "Two heterosexual parents of the same educational background, class, race and religion are more like each other in the way they parent than one is like all other women and one is like all other men." http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/16/gay-parents-better-than-straights_n_1208659.html; accessed 3/14/2012
[7] Cited in McConnell-Ginet (2006a;2006b).

a larger structure. Taking this structure as starting point, Connell locates, and elaborates on, two kinds of masculinities: the *physical masculinity* of the working class, and the upper-middle-class *technical masculinity*. Connell points out that working-class masculinity is associated with physical power, while upper-middle-class masculinity is associated with technical (scientific, corporate, and political) power. This is not to say that physical power is unimportant for upper-middle-class men – the masculine ideal throughout society involves physical power. However, physical power is fundamental to working-class masculinity, whereas the masculine power that is embedded in the halls of technical power is only indirectly physical. While technical men are better off with a certain amount of personal physical power (preferably developed through costly leisure exercise rather than labor), the more important fact is that they command the physical power of other men – of men in the physical market. Armies and workforces are the physical power of the technical men who run things. Furthermore, the refinement needs of the technical context place limits on men's physical power. A technical man has to look trim in a suit, his hands have to be clean and uncalloused, and his movements have to be graceful. While the opposition between these two kinds of masculinity is age-old, the advent of high tech wealth seems to be decreasing the connection between masculinity and physical power, as greater financial power is moving into the hands of those who have notably defined themselves as living by their brains. There is a similar class reversal for women. Women with social status are expected to be small and delicate, with a carefully maintained body down to the smallest detail. Just as physical strength is expected to some extent of all men, this delicacy is expected to some extent of all women. However, since physical work and the ability to defend oneself are important to many working class women, both in the workplace and out, there is less value placed on some aspects of physical delicacy. (An interesting combination of feminine delicacy and robustness is found in current fingernail technology. Long nails have for centuries symbolized abstention from physical labor. Those who engage in physical labor can now boast these symbols as well, with the help of acrylic prostheses that will withstand a good deal of abuse.)

Ignoring the multiplicity of masculinities and femininities leads to the erasure of experience for many people. For example, in a study of girls attending the private Emma Willard School in the eastern US, psychologist Carol Gilligan and her colleagues (e.g. Gilligan, Lyons, and Hanmer 1990) found that as they approached adolescence, girls become less sure of themselves, less assertive, more deferential, and generally lost the sense of agency that they had had as children. This girls' *crisis of confidence* has become a famous gender construct – a kind of developmental imperative for girls. Statistics show that indeed this kind of crisis is common among white middle-class girls, like the ones who attend the Emma Williard school Gilligan *et al.* focused on. But this is a relatively small segment of the population. What few statistics there are on African American girls during this same life stage suggest that they do not undergo such a crisis; on the contrary, they appear to gain a sense of personal confidence (AAUW 1992, p. 13). We would argue that this difference is a result of differences in European American and African American gender discourses, and particularly discourses of heterosexuality. European American girls – at least middle-class ones – are generally raised in a discourse of female subordination and material dependence on men, particularly in child-rearing. African American girls, on the other hand, are generally raised in a discourse of female effectiveness, with an expectation that they will take full responsibility for themselves and for their children (Dill 1979, Ladner 1971, Staples 1973). The age at which the Emma Willard girls begin to lose their sense of agency corresponds to the emergence of the preadolescent heterosexual market we discussed above. As

kids begin to see themselves as agents in a heterosexual market, discourses of gender and heterosexuality begin to enter into their sense of their place in the world. Because of the discourses of heterosexuality that they grow up with, this can have a disempowering effect for middle-class European American girls, and an empowering effect for African American girls. In fact, educators are all too aware that many African American girls become quite assertive during this period. But because assertiveness is not part of the dominant female gender norm, educators tend to associate this assertiveness not with gender, but with race. The assumption of an across-the-board gender experience makes it all too easy to generalize from one group's experience. And it is not coincidental that the girls whose experience is serving as the model are white and middle class; not African American, and not working class.

Just as some people's acts will have a more global effect by virtue of their placement in society, some people's gender discourses will as well. For this reason, girls suffering the preadolescent crisis of confidence that Gilligan describes actually define normative girlhood at that age – "nice" girls tend to be deferential, quiet, and tentative. As a result, the increasingly assertive behavior displayed by many African American girls at that age is viewed as inappropriate, and unfeminine. In schools, African American girls are frequently marginalized because white teachers interpret their behavior as antisocial. It is ironic that in a climate that is seeking to help girls counteract this now famous "crisis of confidence," it is not generally recognized that girls suffering this crisis should be emulating their African American sisters. Instead, there are people now creating programs for African American girls, to help them through one crisis that they may not in fact be experiencing.

In this way, African American girls and women are rendered invisible in totalizing discussions of gender. The construct of the preadolescent girls' crisis of confidence both erases boys' similar crises, and erases the African American experience that does not typically involve this particular crisis. And the picture of hegemonic femininity for this age group, one of a lack of confidence and a generally uncertain and self-subordinating demeanor, renders the behavior of many African American girls non-normative, so that it appears aggressive and threatening to some.

Although this book will focus on gender, we will try not to lose sight of its critical connections to other social categories. No one is simply female or male. No one is simply black or white. No one is simply rich or poor. No one is simply young or old. If we were to talk about gender as if it were independent of other categorization schemes and the systems of privilege and oppression they support, we would effectively erase the vast range of gendered experience, tending to focus on what we are most familiar with. As it is, this is always a danger, but a danger faced is always better than a danger ignored.

Gender practice

The force of gender categories in society makes it impossible for us to move through our lives in a nongendered way, and impossible not to behave in a way that brings out gendered behavior in others. At the same time, the maintenance of gender categories depends on reinforcement in day-to-day behavior. *Male* and *female* could not persist as structurally important social categories if we did not perform enough gendered and gendering behavior – if distinct groups of people did not continue to act like "women" and like "men." In other words, the gender order and the social categories – *male* and *female* – on which it rests exist in virtue of *social practice*.

We use the term *social practice* to refer to human activity when emphasizing the conventional aspect of activity and its relation to social structure. While structure constrains practice, it does not determine it. On the one hand, people may behave in ways that are compatible with existing structure – for example, a married woman may stay at home to raise her children while her husband goes to work to support them financially. As people behave in this way, they *reproduce* the existing social order. On the other hand, a woman may go to work while her partner stays at home to mind the children, another woman may decide to have children on her own, a heterosexual couple may decide not to have children, or a homosexual couple may opt to have children. If only a few isolated people behave in one of these ways, what they are doing will have a negligible effect on social structure. As these life choices have become more common, they have come to constitute practices, recognized (though not necessarily endorsed) ways of doing things. The development of such nontraditional practices in recent years has contributed to changing the meaning of *male* and *female* and thus to changing the gender order, the social structures that in their turn shape gender practices. It has also contributed to development of new identity categories and labels for them, some of which we discuss later, especially in Chapter Eight. People affirming non-normative sexual or gender identities choose and are given many different labels: gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, trans and intersex people, gender-queer folks, and many more, some disparaging. Sometimes everyone who doesn't fit neatly into a straight and gender-conforming mold is poured into the alphabet soup label *LGBTIQ*. We try to use labels that seem appropriate for the context at hand.

Because structure and practice are in this dynamic and dialectical relation, there is always the possibility for change. One could say that the social order is in continual change – that even what appears to be stability is the result not of nothing happening, but of events of social reproduction. Every time a little girl minces in her mother's shoes, and every time a little boy swaggers, they are reproducing gender difference, the relation between gender and style of motion, and all of the implications of that relation. But the little boy pushing his doll carriage and the girl with her truck are also part of the picture even though their actions may not yet be so widely adopted into social practice. Life and daily living are about change – about things happening, about creativity and intelligence at work in the space left open by the incomplete hold of ideologies and institutions.

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