

# GENDERED LIVES

COMMUNICATION, GENDER, & CULTURE

ELEVENTH EDITION

An abstract painting featuring a complex network of dark, intersecting lines and strokes. The color palette is dominated by earthy tones like olive green, ochre, and brown, with vibrant accents of teal and blue. The overall effect is one of dynamic energy and intricate detail.

*Julia T Wood*

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# Gendered Lives

## Communication, Gender, & Culture



**ELEVENTH EDITION**

# **Gendered Lives**

## **Communication, Gender, & Culture**

**Julia T. Wood**

*Lineberger Distinguished Professor of Humanities Emerita  
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*This book is dedicated to Susan B. Anthony, Frederick Douglass, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emma Goldman, Alice Paul, Margaret Sanger, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Mary Wollstonecraft, and other women and men who began the conversation about gender in this country;*

and to

*Gloria Anzaldúa, Ella Baker, Robert Bly, Judith Butler, Karlyn Campbell, Mary Daly, Simone de Beauvoir, Marilyn French, Michael Kimmel, Betty Friedan, Ellen Goodman, bell hooks, Jackson Katz, Evelyn Fox Keller, Lady Gaga, Madonna, Bill McCartney, Gloria Steinem, and other women and men who have added to the cultural dialogue about gender;*

and to

*Malia Obama, Sasha Obama, Jason Muehlhoff, Niko Pezzullo Striphas, Michelle Wood Wilco, Daniel Wood Wilco, Harrison 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

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

Since writing the first edition of this book in the early 1990s, our understandings of gender have changed and issues related to gender have mushroomed. Society has acknowledged a greater range of options for individual women and men—in the military, in the home, in professional life, and in politics. During the past 20 years, transgender awareness has grown, 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 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.

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

## *Features of Gendered Lives,* Eleventh Edition

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This edition of *Gendered Lives* is the most substantive revision in the book’s history. Five specific changes set this edition of *Gendered Lives* apart from its predecessors.

### Enhanced Coverage of Social Media

One of the most significant changes in this edition is greater attention to social media. Although they pervade our everyday lives, that alone is not a reason to focus on them in a book about gender and communication. What does compel attention to social media in this book are the connections between social media and gender. Not only are social media—like mass media and society, in general—sources of gender socialization, but also they are powerful platforms for rethinking gender and for gender activism. Accordingly, Chapter 11 includes a major new

section that details the use of social media and online communities to learn about gender issues; hold corporate interests accountable for actions that promote unhealthy and unrealistic views of gender; and engage in activism related to inequity and injustice. In addition to Chapter 11's concentrated attention to social media, I've incorporated discussion of social media into other chapters.

## Revised Coverage of Women's and Men's Movements

A second significant change in this edition is more concise coverage of women's and men's movements. A number of faculty who use *Gendered Lives* have asked me to reduce the coverage given to these movements, particularly ones that are no longer active. Accordingly, Chapter 3 (Women's Movements) is 25% shorter than in the prior edition, and more of the chapter focuses on current activism among women.

I have also revised Chapter 4 (Men's Movements). New to this edition is the very current Good Man Project, which aims to facilitate a national conversation about what it means to be a (good) man today.

## Attention to Emerging Issues

As I develop each new edition of *Gendered Lives*, I give particular attention to one or two issues that have emerged since the prior edition. For this edition, I give special emphasis to three. First, I've chosen to spotlight bullying, including cyberbullying. Bullying is gendered when it occurs because of a target's sex, gender, sexual orientation, or sexual or gender identity and/or when it reflects gender or sexuality discrimination by the perpetrator(s). The tragic suicide of Tyler Clementi and other suicides by young girls and boys who were targeted for online bullying make this issue one that calls for greater awareness. I've included discussion of it in Chapters 7 (Growing Up Gendered), 8 (Gendered Education), and 12 (Gendered Media). In addition, Chapter 10 (Gendered Organizational Communication) includes discussion of workplace bullying, including women's bullying of other women.

Second, this edition of *Gendered Lives* gives greater emphasis to work–life balance, which continues to be a major challenge and tension in many people's lives. Chapters 7 (Growing Up Gendered), 9 (Gendered Close Relationships), and 10 (Gendered Organizational Communication) call attention to multiple factors that contribute to tension over meeting responsibilities to paid labor and to other facets of life.

Third, this edition inaugurates coverage of reproductive violence, which is interference with an individual's free choice of whether, when, and with whom to reproduce, to become a parent and to parent existing children. Research by Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz (2013), among others, alerts us to the ways that new reproductive technologies can be used both to help and harm women. Accordingly, Chapter 12

features a new section that describes forms of reproductive violence ranging from forced abortion and eugenics to offering monetary incentives to low-income individuals in exchange for their consent to reproductive regulation.

## Ongoing Attention to Cultural and Social Diversity

Beginning with the first edition of this book, I've aimed for content and a writing style that are inclusive. For example, I discuss diverse classes, ethnicities, races, ages, sexual orientations, and gender identities whenever research is available; I try to use language that includes all readers; and I punctuate my discussions throughout the book with comments from a wide range of students.

This edition extends my commitment to representing diversity by enlarging coverage of gender issues beyond the United States and beyond mainstream groups. I chose not to write a separate chapter on cultural gender beliefs and practices because I didn't want to separate cultural influences from the discussions about families, education, relationships, and so forth that are covered in this book. Instead, I've woven information about gender in a range of cultures and social groups into each chapter so that students can appreciate how profoundly culture shapes gender in multiple contexts. For instance, the introduction highlights different cultures' commitment to gender justice as measured by health, education, economics, and politics, and Chapter 9 highlights men's increasing participation in child care and home life. To Chapter 12, I've added new accounts of gendered violence around the globe and an entirely new section on reproductive violence.

In addition to covering differences across cultures, I also attend to differences within U.S. culture. It's no longer plausible to think of two sexes that equate to two genders; it's no longer reasonable to assume there are just two sexual orientations and two gender identities. Those binaries are collapsing under the weight of mounting evidence that human gender and sexuality are far more varied than we once realized or accepted. This edition of *Gendered Lives*, gives attention to the wide range of gender and sexual identities. There is more research relevant to people who do not fit neatly into conventional and approved categories for sex, gender, and sexual orientation, and there are more student voices from people who identify as transsexual, intersexed, gay, lesbian, bisexual, gender queer, or gender nonconforming.

## 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 this edition of *Gendered Lives*, I've incorporated more than 180 new references to publications that have appeared since the tenth edition went to press or that I had not read at that time.



## Pedagogical Features to Engage Students

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, selected Exploring Gendered Lives boxes conclude by asking students' opinion about issues raised in the feature. Third, each chapter concludes with questions for thought and discussion. 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. Finally, at the end of each chapter, I suggest two to four sources—films, articles, books. My criteria for selecting these are that (1) I consider them either classic or especially insightful and (2) they are accessible to undergraduate students.

In making these five changes, I've avoided "page creep"—the tendency of a book to grow longer with each new edition because old material is not deleted to make room for new material. I've eliminated dated coverage and references to make room for more current research and coverage of timely topics. I hope the changes I've described 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.

## Supplementary Resources for Students and Instructors

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*Gendered Lives*, Eleventh Edition, offers print and 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.

**Student Companion Website.** This website provides chapter-by-chapter resources to help students understand and apply the text's instruction. The resources include live and updated web links for every URL mentioned in the book; self-quizzes written by Charles Goehring from San Diego State University; key term crossword puzzles and flashcards; and an online glossary.

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

Written by Emily Anzicsek at Bowling Green State University, 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, activities and test questions.

PowerPoint® presentations prepared by Larry Edmonds at Arizona State University contain text and images, and can be used as is or customized to suit your course needs.

Communication Scenarios for Critique and Analysis videos includes communication scenarios covering interpersonal communication, group communication, gender, and culture. The BBC News and CBS News videos: Human Communication, Interpersonal Communication, and Public Speaking provide footage of news stories that relate to current topics in human and interpersonal communication, and footage of famous historical and contemporary public speeches, as well as clips that relate to current topics in speech communication.

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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One of the most gratifying aspects of writing a book is the opportunity to thank those who have offered support, insight, and advice. First and foremost, I thank my students. The women and men in my classes and whom I meet when I visit other campuses are unfailing sources of education for me. Their questions and ideas, their willingness to challenge some of my notions, and their generosity in sharing their perceptions and experiences have shaped the pages that follow in both obvious and subtle ways.

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My thinking and writing also reflect conversations with colleagues. I am particularly grateful to Professors Bonnie Dow, Vanderbilt University, and Steve W. Duck, the University of Iowa, for their unstinting interest in wrestling with questions about gender, communication, and culture. And I am especially indebted to two long-term colleagues on whom I rely for information, perspective, and critique. One is Lynn O'Brien Hallstein, Boston University, with whom I co-taught my first gender and communication class in 1989 and who remains an intellectual well-spring for me. The other is Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz, University of Iowa, with whom I team-taught gender and communication and who now teaches at the University of Iowa. Over our many years of talking and writing together, Natalie has deepened my understanding of the profound ways in which gender and power are imbricated.

I have benefitted from the professional and personal support of the invincible Monica Eckman, executive editor for Communication Studies, and Julie Martinez, development editor, who made my job as an author far easier and far more satisfying than I had a right to expect. Along with Monica and Julie, others at

Cengage Learning have contributed in important ways to this edition of *Gendered Lives*. They are Colin Solan, production assistant; Alicia Landsberg, content coordinator; Jessica Badiner, media developer; Kara Kindstrom, senior marketing manager; Daniel Saabye, content product manager; and Ann Hoffman, permissions manager. As well I thank Samantha Ross-Miller, who managed the production of this book.

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And, always, I thank Robbie—the love of my life—for his support, criticism, and, most of all, his steadfast presence in my life.

*Julia T. Wood*  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina  
June 2013

# About the Author

Julia T. Wood is Lineberger Distinguished Professor of Humanities Emerita at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She joined the faculty at that 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.

Professor Wood 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 their dog, Cassidy, and two cats, Rigby and Rowdy.

When not teaching or writing, Professor Wood travels, works with victims of abuse, serves as a literacy tutor, and consults with attorneys on cases involving sex and gender issues.



*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 the 1960s?
- As a group, are heterosexual men happier in relationships with feminist or nonfeminist women?

Most textbooks open with a preview of chapters and features, but I'd like to launch our conversation a bit differently. I think you're entitled to know something about the person behind the words you'll be reading, so let me introduce myself and explain why I wrote this book.

We tend to think of 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 to include certain topics and omit others, to rely on particular theories, and to include some issues and exclude others. Authors' choices of topics, writing style, and theoretical stance shape the content and overall meaning of a book. 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 I am and why I wrote this book, I am inviting you to think about how my background, experiences, beliefs, and values have shaped the book you're reading.

Let's start with some simple demographic information. I am a European-American, middle-aged, heterosexual, spiritually engaged, middle-class woman who has been in a committed relationship with Robbie (Robert) Cox for 41 years. Yet, if you think about it, this information isn't simple at all. It implies a great deal about my identity and my experiences. For instance, I became an adult when the second wave of the U.S. Women's Movement was ascending, and it influenced my personal life and my perspective on gender and culture. The "simple" demographic information about me also

shows that I am privileged in many ways—my race, economic class, and sexual identity are approved by mainstream Western culture. Yet I am disadvantaged by my sex, because women continue to be valued less than men in Western culture. I did not earn the privileges conferred by my skin color, sexual orientation, and economic class, nor did I earn the inequities that come with being female. 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

To speak of being privileged in some ways and disadvantaged in others does not mean that I assume these aspects of my life are fixed in stone. The fact that my sex makes me vulnerable to job discrimination, violence, and other injustices is not something I accept as unchangeable. Nor do I accept as unchangeable the fact that some people's sexual orientation or race or economic class or gender identity makes them vulnerable to inequity. In fact, one reason I wrote this book is because I believe we can bring about changes in our society. I also do not accept the privileges culture confers on me without reflection.

If we don't want to be limited by the horizon of our social positions, we can learn about the experiences, perspectives, and circumstances of people in other social positions: the anger and hurt experienced by transgendered people in a



Holo Images/Getty Images

**Interacting with people who differ from us enhances our perspectives.**

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 minorities; 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.

Although we cannot fully understand the lives of people who differ from us, 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, 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.

Realizing that inequality is socially constructed empowers us to be agents of change. We don't have to treat light skin, heterosexuality, maleness, and middle-class economic status as superior or normal. Instead, if we choose to, we can challenge social views that accord arbitrary and unequal value to people and that limit humans' opportunities and lives.

## Feminism—Feminisms

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Finally, in introducing myself to you, I should tell you that I am a feminist. Many people do not identify themselves as feminists. In some cases, people reject the label *feminist* because their understanding of the term has been shaped by media misrepresentations. The word *feminism* 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” (McCann & Kim, 2003). Ironically, although many people in their 20s do not call themselves feminists, they do think that the Women's Movement has improved the conditions and opportunities available to women. Also, many people—both male and female—believe women and men are equal and should have the same rights. 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 I 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 in the 1960s that feminists burned bras as a protest (which they



did not do then), media have consistently misrepresented feminists as man-hating, tough, shrill extremists. Many people, like my student Andrea (see her commentary), say they aren't feminists because they associate feminism with media caricatures that emphasize male bashing, being unfeminine, and engaging in radical protests.

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**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.*

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Media stereotypes of feminists don't fit many women and men who define themselves as feminists. Like me, many feminists have good relationships with both women and men. In fact, research shows that heterosexual men in relationships with feminist women are happier and consider their relationships healthier than heterosexual men in heterosexual 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 & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman & Phelan, 2007). Also like me, many women who label themselves feminists are feminine in many ways: They enjoy wearing feminine clothes, experimenting with hairstyles and makeup, and engaging in traditionally feminine activities such as baking, watching chick flicks, and caring for children. 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 men to make conscious choices about how they define and express their masculinity.

Because feminism means different things to different people, I want to tell you how I define feminism. I see it as an active commitment to equality and respect for all forms of life. For me, this includes respecting all people, as well as nonhuman forms of life and the Earth itself. Simply put, my feminism means I am against 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. I don't think oppression and domination foster healthy lives for individuals or societies as a whole. I believe there are better, more humane, and enriching ways for us to live, and I am convinced we can be part of bringing these alternatives into existence. That is the core of feminism as I define it for myself. 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 an achievement and a process. I was not raised to be a feminist. In fact, quite the contrary. I was raised to be a traditional

Southern woman who deferred to men and devoted herself to home and family. In the 1970s when a friend first introduced me to some readings about discrimination against women, my initial response was denial. I tried to rationalize inequities or repress my knowledge of discrimination, perhaps because recognizing it was painful. When denial failed to work, I entered an angry phase. I was bitter about the ways in which women, including myself, were devalued and denied opportunities. I was also angry at myself for having been unaware of society's devaluation of women and for conforming to the roles assigned to women. This angry and embittered phase is natural in the process of becoming a feminist, but it doesn't lead us forward.

Finally, I was able to transform the anger into an abiding commitment to being part of change, not so much for myself as for future generations. I want our society to become fairer, to respect differences among human beings, and to affirm the entire range of identities that people have. When I began to study gender issues, I learned the path I traveled to achieve my feminist identity is not uncommon. Ignorance, denial, anger, internalization of new values and identities, and transformation to constructive commitment are stages that many individuals go through as they dislodge one identity and perspective on social life and embrace alternate ones.

## Features of *Gendered Lives*

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Three features distinguish this book and support the views I've just discussed. First, I include **discussion of diverse classes, ethnicities, races, gender identities, and sexual orientations** whenever research is available. For instance, the Exploring Gendered Lives box on page 8 identifies a range of ways in which cultures define gender and sexual identities. Although research on many races, sexual identities, and socioeconomic classes is still limited, I include the research that exists on the range of people who make up our world.

A second feature of this book is **language that aims to include all readers**. I use terms such as *he* and *she* and *women* and *men* in preference to *he*, *mankind*, and *men*. But inclusive language means more than including women; it also means using language that refuses to go along with cultural marginalization of any group. For instance, I refer to individuals in intimate relationships as *partners* rather than *spouses*, and I generally refer to *committed relationships* rather than *marriages*. I'm not entirely comfortable describing my sweetheart, Robbie, as my *partner*, because that sounds so businesslike. But I'm even less comfortable calling him my *spouse* or *husband*, because not everyone who is in a committed relationship can use those words. The terms *spouse*, *wife*, *husband*, and *marriage* exclude many lesbians, gay men, and transsexed, transgendered, and intersexed people because currently there are few places that allow same-sex couples the legal, material, and social legitimacy of marriage. The terms *spouse* and *marriage* also exclude cohabiting heterosexuals who choose not to marry.

A third feature of *Gendered Lives* is inclusion of different perspectives. I present not only research that reflects different views, but also **student voices**. In the pages that follow, you'll meet a lot of students—some like you, some quite different. In many

courses on gender and communication, students keep journals or write reflection papers in which they discuss connections between ideas brought forth in their gender and communication classes and in their personal lives. Many of my own students gave me permission to include their reflections in this book. In addition, students at other campuses around the country have written to me in response to previous editions of *Gendered Lives*, and some of their comments appear in this edition. I've tried to return their generosity by including an array of individuals and viewpoints, including ones with which I personally disagree. In fact, including ideas with which I disagree, from both students and scholars, is necessary if this book is to reflect the variety of ideas about gender and communication that circulate in our culture. Hannah, a student from a northeastern college, makes a point in her commentary on this page.

Hannah's comment reflects open-mindedness, which fosters learning. As you read this book, I hope you will think about research findings and students' voices and reflect on how they are similar to or different from your own beliefs and values. I have refrained from evaluating or interpreting the reflections that appear in this book. The students write clearly and eloquently, and I don't want to muffle their voices with my analysis. The student commentaries, my ideas, and your responses to what you read create a tapestry of learning in which we collaboratively explore gender, communication, and culture.

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#### HANNAH

*When I was reading *Gendered Lives*, I had to keep reminding myself that you were presenting information and that not all points were your personal values and beliefs. I didn't agree with all of your statements or the ideas of others, like the students in their commentaries, but I learned a lot about the ways others see gender. I also learned a lot about how I think about gender by seeing what ideas I agreed with and disagreed with.*

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The **Exploring Gendered Lives** boxes in all chapters highlight important information about gender. These are meant to stimulate thought and go beyond the basic material in the chapter. Some of the Exploring Gendered Lives features include websites you can visit to learn more about particular topics.

## Becoming Aware

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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 are a woman, you may find it disturbing to learn the extent to which Western culture (and others) discounts women's experiences and limits their opportunities. I also realize that a number of people reading this book—both women and men—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 males or females. 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 political. Such issues reflect widespread cultural biases and perspectives that limit us all.

If you are 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 maleness benefits you in ways that you may not have noticed, particularly if you are white.

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 current social attitudes and practices. 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.

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**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.*

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In his commentary, Patrick makes an important point when he says he personally doesn't discriminate against women. We need to distinguish between the actions and attitudes of individuals and the social practices and values of our culture. I do not believe that most individual men are bad, oppressive, or sexist. The point is that Western culture as a whole has constructed inequalities between women and men, and these inequalities continue in our era.

The problem, then, is not individual men or women. Rather, it is a social system that accords unequal value and opportunity on the basis of sex, skin color, sexual identity, and other factors. This kind of prejudice diminishes us all. It limits our appreciation of human diversity by falsely 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 I Wrote This Book

I wrote *Gendered Lives* because I believe that change is needed in how we view and enact gender. I also believe that knowledge can empower you to make more informed choices about your personal identity and our shared world. Since the first edition appeared, I've received many positive responses from students in my classes as well as from students around the nation. I've also received feedback that has helped me rethink and improve the book.

### EXPLORING GENDERED LIVES

### Multicultural Perspectives on Sex and Sexual Orientation

What's feminine? What's masculine? What's gay? 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 Sambia 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).
- The Society Islands of French Polynesia have three sex-based classifications: males, females, and *māhū*. A *māhū* is understood to be half woman, half man. Female-bodied *māhū* behave in masculine ways and have sexual relations with *non-māhū* females; male-bodied *māhū* behave in feminine ways and have sex with *non-māhū* males.
- 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 birth sex, within their societies they are recognized as distinct third and fourth genders (Roscoe, 1993).
- In parts of South America, male homosexuality is defined not by male-to-male sex but by whether a man penetrates (not homosexual) or is penetrated by (homosexual) another man (Almaguer, 1993).
- In addition to male and female, India recognizes a *hijra*, who are female men. *Hijras* sometimes remove their external genitalia to appear more womanlike (Herdt, 1997; Nanda, 2004).
- 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. Muxes are accepted, and many residents of Juchitán believe they have special abilities (Lacey, 2008).
- In Samoa, there is a third gender called the Fa'afafine. It is believed that the first Fa'afafines were in families with only boys, so one of the boys was raised as a girl. Today, Samoans consider Fa'afafine a third gender. Fa'afafines engage in sexual relations almost exclusively with heterosexual males, who are not perceived as homosexual for having sex with Fa'afafines (Bartlett & Vasey, 2006).

I wrote this book because I believe we need to challenge and change persisting inequities in our society. 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:

- 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 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 right that most of the advances won by women's movements have benefited white, middle-class women more than minority and poor women?
- Is there any reason why women still earn less than men, even when they do the same jobs?
- Is it fair that mothers have an advantage over fathers in gaining custody of children?

If you don't want inequities such as these to continue, read on. Becoming aware of how our culture establishes and communicates 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 sex inequities 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. Women can now vote, attend universities, own property, and pursue professional careers. Our culture once defined women as too frail and delicate for hard manual or intellectual work. Today, women pursue careers in business, construction, science, education, politics, and the military.

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. In recent decades, sexual harassment, acquaintance rape, and marital rape have been named and recognized as illegal.

Changes such as the ones we've discussed lead many people to think that gender equality has been achieved. Some commentators call our time a "post-feminist era" in which all the issues that feminism focused on have been resolved. Many of my students tell me that gender discrimination is history and that sexism has been overcome.

- They tell me that women now have freedom of choice, but they don't seem to recognize that some health insurance companies will not pay for contraceptives