

Women in American Society
Work, Sexual Harassment, and the Quest for Equality
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Women, in general

- **Women outnumber men; in March 2000, the civilian population of the United States totaled 272 million:**
 - 139 million were female, 133 mil. were male
 - Women had a higher median age than men, 35.8 years to 33.8 years
 - Under 20 years of age, the male-female ratio was 105 to 100; 20-44 years of age, the ratio is 98 to 100
- **Women are racially and ethnically diverse. Of the 139 million females:**
 - 71 percent are white
 - 13 percent are black
 - 11 percent are Hispanic
 - 4 percent were Asian and Pacific islander
 - 1 percent are American Indian and Alaska native

Women & Education

- **Women have almost achieved parity in educational attainment**
- **83.4% of women and men completed high school, in 1999**
- **27.5% of men completed a bachelor's degree**
- **23.1% of women completed a bachelor's degree**

Women & Work

- **Women are unequal in earnings**
- **The median earnings of women 25 years and over who worked fulltime, year round in 1998 was \$26,711**
- **Males earned \$36,679**
- **Women earn 73% of their male counterparts median earnings**
- **High school diploma**
 - **Women earn \$21,963**
 - **Men earn \$30, 868**
- **Bachelor's degree**
 - **Women earn \$35,408**
 - **Men earn \$49,982**
- **Professional degree**
 - **Women earn \$55,460**
 - **Men earn \$90,653**
- **Families maintained by a woman with no husband present have a lower median income:**
 - **No husband, single parent = \$22,163**
 - **No wife, single parent = \$35,681**
 - **Married couple = \$54, 180**
 - **Families maintained by a woman are more likely to be below the poverty level (29.9%)**
- ***Economy* = a society's system of managing and developing its resources, both human and material**

- The *human resources* of the economy constitute the *labor force*
- *Work* is *social* as well as *economic*
- The *social organization* of work is hierarchical in *free market societies*
- People do different jobs that are differentially valued and rewarded
- Ideally, the value and rewards attached to a particular job should reflect its intrinsic characteristics:
 - Degree of skill or amount of effort required;
 - The level of responsibility involved
 - The condition under which it is performed
- In the *real world*, the value and rewards of a job often have more to do with gender or ethnicity than the characteristics of the work
- *Social constructions* prescribe and enforce notions of “women’s work” and “men’s work”
- “Women’s work” is under-valued!
- *Occupational sex segregation* = the degree to which men and women are concentrated in occupations in which workers of one sex predominate
- Examples (2001 Top 10 jobs)
 - Construction worker = 97.6% male
 - Secretary = 98.4% female
 - Nurse = 93.1% female
 - Engineer= 89.6% male
- *Dual labor market* = one set of jobs employing almost exclusively men and another set of jobs, typically lower paying and with lower-prestige, employing almost exclusively women
- *Tokenism* = the *marginal status* of workers hired to meet a legally enforced *quota* of workers
- *Industry sex segregation* = a form of occupational sex segregation in which women and men hold the same job title in a particular field or industry, but actually perform different jobs
 - *Real-estate agents* = women sell residential property; men sell commercial property
 - *Mining* = men mine; women do maintenance
- *Occupation resegregation* = sex-integrated occupations become *resegregated* with members of one sex replaced by members of the opposite sex as the predominant workers
 - Does it lead to a decline in skill, prestige, or salary?
 - Examples = mining, bartending, psychologists
- Gender stereotypes at work:
 - A “proper lady” does not work unless unmarried or without children
 - Women’s “natural talents” best serve the “helping profession” – clerical, sewing, assembling, canning, etc.
 - Women don’t need to work after marriage
 - If they do, it is just to “help out” financially
- A *key interrelationship* exists between family life & the work world
- Because women are not paid for “house work,” the work is devalued
- Women, then, have less power in the home even though they do more work
- Women’s jobs in the work force are seen as an *extension* of their work at home

- Gender stereotypes about “appropriate” work roles for women & men perpetuate and reinforce:
 - Workplace sex segregation
 - Female/male earnings gap
 - Employed women bearing primary responsibility for household and childcare
 - Women carry a “double work load”

Sexual Harassment

- Sexual Harassment = unwanted leers, comments, suggestions, or physical contact of a sexual nature, as well as unwelcome requests for sexual favors.
- Women who work in *male-dominated, non-traditional jobs* experience more sexual harassment than women who work in traditional female jobs.

Two types of *sexual harassment*:

- *quid pro quo* harassment
 - Granting or denying a benefit or privilege
 - Could be a grade, a promotion, a raise, or the chance to work on a major research project
- *Hostile environment* harassment
 - Telling sexual jokes/spreading sexual rumors
 - Using sexual innuendo
 - Publicly displaying pornographic materials
- Peer harassment = another worker (or student) at the same power-level
- Subordinate target/superior perpetrator harassment = a person with more power uses it for sexual favors
- *Contrapower sexual harassment* = the target possesses greater organizational power than the perpetrator

Impact of Sexual Harassment

- Most incidences still go unreported
 - Victims report lowered self-esteem, emotional disturbance, physical illness
 - Students, particularly women, will drop out of school or take a lower grade
 - Workers will quit the job, usually taking a lower-paying, less demanding job
- Sex and Power**
- Human sexuality, like the need for food and shelter, is a *natural human drive*, therefore it has enormous *power*.
 - Humans create *social institutions* with *power-based hierarchies*
 - Patriarchal *social constructions* place women in positions of *less-power*
 - Result = sexual harassment

Sex and Power

- Patriarchy infects and distorts all natural human differences (sex, ethnicity, age, etc.) because patriarchy embraces the *dominator model* of social interaction
- “I can only win in the game of life if I have more power than you, and I can control you.”
- In this situation, women lose!

Legislation for Equality in the Workplace

- Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act:

forbids discrimination in hiring, benefits, and other personnel decisions (such as promotions or layoffs) on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, or religion by employers of 15 or more employees

Equality Legislation

- **Executive Order 11246 = Affirmative Action:**
 - Prohibits sex discrimination in addition to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, and religion
 - Requires employers to take *affirmative actions* to recruit, train, and promote women and minorities

Equality Legislation

- **Equal Pay Act of 1963:**
 - Prohibits employers from paying employees of one sex more than employees of the opposite sex when these employees are engaged in work that requires equal skill, effort, and responsibility and that is performed under similar working conditions
 - Means “equal pay for equal work”
- **Topics:**
 - **Masculine heroes**
 - **Machismo**
 - **Need to balance “male & female” qualities and characteristics**

Masculine Heroes

- Michael Jordan
- Tarzan
- Indiana Jones
- Lone Ranger
- Hulk Hogan
- Mel Gibson

Responsible and persevering, he pursues right as he sees it and lets no one deter him from his course.

	Patriarchal Ideal of Masculinity
Warrior Virtues	<u>Not-Male</u>
Aggressiveness	Passivity
Courage	Timidity
Physical strength and health	Fragility and delicacy
Self-control and emotional reserve	Expressiveness
Perseverance and endurance	Frailty
Competence and rationality	Emotionality
Independence	Needfulness
Self-reliance and autonomy	Dependence
Individuality	Humility
Sexual potency	Chastity, innocence, or receptivity

Machismo

- This is a form of masculine behavior, which comprises
 - a man’s desire to take sexual advantage of women
 - the failure to assume responsibility for the consequences of such actions
 - the self-praise for sexual exploits within the subculture of the peer group...
- No responsibility towards children.

- Men are encouraged to engage in warrior behavior, to take as his directive the path of action.
- He is also to deny emotional feelings, and certainly not to let his emotions control his behavior.
 - “Take it like a man”
 - “Keep a stiff upper lip”
- Men who pursue the macho ideal indeed lose a good deal in life, yet we must not be blind to a harsh reality: They hold a tremendous advantage in power, privilege, and position.

- Under patriarchy, control shapes not only the broad outlines of social life but also men’s inner lives. It does this through its central place in the definition of masculinity: a real man is in control or at least gives the impression of being in control.
- This takes men away from connection to others and themselves and toward disconnection.