SIXTH EDITION

GENDER ROLES

A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

LINDA L. LINDSEY

Sixth Edition

Gender Roles

A Sociological Perspective

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PREFACE

In the United States and globally, unparalleled social change continues unabated as the young millennium unfolds. Accounting for the latest available research, the sixth edition of *Gender Roles* effectively captures the profound gender components of much of this change. Research and theory in the sociology of gender roles continue to shape the discipline. Viewed through a sociological lens, research is interpreted according to various theories in the discipline, often suggesting ways the research is better explained when the theories are linked. With diversity and its intersectionality as a backdrop, relevant interdisciplinary bridges are also highlighted. These bridges clarify gender content for students who are from diverse backgrounds and who represent a variety of majors.

Interweaving research and theory on selected issues, this edition discusses the profound gendered consequences of the Great Recession, new work on transgender and gendered sexuality, navigating gender in the changing family and those choosing alternative lifestyles, shifting definitions of masculinity and femininity in media, the military, schools, and workplace, and how public policy adopts beliefs about gender. *Gender Roles* highlights the junction between sociological theory and its usefulness to those working on a variety of issues in the name of gender justice, including economic equality, policies for same sex-marriage, and decreased violence against women. With glimpses of gender issues reverberating across the globe, students are offered content to better understand the global connection and the theory–research connection with critiques throughout the text. Students will also be able to locate themselves when examining abundant material on diversity and the intersection of gender with other social categories they occupy. New content spotlighting these objectives include the following:

- Reflecting important trends in sociology, this edition introduces social constructionism as a distinct "mezzo level" paradigm, joining it with conflict theory, functionalism, symbolic interaction, and feminist theoretical perspectives. Intersectionality as a key concept and the research flowing from it are expanded considerably. This research links gender to race and ethnicity, social class, age, and sexuality, offering a powerful tool to be used in understanding how diversity unfolds in a gender context.
- Research in the surging field of "body studies" is discussed and includes provocative issues related to health, socialization, and media.
- Online communication has an ever-increasing influence in our lives, and it plays out differently for males and females. Focusing on socialization, this edition explores its gendered consequences with all new material on social media, cyberfeminism, and computer technology.
- Uncovering the hidden economic reality of paid and unpaid labor, including eldercare, added content on how "work" is defined, explained sociologically, and acted out according to gender is in sections related to family and workplace, global perspectives, socialization, and politics and public policy.
- Expanded content with cutting-edge research on gender issues globally includes the perils of globalization for women with a case study on Bangladesh; gendered

demographic crises in Japan, China, and Russia; and feminist response to escalating violence against women in India.
- Provocative gender issues making headlines are sociologically framed throughout the text and compared to views presented in the political and media arenas. This comparison allows students to distinguish gender myths based on ideology, from gender reality which is based on social scientific research. Topics include: sexual scandals in priesthood, sports, and the military; transgender in a binary world; the politics of contraception and women's bodies; and the ongoing challenges related to the intersection of race and gender in the public policy on education.

Ongoing, enhanced gender-related scholarship brings more interpretations, more sophistication, and more complexity. The good news is that there is a wealth of material from which to choose. Students are introduced to the richness and complexity of scholarship on gender and the important issues emerging from this scholarship. Only a fraction of this abundant information can be included. Material was chosen to adequately and accurately represent the range of theoretical perspectives on gender and how various groups are portrayed accordingly. Choices are made from research in other disciplines that impinge on the sociology of gender roles. Selecting new material and discarding old material is difficult, but it is manageable when directed by a sociological perspective. Students will find a solid sociological foundation that connects the range of information presented.

Written as a core text for courses variously titled *Sociology of Gender, Sex and Gender, Gender Roles, Gender and Society*, and *Women in Society*, this text is useful for studying sociology of the family, psychology of women, global views on gender, and women's or men's studies. Although the text is guided by a sociological perspective, those with limited background in sociology will find the book easy to navigate. It also offers an excellent review for advanced students, who will have their sociological expertise bolstered early in the text. All students will gain requisite knowledge to tackle more complex gender issues they confront later.

Armed with the latest research, this edition of *Gender Roles* offers opportunities to explore a variety of gender issues affecting our personal, educational, and professional lives. Students will encounter ideas that reinforce as well as challenge their taken-for-granted thinking about females and males, about masculinity and femininity. They will grapple with research, confront stereotypes, and select theories to best explain their gendered world. Social change is relentless. It collides with attitudes and behaviors regarding gender and forces us to confront traditional ways of thinking and doing. We will make wiser decisions in our relationships and in our homes, schools, and workplaces when we better understand the consequences of gender in our lives.

Text Sections and New Material

Part I introduces basic sociological concepts and theories and links these to the feminism paradigm and various forms of feminism. The section considers the similarities and differences between the genders and between women and women and men and men. Interdisciplinary theories and multidisciplinary insights into socialization and the development of beliefs about females and males and masculinity and femininity from biology, psychology, anthropology, language, and history are highlighted. A wealth of

new material exposes gendered myths and critiques various explanations for gender roles. This edition considerably expands sexuality and gendered trends in health and mental health. Powerful gendered connections to well-being in the United States are explored and are considered in light of gender-related flashpoints globally.

Part II focuses on marriage and the family, offering the newest research, demographic portraits, and sociological explanations regarding gender issues in love, choice of a partner, persistent as well as fluctuating gender norms in parenting, and the changing family in a diversity (multicultural) context. The influence of gendered work roles on family life is highlighted. The chapter on men and masculinity incorporates significant new research on masculinity norms throughout the social institutions, highlighting the challenges to traditional definitions of masculinity, how men respond to these challenges, and how they respond to the changing roles of women.

Part III views gender role continuity and changes in the economy, education, religion, media, politics, and the law and suggests how intersectionality will influence these trends, especially in how public policy plays out according to gender. Women's employment is emphasized as a fundamental influence on gender roles in all social institutions. The last chapter brings full circle the material from the first chapter and many of the topics discussed throughout the text with a focus on media and the gender–race intersection and women's issues in Elections 2008 and 2012 and previews upcoming elections.

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CHAPTER 1

The Sociology of Gender
Theoretical Perspectives and Feminist Frameworks

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Distinguish between the concepts of sex and gender and explain why these differences are important in understanding other concepts, such as sexual orientation and gender roles.
2. Identify the four major sociological perspectives and provide an example of how each is used in explaining gender roles in the family.
3. Demonstrate how feminist sociological theory accounts for intersectionality between gender, race, social class, and sexuality.
4. List and briefly describe characteristics of various feminisms and how they overlap.
5. Demonstrate how the media portrays feminism in a political context.
6. Identify the challenges to feminism and routes to overcome these.

All causes, social and natural, combine to make it unlikely that women should be collectively rebellious to the power of men. They are so far in a position different from all other subject classes, that their masters require something more from them than actual service. Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments.

—John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869)

The millennium is still young, but powerful events and transformative research in its first decades have profoundly affected beliefs about gender and the way these beliefs play out in gender roles. Although John Stuart Mills' comments about women's oppression may not be denied today, the next century of sociological research began to spotlight *gendered* oppression. We will see that a strong, ongoing feminist movement is beneficial to men. Anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901–1978), whose work we discuss in Chapter 2, is attributed with saying, "every time we liberate a woman, we liberate a man" (see Mead, 1967). This book echoes that sentiment.

The study of gender emerged as one of the most important trends in the discipline of sociology in the twentieth century and is continuing today. The research and theory associated with studying gender issues propelled the sociology of gender

from the margins to become a central feature of the discipline. To understand the formidable social effects of the Recession, patterns of globalization, and a changing political climate, for example, sociological analysis *must* account for gender. This text documents how sociologists have aided our understanding of the influence of gender in shaping our lives, our attitudes, and our behavior. This understanding is enhanced by investigating the links between sociology and other disciplines and by integrating key concepts such as race, social class, and sexuality to clarify gender relations. Sociology is interested in how human behavior is shaped by group life. Although all group life is ordered in a variety of ways, gender is a key component of the ordering. An explosion of research on gender issues now suggests that all social interactions, and the institutions in which the interactions occur, are gendered in some manner. Accounting for this gendering has reshaped the theoretical and empirical foundations of sociology. On the theoretical side, gender awareness has modified existing sociological theory and led to the creation of a new feminist paradigm. On the empirical side, gender awareness has led to innovative research strategies and opened up new topics for sociological inquiry. We open with an examination of basic concepts and theories that lay the groundwork for our sociological journey into gender roles.

Basic Sociological Concepts

All societies are structured around relatively stable patterns that establish how social interaction will be carried out. One of the most important social structures that organizes social interaction is **status**—a category or position a person occupies that is a significant determinant of how she or he will be defined and treated. We acquire statuses by achievement, through our own efforts, or by ascription, being born into them or attaining them involuntarily at some other point in the life cycle. We occupy a number of statuses simultaneously, referred to as a **status set**, such as mother, daughter, attorney, patient, employee, and passenger. Compared to *achieved* statuses occurring later in life, *ascribed* statuses immediately impact virtually every aspect of our lives. The most important ascribed statuses are gender, race, and social class. Because a status is simply a position within a social system, it should not be confused with rank or prestige. There are high-prestige statuses as well as low-prestige statuses. In the United States, for example, a physician occupies a status ranked higher in prestige than a secretary. All societies categorize members by status and then rank these statuses in some fashion, thereby creating a system of **social stratification**. People whose status sets are comprised of low-ranked ascribed statuses more than high-ranked achieved statuses are near the bottom of the social stratification system and are vulnerable to social stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. To date, there is no known society in which the status of female is consistently ranked higher than that of male.

A **role** is the expected behavior associated with a status. Roles are performed according to social **norms**, shared rules that guide people's behavior in specific situations. Social norms determine the privileges and responsibilities a status possesses. Females and males, mothers and fathers, and daughters and sons are all statuses with different normative role requirements attached to them. The status of mother calls for expected roles involving love, nurturing, self-sacrifice, homemaking,

and availability. The status of father calls for expected roles of breadwinner, disciplinarian, home technology expert, and ultimate decision maker in the household. Society allows for a degree of flexibility in acting out roles, but in times of rapid social change, acceptable role limits are often in a state of flux, producing uncertainty about what appropriate role behavior should be. People may experience *anomie*—normlessness—because traditional norms have changed but new ones have yet to be developed. For example, the most important twentieth-century trend impacting gender roles in the United Sates is the massive increase of women in the labor force. Although women from all demographic categories contributed to these numbers, mothers with preschool children led the trek from unpaid home-based roles to full-time paid employment roles. In acting out the roles of mother and employee, women are expected to be available at given times to satisfy the needs of family and workplace. Because workplaces and other social institutions have not been modified in meaningful ways to account for the new statuses women occupy, their range of acceptable role behavior is severely restricted. As a result, family and workplace roles inevitably collide and compete with one another for the mother–employee's time and attention.

Key Concepts for the Sociology of Gender

As key components of social structure, statuses and roles allow us to organize our lives in consistent, predictable ways. In combination with established norms, they prescribe our behavior and ease interaction with people who occupy different social statuses, whether we know these people or not. Yet there is an insidious side to this kind of predictable world: When normative role behavior becomes too rigidly defined, our freedom of action is often compromised. These rigid definitions are associated with the development of **stereotypes**—oversimplified conceptions that people who occupy the same status group share certain traits they have in common. Although stereotypes can include positive traits, they most often consist of negative ones that are then used to justify discrimination against members of a given group. The statuses of male and female are often stereotyped according to the traits they are assumed to possess by virtue of their biological makeup. Women are stereotyped as flighty and unreliable because they possess uncontrollable raging hormones that fuel unpredictable emotional outbursts. The assignment of negative stereotypes can result in **sexism**, the belief that the status of female is inferior to the status of male. Males are not immune to the negative consequences of sexism, but females are more likely to experience it because the status sets they occupy are more stigmatized than those occupied by males. Compared to males, for example, females are more likely to occupy statuses inside and outside their homes that are associated with less power, less prestige, and less pay or no pay. Beliefs about inferiority due to biology are reinforced and then used to justify discrimination directed toward females.

Sexism is perpetuated by systems of **patriarchy**, male-dominated social structures leading to the oppression of women. Patriarchy, by definition, exhibits **androcentrism**—male-centered norms operating throughout all social institutions that become the standard to which all persons adhere. Sexism is reinforced when patriarchy and androcentrism combine to perpetuate beliefs that gender roles are

biologically determined and therefore unalterable. For example, throughout the developing world, beliefs about a woman's biological unsuitability for other than domestic roles have restricted opportunities for education and literacy. These restrictions have made men the guardians of what has been written, disseminated, and interpreted regarding gender and the placement of men and women in society. Until recently, history has been recorded from an androcentric perspective that ignored the other half of humanity (Chapter 5). This perspective has perpetuated the belief that because patriarchy is an inevitable, inescapable fact of history, struggles for gender equality are doomed to failure. Women's gain in education is associated with the power to engage in research and scholarship that offers alternatives to prevailing androcentric views. We will see that such scholarship suggests that patriarchal systems may be universal, but are not inevitable, and that gender egalitarianism was a historical fact of life in some cultures and is a contemporary fact of life in others.

Distinguishing Sex and Gender

As gender issues become more mainstreamed in scientific research and media reports, confusion associated with the terms *sex* and *gender* has decreased. In sociology, these terms are now fairly standardized to refer to different content areas. **Sex** refers to the biological characteristics distinguishing male and female. This definition emphasizes male and female differences in chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, reproductive systems, and other physiological components. **Gender** refers to those social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to males and females through particular social contexts. Sex makes us male or female; gender makes us masculine or feminine. Sex is an ascribed status because a person is born with it, but gender is an achieved status because it must be learned.

This relatively simple distinction masks a number of problems associated with its usage. It implies that all people can be conveniently placed into unambiguous either-or categories. Certainly the ascribed status of sex is less likely to be altered than the achieved status of gender. Some people believe, however, that they were born with the "wrong" body and are willing to undergo major surgery to make their gender identity consistent with their biological sex. **Sexual orientation**, the preference for sexual partners of one gender (sex) or the other, also varies. People who experience sexual pleasure with members of their own sex are likely to consider themselves masculine or feminine according to gender norms. Others are born with ambiguous sex characteristics and may be assigned one sex at birth but develop a different identity related to gender. Some cultures allow people to move freely between genders, regardless of their biological sex.

These issues will be addressed fully in Chapters 2 and 3, but are mentioned here to highlight the problems of terminology. From a sociological perspective, this text is concerned with gender and how it is learned, how it changes over time, and how it varies between and within cultures. Gender can be viewed on a continuum of characteristics demonstrated by a person regardless of the person's biological sex. Adding the concept of role to either sex or gender may increase confusion in

terminology. When the sociological concept of role is combined with the biological concept of sex, there is often misunderstanding about what content areas are subsumed under the resultant *sex role* label. Usage has become standardized, however, and most sociologists now employ *gender role* rather than *sex role* in their writing. **Gender roles**, therefore, are the expected attitudes and behaviors a society associates with each sex. This definition places gender squarely in the sociocultural context.

Sociological Perspectives on Gender Roles

Sociologists explain gender roles according to several *theoretical perspectives*, general ways of understanding social reality that guide the research process and provide a means for interpreting the data. In essence, a **theory** is an explanation. Formal theories consist of logically interrelated propositions that explain empirical events. For instance, data indicate that compared to men, women are more likely to be segregated in lower-paying jobs offering fewer opportunities for professional growth and advancement. Data also indicate that in the United States and cross-culturally, the domestic work of women performed in or near their homes is valued less than the work of men performed outside their homes. Because the issue of gender crosses many disciplines, explanations for these facts can be offered according to the theoretical perspectives of those disciplines. Biology, psychology, and anthropology all offer explanations for gender-related attitudes and behavior. Not only do these explanations differ between disciplines, but scientists within the same discipline also frequently offer competing explanations for the same data, and sociology is no exception. The best explanations account for the volume and complexities of the data. As research on gender issues accelerates and more sophisticated research tools are developed, it is becoming clearer that the best explanations are those that are interdisciplinary and that incorporate concepts related to diversity. Sociological theory will dominate this text's discussion, but we will also account for relevant interdisciplinary work and its attention to diversity issues.

Levels of Analysis

Sociological perspectives on gender also vary according to the *level of analysis*, referring to the scope of the data collected and how the data are explained. A *macro sociological* perspective on gender roles directs attention to large-scale social phenomena such as labor force, educational, and political trends that are differentiated according to gender. A *micro sociological* perspective on gender is largely contextual, directing attention to small groups and the details of gender interaction occurring, for example, between couples and in families and peer groups. A *mezzo sociological* perspective on gender draws attention to the definitions associated with wider cultural norms that can configure all social interaction. In this sense, the mezzo level serves as a bridge between the micro and macro levels. Media-inspired and defined images of gender roles, for example, are transported to schools and workplaces that in turn influence the activities of students, teachers, and workers.

With feminist scholars at the forefront, research on gender continues its innovative tradition. The theoretical perspectives emanating from all levels are beginning to be successfully combined. These offer excellent ways to better understand gender issues from a sociological perspective.

Early sociological perspectives related to gender roles evolved from scholarship on the sociology of the family. These explanations centered on why men and women hold different roles in the family that in turn influence the roles they perform outside the family. To a large extent, this early work on the family has continued to inform current sociological thinking on gender roles. The next sections will overview the major sociological (theoretical) perspectives and highlight their explanations regarding the gender–family connection.

Functionalism

Functionalism, also known as "structural functionalism," is a macro sociological perspective that is based on the premise that society is made up of interdependent parts, each of which contributes to the functioning of the whole society. Functionalists seek to identify the basic elements or parts of society and determine the functions these parts play in meeting basic social needs in predictable ways. Functionalists ask how any given element of social structure contributes to overall social stability, balance, and equilibrium. They assert that in the face of disruptive social change, society can be restored to equilibrium as long as built-in mechanisms of social control operate effectively and efficiently. Social control and stability are enhanced when people share beliefs and values in common. Functionalist emphasis on this value consensus is a major ingredient in virtually all of their interpretations related to social change. Values surrounding gender roles, marriage, and the family are central to functionalist assertions regarding social equilibrium.

Preindustrial Society Functionalists suggest that in preindustrial societies, social equilibrium was maintained by assigning different tasks to men and women. Given the hunting and gathering and subsistence farming activities of most preindustrial societies, role specialization according to gender was considered a functional necessity. In their assigned hunting roles, men were frequently away from home for long periods of time and centered their lives on the responsibility of bringing food to the family. It was functional for women—more limited by pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing—to be assigned domestic roles near the home as gatherers and subsistence farmers and as caretakers of children and households. Children were needed to help with agricultural and domestic activities. Girls would continue these activities when boys reached the age when they were allowed to hunt with the older males. Once established, this functional division of labor was reproduced in societies throughout the globe. Women may have been farmers and food gatherers in their own right, but they were dependent on men for food and protection. Women's dependence on men in turn produced a pattern in which male activities and roles came to be more valued than female activities and roles.

Contemporary Society Similar principles apply to families in contemporary societies. Disruption is minimized, harmony is maximized, and families benefit

when spouses assume complementary, specialized, nonoverlapping roles (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Parsons, 1966). When the husband–father takes the **instrumental role**, he is expected to maintain the physical integrity of the family by providing food and shelter and linking the family to the world outside the home. When the wife–mother takes the **expressive role**, she is expected to cement relationships and provide emotional support and nurturing activities that ensure a smoothly running household. If too much deviation from these roles occurs or there is too much overlap, the family system is propelled into a state of imbalance that can threaten the survival of the family unit. Advocates of functionalist assumptions argue, for instance, that gender role ambiguity regarding instrumental and expressive roles is a major factor in divorce (Hacker, 2003).

Critique It should be apparent that functionalism's emphasis on social equilibrium contributes to its image as an inherently conservative theoretical perspective. This image is reinforced by its difficulty in accounting for a variety of existing family systems and in not keeping pace with rapid social change moving families toward more egalitarian attitudes regarding gender roles.

Often to the dismay of the scientists who developed them, scientific theories and the research on which they are based are routinely employed to support a range of ideologies. Functionalism has been used as a justification for male dominance and gender stratification. In the United States, functional analyses were popularized in the 1950s when, weary of war, the nation latched onto a traditional and idealized version of family life and attempted to establish not just a prewar, but a pre-Depression, existence. Functionalism tends to support a white middle-class family model emphasizing the economic activities of the male head of household and domestic activities of his female subordinate. Women function outside the home only as a reserve labor force, such as when their labor is needed in wartime. This model does not apply to poor women and single parents who by necessity must work outside the home to maintain the household. It may not apply to African American women, who are less likely by choice to separate family and employment and who derive high levels of satisfaction from both of these roles.

Research also shows that specialization of household tasks by gender in contemporary families is more dysfunctional than functional. Women relegated to family roles that they see as restrictive, for example, are unhappier in their marriages and more likely to opt out of them. Despite tension associated with multiple roles and role overlap, couples report high levels of gratification, self-esteem, status security, and personally enriched lives (Chapter 8). Contemporary families simply do not fit functionalist models.

To its credit, functionalism offers a reasonably sound explanation for the origin of gender roles and demonstrates the functional utility of assigning tasks on the basis of gender in subsistence economies or in regions in which large families are functional and children are needed for agricultural work. Contemporary functionalists also acknowledge that strain occurs when there is too sharp a divide between the public and the private sphere (work and family), particularly for women. They recognize that such a divide is artificial and dysfunctional when families need to cope with the growing interdependence called for in a global economy. The "superwoman" who "does it all" in career achievement and family nurturance will be valued (Diekman

and Goodfriend, 2006). Finally, neofunctionalism accounts for the multiple levels at which gender relations are operative—biological, psychological, social, and cultural. A functionalist examination of their interdependence allows us to understand how female subordination and male superiority reproduced throughout the globe.

Conflict Theory

With its assumptions about social order and social change, the macro sociological perspective of conflict theory, also referred to as social conflict theory, is in many ways a mirror image of functionalism. Unlike functionalists, who believe that social order is maintained through value consensus, conflict theorists assert that it is preserved involuntarily through the exercise of power that one social class holds over another.

Marx, Engels, and Social Class Originating from the writings of Karl Marx (1818–1883), conflict theory is based on the assumption that society is a stage on which struggles for power and dominance are acted out. The struggles are largely between social classes competing for scarce resources, such as control over the means of production (land, factories, natural resources) and for a better distribution of all resources (money, food, material goods). Capitalism thrives on a class-based system that consolidates power in the hands of a few men of the ruling class (*bourgeoisie*) who own the farms and factories that workers (*proletariat*) depend on for their survival. The interest of the dominant class is to maintain its position of power over the subordinate class by extracting as much profit as possible from their work. Only when the workers recognize their common oppression and form a *class consciousness* can they unite and amass the resources necessary to seriously challenge the inequitable system in which they find themselves (Marx and Engels, 1964; Marx, 1967). Marxian beliefs were acted out historically in the revolution that enveloped Russia, Eastern Europe, and much of Eurasia, propelling the Soviets to power for a half a century of control over these regions.

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), Marx's collaborator, applied these assumptions to the family and, by extension, to gender roles. He suggested that the master–slave or exploiter–exploited relationships occurring in broader society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat are translated to the household. Primitive societies were highly egalitarian because there were no surplus goods—and hence, no private property. People consumed what they produced. With the emergence of private property and the dawn of capitalistic institutions, Engels argued that a woman's domestic labor is "no longer counted beside the acquisition of the necessities of life by the man; the latter was everything, the former an unimportant extra." The household is an autocracy, and the supremacy of the husband is unquestioned. "The emancipation of woman will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large social scale, and domestic work no longer claims but an insignificant amount of her time" (Engels, 1942:41–43).

Contemporary Conflict Theory Later conflict theorists refined original Marxian assertions to reflect contemporary patterns and make conflict theory more palatable to people who desire social change that moves in the direction of egalitarianism but not through the revolutionary means outlined by classical Marxism

(Dahrendorf, 1959; Collins, 1975, 1979). Today conflict theorists largely assert that social structure is based on the dominance of some groups over others and that groups in society share common interests, whether its members are aware of it or not. Conflict is not based simply on class struggle and the tensions between owner and worker or employer and employee; it occurs on a much wider level and among almost all other groups. These include parents and children, husbands and wives, young and old, sick and healthy, people of color and whites, heterosexual and gay, females and males, and any other groups that can be differentiated as minority or majority according to the level of resources they possess. The list is infinite.

Gender and the Family Conflict theory focuses on the social placement function of the family that deposits people at birth into families who possess varying degrees of economic resources. People fortunate enough to be deposited into wealthier families will work to preserve existing inequality and the power relations in the broader society because they clearly benefit from the overall power imbalance. Social class *endogamy* (marrying within the same class) and inheritance patterns ensure that property and wealth are kept in the hands of a few powerful families. Beliefs about inequality and the power imbalance become institutionalized—they are accepted and persist over time as legitimate by both the privileged and the oppressed—so the notion that family wealth is deserved and that those born into poor families remain poor because they lack talent and a work ethic is perpetuated. The structural conditions that sustain poverty are ignored. When social placement operates through patriarchal and patrilineal systems, wealth is further concentrated in the hands of males and further promotes female subservience, neglect, and poverty. Contemporary conflict theorists agree with Engels by suggesting that when women gain economic strength by also being wage earners, their power inside the home is strengthened and can lead to more egalitarian arrangements.

The conflict perspective is evident in research demonstrating that household responsibilities have an effect on occupational location, work experience, and number of hours worked per week, all of which are linked to the gender gap in earnings (Chapter 10). Those lacking resources to demand sharing the burden or purchasing substitutes will perform undesirable work disproportionately. Because household labor is unpaid and associated with lack of power, the homemaker (wife) takes on virtually all domestic chores (Lindsey, 1996a; Riley and Kiger, 1999). The more powerful spouse performs the least amount of household work.

Critique Conflict theory has been criticized for its overemphasis on the economic basis of inequality and its assumption that there is inevitable competition between family members. It tends to dismiss the consensus among wives and husbands regarding task allocation. In addition, paid employment is not the panacea envisioned by Engels in overcoming male dominance. The gendered division of household labor does not translate to significant wage reductions for employed women outside the home or reduced in-home responsibilities (Tichenor, 2005; Lincoln, 2008). In the former Soviet Union, women had the highest levels of paid employment in the world but retained more household responsibilities than comparable women in other countries and earned two-thirds of the average male income. In post-Communist Russia, there is no change in women's domestic work, but women now earn less