Sociology 125
Lectures 17 & 18
Gender
November 6 & 8
I. GENDER & NATURE
1. Definition of Sex & Gender

Sex = a **biological** distinction based on roles in the process of biological reproduction.

Gender = a **social** distinction between roles and expectations linked to sex.

Gender is the social transformation of a biological difference, sex, into a social difference.

Gender norms are the rules of appropriate behavior and roles for men and women.
I. Gender & Nature

2. What is Natural?

I. Existing distribution of caregiving in a world with strong gender norms

The intensity of caregiving behavior

Gender gap in caregiving

Men

Women

Low

High
I. Existing distribution of caregiving in a world with strong gender norms

II. Hypothetical distributions of caregiving in a world with weak gender norms

2. What is Natural?

The intensity of caregiving behavior
II. THE EMPIRICAL STORY: MASSIVE TRANSFORMATIONS IN THREE GENERATIONS
Five important elements of transformations of gender relations

1. Legal Rights
2. Labor force participation
3. Family structure
4. Occupational Structure
5. Domestic division of labor
1. Legal Rights gained by women

- Right to vote (1920)
- Right to own passport (early 1930s)
- Equal right to divorce (gradually since 1940s)
- Reproductive rights (1973, but eroding)
- Equal rights to university admission (1960s)
- Equal rights to all jobs (1960s)
- Equal rights to participate in sports (1972)
II. Massive change: 3. family structure

% of Households that consist of a Married Couple

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
II. Massive change: 3. family structure

% of Households that consist of a Single Person living alone

- **1940**: 10%
- **1980**: 27%
- **2000**: 32%
% of Women ages 30-34 who have Never Married, 1940-2000

II. Massive change: 3. family structure
% of People in Selected Traditionally Male Professions who are Women, 1975, 1983, 1998

II. Massive change: 4. occupations
II. Massive change: 4. occupations

% of admitted medical students who are women

- Admitted in 1973
- Admitted in 1988
- Admitted in 2000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1975</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>secretary</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>97.0%</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental Assistant</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airline pilot</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auto mechanic</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% of Women in Selected Highly Gender-Segregated Jobs

II. Massive change: 4. occupations
II. Massive change: 4. occupations

% of the 1000 Largest U.S. Corporations with at least one Woman on the Board of Directors

1969: 13%
1981: 30%
1988: 47%
1999: 73%
II. Massive change: 4. occupations

The Catalyst Pyramid: U.S. Women in Business

- 8% F500 CEOs
- 5.2% F500 top earners
- 7.9% F500 highest titles
- 13.6% F500 board directors
- 15.7% F500 corporate officers
- 50.5% Managerial and professional specialty positions
- 46.5% U.S. labor force

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment & Earnings, January 2003; Catalyst, 2001 Catalyst Census of Women Board Directors; Catalyst, 2002 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners
II. Massive change: 4. occupations

Earnings of women as a % of men

African American
- 1979: 78%
- 1989: 85%
- 1999: 84%
- 2002: 91%

Latino
- 1979: 70%
- 1989: 84%
- 1999: 86%
- 2002: 88%

White
- 1979: 61%
- 1989: 68%
- 1999: 76%
- 2002: 78%
II. Massive change: 5. domestic labor

Time devoted by Mothers and Fathers to all domestic activities (Housework, childcare, shopping, home repairs, etc.)
Mothers and fathers time spent cleaning house

II. Massive change: 5. domestic labor
III. EXPLAINING TRANSFORMATION
1. POSITIONAL & STATUS INEQUALITIES

Positional inequalities =
inequalities defined by the relationship between positions or roles
within an institution: for example, managers and workers within firms;
childcare giver and breadwinner within families; army officer and
privates within the military.

Status inequalities =
inequalities in the privileges, opportunities, rewards accorded to
personal attributes of individuals: race, gender, ethnicity, age.
2. Two Theses: Gender Inequality and Its Erosion

(1) Gender inequality thesis:

“The link between gender and positional inequality has been the key to women’s status.” (Destined for Equality, p.14)

(2) The erosion of gender inequality thesis:

“Gender inequality has declined primarily through an erosion of the overlap between gender and the major forms of positional inequality”
(Destined for Equality, p.14)
3. The Logic of Social Change: the interplay of structural conditions and social struggles

Basic idea:

Women have tried throughout history to increase their autonomy and reduce their subordination, but they could only succeed in doing this on a large scale once social conditions had changed in ways that made gender power relations fragile.
The transformation of social conditions

“The driving force behind this transformation has been the migration of economic and political power outside the household and its reorganization around business and political interests detached from gender....Gender inequality declined because modern society transferred social power from people committed to preserving men’s advantages to institutions and people whose interests were indifferent to gender distinctions....While prejudices against women still ruled many actions of men with power, their institutional interests repeatedly prompted them to take actions incompatible with preserving gender inequality.”

(From Destined for Equality by Robert Max Jackson)
IV. THE CRISIS OF DOMESTICITY
1. Traditional social supports for domesticity = a coherent system

- Stable marriage/personal relations fostered domesticity
- Blocked work opportunities increased the attractiveness of domesticity
- A family wage made domesticity economically feasible
- Dense social networks supported domesticity (neighbors, churches, communities, etc.)
- Cultural norms and sexism reinforced identities and expectations
2. Collapse of the system of sustainable domesticity beginning in the 1960s

- decline of stable marriage means women cannot count on support of husbands
- expansion of work opportunities increased the viability of alternatives to domesticity
- decline of the family wage made domesticity economically difficult
- erosion of dense social networks makes domesticity more isolated and difficult
- challenge to cultural norms and traditional sexism contributes to new identities
V. THE WORLD TODAY: DILEMMAS AND PROSPECTS
1. Imagine two possible worlds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World #1</th>
<th>World #2</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Average wages of men and women are about the same</td>
<td>• Average wages of women are 75-80% of wages of men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good quality childcare is provided by the city or employers free or at low cost</td>
<td>• No childcare is provided by the city or employers; private daycare is expensive or of poor quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Generous paid parental leave for caregiving emergencies and early infant care</td>
<td>• no paid parental leave for caregiving emergencies or early infant care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

World #2 is like Sweden
World #2 is like the United States
2. IRREVERSIBILITY OF FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES

- Dramatic decline in family size unlikely to be reversed: permanent erosion of lifetime domesticity as an ideal
- Traditional marriage stability unlikely to be restored
- Women’s labor force participation unlikely to be reversed
- Women’s participation in powerful and influential positions unlikely to decline
3. The problem of Winners & Losers

- Gender equality imposes costs on some women and erodes some of the security that comes with traditional female dependency.
- Certain ways of life, valued by many women and men, are threatened by gender equality.
- Men have contradictory interests with respect to gender inequality: men have much to gain from gender equality, but some losses as well.
- Gains for men = opening up of choices around parenting & work; the cult of masculinity blocks the full development of personhood in men. Losses = more competition for higher jobs; end of gender-based privileges.
4. Three Critical Reforms to facilitate gender equality and reduce the work/life dilemmas faced by both men and women

1. Pay Equity: equal pay for comparable work
2. Quality public provision of childcare in neighborhoods and workplaces
3. Generous paid parental leaves