

Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz • Julia T. Wood

# GENDERED LIVES

Communication,  
Gender, & Culture

Thirteenth  
Edition





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# Gendered Lives

## Communication, Gender, and Culture

**THIRTEENTH EDITION**

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and Culture,  
Thirteenth Edition**  
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## DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to Susan B. Anthony, Ella Baker, Frederick Douglass, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emma Goldman, Sarah Grimke, Francis Ellen Watkins Harper, Alice Paul, Margaret Sanger, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Mary Wollstonecraft, and other women and men who began the conversation about gender in this country;*

and to

*Maya Angelou, Gloria Anzaldúa, Robert Bly, Judith Butler, Karlyn Campbell, Mary Daly, Angela Davis, Simone de Beauvoir, Marilyn French, Michael Kimmel, Betty Friedan, J. Jack Halberstam, bell hooks, Jackson Katz, Evelyn Fox Keller, Lady Gaga, Amy Schumer, Gloria Steinem, Beyoncé, and other women and men who have added to the cultural dialogue about gender;*

and to

*Emmons Fixmer-Oraiz, Jason Muehlhoff, Malia Obama, Sasha Obama, Niko Pezzullo Striphos, Daniel Wood Wilco, Harrison Wood Wilco, Michelle Wood Wilco, and other boys and girls whose voices will shape the next generation's understanding of women and men, masculinity and femininity, and the meaning of gender in our society.*



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# Preface

We wrote *Gendered Lives* for two reasons. First, we want to introduce students to a rich body of research that informs us about the intricate connections among communication, gender, and culture. Second, we think that learning about these connections empowers students to make more informed decisions about how they personally enact gender, address gender issues in their lives, and contribute to cultural attitudes, perspectives, laws, and policies related to gender.

Since the first edition of this book appeared in the early 1990s, our understandings of gender have changed as have issues related to gender. Society has acknowledged a greater range of options for individuals—in the military, in the home, in professional life, in social life, and in politics. During the past 25 years, society has become more accepting of gay, lesbian, and transgender, or trans, identities; new women’s and men’s movements have emerged; mass media have challenged some gender stereotypes while creating others; and social media have added to the content and forms by which gender is continually enacted and negotiated. Academic researchers have continued to map the ways that communication, gender, and culture influence one another. This new edition responds to social changes in the United States and around the world, as well as to feedback from students and faculty who generously offered ideas for ways to improve this book.

We discuss this book’s origins and features in the Introduction (“Opening the Conversation,” pages 1–13). Here, we want to describe changes that make this edition different from the last and identify supplementary resources available for students and instructors.

## Changes in *Gendered Lives*, Thirteenth Edition

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Five significant changes differentiate this edition from its predecessors.

### Enhanced Coverage of Men’s Issues

Since the first edition in the mid-1990s, *Gendered Lives* has included discussion of topics related to men and masculinity. In recent years, more research on men and masculinity has emerged and is reflected in this edition’s increased attention to men’s issues. For example, Chapters 3 and 4 include new coverage of the Black Lives Matter movement. Also, Chapter 9 highlights men’s investment in fatherhood, and Chapter 10 covers the conflict between work and family that many men experience.


## Attention to Gendered Dynamics in Public Life

This edition offers more focus on gender in the public sphere. For example, in Chapters 5 we attend to language used to describe male and female politicians and also the gendered ways in which voters view candidates of each sex. Similarly, Chapter 5 points out sexist language used in relation to athletes. We also discuss how public figures enact and challenge gender norms.

## Integrated Emphasis on Social Media

With this edition, we continue to enrich our coverage of social media, which are not only sources of gender socialization, but also powerful platforms for rethinking gender and for gender activism. Accordingly, we have included discussion of social media throughout the book.

## Expanded Emphasis on Application

Since the first edition, *Gendered Lives* has encouraged students to apply material in the book by reflecting on gendered issues in their lives and by taking a voice in their personal lives as well as the public sphere. This edition enlarges the commitment to application by providing more explicit invitations for students to do something active and personal related to what they learn in the book and the course it accompanies. The Exploring Gendered Lives boxes that appear in every chapter now conclude by asking students to take a stand on the topics discussed. At the end of each chapter, the Reflection, Discussion, and Action feature now includes a Gender in Action item that encourages students to apply or extend a concept or topic discussed in the chapter to their lives. The Gender in Action items are highlighted by this icon .

## Up-to-Date Research

A final focus of this revision is updating research. Understandings of gender and issues connected to it change at lightning speed. To keep up with these changes, a textbook must be continuously updated to reflect the most current research and events. To ensure the currency of *Gendered Lives*, we've incorporated more than 275 new references into this edition.

## Pedagogical Features to Engage Students

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Five features are aimed to heighten students' engagement with the text and issues related to gender. First, each chapter opens with "Knowledge Challenge" questions, which focus on issues that are often misunderstood and which are covered in the chapter. Second, to encourage active engagement with material, Exploring Gendered Lives boxes conclude by asking students' opinion about issues raised in the feature. Third, each chapter concludes with questions for thought, discussion, and application. These may be assigned for students to think about or as journal entries. They may also be prompts for class discussion. Fourth, "Gender Online," which appears after each chapter summary, invites students to

visit websites related to chapter content and to search online for videos and information about concepts and ideas in the chapter. Fifth, at the end of each chapter, we suggest two to four sources—films, articles, websites, and books. Our criteria for selecting these are that (1) we consider them either classic or especially insightful, and (2) they are accessible to undergraduate students.

In making these changes, we've avoided “page creep”—the tendency of books to grow longer with each new edition because old material is not deleted to make room for new material. We have eliminated dated references and coverage to make room for more current research and coverage of timely topics. We hope the changes make this edition of *Gendered Lives* a valuable resource for instructors and students who want to explore the complex and fascinating ways in which communication, gender, and culture interact and affect our lives.

## MindTap

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This edition is complemented by MindTap, a platform that propels students from memorization to mastery. It gives you complete control of your course, so you can provide engaging content, challenge every learner, and build student confidence. Customize interactive syllabi to emphasize priority topics, then add your own material or notes to the eBook as desired. This outcomes-driven application gives you the tools needed to empower students and boost both understanding and performance.

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MindTap isn't just a tool, it's backed by a personalized team eager to support you. We can help set up your course and tailor it to your specific objectives, so you'll be ready to make an impact from day one. Know we'll be standing by to help you and your students until the final day of the term.



## Supplementary Resources for Students and Instructors

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*Gendered Lives*, thirteenth edition, offers electronic supplements to assist in making the gender communication course as meaningful and enjoyable as possible for both students and instructors and to help students succeed. Cengage Learning has prepared the following descriptions for your consideration.

**Instructor Companion Website.** The password-protected instructor's website includes electronic access to the Instructor's Resource Manual, PowerPoints, Cognero Testing Program, Comprehensive Video Program, and links to Cengage Learning technology resources.

The Instructor's Resource Manual comprises two main parts, the first titled and addressing Special Issues in Teaching Communication, Gender, & Culture; and the second a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide for Teaching *Gendered Lives*, which provides chapter outlines and activities.

PowerPoint® presentations contain text and images and can be used as is or customized to suit your course needs.

Please consult your local Cengage Learning sales representative or [cengage.com/login](http://cengage.com/login) for more information, user names and passwords, examination copies, or a demonstration of these ancillary products. Available to qualified adopters.

## Acknowledgments

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*Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz*  
 Iowa City, Iowa  
*Julia T. Wood*  
 Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
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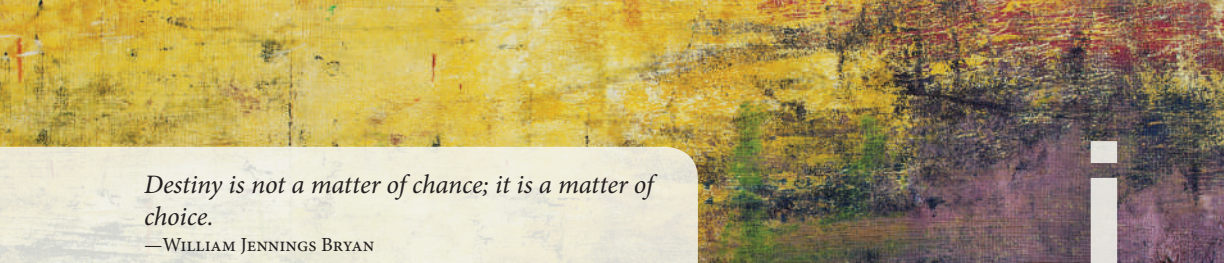
# About the Authors

**Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz** is an Assistant Professor of Communication Studies and Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Iowa. She has published articles on rhetoric and reproductive justice, the commercial surrogacy industry, and third-wave feminism, as well as book chapters on the public debates surrounding birth control and communication activism pedagogy. She is currently at work on *Homeland Maternity*, a book that examines contemporary struggles over reproductive health and motherhood in the context of homeland security culture. In addition, Natalie has been honored by teaching awards from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the American Association of Colleges and Universities. She is committed to service-learning and experiential education as means of helping students make connections between theory and practice and the community and the classroom. She continues her involvement in reproductive health and justice initiatives in the United States and transnational contexts. She currently resides in Iowa City with her wife, son, and two cats.

**Julia T. Wood** is Lineberger Distinguished Professor of Humanities Emerita at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She joined the university at the age of 24. While on the faculty, she was named the Lineberger Distinguished Professor of Humanities and the Caroline H. and Thomas S. Royster Distinguished Professor of Graduate Education. She has authored 17 books and edited 10 others. In addition, she has published more than 100 articles and book chapters and has presented numerous papers at professional conferences. She has won 12 awards for undergraduate teaching and 15 awards for her scholarship.

Julia lives with her partner, Robert Cox, who is Professor Emeritus of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Filling out their immediate family are two cats, Rigby and Always Rowdy, and a puppy, Sydney. When not teaching or writing, Julia works with, and consults on sex and gender issues, and serves on the Board of the Carolina Tiger Rescue.





*Destiny is not a matter of chance; it is a matter of choice.*

—WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

# Opening the Conversation

## Knowledge Challenge:

- When was the term *feminism* first used?
- How many bras were burned in feminist protests in 1968?
- As a group, are heterosexual men happier in relationships with feminist or nonfeminist women?
- What is at stake in how we think about gender?

Textbooks typically begin with a preview of chapters and features, but we want to launch our conversation a bit differently. We think you're entitled to know something about the people behind the words you'll be reading, so we want to open the book by introducing ourselves and explaining why we wrote *Gendered Lives*.

Most people regard books as impersonal sources of information. Like anything that people create, however, books reflect the experiences, identities, and historical context of the authors who write them. Authors influence books when they decide which topics to include and which theories to present. This doesn't mean that books are not informative or reliable, but it does mean that authors' experiences and perspectives have an impact on books. By telling you a little about who we are and why we wrote this book, we are inviting you to think about how our backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, and values have shaped the book you're reading.

Let's start with some simple demographic information. Natalie is a white, femme, cisgender, middle-class woman in a committed 12-year relationship with her partner, Vanessa. Julia is a European-American, heterosexual, spiritually engaged, middle-class woman who has been in a committed relationship with Robbie (Robert) Cox for 42 years.

Yet, if you think about it, this information isn't simple at all. It implies a great deal about our identities and experiences. For instance, Julia became an adult when the second wave of the U.S. Women's Movement was ascending, and it influenced her personal life, political views, and perspective on gender and culture. Natalie grew up in a culture that presented far greater opportunities to girls and women than that of previous generations. But even as feminism seemed to be part of the air she breathed, she also began to notice how sexism and other forms of social and economic injustice remained stubbornly intact.

The “simple” demographic information also shows that Natalie and Julia are privileged by their race and economic class, as well as by their cisgender identities. Yet, because of persistent sexism in Western culture, Natalie and Julia have faced gendered forms of bias and discrimination, and homophobia has compounded those challenges for Natalie.

We did not earn the privileges conferred by our skin color, class, or gender identity, nor did we earn the inequities that come with being categorized as female and, for Natalie, being a lesbian. That is the nature of much privilege and inequity—they are unearned. They do not reflect the achievements, efforts, or failings of the individuals who enjoy or suffer them.

## The Social Construction of Inequality

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To speak of being privileged in some ways and disadvantaged in others does not mean that these aspects of life are fixed in stone. The fact that being classified female makes approximately half of the population vulnerable to job discrimination, violence, and other injustices is not unchangeable. Nor is it immutable that some people’s sexual orientation or race or economic class or gender identity makes them vulnerable to inequity. In fact, one reason we wrote this book is because we believe society can change, and each of us can be part of bringing change about.

To participate in changing society, we cannot limit ourselves to our personal identities and experiences. We need to learn about the experiences, perspectives, and circumstances of people in other social positions: The anger and hurt experienced by trans people in a society that defines them as abnormal; the resentment felt by some heterosexual white men toward laws and policies that increase rights and opportunities available to women and other historically disenfranchised populations; what it means to be a person of color in a sea of whiteness; the sense of restriction many women feel knowing they cannot venture out at night without risking assault; the frustration felt by poor and working-class citizens whose needs and circumstances often are not represented in legislation that claims to help everyone.

We can never fully understand the lives of people who differ from us but we can realize that our feelings, identities, values, and perspectives are not everyone’s. Recognizing the limits of our own perspectives and experiences encourages us to learn from people who have different perspectives and experiences. We do this by respecting the specific conditions that shape their lives and by recognizing that only *they* can define the meanings of their experiences, feelings, thoughts, hopes, beliefs, problems, and needs. We cannot speak for them and cannot appropriate their voices as our own (González, Houston, & Chen, 2012). But to listen is to learn, and to learn is to broaden our appreciation of the range of human experiences and possibilities.

## Feminism—Feminisms

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Finally, in introducing ourselves to you, we should tell you that we are feminists, as are 60% of women and 33% of men in the United States (Crary, 2014). Before you form an impression based on your understanding of feminism, let’s define the term. The word *feminism*



## EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

*Multicultural Perspectives on Gender*

How do we define and express *gender*? It depends on which culture's perspective you take.

- The Agta in the Philippines and the Tini Aborigines in Australia see keen hunting ability as a feminine ideal (Estioko-Griffin & Griffin, 1997).
- In Melanesia, young Sambian boys perform fellatio on adult men. The Sambia believe that swallowing the semen of adult men helps boys grow into healthy adult males (Herdt, 1997).
- Berdaches are members of approximately 150 North American societies, many of which are Native Americans. Although berdaches often enact the behaviors of a gender other than that associated with their assigned sex, within their societies they are recognized as distinct third and fourth genders (Roscoe, 1993).
- In addition to male and female, several South Asian nations including India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, formally recognize *hijra* as a third gender. *Hijra* are biologically assigned male at birth but embrace a feminine identity (Human Rights Watch, 2016). In addition to males and females, Juchitán in Oaxaca, Mexico, recognizes *muxes*, who are biological males who, from an early age, identify as females and adopt the roles and practices assigned to females in their community. Many residents of Juchitán believe that *muxes* have special abilities (Lacey, 2008).
- In Samoa, there is a third gender called the *Fa'afafine*. *Fa'afafines* engage in sexual relations almost exclusively with heterosexual males (Bartlett & Vasey, 2006).

**TAKE A STAND:** Do you believe you would view masculinity, femininity, and sexual orientation differently if you were Samoan or belonged to one of the other cultures mentioned above?

was coined in France in the late 1800s. It combined the French word for “woman,” *femme*, with the suffix *ism*, meaning “political position.” Thus, *feminism* means “a political position about women.” Ironically, although many people do not call themselves feminists, they do think that women’s rights activism has improved the conditions and opportunities available to women. Also, many people of all sexes and genders believe that individuals should have equal rights, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, or gender. This suggests that, for many people, there is greater reservation about the label *feminist* than about the actual goals, values, and achievements of feminism.

When we talk with students who say they aren’t feminists, we often discover that we agree on most issues relevant to gender but disagree on the meaning of the word *feminism*. There’s good reason for this. First, feminism is not one single belief or political position. Chapter 3 discusses a variety of feminist positions, and Chapter 4 explores the different stances—some feminist, some not—endorsed by men’s movements. Second, most people’s impressions of feminism have been shaped by bias in media portrayal of feminism and feminists. Beginning with the inaccurate report that feminists burned bras at a protest of the 1968 Miss America Pageant (no bras were burned at that protest), media have consistently misrepresented feminists as man-hating, shrill extremists. Many people,

like a student named Andrea (see her commentary), say they aren't feminists because they associate feminism with media caricatures that emphasize bashing men and engaging in radical protests.

#### ANDREA

*I would never call myself a feminist, because that word has so many negative connotations. I don't hate men or anything, and I'm not interested in protesting. I don't want to go around with hacked-off hair and no makeup and sit around bashing men. I do think women and men are equal and should have the same kinds of rights, including equal pay for equal work. But I wouldn't call myself a feminist.*

Media stereotypes of feminists don't fit many women and men who identify as feminists. Most feminists are not extremists, and most, like the two of us, have strong and loving relationships with people of all sexes and genders. Those who identify as feminist claim a range of gendered identities, and including traditional femininity, from interest in fashions to activities such as cooking and caring for children. Research shows that heterosexual men in relationships with feminist women are happier and consider their relationships healthier than heterosexual men in relationships with nonfeminist women. The converse is also true: Women in heterosexual relationships with feminist men are happier and more satisfied with their relationships than women in heterosexual relationships with nonfeminist men (Rudman & Phelan, 2007). Being a feminist does not conflict with being feminine, but it does mean being reflective about how women define and express femininity. Likewise, being a feminist does not conflict with being masculine, but it requires conscious decision-making about how to define and express masculinity.

Because feminism means different things to different people, we want to tell you how we define the term. We understand feminism as an active commitment to equality and respect for all forms of life. For us, this includes respecting all people, as well as nonhuman forms of life and the Earth itself. Simply put, we see feminism as resisting oppression, be it the oppression of women, men, people with disabilities, people with any gender or sexual identity, people of any race, ethnicity or religion, elderly people, children, animals, or our planet. We don't think oppression and domination foster healthy lives for individuals or societies as a whole. We believe there are better, more humane, and enriching ways for us to live, and we are convinced each of us can be part of bringing these alternatives into existence. During the course of reading this book, you will encounter varied versions of feminism, which should shatter the myth that feminism is one position, and which should also invite you to consider where to locate yourself among diverse viewpoints.

Feminism does not just happen. It is a process and an achievement. Julia was not raised to be a feminist. In fact, quite the contrary. She was brought up to be a traditional Southern woman who deferred to men and devoted her life to home and family. In the 1970s when a friend first introduced Julia to some readings about discrimination against women, her initial response was denial. She tried to rationalize inequities or repress her knowledge of discrimination, perhaps because recognizing it was painful. When denial failed to work, Julia became angry about the ways in which women, including herself,

were devalued and denied opportunities. She was also angry at herself for having been unaware of society's devaluation of women and for conforming to the roles assigned to women. Eventually, Julia transformed the anger into an abiding commitment to working for changes in society.

Natalie came to feminism somewhat differently. She was raised to believe that girls and women were equal to boys and men. Her parents, both of whom identified as feminists, encouraged her love of reading, music, dance, and math equally, and cheered her athletic and academic pursuits. She was fortunate to have a series of teachers throughout her schooling who believed in her and pushed her to excel. Upon entering graduate school, she was assigned to Julia's teaching team for the class, *Gender, Communication, and Culture*, using the very textbook you are reading right now (albeit an edition from a few years back!). The material resonated profoundly: Despite the fact that Natalie had grown up in a culture that proclaimed sexism to be over and feminism no longer needed, the new set of concepts she encountered in *Gendered Lives* named persistent patterns of inequity that she had noticed but had not had language to label and critique. Like Julia, sometimes Natalie's response to this new information was denial or anger, but it also ignited her curiosities and passions. She began exploring the histories of feminist social movements and contemporary gendered injustices and now devotes her research, teaching, and activism to these issues.

## Becoming Aware

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Whether you identify with feminism or not, you are gendered. Reading this book will expand your understanding of gender—how it is shaped and expressed in contexts ranging from the political arena to intimate relationships. The awareness you gain will enhance your insight into yourself and your society.

At the same time, you may feel unsettled as you read this book. If you identify as a woman, you may find it disturbing to learn the extent to which Western culture (and other cultures) devalues women's experiences and limits their opportunities. If you identify as a man, reading this book may increase your awareness of the ways in which cultural views of masculinity constrain your life choices. You may be uncomfortable learning about social expectations for men to succeed, to be self-sufficient, to repress feelings, and to put work ahead of family. You may also be surprised to learn that your sex and gender benefit you in ways that you may not have noticed, particularly if you are white. If you challenge gender norms or identify as LGBTQ, this book may give you language that helps you to define your identity and experience, while also specifying the unique challenges of living as LGBTQ in a cis- and hetero-normative world.

We also realize that a number of people reading this have been raped, sexually abused, sexually harassed, or battered. Some of you have eating disorders; some have suffered job discrimination; some of you have been taunted for not embodying current social expectations for women and men; and some of you have been bullied because of your sexual orientation or gender identity. Reading *Gendered Lives* is likely to stir up these issues. If you don't wish to deal with such difficult issues, then you may choose to forgo or delay study in this area. However, if you are ready to wrestle with serious

personal and social matters, then this book should help you understand issues in your life as not only personal but also deeply rooted in social values and institutions.

Becoming aware of inequities in social life may lead you to speak out against practices and attitudes that sustain discrimination and disadvantage. Realize that some people will respond negatively if you make thoughtful criticisms of social attitudes and practices that foster inequity. Women who speak out against inequities and discrimination are sometimes accused of male-bashing. Men who speak out against discrimination against women are sometimes regarded as wimps or as disloyal to men. Such responses reflect an unwillingness to engage in the substance of the criticism. If you want to take an active role in shaping our shared world, you must anticipate struggles with those who are less willing to consider ideas that question familiar perspectives and behaviors.

#### PATRICK

*I don't want to be lumped with all men. I am not sexist; I don't discriminate against women; I believe in gender equality and try to practice it in my relationships with women. It really makes me angry when people bash males as if we are all oppressors or something. I don't oppress women or anyone else, and I don't want to be blamed for unfair things that others do.*

Patrick makes an important point. We need to distinguish between the actions and attitudes of individuals and the social practices and values of our culture. Most individual men do not aim to oppress women or gender-nonconforming people. The point is that Western culture as a whole has constructed gendered inequalities, and these inequalities continue in our era.

The problem, then, is not individuals, but rather a social system that accords unequal value and opportunity on the basis of sex assignment. This kind of prejudice diminishes us all. It limits our appreciation of human diversity by defining a very narrow zone of what is good, normal, and worthy of respect. Regardless of whether you are privileged or oppressed by social evaluations of what is normal and good, your study of gender, communication, and culture may be unsettling. If you are seriously disturbed by what you read, you might find it helpful to talk with your instructor or to visit the counseling center at your school.

## Why We Wrote This Book

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We wrote *Gendered Lives* because we believe that change is needed in how we view and embody gender. We also believe research presented in this book can empower you to make more informed choices about your personal identity and our shared world. Since the first edition was published, we've received many positive responses from colleagues who teach classes that use the book and from students in our classes as well as from students around the nation. We've also received helpful criticism and suggestions that have motivated us to rethink and improve the book.

In the chapters that follow, you'll learn about the extent to which gender inequities and discrimination persist and diminish individual and collective life. For instance:

## EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

## About “Male-Bashing”: Julia and Natalie—the Authors— Comment

Occasionally, a student tells one of us that *Gendered Lives* “bashes men.” This comment puzzles us, because we don’t see ourselves as male-bashers. Both of our lives include men we love. We have many male friends and colleagues, and we’ve done as much to mentor male students and colleagues as female ones. When we ask students to explain why they think the book bashes men, they tell us it gives more attention to discrimination against women than to discrimination against men and that it points out that some men harm women. They are correct in this observation, but the difference in attention to harms to women and men reflects findings from research rather than any personal views we hold.

Like all scholars, what we write depends largely on available information. Existing research shows that, although both men and women experience violence from intimate partners, 95% of people who are known to be physically abused by romantic partners are women (Haynes, 2009; Johnson, 2006). It would be inaccurate to give equal space to discussion of men who are physically abused by intimate partners. The same

is true of sexual harassment: Although members of both sexes and all genders are sexually harassed, most victims are girls and women and most perpetrators are men. The only way we could present a gender-balanced discussion of sexual harassment would be by misrepresenting facts.

You should also realize that this book includes more information about men and men’s issues than any other textbook for a course in gender and communication. In the chapters that follow, you’ll learn about men’s movements, pressures men face to succeed and conform to stereotypes of masculinity, and consequences, such as depression, of social perspectives that limit men in the workplace and in personal relationships. You’ll also learn that men, like women, can be victims of sexual violence. In addition, you’ll discover that men find it stressful to balance work and family, yet men today are contributing more to raising children than previous generations of men. Research throughout this book shows how social expectations of women and men can restrict all of us. We hope that, as you read this book, you’ll perceive the coverage as fair.

- Is there any way to justify the fact that, each day in the United States, at least four women are killed by their partners or ex-partners?
- Is there any way to justify the fact that the majority of the victims of hate violence murders are trans women and mostly trans women of color (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, 2013)?
- Is it fair that men who want to spend time with their families are often evaluated negatively in professional contexts?
- Is it acceptable that a Pakistani court sentenced a woman to be gang-raped because of an offense allegedly committed by her brother?
- Is it just that most of the advances won by women’s movements have benefited white, middle-class women more than poor women and women of color?

- Is there any reason why, for every dollar white men earn, white women earn 79 cents, Black women earn 60 cents, Native American women earn 59 cents, and Latinas earn 55 cents for doing the same job (Miller, 2016b; “Women Still Earn a Lot Less Than Men,” 2015)?
- Is it fair that, in divorce proceedings, mothers have an advantage over fathers in gaining custody of children?
- Is it right that women bear the primary responsibility and nearly all of the risks in reproductive matters, including fertility, contraception, and parenting?
- Does it make sense that the United States is one of only four countries without a national policy requiring paid family leave (Oman, Tonga, and Papua New Guinea are the other three) (Rowe-Finkbeiner, 2014; Zarocostas, 2014)?

If you don't want inequities such as these to continue, read on. Becoming aware of how our culture establishes and normalizes inequities is necessary, but that alone will not lead to changes. In fact, concentrating exclusively on what is wrong tends to depress us, which can paralyze impulses toward reform. Awareness of inequities must be coupled with realizing that change is possible.

Through individual action and social movements, many blatant forms of sex discrimination have been eliminated. In the 1800s, women weren't allowed to vote. They also had no access to a university education, could not own property if they married, and were barred from participating in most professions. Until the mid-1970s, women in the United States could not get credit cards in their own names (Zeisler, 2016). In the past, sexual harassment, acquaintance rape, and marital rape were unnamed and generally unpunished. In recent decades they have been named and recognized as illegal. Women can now vote, attend



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Contemporary views of masculinity differ from those that prevailed in earlier eras.

universities, own property, pursue professional careers, and have credit cards in their names, and they can bring legal action if they are harassed or raped.

Views of men, too, have changed. In earlier eras, our society defined *manliness* in terms of physical strength and bravery. After the Industrial Revolution, the ability to earn a good salary became the social standard of manliness. Today, many men are challenging social definitions of men as income providers and are seeking greater opportunities to participate in personal relationships. Forty years ago, it would have been almost unthinkable for a man to have been a stay-at-home dad. Today, a number of men are stay-at-home dads.

Gender is also increasingly recognized as fluid. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender-nonconforming individuals enjoy greater visibility and acceptance than in previous decades. Long-standing forms of discrimination against LGBTQ people have been challenged and, in many cases, changed. For example, a few years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriages are legal. Despite these positive changes, many forms of discrimination against LGBTQ people remain and strict gender norms create barriers to full acceptance.

Changes such as the ones we've discussed mislead many people into thinking that gender equality has been achieved. Some believe we live in a "postfeminist era" in which gender discrimination is history and that sexism has been overcome.

- Some say that women now have freedom of choice but fail to recognize that women have fewer reproductive rights in the United States than in a number of other countries.
- Some cite high-visibility politicians such as Hillary Clinton as evidence that the playing field in politics is now level but do not realize that women make up 18% of the U.S. House of Representatives and only 4.6% of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies (Remnick, 2015; Sandberg & Chávez, 2014 vanOgtrop, 2015).
- Some argue that the United States opposes discrimination against women but don't seem disturbed that the United States—along with a few other nations such as Somalia and Sudan—has refused to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Jimmy Carter signed the treaty in 1980, and the Senate has yet to act on it.
- Some believe that heterosexual women and men now have egalitarian relationships but don't seem concerned that, in two-worker families, women still spend twice as much time as men on housework and child care (Bruni, 2016).

As the listing shows, not all of the inequities based on sex and gender are history. Even in the United States, gender equity has not been fully achieved. In a ranking of measures that affect women's lives (health, education, economics, politics, and justice) the United States ranked eighth, behind Iceland, Sweden, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland, and Norway (Streib, 2011). Although we've made progress toward gender equity, there are more changes to be made before we have a truly level-playing field for everyone.

The consequences of how we define and embody gender are not abstract. There are very real stakes involved. Individuals' health and even their lives can be on the line. Consider a few examples of the concrete impacts of social views of gender:

- Women suffer far more adverse side effects, including potentially fatal heart arrhythmia, from sleeping pills than men because only men were used in trials when many of the drugs were in development (Rabin, 2013).