consistent information remembered better than gender-inconsistent information. For example, a child with a traditional gender schema might generalize that physicians are men even though the child has sometimes had appointments with female physicians. Overall, gender schema theorists see gender schema as maintaining traditional stereotypes.

**Chodorow’s Theory of Gender** Sociologist Nancy Chodorow (1978) has constructed a theory of gender that combines psychoanalytic ideas about identification of children with parents (object relations theory) with an awareness of those parents’ social roles in our society. According to **Chodorow’s theory**, infants develop a primary identification with the person primarily responsible for their early care. Later, children must learn to differentiate psychologically and emotionally between themselves and their primary caregiver.

Children’s primary caregivers are virtually always female. Because a daughter is developing a gender identity similar to her principal caregiver’s (her mother), she can readily model her mother’s behavior. But a boy cannot model his mother’s behavior and also develop a culturally consistent gender identity. He learns instead that he is “not female.” He must suppress “feelings of overwhelming love, attachment, and dependence on his mother” (Thurman 1982, p. 35), leaving his gender identity less secure (W. Pollack 1998).

Chodorow attributes differences between adult men and women to this gender divergence in early socialization experience. Boys are disappointed and angry at the necessary—but abrupt and emotionally charged—detachment from their mother. Gradually, however, they come to value their relatively absent fathers as models of agency, independence, and “the superiority of masculine . . . prerogatives” (Thurman 1982, p. 35). Conversely, “relatedness,” or expressiveness, is allowed and fostered among girls.

Research does not strongly support Chodorow’s theory, and in an era of numerous single-parent families and changing parental roles, it seems less applicable. Nevertheless, Chodorow has been very influential in academic thinking on gender.

**Symbolic Interaction Theory** In symbolic interaction theory (Cooley 1909; 1909; G. H. Mead 1954), children develop self-concepts based on social feedback—the *looking-glass self* (see Chapter 2). Also important is their *role-taking*, as they play out roles in interaction with significant others such as parents and peers. As children grow they take on roles representing wider social networks, and eventually internalize norms of the community (termed by Mead *the generalized other*). Although this is a general theory of socialization, you can see how it can be applied to gender. Little girls play “mommy” with their dolls and kitchen sets, while little boys play with cars or hypermasculine action figures. But things are changing, and it is now likely that little girls as well as little boys play “going to work.”

All the socialization theories presented here seem plausible, but none has conclusive research support. Self-identification theory, gender schema theory, and Chodorow’s theory as well as biologically deterministic theories are especially lacking (Bussey and Bandura 1999). It is also the case that gender socialization is a moving target in a rapidly changing social world.

### Settings for Socialization

We’ll turn now to some empirical findings regarding gender socialization in concrete and specific settings: the family, play and games among peers, media influences, and the schools. We saw in Chapter 3 that religious groups often specify appropriate gender roles, and they are also a setting for gender socialization.

**Boys and Girls in the Family** From the 1970s on, parents have reported treating their sons and daughters similarly.4 “[T]he specialization of men for dominance and women for subordination that emerged [as a socialization pattern] in patriarchal societies has eroded with the weakening of gender hierarchies in postindustrial societies” (Wood and Eagly 2002, p. 717). Differential socialization still exists, but it is typically not conscious. Instead, it “reflects the fact that the parents themselves accept the general societal roles for men and women,” though this is no longer universal (Kimmel 2000, p. 123).

Still, encouragement of gender-typed interests and activities continues. A study of 120 babies’ and toddlers’ rooms found that girls had more dolls, fictional characters, children’s furniture, and the color pink; boys had more sports equipment, tools, toy vehicles, and the colors blue, red, and white. Fathers, more than mothers, enforce gender stereotypes, especially for sons; it is more acceptable, for example, for girls to be tomboys (Adams and Coltrane 2004; Bussey and Bandura 1999; Feldman 2003, p. 207; Kimmel 2000, Chapter 6; Pomerleau et al. 1990).

Exploratory behavior is more encouraged in boys than girls (Feldman 2003, p. 207). Toys considered appropriate for boys encourage physical activity and

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**Teaching Tip:** Provide students with scenarios depicting the socialization of gender roles and assign students to work in small groups to discuss and apply each of the socialization theories (e.g., social learning theory, self-identification theory, etc.).
independent play, whereas "girl toys" elicit closer physical proximity and more talk between child and caregiver (Caldera, Huston, and O'Brien 1989). Even parents who support nonsexist child rearing for their daughters are often concerned if their sons are not aggressive or competitive "enough"—or are "too" sensitive (Pleck 1992). Girls are increasingly allowed or encouraged to develop instrumental attitudes and skills. Meanwhile, boys are still discouraged from, or encounter parental ambivalence about, developing attitudes and skills of tenderness or nurturance (Kindlon and Thompson 1999; Pollack 1998).

Beginning when children are about five and increasing through adolescence, parents allocate household chores—both the number and kinds—to their children differentially, according to the child's sex. With African American children often an exception, Patricia will more likely be assigned cooking and laundry tasks; Paul will find himself painting and mowing (Burns and Homel 1989; McHale et al. 1990). Because girls' chores typically must be done daily, while boys' are sporadic, girls spend more time doing chores—a fact that "may convey a message about male privilege" (Basow 1992, p. 131). African American girls, however, are raised to be more independent and less passive, while research also indicates that African American boys, as well as girls, are socialized for roles that include employment and child care (Hale-Benson 1986; Staples and Boulin Johnson 1993).

Although relations in the family provide early feedback and help shape a child's developing identity, play and peer groups become important as children try out identities and adult behaviors. In fact, the author of one review of psychological research argues that peers have much more influence on child and adolescent development in general than do parents (J. Harris 1998).

Play and Games The role of play is an important concept in the interactionist perspective. In G. H. Mead's theory (1934), play is not idle time, but a significant vehicle through which children develop appropriate concepts of adult roles, as well as images of themselves.

Boys and girls tend to play separately and differently (Maccoby 1998). Girls play in one-to-one relationships or in small groups of two and three; their play is relatively cooperative, emphasizes turn taking, requires little competition, and has relatively few rules. In "feminine" games like jump rope or hopscotch, the goal is skill rather than winning (Basow 1992). Boys more often play in fairly large groups, characterized by more fighting and attempts to effect a hierarchical pecking order. Boys also seem to exhibit high spirits and having fun (Maccoby 1998). From preschool through adolescence, children who play according to traditional gender roles are more popular with their peers; this is more true for boys (C. L. Martin 1989).

Especially in elementary schools, many cross-sexual interaction rituals such as playground games are based on and reaffirm boundaries and differences between girls and boys. Sociologist Barrie Thorne (1992), who spent eleven months doing naturalistic observation at two elementary schools, calls these rituals borderwork.

Sports play a role, both the informal and organized sports of childhood and the images presented in the media (Messer 2002). Now girls have more organized sports available to them, as well as more media models of women athletes. Girls who take part in sports have greater self-esteem and self-confidence (Andersen and Taylor 2002; Dworkin and Messner 1999).

The Power of Cultural Images Media images often convey gender expectations. Children's programming more often depicts boys than girls in dominant, agentic roles.

(B. Carter 1991). On music videos, females are likely to be shown trying to get a man’s attention. Some videos broadcast shockingly violent misogynous (hatred of women) messages. In TV commercials, men predominate by about nine to one as the authoritative narrators or voiceovers, even when the products are aimed at women (Craig 1992; Kilbourne 1994). Cultural images in the media indicate to the audience what is “normal.”

Socialization in Schools There is considerable evidence that the way girls and boys are treated differently in school is detrimental to both genders (AAUW 1992; Kindlon and Thompson 1999; W. Pollack 1998; Sadker and Sadker 1994;). School organization, classroom teachers, and textbooks all convey the message that boys are more important than girls. At the same time, some critics posit that school expectations are unreasonably difficult for the typical boy to meet.

Teachers’ Practices Research shows that teachers pay more attention to males than to females, and males tend to dominate learning environments from nursery school through college (Lips 2004). Researchers who observed more than 100 fourth, sixth, and eighth-grade classes over a three-year period found that boys consistently and clearly dominated classrooms. Teachers called on and encouraged boys more often than girls. If a girl gave an incorrect answer, the teacher was likely to call on another student, but if a boy was incorrect, the teacher was more likely to encourage him to learn by helping him discover his error and correct it (Sadker and Sadker 1994). Compared to girls, boys are more likely to receive a teacher’s attention, to call out in class, to demand help or attention from the teacher, to be seen as model students, or to be praised by teachers. Boys are also more likely to be disciplined harshly by teachers (Gurian 1996; Kindlon and Thompson 1999; Pollack 1998).

In subtle ways, teachers may reinforce the idea that males and females are more different than similar. There are times when boys and girls interact together relatively comfortably—in the school band, for example. But in classrooms, teachers often pit girls and boys against each other in spelling bees or math contests (Thorne 1992).

African American Girls, Latinas, and Asian American Girls in Middle and High School Journalist Peggy Orenstein (1994) spent one year observing pupils and teachers in two California middle schools, one mostly white and middle class and the other predominantly African American and Hispanic and of lower socioeconomic status. Orenstein found that in both schools, girls were subtly encouraged to be quiet and nonassertive whereas boys were rewarded for boisterous and even aggressive behaviors.

However, African American girls were louder and less unassuming than non-Hispanic white girls were when they began school—and some continued along this path. In fact, they called out in the classroom as often as boys did. But Orenstein noted that teachers’ reactions differed. The participation, and even antics, of white boys in the classroom was considered inevitable and rewarded with extra attention and instruction, whereas the assertiveness of African American girls was defined as “menacing, something that, for the sake of order in the classroom, must be squelched” (p. 181). Orenstein further found that Latinas, along with Asian American girls, had special difficulty being heard or even noticed. Probably socialized into quiet demeanor at home and often having language difficulties, these girls’ scholastic or leadership abilities largely went unseen. In some cases, their classroom teachers did not even know who the girls were when Orenstein mentioned their names.

Clicker/Discussion Tip: To facilitate discussion around gender inequality in school settings, poll students on their experiences/opinions (track responses by gender). For example, ask how many feel that their school experiences were similar to the descriptions in the text regarding boys having an advantage (being called on more, encouraged more, etc.), and how many feel that their school experiences did not reflect gender inequality? Facilitate discussion around responses as related to recent findings in this area.
In high school, Latina girls experience crosspressures when the desire to succeed in school and move on to a career is in tension with the traditional assumption of wife and mother roles at a young age. Twenty-five percent do not finish high school, compared to 12 percent of black and 10 percent of white girls (U.S. Census Bureau 2006c, Table 258). Factors such as poverty and language barriers, as well as the pressure to contribute to the family, affect the educational attainment of both boys and girls. But young Latinas, especially recent immigrants, seem torn between newer models for women as mothers and career women and the traditional model of marriage and homemaking (Canedy 2001). Nevertheless, the majority of Latinas and Latinos finish high school.

School Organization In 2004, 74 percent of all public school employees were women, while only a little over half (53 percent) of the principals and assistant principals and officials and administrators (51 percent) were women. Eighty-six percent of elementary teachers were women, and 59 percent of secondary teachers. These numbers represent a change toward greater balance since 1982, when only 21 percent of principals, 24 percent of officials and administrators, and 49 percent of secondary teachers were women (U.S. Census Bureau 2003a, Table 252).

Programs and Outcomes One concern related to schooling has been whether girls are channeled into or themselves avoid the traditionally masculine areas in high school study. We don’t really know the answer to this question. A recent review of one thousand research studies (AAUW Educational Foundation 1999) reports that high school boys and girls now take similar numbers of science courses, but boys are more likely to take all three core courses: biology, chemistry, and physics. Girls enroll in Advanced Placement (AP) courses in greater numbers than boys, including AP biology. But fewer girls than boys get high enough scores on AP tests to get college credit. Girls take fewer computer courses, and they cluster in traditional female occupations in career-oriented programs.

Girls versus Boys?

Girls have long been the primary focus of attention in examining the possible bias of educational institutions. The previous sections make a good case for such concern, and the 1994 Women’s Equal Education Act declares girls an “under-served population.” Despite the litany of difficulties girls and women may face in educational settings, the intention is to identify problems that need continued attention. In fact, girls are doing well, on the whole. Women and girls “are on a tear through the educational system . . . In the past 30 years, nearly every inch of progress . . . has gone to them” (Thor Mortenson of the Dell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, in Conlin 2003a, p. 76).

In recent years, attention has turned to boys. Some writers attack the “myth of girls in crisis” (Sommers 2000a, p. 61). Sommers’s critique goes beyond a concern for balance to argue that there is a “war on boys” (2000b). In Sommers’s view, boys are actively discriminated against by the educational establishment: “[B]oy are repressed, both as the unfairly privileged sex and as obstacles on the path to gender justice” (2000b, p. 60; see also 2000a, p. 23).

Sommers and others have some valid points. They point to the declining male share of college enrollments and note that on a number of indicators, girls do better in school: better grades, higher educational aspirations, greater enrollment in AP and other demanding academic programs. Currently, girls are even more likely to outnumber boys in higher-level math and science courses, student government, honor society, and student newspaper staffs. More boys fall behind grade level and more are suspended, and they are far more likely to be shunted into special education classes or to have their inattentive and restless behavior defined as deviant, and medicated. Indicators of deviant behavior—crime, alcohol, and drugs—show more involvement by boys.

To the argument that boys do better on SAT and other standardized tests, Sommers responds that the pool of girls taking the test is more apt to include disadvantaged and/or marginal students, whereas their male counterparts do not take these exams. Boys have a greater incidence of diagnosis of emotional disorders, learning disorders, attention-deficit disorders, and teen deaths (Conlin 2003a; Goldberg 1998; Sommers 2000a, 2000b). The “gender gap” in current bachelor’s degrees is noted. In every racial/ethnic group, women receive more degrees (“A Widening Gulf” 2003).

Other analysts do not necessarily share Sommers’s allegations of active discrimination against boys. But they argue that attention to girls’ educational needs and the success of men in the work world tended to obscure boys’ problems in school. They see a mismatch between typical boy behavior—high levels of physical activity and more challenges to teachers and school rules—and school expectations about sitting still, following rules, and concentrating (Poe 2004). Moreover, a survey by the Public Education Network (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company 1997) found that 31 percent of boys in grades 7–12 felt that teachers do not listen to them, compared to 19 percent of girls.
A recent research study (Meadows, Land, and Lamb 2005) sought to examine and compare the situations of boys and girls. The researchers took note of Sommers’s critique regarding boys, as well as the research cited earlier on the disadvantaged situation of girls in schools. They noted Carol Gilligan’s influential books (1982; Gilligan, Lyons, and Hammer 1990), which argue that girls’ strengths in relationships and emotional expressions are devalued in an individualistic and competitive American society and that girls become discouraged as they arrive on the threshold of adolescence (see also Pipher 1995).5

Essentially, Meadows and her colleagues asked: How goes it with boys and girls? For answers they turned to the status of boys and girls on twenty-eight social indicators of well-being, which are also combined into an index. These indicators measure seven life domains: material well-being, health, safety, productive activity, intimacy, place in the community, and emotional well-being (p. 5). Meadows and her colleagues concluded that “gender differences in well-being, when they do exist, are very slight and that overall both boys and girls in the United States currently enjoy a higher quality of life than they did in 1985” (p. 1).

This study addresses the question of the overall well-being of boys and girls, inspired by assertions of a “war against boys” (Sommers 2000b) and a “girl-poisonous culture” (Pipher 1995) and comes to reassuring conclusions. Regarding education specifically, “[T]he results reported here do not support current claims by many feminists that girls are at a disadvantage . . . when it comes to educational attainment. If anything, it is boys who are falling behind, particularly at higher levels of education” (Meadows et al. 2005, p. 44). This points to the question of whether schooling should change in some way.

Sommers proposes single-sex schools; restoration of a competitive, structured, and achievement-oriented environment; and elimination of attempts to get boys to express their emotions (Sommers 2000a, 2000b).

Other approaches to concerns about boys are exactly opposite to the approach of Sommers. Psychiatrist William Pollack’s perspective is that “what we call . . . normal boy development . . . not only isn’t normal, but it’s traumatic and that trauma has major consequences” (quoted in Goldberg 1998, p. A-12; see also Kimmel 2001). To express vulnerability runs the risk of victimization. Boys, particularly racial/ethnic minority youth, face a dilemma in that acting tough to protect themselves is threatening to adults (psychologist Dan Kind-

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5 Meadows et al. (2005) note that Gilligan’s conclusions about gender differences are based on small numbers of interviews with girls (no boys) and on anecdotes and that she has never been willing to make her data available for review by other scholars.

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“We don’t believe in pressuring the children. When the time is right, they’ll choose the appropriate gender.”

lon, cited in Goldberg 1998). One effort suggested by this line of thought is to take measures to decrease bullying (Kimmel 2001). Another is to encourage boys to express their emotions and to redefine the male role to include emotional expression (Kindlon and Thompson 1999).

Other proposals include: (1) accepting a certain level of boys’ rowdy play as not deviant, (2) implementing more active learning-by-doing to permit physical movement in classroom settings, and (3) encouraging activities shared by boys and girls and boy–girl dialogues about gender (Kindlon and Thompson 1999). The bottom line may be the observation by Marie C. Wilson, president of the Ms. Foundation for Women: “We’d be so naive to think we could change the lives of girls without boys’ lives changing” (quoted in Goldberg 1998, p. A-12). It may be that “girls and boys are on the same side in this issue.”

In this section on socialization, we have examined how socialization shapes gender identities and gendered behavior. Socialization continues throughout adulthood as we negotiate and learn new roles—or as those already learned are renegotiated or reinforced. The varied opportunities we encounter as adults influence the adult roles we choose and play out, and the qualities and skills we develop. And those have changed in recent decades, in response to the Women’s Movement and the men’s movements that followed.

Social Change and Gender

The increasing convergence of men’s and women’s social roles, though incomplete, reflects a dramatic change from the more gender-differentiated world of
the mid-twentieth century. Such changes are due not only to structural forces (especially economic) that led to women’s increased entry into the labor force but also to active change efforts by women and their allies in the Women’s Movement. Men’s movements followed.

The Women’s Movement

The nineteenth century saw a feminist movement develop, but from around 1920 until the mid-1960s there was virtually no activism regarding women’s rights and women’s roles. Women did make some gains in the 1920s and 1930s in education and occupational level, but these were eroded during the more familial post-World War II era.

Media glorification of housewife and breadwinner roles made them seem natural despite the reality of increased women’s employment. But contradictions between what women were actually doing and the roles prescribed for them became increasingly apparent. Higher levels of education for women left college-educated women with a significant gap between their abilities and the housewife role assigned to them. Employed women chafed at the unequal pay and working conditions in which they labored and began to think that their interest lay in increasing equal opportunity. Betty Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) captured this dissatisfaction and made it a topic of public discussion. Further, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s provided a model of activism. In a climate in which social change seemed possible, dissatisfaction with traditional roles precipitated a social movement—the Second Wave of the Women’s Movement. This movement challenged heretofore accepted traditional roles and strove to increase gender equality.

In 1961 President Kennedy set up a Presidential Commission on the Status of Women, and some state commissions were established subsequently. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in 1966. Meanwhile, in Congress, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had been amended by opponents (as a political tactic) to include sex—and it passed! Title VII of the Civil Rights Act gradually began to be enforced. Grassroots feminist groups with a variety of agendas and political postures developed across the country.

NOW had multiple goals—opening educational and occupational opportunities to women, along with establishing support services like child care. As well, NOW recognized the commitment of a majority of women to marriage and motherhood and spoke to the possibility of “real choice” (National Organization for Women 1966). Although supporting traditional heterosexual marriage for those who chose it, the organization came to support the more controversial choice (in those times) of a lesbian lifestyle, as well as reproductive choice, including abortion.

Women vary in their attitudes toward the Women’s Movement and in what issues are important to them. Figure 4.4 indicates “top priority” issues that were evident in a survey of women conducted in 2003.

Some women of color and white working-class women may find the Women’s Movement irrelevant to the extent that it focuses on psychological oppression or on professional women’s opportunities rather than on “the daily struggle to make ends meet that is faced by working class women” (Aronson 2003, p. 907). Black women have always labored in the productive economy under duress or out of financial necessity and did not experience the enforced delicacy of women in the Victorian period. Nor were they ever housewives in large numbers, so the feminist critique of that role may seem irrelevant (Hunter and Sellers 1998).

Chicana/Chicana (Mexican American) activism gave *la familia* a central place as a distinctive cultural value. Latinos of both sexes placed a high value on family solidarity, with individual family members’ needs and desires subsumed to the collective good, so that Chicana feminists’ critiques of unequal gender relations in *la familia* often met with hostility (Segura and Escamilla 1995).

African American and Latino women consider racial/ethnic as well as gender discrimination in setting their priorities (Arnott and Matthaei 2007). In fact, it is more precise to say their feminist views are characterized by *intersectionality*—structural connections among race, class, and gender (Baca Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Messner 2007; Roth 2004).

In some ways, such as their experience with racial/ethnic discrimination and their relatively low wages, Chicanas are more like Mexican American men, who are also subordinated, than they are like non-Hispanic white women. Nevertheless, a Chicana feminism emerged during the 1960s and 1970s. Generally, Chicanas support women’s economic issues, such as equal employment and day care, while showing less support for abortion rights than do Anglo women. Latinas formed some grassroots community organizations of their own to offer social services such as job training, community-based alternatives to juvenile incarceration, and bilingual child development centers. The Mexican American Women’s National Association (now MANA) was established in 1974 (Segura and Escamilla 1995).

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**Clicker/Discussion Tip:** Poll students on when the equal rights amendment was passed (I’m always amazed by how many students are not aware that it has yet to be passed). Briefly discuss the history and current status of the equal rights amendment and facilitate discussion around the importance/need (or lack of, depending on students’ opinions) for this constitutional amendment, as well as the current and possible influences on families.
A National Urban League report states that “a feminist perspective has much to offer Black America” (West 2003). African American women and men are more likely than whites to endorse political organizing for women’s issues (Hunter and Sellers 1998). Sixty-eight percent of Latina women (n = 354) and 63 percent of African American women (n = 352) surveyed in 2001 as part of a national sample of 2,329 “strongly agree” that there is a need for a women’s movement today (Center for the Advancement of Women 2003).

There are other variations in attitudes toward the Women’s Movement. Some women deplore the rise of feminism and encourage traditional marriage and motherhood as the best path to women’s self-fulfillment (Enda 1998; Marshall 1995; Passno 2000). Many feminists would define the movement as one that advances the interests and status of women as mothers and caregivers, as well as workers (Coburn 1999). Surveys in the 1980s indicate that large majorities reject the notion that the Women’s Movement is anti-family (Hall and Rodriguez 2003). The media often assert that a younger “post-feminist” generation does not support a women’s movement. The assumption is that they may have a negative image of feminism or be latently feminist, but believe that women’s rights’ goals have already been achieved. Sometimes such articles assert that younger women are simply too busy with work and family to have the time to be active.

Differences of opinion among women on issues related to sexuality and reproduction are undoubtedly divisive. Most recent research finds a complex array of definitions of feminism (Aronson 2003; Center for the Advancement of Women 2003), and cultural meanings of feminism do seem to vary by age cohort (Peltola, Milkie, and Presser 2004).

Nevertheless, research suggests that “post-feminism” is a myth. Hall and Rodriguez, who did an extensive review of survey data, found an increase in support
Native Americans, members of what were once hunting and gathering and horticultural societies, have a complex heritage that varies by tribe but may include a matrilineal tradition in which women owned (and may still own) houses, tools, and land. Native American women's political power declined with the spread of Europeans into their territories and the subsequent reorganization of Indian life by federal legislation in the 1920s. Recently, Native American women have begun to regain their power. Erma J. Vizenor is chairwoman of the White Earth Nation, the largest tribe in Minnesota. Dr. Vizenor, who holds a doctorate from Harvard, is one of 133 women tribal leaders.

for the Women's Movement from the 1970s and 1980s to the middle or late 1990s (see also Bolzendahl and Myers 2004). Young adults age eighteen to twenty-nine reported more favorable attitudes toward older cohorts (Hall and Rodriguez 2003, p. 895; see also Aronson 2003). “One might note that many of the ideologies associated with feminism have become relatively common place and speak to the success of feminism in attaining much broader acceptance of gender equality” (Schmittker, Freese, and Powell 2003, pp. 619–20). Although not all supporters of the Women's Movement self-identify as feminists, a majority (54 percent) “say that being a feminist is an important part of who they are” (Center for the Advancement of Women 2003).

Men’s Movements

As the Women’s Movement encouraged changes in gender expectations and social roles, some men responded by initiating a men’s movement. The first National Conference on Men and Masculinity was held in 1975 and has been held almost annually since. The focus of this men’s movement is on changes that men want in their lives and how best to get them. One goal has been to give men a forum—in consciousness-raising groups, in men's studies college courses, and, increasingly, on the Internet—in which to air their feelings about gender and think about their life goals and their relationships with others.

Kimmel (1995) divides today's men's movement into three fairly distinct camps: antifeminists, pro-Yemists, and masculinists. Antifeminists believe that the Women’s Movement has caused the collapse of the natural order, one that guaranteed male dominance, and they work to reverse this trend. The National Organization for Men (NOM) opposes feminism, which it claims is “designed to denigrate men, exempt women from the draft and to encourage the disintegration of the family” (Sillner 1984, quoted in Kimmel 1995, p. 564).

According to Mark Kann, men’s self-interest may lead to an antifeminist response even among men who wish women well in an abstract sense:

I would suggest that men’s immediate self-interest rarely coincides with feminist opposition to patriarchy. Consider that men need money and leisure to carry out their experiments in self-fulfillment. Is it not their immediate interest to monopolize the few jobs that promise affluence and autonomy by excluding women? . . . Why should they commit themselves to those aspects of feminism that reduce men’s social space? It is one thing to try out the joys of parenting, for example, but quite another to assume sacrificial responsibility for the pains of parenting. (Kann 1986, p. 32)

Pro-Yemists support feminism in their opposition to patriarchy. They analyze men’s problems as stemming from a patriarchal system that privileges heterosexual men while forcing all males into restrictive gender roles. In 1983, pro-Yemist men formed the National Organization for Changing Men (changed in 1990 to the National Organization for Men Against Sexism, or NOMAS), whose purposes are to transcend gender stereotypes while supporting women’s and gays’ struggles for respect and equality (Doyle 1989).

The newer masculinists, who emerged in the early 1990s, tend not to focus on patriarchy as problematic (although they might agree that it is). Instead, masculinists work to develop a positive image of masculinity, one combining strength with tenderness. Their path to this is through therapy, consciousness-raising groups, and rituals. Through rituals, men are to get in touch with their feelings and heal the buried rage and grief caused by the oppressive nature of corporate culture, the psychological and/or physical absence of their fathers, and
men’s general isolation due to a learned reluctance to share their feelings (Kimmel 1995). Robert Bly’s *Iron John* (1990) is a prominent example of these ideas.

In examining men’s movements and their goals, it is important to appreciate that men’s social situations vis-à-vis traditional roles are as diverse as women’s. The idea of a universal patriarchy and male dominance is challenged by the obvious point that all men are not privileged in the larger society (Connell 2005), whether or not they are so in gender relations. “When race, social class, sexual orientation, physical abilities, and immigrant or national status are taken into account, we can see that in some circumstances ‘male privilege’ is partly—sometimes substantially—muted” (Baca Zinn, Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Messner 2004, p. 170, citing Kimmel and Messner 1998).

### Personal and Family Change

Sometimes, in response to available options, adults reconsider earlier choices regarding gender roles. For example, a small proportion of men choose to be full-time fathers and/or househusbands. Others may effect more subtle changes, such as breaking through previously learned isolating habits to form more intimate friendships and deeper family relationships.

Ironically, that very expansion in the range of people’s opportunities may lead to mixed feelings and conflicts, both within oneself and between men and women as we confront the “lived messiness” of gender in contemporary life (Heywood and Drake 1997, p. 8). Stay-at-home moms may worry about the family budget and about their options if their marriages fail or if they desire to work when children are older. They may feel others consider them uninteresting or incompetent. Women who are employed may wish they could stay home full-time with their families or at least have less- hectic days and more family time. Moreover, a wife’s career success and work demands may lead her into renegotiating gender boundaries at home, and that may produce domestic tension.

Modern men may be torn between egalitarian principles and the advantages of male privilege. For one thing, husbands are still expected to succeed as principal family breadwinners. The “new man” is expected to succeed economically and to value relationships and emotional openness. Although women want men to be sensitive and emotionally expressive, they also want them to be self-assured and confident. Men often face prejudice when they take jobs traditionally considered women’s (Campbell 1991). They may encounter more resistance than women when they try to exercise “family friendly” options in the workplace (Hochschild 1997).

These conflicts are more than psychological. They are in part a consequence of our society’s failure to provide support for employed parents in the form of adequate maternity and paternal leave or day care, for example. American families continue to deal individually with problems of pregnancy, recovery from childbirth, and early child care as best they can. Adequate job performance, let alone career achievement, is difficult for women under such conditions regardless of ability. Declining economic opportunities for non-college men, coupled with criticisms of male privilege sparked by the Women’s Movement, lead some men to feel unfairly picked on (N. Scott 1992). Perhaps more common is the ambivalence of a man who wants his wife and daughters to have the same opportunities he does and who is willing to pitch in at home—but who envies the freedom from domestic cares and ability to concentrate on work of a man in a more traditional household.

Today’s men, like today’s women, find it difficult to have it all. If women find it difficult to combine a sustained work career with motherhood, men face a conflict between maintaining their privileges and enjoying supportive relationships. But many “will find that equality and sharing offer compensations to offset their attendant loss of power and privilege” (Gerson 1993, p. 274).

Chapter 12 discusses work and family in more detail, while Chapter 14 addresses family power.

### The Future of Gender

“Gender is a ruling idea in people’s lives—even where egalitarian ideology is common, as among young, affluent, educated Americans. . . .” Despite the extraordinary improvements in women’s status over the past two centuries, some aspects of gender have seemed exceptionally resistant to erosion in recent decades,” notably child raising and occupational achievement and pay. “[P]eople still think about women and men differently and . . . men still occupy most of the highest positions of political and economic power” (Jackson 2006, pp. 215, 229).

If men and women are seen through a lens of differential competence, if men and women continue to interact with men in situations in which they (men) have greater power and status, assumptions about inherent status differences are supported. Moreover, gender differences may be maintained because of the power of gendered self-concepts. Men and women may have a psychological stake in the maintenance of these differences as important aspects of personal identity (Ridgeway 2006).

Yet sociologist Robert Max Jackson is convinced that the forces of history will sweep gender inequality aside. Two hundred years of change suggest that indeed gen-
Gendered expectations and behaviors—both as they have and have not changed—underpin many of the topics explored throughout this text. For example, gender is important to discussions of family power, communication, and parental roles, as well as to work and family roles. In future chapters we will explore these topics, keeping in mind gendered expectations and social change.

Summary

- Roles of men and women have changed over time, but living in our society remains a somewhat different experience for women and for men. Gendered cultural messages and social structure influence people’s behavior, attitudes, and options. But in many respects, men and women are more alike than different.

- Generally, traditional masculine expectations require that men be confident, self-reliant, and occupationally successful—and engage in “no sissy stuff.” During the 1980s, the “liberated male” cultural message emerged, according to which men are expected to value tenderness and equal relationships with women. We have seen the return of respect to the physically tough and protective “manly man.”

- Traditional feminine expectations involve a woman’s being a man’s helpmate and a “good mother.” An emergent feminine role is the successful “professional woman.” When coupled with the more traditional roles, this results in the “superwoman.”

- Individuals vary in the degree to which they follow cultural models for gendered behavior. The extent to which men and women differ from each other and follow these cultural messages can be visualized as two overlapping normal distribution curves.

- Although there are significant changes, male dominance remains evident in politics, in religion, and in the economy.

- There are racial/ethnic and class differences in stereotypes, as well as some differences in actual gender and family patterns. This, and other diversity, has come to be expressed in responses to the women’s and men’s movements.

- Biology interacts with culture to produce human behavior, and the two influences are not really separable. Sociologists give considerable attention to the socialization process, for which there are several theoretical explanations. Advocates have expressed concern about barriers to the opportunities and achievements of both boys and girls.
- Underlying both socialization and adult behavior are the social structural pressures and constraints that shape men’s and women’s choices and behaviors. These have changed in recent decades, in part as a consequence of the Women’s Movement and subsequent men’s movements.
- Turning our attention to the actual lives of adults in contemporary society, we find women and men negotiating gendered expectations and making choices in a context of change at work and in the family. New cultural ideals are far from realization, and efforts to create lives balancing love and work involve conflict and struggle, but promise fulfillment as well.

- Whether gender will continue to be a moderator of economic opportunities and life choices in the future is uncertain, as men’s and women’s roles and activities converge, but men remain more advantaged. It is likely that gender identity will continue to be important to both men and women.
- Some social scientists predict that the shared economic and family roles emerging in younger marriages will produce more stable marriages.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What are some characteristics generally associated with males in our society? What traits are associated with females? How might these affect our expectations about the ways that men and women should behave? Are these images still influential?
2. Do you think men are dominant in major social institutions such as politics, religion, education, and the economy? Or are they no longer dominant? Give evidence to support your opinion.
3. Which theory of gender socialization presented in this chapter seems most applicable to what you see in the real world? Can you give some examples from your own experience of gender socialization?
4. Women and men may renegotiate and change their gendered attitudes and behaviors as they progress through life. What evidence do you see of this in your own life or in others’ lives?
5. **Policy Question.** What family law and policy changes of recent years do you think are related to the women’s and men’s movements? What policies do you think would be needed to promote greater gender equality and/or more satisfying lives for men and women?

Key Terms

agentic (instrumental) character traits 78
borderwork 89
Chodorow’s theory of gender socialization 88
communal (expressive) character traits 78
femininities 79
gender 76
gender identity 76
gender role 76
gender schema theory of gender socialization 87
gender similarities hypothesis 81
hormonal processes 86
hormones 86
intersexual 78
male dominance 81
masculinities 78
modern sexism 77
play 89
self-identification theory of gender socialization 87
sex 76
social learning theory of gender socialization 87
socialization 87
symbolic interaction theory of gender socialization 88
traditional sexism 77
transgendered 78
transsexual 78
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