



The subtitle of this text and the title of this final chapter are “Making a Difference,” so a good place to start might be to think about where things now stand regarding gender equality. Stop for a moment and reflect on how you answered this opening question. Did you base your judgment (1) on how current levels of gender equality compare to where they were in the past or (2) on how well they stack up against an ideal goal of true gender equality? This difference captures a glass half-full (as in look-at-how-far-we’ve-come) versus glass half-empty (as in look-at-how-far-we’ve-yet-to-go) mentality. Both perspectives make sense, but each suggests something different about work yet to be done.

These are the questions Richard Eibach and Joyce Ehrlinger (2010) explored with college women and men. Although their participants recorded generally positive views of progress, women ( $M = 5.28$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) were significantly less positive than men ( $M = 5.85$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ), with no differences across ethnic minority and White raters. Whereas women reported using both frames to make their judgments, men more commonly relied on measuring progress relative to the past. Importantly, it is this past referent that **mediated** the difference in men’s and women’s judgments. In other words, men’s overall assessment was that we have made more substantial progress because men relied more singularly on thinking about the past and how far we have come (not on how far we have yet to go). In a follow-up study, when women and men were given a specific reference point (past or ideal) to consider, their judgments merged—demonstrating conclusively that seeing the glass as half-full or half-empty matters.

As I argued in Chapter 2, psychology has been irrevocably transformed by feminist thinking and research. However, here in this chapter, I am asking you to use the frame of ideal gender equality to think about the work yet to be done and what you can do to make a difference.

As we look back over this book and contemplate how we might make a difference, there are at least four major themes that recur. The first overriding theme finds meaning in our psychological theories and research by drawing on a social justice agenda based in feminist values. At the heart of this understanding is **gender** differences, not as explanations, but rather as these differences relate to broader issues of **power**, **privilege**, **oppression**, and a **patriarchal system of inequality**. Thus, the ultimate value of our efforts will be judged by their usefulness in contributing to feminist goals for women and men. The purpose of this final chapter is to explore some concrete ways you can use what you’ve learned throughout this book to “make a difference.”

A second repeated theme across these chapters contends that our **socially constructed** and continually changing psychology has been irrevocably transformed by feminist questions that critique, refine, and expand what we do, how we do it, what we’ve found, and how we interpret our findings. Within this framework, gender too is socially constructed—enacted in what we do, think, and feel, and thus open to change. Moving away from more **essentialist** toward more social constructionist thinking gives us a base from which to “make a difference” because it allows for the possibility of realist change. Indeed, it is the shift in thinking that is empirically connected to believing in the possibility of social change and that is a big part of what students take away from psychology of women and gender courses (Yoder et al., 2007a).

Our third point takes a holistic approach to understanding women and gender by bringing together biology, socialization, **individual differences**, and **social context**. Awareness of how these are intertwined moves us away from an **androcentric**, deficit model that

blames women for their presumed shortcomings and lays the groundwork for social activism directed at eliminating unfair external constraints. It also opens up a wide array of possibilities for individuals who are not limited by gendered stereotyping or prescriptions dictating what they *should* do as women and as men.

Our fourth recurrent theme extends our analysis of **social categorization** beyond gender to consider other markers of **social status** and power, including race and ethnicity, physical (dis)ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, religion, age, and so on. Each of these **intersects** with gender so that how one plays out her or his gender is inseparably and always intertwined with these other social markers. Additionally, these social indicators cannot be left unexplored as final explanations for differences. For example, when racial and ethnic differences are found, a full analysis must examine the cultural settings that are related to these markers. We cannot simply accept race and ethnicity itself as an explanation; rather, we need to “**do**” **difference** as part of “**doing**” **gender**. This book only begins this process by focusing mostly on gender.

The immodest hope I have for this book is that when you have finished it, you will take something important away from it. This book falls short of its usefulness in a movement toward social justice if we don’t examine its impact on you and what you can do with what you’ve learned and considered. Feminist psychologists have looked at making a difference in three realms: (1) within ourselves as individuals, (2) within our relationships, and (3) throughout our society through social activism. Each is informed by our general understanding of power and **empowerment**. We first will take another look at how psychologists in general, and feminist psychologists in particular, have approached the concepts of power and empowerment, and then we’ll go on to discuss how we can become empowered individually and in our relationships, as well as simultaneously work toward social change as activists.

## POWER AND EMPOWERMENT

From the very start of this book, we have talked about power in relation to gender differences such that men and what is associated with men (masculinity or **agency**) is generally privileged, and women and that which is regarded as feminine (or communal) is devalued—leading to the oppression of women and supporting a patriarchal system of inequality. The core concept underlying this process is power—power to be considered normative (as in **androcentric bias**), to be distinct from the “other” (**gender polarization**), and to control relationships (despite an ultimate loss of connection).

Feminist psychologists have had an uneasy relationship with the concept of power. Traditionally, psychologists have conceptualized power as dominance, control, or influence over others (see Unger, 1986, for a review of social psychological approaches to studying power). From this tradition emerged six distinct bases of direct power: **reward**, **coercive**, **expert**, **information**, **legitimate authority** (derived from one’s position), and **referent** (derived from others wanting to emulate or identify with the powerful person) (French & Raven, 1959). Although these direct forms of using power are often regarded as masculine and are ascribed to men, a clever computerized protocol in which women and men served as “advisors” to an unseen confederate trying to solve difficult puzzles found that women used these forms of power as much as men when they were in high- (but not in low-) status

positions (Keshet et al., 2006). Thus, using power may be more about having status than about gender per se.

It is these forms of direct power that underlie feminist analyses of male dominance or **patriarchy**: ending sexist oppression ultimately means righting unjust power relationships. Yet Celia Kitzinger (1991) points to the paradoxes accompanying such a feminist critique of power in psychology (and in **feminism** as a whole). In psychology, the concept of power is rarely mentioned, and when it is used, it often summarizes power differentials in gender relationships without explaining how those differences arose. Although power may be as invisible and all-encompassing as the air we breathe (Henley, 1977), this description does little to inform us about what it is. Joan Griscom (1992) details four components of a good definition of power: power must involve more than coercion or dominance; it must be understood as relational (one has power over another:—t cannot exist in isolation of others); it is sustained at an individual and relational level by broader societal forces; and it is a process that dynamically changes over time (rather than exists as a stable trait).

In addition to defining what power is, feminist analyses of male dominance necessarily portray women as powerless, engendering disempowered feelings in women who acknowledge the extent and pervasiveness of their oppression:

My entry into the women's movement has led to feelings of vulnerability, despair, and shock. That cannot be denied. For identifying with women, instead of men, means taking on, in part, the notion of one's powerlessness, victimisation, and lack of resources. In my own head, for example, I was much less exposed to the danger of rape when I believed that the women who were raped contributed to it in some way, for after all there was no way I would provoke or initiate such an attack. Recognising now that all women are potentially rape victims, that most rapists are known to their victims, that the object of rape is domination, I no longer have that (false) security that it won't happen to me (Spender, 1984, p. 211).

Attributing the powerlessness of women to conditioning or socialization ultimately underestimates the power of male dominance by suggesting that if only women understood they were free, they would be—ignoring the social consequences of deviance and the strong normative pressures that enforce conformity (Kitzinger, 1991). Paradoxically, a feminist analysis of power that defines power solely in terms of dominance and control and that assigns such power exclusively to (some) men renders women both powerless and blame-worthy.

One potential solution to this quandary is a reconceptualization of power as **empowerment** or power-to, rather than power-over (Yoder & Kahn, 1992). This approach regards empowerment as more of a *process* than a thing, focusing on power as energy, potential, and competence—not as domination, coercion, and competition (Browne, 1995). Such an analysis of power recognizes the forces of patriarchal domination *and* turns to the empowerment of women and men not only to empower themselves (develop personal **agency**), but also to change broader social structures (activism) (Kitzinger, 1991). This form of empowerment is articulated by Colette Browne (1995) as:

a process of liberation of self and others, as a life force, a potential, a capacity, growth, and energy, where one works toward community and connection

responsibly as opposed to working primarily toward one's individual good (p. 360).

Note that this definition meets all four of Griscom's (1992) criteria: **empowerment** is more than coercion, is relational, is sustained by societal forces, and is a dynamic process.

Throughout the research we have reviewed in this book, we have seen that the concept of masculinity, instrumentality, or agency comes into play. This concept has been measured as an individual difference variable [commonly using the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) or Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ)] such that each person falls somewhere along a continuum from reporting low to high levels. It's easy to regard empowerment as simple personal agency, but empowerment goes beyond this to add concerns for activism (Kitzinger, 1991; Riger, 2000c).

This point about individual agency versus empowerment with activism is at the core of contemporary debates about women's self-sexualizing behavior versus **objectification**. The central argument made in support of women's self-sexualizing behaviors (e.g., catwalks at dance clubs and wearing clothing with sexualized statements) is that women choose and control their own behavior, are taking an active role in its production, and may, in fact, gain power over men by exploiting their own sexuality. However, a developing body of research challenges this portrayal.

Two studies looked at women's attitudes about self-sexualization and their correlates. In the first, the more women reported enjoying being sexualized, the higher was their endorsement of both hostile and benevolent sexism (Liss et al., 2011)—attitudes that we saw in Chapter 7 don't serve women very well. In the second study, the more strongly women accepted self-sexualizing behavior, the more extremely they adhered to the feminine role (Nowatzki & Morry, 2009)—that is, "hyperfemininity," which had previously been linked to women's beliefs in adversarial sexual relations (including some acceptance of sexual coercion and rape myths as well as destructive self-blame when coercion occurs) and in putting a traditional marriage ahead of career aspirations (Murnen & Byrne, 1991). Both studies document that self-sexualization isn't all that good for women.

Turning to the sexualization of women in the media, Emma Halliwell and her colleagues (2011) modified magazine advertisements that depicted sexualized women as passive (e.g., a woman holding a ribbon on the bra she is wearing along with the slogan "For a beautiful figure") to convey powerfulness ("I pull the strings"). These presumably empowering images had the same effect on women (felt objectification and weight dissatisfaction) as the more typical passive version of the same ads. Connecting media images with attitudes, exposure to sexualized media is related to women's acceptance of self-sexualizing behavior (Nowatzki & Morry, 2009).

Finally, Megan Yost and Lauren McCarthy (2012) explored the prevalence and meaning of heterosexual women kissing one another publicly at a college party. Surveying students at a private residential U.S. college, they found that one-third of women had engaged in this behavior and over two-thirds of women and men had observed it. In follow-up surveys and interviews with women who had engaged in this behavior, many women's motivations appeared far from empowering—citing pressures from men who controlled the party, intoxication, and desires to avoid men's unwanted sexual attention and to bond with women friends. Although some women did use this behavior to get something from a man at the party (the presumably power wielding benefit of self-sexualization), this strat-

egy targeted a resource he controlled (e.g., alcohol) and thus ultimately acknowledged his, not her, power. Given this analysis, it is not surprising that only a small minority of women did not feel pressured and reported feeling empowered by the experience. In contrast, one woman summed up the more common sentiments of felt objectification:

It makes me feel cheap, it makes me feel like I'm kind of betraying those friends that I have that are lesbian because when I make out with girls at parties, I think that it's making women's sexuality not about ourselves but about the other people around us. (p. 18–19)

These findings argue, then, that true empowerment entails more than simply doing whatever one wants to do without inhibition. Given this understanding about what empowerment is not, let's take a look in the next section at what psychologists know about how to develop genuine personal empowerment.

## PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT

Our emphasis in this section will be on empowering individual women. We saw in Chapter 12 that individual empowerment is a primary goal of feminist therapy (Worell & Remer, 2003). For psychologists, personal **empowerment** is defined as helping a woman “to become more independent and assertive about attaining her goals and achieving change and psychological growth” (Wyche & Rice, 1997, p. 60). Tied to personal empowerment are psychological well-being, self-esteem, and **agency** (Yoder et al., in press). For example, agency has been associated with reduced depression, lower anxiety, elevated self-esteem, fewer health complaints, and decreased distress (reviewed by Helgeson, 1994b). Similarly, well-being includes autonomy (agency), personal growth, and self-acceptance (Ryff, 1989).

My goal in this section on personal empowerment is to explore how women might achieve some genuine personal empowerment, starting at an individual level. Specifically, we'll explore gender-role transcendence as well as what it means to have a feminist identity and the outcomes associated with feminist labeling and beliefs. However, personal empowerment cannot reside in an individual-level model alone that stresses autonomy, self-control, and independence from others. Rather, a feminist reassessment enlarges the scope of what defines mental health to include self and others. Descriptions by 51 feminist women of a fully functioning woman integrate both agentic independence and communal interdependence—women who feel empowered by themselves and in their relationships (Crowley-Long & Long, 1992). We'll then turn to empowered relationships in the next section.

### *Gender-Role Transcendence*

Strict adherence to gender-role prescriptions limits the full expression of human behavior in both women and men (Philpot et al., 1997) and disrupts their human connection. As we've seen throughout this book, gender-schematic thinking that holds fast to gendered **stereotyping** and **scripts** constrains thinking and social interaction. We further explored



in Chapter 4 some ways to counteract sexist socialization processes; however, we noted that this approach was compromised by the pervasiveness of sexist societal influences. It also gives up on adults whose childhood socialization is complete. A supplement to **gender-aschematic** socialization is offered by **gender-role transcendence**—an approach that views people simply as people who often operate in gender-laden contexts.

Gender-role transcendence does not ignore gender; rather, it *reflects the final stage in a developmental progression that grapples with gendered norms in increasingly complex ways* (Eccles, 1987; Rebecca et al., 1976). At the simplest stage, people are undifferentiated by gender. A person who ignores gender might claim to treat individuals without regard to their sex, claiming to be gender neutral (for example, by claiming to be a “humanist” rather than a feminist). Such a position is made untenable by the simple fact that we automatically categorize people by sex. Furthermore, it avoids grappling with sexist oppression and ultimately is a form of passive resistance to feminism. It defines a starting point for the development of gender-role transcendence, not its endpoint.

In response to repeated exposure to a universal system of **social categorization** that divides people into female and male, a polarized view emerges that regards the sexes as opposite and distinct. This **gender polarization** may mellow somewhat, but gendered stereotyping continues to have a prescriptive quality by defining what women, girls, men, and boys *should* do. Both gender-neutrality and gender-polarized thinking must be rejected to move toward true gender role transcendence.

For this movement to happen, four psychological shifts are critical (Eccles, 1987, p. 236). First, we must break the link between gender identity and gender stereotyping so that our gender identity is independent from what is culturally prescribed. Here is a trivial personal example: I harbored a distaste for pink clothing for a long time in reaction to the feminizing quality it represented. My feminist identity was somehow compromised by the thought of wearing this color, even though I knew at a fundamental level that my self-concept need not be so fragile.

This relates to the second necessary ingredient for gender-role transcendence—the differentiation of **descriptive** (what is) from **prescriptive** or injunctive (what should be) **norms**. Pink may describe some women’s clothes, but it need not prescribe or dictate them. Men’s clothes can be pink, and women’s can vary endlessly (although I still recoil from putting pink on a baby, probably because it is used to demarcate the often indeterminable gender of infants). Put on a more substantial level, nursing describes more women’s than men’s employment, but it certainly need not be this way.

Understanding the difference between description and prescription, the third step is to question the validity of the prescriptive functions of norms and stereotyping, both for individuals and for society at large. Why should women be nurses and not surgeons; and why should men be surgeons and not nurses? On the face of it, these questions seem simplistic, but when we dig deep to explore them, they open up lots of challenges to gendered stereotyping, beginning with who benefits from (is **privileged** by) and who loses out from (is **oppressed** by) such restrictions. They also reveal a host of **social contexts** that channel women and men in different directions.

The fourth shift in thinking toward gender-role transcendence moves away from gender as a defining property of one’s self-image and evaluations of others, refocusing our understanding of gender outward to social, contextual factors that influence women’s and men’s lives. This takes us beyond feeling secure as a woman or man (**gender identity**) to

how we feel about ourselves as people, about others, and about the settings in which we live. Now we might think it's appropriate for a person to be tender toward a baby, directive with subordinates, warm and expressive with friends, cool and detached with opponents, and so on. The situation, not **essentialist** gender, dictates the appropriateness of a full range of behaviors. This fits well with our discussion of **gender aschematicity** in Chapter 6.

Summing up, **gender-role transcendence** is the opposite of rigid **gender polarization**, including **hypermasculinity** and hyperfemininity. It also rejects gender-neutrality as well as attempts to overlook gender. Throughout this book, we have seen the pitfalls of exaggerations of stereotyping, both feminine (e.g., vulnerability to agoraphobia, Ch. 12) and masculine (e.g., tendencies toward violence, Ch. 13). However, gender-role transcendence can take us only so far toward social change. Even if we each manage to better understand the role gender plays in our own lives and in our interactions with others, we often will be opposing broad societal norms and will face the not-so-trivial consequences of deviance (remember the **sexist discrimination** of Chapters 7 and 9). This is where the activism part of this chapter comes into play.

### *Feminist Identity*

Are you a feminist: NO YES

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

- (1) Girls and women have not been treated as well as boys and men in our society.
- (2) Women and men should be paid equally for the same work.
- (3) Women's unpaid work should be more socially valued.

Alyssa Zucker (2004, pp. 426-427) considers these three items the core "cardinal beliefs" of feminism, and she uses agreement with all three of them to indicate endorsement of feminist beliefs. She then combines these beliefs with the opening labeling as feminist or not to designate three groups of women: (1) feminists (who adopt the label and all three beliefs), (2) egalitarians (who do not self-label as feminist but who endorse all three cardinal beliefs), and (3) nonfeminists (who do not self-label and disagree with at least one cardinal belief). In this way, she captures a group between feminists and nonfeminists who in essence say "I'm not a feminist, but ..." (going on to advocate feminist positions). Women college students (Yoder et al., 2011) and college graduates (Zucker, 2004) spread across these three groupings.

My colleagues Ann Tobias and Andee Snell and I dissected the impact of labeling and beliefs on women's reports of engaging in feminist activism (signing a petition and giving money "on behalf of women's rights"), psychological well-being, and endorsement of equal-sharing intimate relationships (Yoder et al., 2011). We concluded that it is labeling alone that is important for predicting feminist activism—a point to which we'll return later. On the other hand, beliefs were the more potent predictor of both personal well-being and interpersonal egalitarianism. Thus, it appears that both labeling and beliefs are important parts of feminist identification but they are linked to different outcomes. Given our interest in personal empowerment here, let's turn our attention now to feminist beliefs and their outcomes for the women who hold them.



**Feminist beliefs.** Psychologists have developed an array of different ways to capture an individual woman's feminist beliefs. These measures include the Feminist Perspectives Scale (Henley et al. 1998), which taps women's sociopolitical beliefs; Fassinger's (1994) Attitudes Toward Feminism and the Women's Movement Scale, which explores women's emotional ties to both feminists and the women's movement; a sense of common fate (Gurin & Townsend, 1986), which captures a woman's feelings of connection with other women as a collectivity; and the Feminist Identity Composite (FIC; Fischer et al., 2000), which takes a snapshot of a woman's evolving feminist identity over time. Other measures, such as Janet Helms' (1990) **womanist identity** model, propose that women's gender and racial identities intersect; for example, by including black identity for African American women and anti-racism for White women.

As we have already seen, feminist identity is complicated by including both labeling and beliefs. This wide array of measures of beliefs further complicates the picture. Let's focus in on one of these measures (the widely cited FIC) and the model of feminist identity development that underlies it, and then we'll explore whether holding feminist beliefs works to personally empower women.

**Feminist identity development.** Before you read on, you'll find it helpful to complete the brief scale in Box 14.1.

Nancy Downing and Kristin Roush (1985) presented a five-stage model of feminist identity development. The Feminist Identity Composite (FIC) identifies the degree to which a woman endorses each of the five stages with items such as those in Box 14.1. According to this model, respondents high in **passive acceptance** are either unaware of or deny individual, institutional, and cultural prejudice and discrimination against women (the first item labeled "PA"). High scorers believe that traditional roles are advantageous for women and men and that men are superior to women. For example, women endorsing passive acceptance would agree that men should be masculine and women, feminine. After taking a women's studies course (Bargad & Hyde, 1991) or psy-

#### Box 14.1

Please express your feelings by indicating how much agree or disagree with each statement.

PA.	I don't see much point in questioning the general expectation that men should be masculine and women should be feminine.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral or undecided	agree	strongly agree
Rev.	Gradually, I am beginning to see just how sexist society really is.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral or undecided	agree	strongly agree
EE.	I am very interested in women writers.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral or undecided	agree	strongly agree
Syn.	I feel like I have blended my female attributes with my unique personal qualities.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral or undecided	agree	strongly agree
AC.	I am very committed to a cause that I believe contributes to a more fair and just world for all people.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral or undecided	agree	strongly agree

chology of women class (Yoder et al., 2007a), students were likely to disagree with items like these both more than before taking the course and more than control students taking other courses.

A second dimension involves **revelation** (Rev)—a series of crises or contradictions disrupt one's passive acceptance so that ignoring and denying are no longer possible. Potential disruptions include this book and the course you are taking (as well as other women's studies classes which tend to stress critical thinking, open-mindedness, and participatory learning; Stake & Hoffmann, 2000) as well as being targeted for **sexist discrimination** (Anthis, 2002). These challenges typically result in open questioning of one's self and one's roles, often accompanied by feelings of anger and guilt. Often this stage is characterized by dualistic thinking in which women are seen as positive and men are vilified. Again, students agreed with these revelation-type items after taking a feminist course—more than they did beforehand and more than control students.

Nancy Downing and Kristin Roush (1985) drew upon a model of racial-identity development (Cross, 1971) that projected stages of development. A central assumption of stage-wise models is that individuals pass through and resolve prior stages before moving to more advanced stages in a stepwise progression. Such a progression is evident from passive acceptance to revelation as earlier attitudes are rejected in the face of an intervening crisis. However, moving from revelation to some resolution does not seem to follow a simple, linear progression from rudimentary to more advanced forms of feminist identity, as Downing and Roush originally theorized. A better conceptualization based on subsequent research considers the next three configurations as *dimensions* of feminist identity that co-exist in varying degrees in many post-revelation women (Worell, 1996) and through which an individual may recycle (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1997). For our purposes, you probably will find parts of each of the remaining three dimensions in your own post-revelation identity.

In the third dimension of the model, **embeddedness-emanation** (EE), feminists immerse themselves in feminist culture, seeking both affirmation and strengthening of their new identity. Their newfound feminist identity may begin as somewhat rigid, but openness to alternative viewpoints grows. A more relativistic approach to men appears, making it worthwhile to engage in cautious interaction with a select few. In the fourth **synthesis** (Syn) dimension, women are able to transcend traditional gender roles, celebrate and value the positive aspects of femininity, make choices based on personal values, and evaluate men on an individual, not a stereotyped, basis. The final dimension emphasizes **active commitment** (AC), integrating personal feminist identity with plans for meaningful and effective action aimed at social change. Men are viewed as equal to, but not the same as, women. These five stages/dimensions are summarized in Table 14.2.

Interestingly, subsequent research showed that synthesis, not active commitment, best predicted feminist activism (Liss et al., 2004). As we might expect, each of these last three dimensions was affected by taking a women's studies or psychology of women/gender course such that students expressed stronger agreement with each dimension after taking a course than they did beforehand. As one student commented:

I feel I have a better understanding of feminist issues so I can argue for the feminist cause more effectively, making me more confident in identifying myself as a feminist (Bargad & Hyde, 1991, p. 193).

TABLE 14.2  
Feminist Identity Development According to Downing and Roush

<i>Passive Acceptance Stage</i>	<i>Revelation Stage</i>	<i>Embeddedness-Emanation Dimension</i>	<i>Synthesis Dimension</i>	<i>Active Commitment Dimension</i>
Passive acceptance of traditional gender roles and discrimination; belief that traditional roles are advantageous; men are considered superior.	Catalyzed by a series of crises, resulting in open questioning of self and roles and feelings of anger and guilt; dualistic thinking; men are perceived as negative.	Characterized by connectedness with other select women, affirmation and strengthening of new identity. Eventually more relativistic thinking and cautious interaction with men.	Development of an authentic and positive feminist identity; gender-role transcendence; “flexible truce” with the world; evaluate men on an individual basis.	Consolidation of feminist identity; commitment to meaningful action; to a nonsexist world. Actions are personalized and rational. Men are considered equal but not the same as women.

Other studies have documented the positive influence of psychology of women and other women’s studies classes on students’ feminist identity development (Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997; Worell et al., 1999), sexist and feminist beliefs (Katz et al., 2004), performance self-esteem and occupational aspirations (Stake & Gerner, 1987), activism (Stake & Rose, 1994; Stake et al., 1994), self-concept and assertiveness (O’Connell, 1989), and progressive gender role orientation and empowered locus of control (Harris et al., 1999). All of this research predicts that this book and the course you are taking are likely to have some impact on how you think, feel, and act toward feminism and feminist psychology.

**Feminist identity and personal empowerment.** Studies of feminist identity find that women with strong feminist identities are personally and collectively empowered (Carpenter & Johnson, 2001), see the world through feminist lenses (Liss et al., 2001), and exhibit high levels of psychological well-being (Saunders & Kashubeck-West, 2006; Yakushko, 2007). Feminist beliefs, even without self-labeling, are related to self-efficacy (Eisele & Stake, 2008), and they are linked to rejecting pressures to be thin, attractive, and in a romantic relationships (Hurt et al., 2007).

College women who scored high on the feminist identity scale followed less traditional dating scripts than did women high on passive acceptance (Rickard, 1989) and internalized less **heterosexism** (Szymanski, 2004). Women’s feminist views influenced political voting choices when candidates held divergent views on feminist issues (Cook, 1993); predicted perceptions of gender discrimination on a college campus (Fischer & Good, 1994) and in general (Kobryniewicz & Branscombe, 1997); helped women faculty cope with discrimination (Klonis et al., 1997); and eliminated evaluation bias such that feminist college women did not devalue the work of women artists (Rickard, 1990).

A feminist orientation can affect occupational aspirations in that feminist adolescent girls exhibited enhanced confidence in their abilities to pursue career-related tasks (Ahrens & O’Brien, 1996), and feminist African American women placed greater value on blending career and family (Weathers et al., 1994). Non-bulimic women were more likely to endorse a feminist ideology than bulimics (Brown, et al., 1990), and women who identified with

feminist values reported less body dissatisfaction, fewer bulimic symptoms, and strengthened feelings of effectiveness (Ojerholm & Rothblum, 1999; Snyder & Hasbrouck, 1996). Feminist adult women survivors of childhood sexual abuse expressed more anger toward their parents in therapy and were less likely to blame themselves for bringing on their own abuse (Newman & Peterson, 1996).

However, these generally positive conclusions are muddled by some negative correlates with feminist identification. For example, some women equate feminism with disharmony in heterosexual intimate relationships (Rudman & Farchild, 2007). Only egalitarian women scored higher than self-labeling feminists and nonfeminists in their sexual assertiveness regarding condom use (Bay-Cheng & Zucker, 2007). Most consistently, scoring high on the revelation stage has been linked to psychological distress (Moradi & Subich, 2002), lower self-esteem, and anger (Fischer & Good, 2004).

These inconsistencies point to the likelihood that the picture we are exploring about how feminist identity relates to various psychological outcomes is even more complicated. Making this argument, my colleagues Andee Snell and Ann Tobias and I examined how a set of multiple measures of women's feminist beliefs might be related to a complex set of psychological outcomes, including the individual indicators we are considering here of personal empowerment, self-esteem, well-being, and agency, as well as measures of interpersonal (egalitarianism and sexual assertiveness) and collective (feeling entitled to social justice) empowerment (Yoder et al., in press).

We found strong evidence that the more firmly established college women's feminist beliefs were ("established feminism"), the more they exhibited optimal psychological functioning across this wide array of outcomes. Conversely, the more actively anti-feminist a woman's beliefs were, the most compromised were her psychological outcomes, topped by low levels of both personal empowerment and egalitarianism (endorsement of equal-sharing relationships). Additionally, a configuration we called "awakening feminism" that was characterized by high levels of revelation was related to less optimal functioning, confirming that the revelation stage is a period of vulnerability (but with hope, a step toward established feminism).

Most fascinating was a final configuration of beliefs and outcomes that we called "woman-identified traditionalism." Women who connected with other women but did so while also endorsing passive acceptance rather than feminist beliefs showed high levels of self-esteem and moderate levels of personal empowerment and self-acceptance. However, this positive picture was tainted by compromised autonomy well-being and low levels of seeking social justice (justice entitlement). Although certainly not a negative configuration for a woman (unlike anti-feminism), these traditionalists (like established feminists) benefit from their connection with women as a collective but (unlike established feminists) falter both in their own well-being and toward promoting women's rights.

**Feminist men.** Given the complexity we have seen in defining feminist beliefs for women, it is not surprising that we know relatively little about men and feminism. Can men develop a feminist identity? One approach to men and masculinity, often acclaimed in the popular media, mimics the claims of the women's movement by lamenting the oppression of men vis-à-vis the restrictions of the masculine gender role (Allen, 1997). The fundamental goal of this movement of "weekend warriors" is to de-feminize, then re-masculinize, men and boys (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1997). At its heart, it is a defensive reaction to the presumed male-bashing of the feminist movement. (As we saw in our model of feminist identity devel-



#### Box 14.3

How is it that we intuitively know the sex of the person in the closet? Who has more power in this exchange?

opment, male-bashing may play a temporary role in women's movement toward a more advanced feminist identity that ultimately brings in men as partners in activism.) At its core, this approach to understanding men and masculinity fails to recognize the privileges attached to the masculine gender role, seeks to reaffirm it, and is thus fundamentally anti-feminist.

A second strand of men's studies emerges from a profeminist stance (Brod, 1987a; Clatterbaugh, 1990; Messner, 1997, 1998). From this perspective, men's lives become a focal point for study because leaving men's lives unexamined ignores male privilege (Brod, 1987b, p. 57). For example, an often-cited drawback of the masculine stereotype is the demand for strength that eschews weakness (operationalized as not being able to cry and express emotions). A profeminist perspective would approach this gendered expectation to see if its enactment privileges men and boys in some ways; for example, by empowering them by hiding vulnerability and withholding information (Brod, 1987a, p. 8).

Such a perspective envisions an end to **sexism** that ultimately liberates both women and men, rather than re-entrenches male-dominance. It also provides a framework from which men can join women in developing feminist identities. For example, feminist values may serve as an antidote to male violence against women. Men who endorsed feminist ideology possessed a lower proclivity to perpetrate sexual harassment (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; Wade & Brittan-Powell, 2001), exhibited less rape myth acceptance (Cowan & Quinton, 1997), and reported less acceptance of interpersonal violence overall (Truman et al., 1996).

**Summary.** As we saw, *a strong feminist identity involves both a sense of personal empowerment and a commitment to social activism.* Indeed, empowerment mediates the relationship between feminist beliefs and activism (Stake, 2007). We also argued throughout this book that a psychology of women was valuable to the extent that it is useful—that it works *for* women. It is clear that effective activism relies on individual empowerment and optimal psychological functioning (a configuration we identified as “established feminism”).

However, we shall see that personal empowerment without social activism falls short of an active commitment to social change and hence misses the mark for this final dimension of feminist identity development. Too often, psychologists have focused on personal empowerment without making this necessary connection to social activism (Kravetz & Marecek, 1996; Marecek & Hare-Mustin, 1991; Parvin & Biaggio, 1991). Although we began here by exploring personal empowerment, this section cannot stand alone with-

out the one that follows later on social activism. The need for this broader definition of empowerment becomes even clearer when we next consider empowerment in women's relationships with men.

## EMPOWERED RELATIONSHIPS

A general model for how gender is enacted in interpersonal exchanges was proposed by Kay Deaux and Brenda Major (1987). They think of gender as one aspect of ongoing relationships in which one member expects certain behaviors from another, the other member negotiates her or his own identity, and the **social context** in which the interaction occurs shapes what behaviors are emitted. Given this model, we would expect to find lots of stereotype-confirming behavior if both parties in an interaction hold traditional beliefs, and these beliefs are activated by the situation.

For example, consider a manager who has two subordinates, Joan and John. If that manager held traditional beliefs about the male-appropriateness of leadership, those beliefs might prompt the manager to describe a performance appraisal exercise quite differently to the two employees: say as an opportunity for John to take charge and for Joan to display cooperative skills. To further maximize the gender-typing here, assume that Joan and John have different histories and expectations about leadership that also conform to gender stereotyping. Combine these with what the manager conveys (either openly or subtly), and an observable gender difference between the behaviors of Joan and John is likely to result: John is likely to take charge and Joan is likely to work cooperatively with her group. Joan and John behave differently, confirming everyone's original beliefs and making the roles played by these original beliefs invisible.

Consider the same scenario with all components working synchronously to minimize gender differences. We would expect to find few differences between the behaviors of Joan and John if: (1) the manager believed that women and men enact leadership similarly; (2) gender-related beliefs were not activated in the manager; (3) Joan and John thought similarly about leadership and shared similar past experiences; and (4) similar **schema** about leadership were activated in Joan and John.

We saw in Chapter 7 that gender expectations can become a **self-fulfilling prophecy**. Deaux and Major's model both can explain how this happens and can offer an alternative scenario to short-circuit the process. The important point here is that *gendered enactments are dependent on ourselves, the others with whom we interact, and the social context in which this occurs*. With this in mind, we'll explore empowerment in heterosexual dating, marital and working relationships, and in responses to violence. We saw in Chapter 8 that gendered issues of imbalanced power are influential in heterosexual intimate relationships, so our discussion here is purposively confined to heterosexual dating and marriage.

### *Heterosexual Dating*

One intervention designed for high school girls and college women in abusive heterosexual dating relationships formed support groups to help empower them (Rosen & Bezold, 1996). Participants reported that the groups were effective in providing a safe environment to share experiences; in encouraging thoughtful consideration of their relationship; in



inspiring self-efficacy; in developing communication, problem-solving, and assertiveness skills; and in recognizing their own personal rights. The heterosexual **dating scripts** we saw in Chapter 8 were associated with dating violence in Chapter 13 in part because these scripts serve to disempower women. Support groups such as this one, as well as the development of a feminist identity, serve to better balance these power dynamics.

### *Heterosexual Marriage*

A similar effect of women's empowerment emerges from our discussion in Chapter 8 of the division of domestic labor. We saw that there is some evidence, although far from conclusive, that the balance of power in a heterosexual relationship may make a difference. We also saw that egalitarian attitudes do not automatically translate into domestic sharing. Some clues regarding how to empower women and men in marriage (and other intimate heterosexual relationships) can be gleaned from studies of feminist couples (Choi & Bird, 2003; Laennec & Syrotinski, 2003). Indeed, having a feminist partner is associated with healthier relationships for women (Rudman & Phelan, 2007), and women scoring high in passive acceptance (low feminist beliefs) had low egalitarian expectations for their intimate relationships (Yoder et al., 2007b).

In one such study, Karen Blaisure and Katherine Allen (1995) conducted in-depth interviews with 10 self-identified feminist married couples. All participants stressed the importance of **vigilance** and the dynamic nature of their exchanges as they *continually worked* to define and redefine their participation in their marriages (also see Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005). All couples monitored their relationship in three ways. First, they spent time together exploring the **sexism** faced by women in their everyday lives. They analyzed life events from a feminist framework:

DAN: I was mad because I felt Barb wasn't valued for what she was. She worked just as hard as anyone else, and she wasn't appreciated. It made me more supportive of her (Blaisure & Allen, 1995, p.11).

Second, they worked hard to demonstrate publicly their concern for the wife's status in marriage, most often through different last names (also see Hoffnung, 2006) and joint involvement in financial decisions:

LARRY: Well, the world we're in still expects to see the male making all the decisions about what the family is going to do. So people ranging from a car salesman to everything else expect me to make any decision that is confronting what we should do. They talk to me, and I don't like that. I don't want them to talk to me, I want them to talk to both of us (Blaisure & Allen, 1995, p. 12).

Third, all participants stressed the importance of supporting the woman's activities, including employment and feminist activism.

Six of the ten couples interviewed justified their unequal division of household labor by pointing to either gendered (cooking is women's work) or personality (she enjoys cooking) explanations. In contrast, four claimed to share equally in domestic responsibilities, and

only these four reported two additional processes of vigilance. First, the equal-contributing subset continually monitored their contributions:

PATRICK: I think it is really possible to have equality or a nonoppressive marriage but it is not something that sort of happens and you say “Zap, now we got it” and you go on. You have to constantly communicate and sometimes it swings a little bit more toward the other.... You have to ensure that equality maintains itself (Blaisure & Allen, 1995, p. 13).

Second, although all couples noted the importance of feeling close to their partner, the four equal-sharers worked together to meet each other’s emotional needs:

MIRIAM: He’s my soul mate, and I know I would never find anyone as perfect for me as he is. Other friends are for spice, for variety, for flavor, for a fuller emotional range (Blaisure & Allen, 1995, p. 15).

The message that comes through loud and clear is that equal sharing is not a given, but rather reflects a continual process involving vigilance and painstaking work to bring feminist ideology to life in everyday practice (also see Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009).<sup>1</sup>

### *On the Job*

Almost all of what we discussed in Chapter 9 points to broad macrostructural factors (e.g., occupational segregation) and more narrow microstructural factors (e.g., tokenism) that work together to restrict women’s and men’s participation in the workforce. One small form of personal empowerment that emerged from this discussion focused on using individuating information on job resumes, most notably by masculinizing an applicant’s background for a male-defined job. Others have noted the value of making earnings public to highlight, and ultimately undermine, wage inequities (Steinem, 1983). Beyond the individual worker, I believe that it is important for employers to ask what they can do to level the playing field; for example, by training and legitimating women leaders (Yoder, 2001). In the classroom, feminist educators report feeling empowered to bring about political and social change (Sinacore et al., 2002).

### *Responses to Violence*

Feminists have discussed personal empowerment as an impetus for recovery and as a component of violence prevention. Both themes appear in discussions of sexual harassment (Anonymous, 1991; Charney & Russell, 1994), male intimate partner violence (Dutton-Douglas, 1992; Frieze & McHugh, 1992; Webb, 1992), and childhood sexual abuse (Liem et al., 1992; Nelson, 1991).

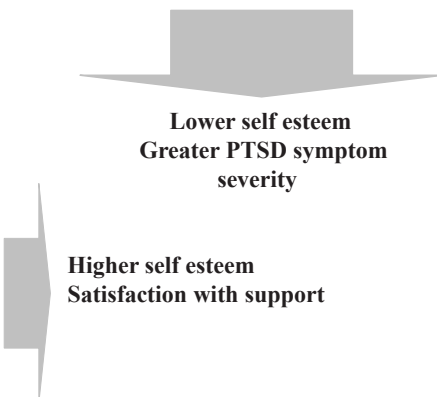
**Resilience.** Box 14.4 catalogues the reactions survivors of sexual assault reported from others. Sarah Ullman (2000, 2010) not only clustered these into categories of posi-

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<sup>1</sup>For sound, practical advice on how to realize gender equality in dual career relationships, see Lucia Gilbert’s work (1993). For ideas about equal-sharing parenting, see Deutsch (1999).

## Box 14.4: Tangible Aid

Sarah Ullman (2000) collected reactions that sexual assault survivors reported from others and found that they sorted into the seven categories identified below, fully five of which are negative. She then explored the effectiveness of these reactions with 323 survivors. Combining these data gives us a list of do's and don't's to guide us if a woman discloses her experiences to us.

<i>Positive Social Reactions</i>	<i>Negative Social Reactions</i>
<p><i>Emotional Support/Belief</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Told you that you were not to blame</li> <li>Told you that you did not do anything wrong</li> <li>Told you that it was not your fault</li> <li>Reassured you that you were a good person</li> <li>Held you or told you that you are loved</li> <li>Comforted you by telling you it would be all right or by holding you</li> <li>Spent time with you</li> <li>Listened to your feelings</li> <li>Showed understanding of your experiences</li> <li>Reframed the experience as a clear case of victimization</li> <li>Saw your side of things and did not make judgments</li> <li>Was able to really accept your account of your experience</li> <li>Told you that s/he felt sorry for you</li> <li>Believed your account of what happened</li> <li>Seemed to understand what you were feeling</li> </ul> <p><i>Tangible Aid and Information/Support</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helped you get medical care</li> <li>Provided information and discussed options</li> <li>Helped you get information of any kind about coping with the experience</li> <li>Took you to the police</li> <li>Encouraged you to seek counseling</li> </ul>	<p><i>Blame</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You could have done more</li> </ul> <p><i>Control</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made decisions for you</li> </ul> <p><i>Egocentric</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Others' own anger and revenge dominate</li> </ul> <p><i>Distraction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Told you to stop talking and thinking about it; try to supply alternatives</li> </ul> <p><i>Treat Differently</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes withdrawal and avoidance.</li> </ul> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">  <p><b>Lower self esteem Greater PTSD symptom severity</b></p> <p><b>Higher self esteem Satisfaction with support</b></p> </div>

tive and negative reactions, but also showed that only positive reactions were associated with better self-esteem and greater satisfaction among survivors. This list informs all of us about how we can best react when a woman does choose to disclose her victimization. A study with 102 rape survivors documented that most (nearly 75%) turned to informal support providers, and over one-third of these contacts were not initiated by the survivor herself (Ahrens et al., 2007). Over half reported receiving positive reactions from informal supporters, in contrast to the more commonly negative reactions garnered by women who sought support from formal providers.

Seeking self-defense or assertiveness training after an assault, especially when social supports failed, may help survivors regain their sense of control (Brecklin & Ullman, 2004) and may reduce women's chances of re-victimization (Orchowski et al., 2008). As for therapy, key features of an effective approach include avoidance of blaming the victim; a nonstigmatizing view that regards rape as criminal victimization; support to overcome cognitive and behavioral avoidance; information about the normality of trauma reactions; expectations that symptoms will improve (Resick & Markaway, 1991); and building on positive sexual self-perceptions (Offman & Matheson, 2004; see Russell & Davis, 2007, for a review of treatment evidence).

The resilience of some abuse survivors is attested to in in-depth interviews conducted by Linda DiPalma (1994). In childhood, some girls imagined sunny but realistic futures to relieve their pain and to escape their victimization. Some put their energy into academic success to obtain personal validation; others drew on creative outlets such as writing, drama, and music. Their stories testify to their unflinching determination and inner strength.

Being a survivor means being able to feel again, not to repress, not to forget, not to run away from, but to be able to stand still, remember what happened, claim all of that experience, claim the feelings, and still be able to hang on to this new person that I am (DiPalma, 1994, p. 87).

**Rape resistance and avoidance.** Overall violence prevention takes two interrelated forms: resistance/avoidance and prevention. On an individual level, empowerment of individual women can help them resist and avoid being victimized. For example, comparisons of women who were raped by a *stranger* with those who escaped focus on situational characteristics, offender aggression, and victim resistance. Higher completion rates have been found when the rape takes place indoors, when environmental interruptions (someone driving by) are absent, when a weapon is present, when the attack occurs at night, and when it is a blitz attack (a surprise physical assault) (reviewed by Ullman & Knight, 1993).

*Offender aggression* can fall into one of four categories: nonviolent verbal aggression (the attacker tells the victim what to do); violent verbal aggression (the perpetrator yells and/or swears at the victim); violent physical aggression (using physical assault or a weapon); and use of other items (blindfolds, ropes, and sticks) (Ullman & Knight, 1991). *Victim resistance* can be classified as none; nonforceful verbal (pleading or crying); forceful verbal (screaming); physical (pushing, wrestling, striking, and biting); and fleeing (Zoucha-Jensen & Coyne, 1993). The effectiveness (defined as rape escape, minimal physical harm, and less sexual abuse) of each of these depends on the type of offender aggression and on some *situational characteristics*.

Sarah Ullman and Raymond Knight (1991, 1993) found that forceful verbal and physical responses were equally efficacious across all rape locations. In contrast, nonforceful verbal strategies were ineffective in escaping rape in both dangerous and less dangerous situations. *Forceful verbal, physical, and fleeing responses were most effective for escaping rape by a stranger*, especially in dangerous settings. Physical resistance proved effective in thwarting a rape attempt even in the presence of a weapon, although more rapes are completed with the presence of a weapon (Bart & O'Brien, 1997).

Physical injury to the victim resulted more from the stranger's violent physical aggressiveness than from the physicality of the victim's resistance and is more likely if the attacker

has been drinking (Martin & Bachman, 1998). In other words, most physical injury appears to result from the sexual assault itself, not the victim's resistance. Women tend to confine their use of physical resistance to offenders who use violent physical aggressiveness (so it is hard to say if this would work with other forms of attack). Sexual abuse was most severe when the assailant used violent verbal aggression or executed a con assault (in which the victim was duped into trusting her more sadistic attacker or stalker-like assault). Both offender propensity to abuse alcohol (Martin & Bachman, 1998; Tests & Livingston, 1999) and victim's preassault use of alcohol are associated with greater sexual aggression severity (Ullman et al., 1999). In sum, crying and pleading don't seem to help; rather *meeting the offender's violence with an equal level of resistance is generally most effective*.

The above discussion was generated by research with survivors of stranger rape and attempted rape, ignoring a more likely threat to women from acquaintances and intimates. Recognizing this point, Joyce Levine-MacCombie and Mary Koss (1986) compared college women who either escaped date rape or were victimized. All reported feeling angry during the attack, but only successful resisters recalled less fear and guilt during the attack. Women who succeeded in escaping rape retrospectively perceived their assault as less violent, and they reported running away and screaming for help more often than unsuccessful resisters.

This resistance pattern with acquaintances parallels what we saw above with stranger rape. Quarreling with the offender contributed significantly to the *completion* of date rape, making this a strategy to avoid. In contrast to stranger escape, women who escaped date rape reported that crying and reasoning contributed to their success, probably because they had some relationship with the attempted perpetrator. However, these nonforceful verbal strategies were less effective than more active patterns of resistance—*still making screaming, physical attacking, and fleeing the most effective responses*. Furthermore, women who resisted rape by using forceful physical strategies exhibited less post-assault depression than other survivors (Bart & O'Brien, 1997).

Ironically, these effective response strategies involve actions many women have been socialized to avoid as “unfeminine,” “impolite,” and hurtful (Rozee, 1996; Quina & Carlson, 1989) and are not what most women expect to do in the face of an impending sexual assault (Masters et al., 2006). This is where empowerment programs come in. There is research evidence documenting that a self-defense class can help most women show improvements in their assertiveness, self-esteem, perceived control, self-efficacy, and physical competence, as well as declines in anxiety, helplessness, fear, and avoidance behaviors such as restricting their own behaviors (Brecklin, 2008). In heterosexual dating relationships, communication and assertiveness skills are linked to successful date-rape resistance (Rosen & Bezold, 1996).

Some avoidance advice argues for developing “assertive wariness,” whereby women recognize risky behaviors and plan alternative escape and avoidance strategies (Greene & Navarro, 1998). An example is carrying one's purse tucked securely under one's arm rather than holding it loosely—a strategy that reflects “street savvy.” More fundamentally, physical empowerment can encourage women to reclaim their bodies as instruments of action and sources of confidence, instead of as passive objects for others' oppression (McCaughey, 1998).

However, these strategies, taken alone, fail to challenge the faulty ideas that women alone are responsible for preventing violence; that women who are unsuccessful at resisting rape are blame-worthy; that confine rape scenarios to the less likely occurrence of

stranger rape; and that (taken to an extreme) fit with the pattern of borderline agoraphobia we examined in Chapter 12. In fact, they may contribute to a pattern whereby women engage in more precautionary behaviors designed to thwart stranger rape even though acquaintance rape is, and is understood by women to be, much more common (Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997).

Successfully escaping rape and avoiding rape attempts are positive outcomes, the importance of which should not be minimized for individual women. However, an avoidance approach is fundamentally individualistic; it does not protect women in general (Lonsway, 1996). Rapists tend to seek out vulnerable women so that the success of one woman in deterring rape is offset by the likely victimization of another. Because of this, no matter how well trained women are in avoidance, escape, and self-defense, they remain vulnerable to sexual assault to the extent that men continue to commit these acts (Schewe & O'Donohue, 1993). It is this key point that distinguishes rape avoidance from our next topic—rape prevention.

**Rape prevention.** Rape prevention focuses on men as the perpetrators of these acts *and* on cultural beliefs and institutions that, intentionally or not, support the victimization of women. Kimberly Lonsway (1996) reviewed educational programs, most of which target women or mixed-sex audiences. One increasingly popular program designed to target men's attitudes and empathy is "The Men's Program" (Foubert, 2005), which has been shown to induce self-reported, positive changes in some men (Foubert & Cremedy, 2007). Targeting the misinformation of rape mythology is widely used by educational programs and has been linked to desirable attitude change (Pinzone-Glover et al., 1998). Similarly, participant interaction, typically in the forms of group discussion, role play, and interactive dramatic performances, generally is found to co-occur with favorable attitude change.

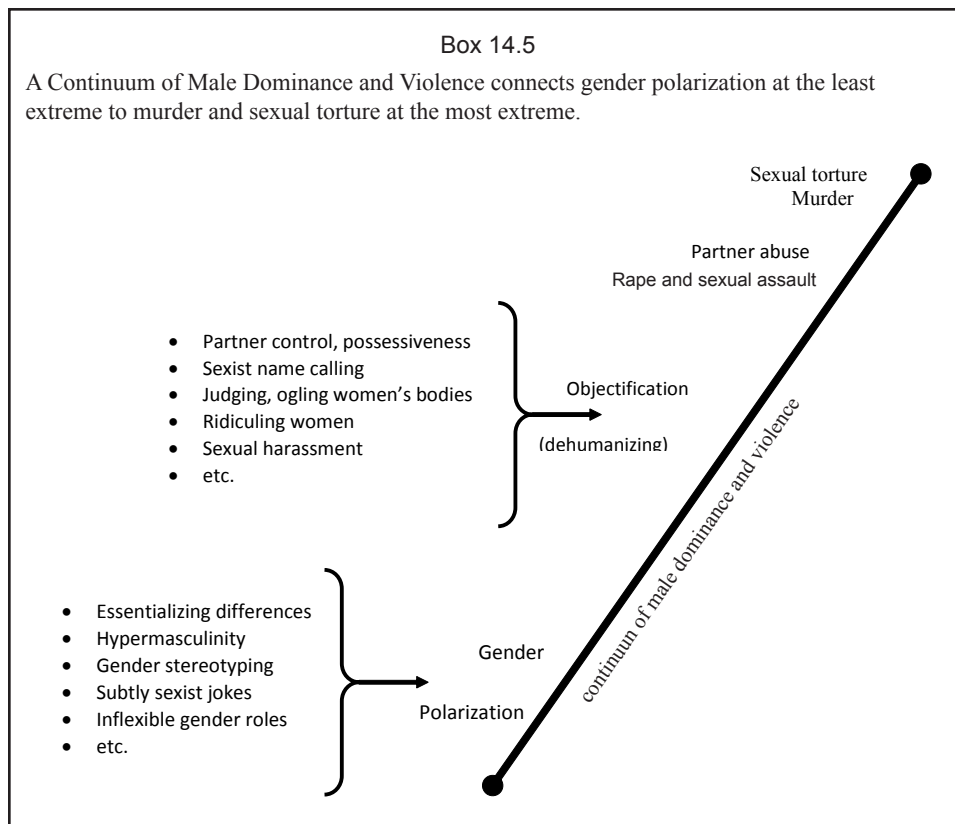
Improved communication skills appear effective only when they incorporate explicit understandings of gender roles and the subordinated status of women. Simple enhancements to interpersonal exchanges without these broader societal linkages indeed may make communication clearer, but men who perpetrate sexual aggression seem to ignore, not misunderstand, women's intentions and desires (Hanson & Gidycz, 1993). Evidence about the effectiveness of getting men to empathize with their targets and of previous experiences with either victimization or perpetration is inconclusive, warranting further research. Researchers are beginning to realize the importance of multicultural sensitivity in violence interventions (Oliver, 2000; Preisser, 1999). Finally, confrontational approaches induce alienation and defensiveness, both of which run contrary to prevention. It is clear that educational programs using effective approaches are likely to encourage positive attitude change. However, a causal link between rape-rejecting attitudes and reduced sexually aggressive behavior has not been established definitively, although these factors clearly are correlated (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

At the end of Chapter 13, I argued that gender-based violence is more than acts confined to individual women and men; for this reason, solutions must look beyond individuals as well. Some broader possibilities include supporting and participating in "take back the night" events (where supporters march in unison in settings individual women usually find disturbing); pressuring organizations to establish policies and set up an atmosphere in which they'll be enforced (Nelson et al., 2007; Ormerod et al., 2008); boycotting products that rely on violent advertising; raising nonviolent children (Warner & Steel, 1999);



making violence visible by speaking out (Quina & Carlson, 1989); educational programs targeting young children (Tulloch & Tulloch, 1992) and college students (Berkowitz, 1994; Earle & Nies, 1994); interventions designed for male batterers (Dutton, 1988) and rape perpetrators (Pollard, 1994); multifaceted community-based programs and services for incest survivors (Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 1989) and campus rape (Adams & Abarbanel, 1988; Bohmer & Parrot, 1993); organizations for men against rape (see the appendix of Beneke, 1992, for a beginning list), including fraternities (Egidio & Robertson, 1981); expanded feminist coverage of violence against women in the media (Kozol, 1995; Stone, 1993); and so on.

However, the true key to violence prevention may rest in expanding our vision beyond ending acts of violence themselves to looking more closely at the building blocks that lead up to violence. Box 14.5 offers a step toward such an expanded vision.<sup>2</sup> Much of how we commonly think about gender supports two general cognitive processes: **gender polarization** (viewing women and men as basically different) and **objectification** (treating different others as objects). Simply viewing others as fundamentally different takes a step toward disconnection that *can* lead to objectification, which in turn *can* lead to violence. Gender polarization and objectification become building blocks upon which violence becomes more likely.



<sup>2</sup>I am indebted to my colleague Ann Fischer for first encouraging me to think about this continuum and for laying out much of the contents of Box 14.5.

On first blush you may object that I am making mountains out of molehills. For example, what's so harmful about a funny but sexist joke? Researchers found that college men who enjoyed sexist humor also were more likely to harbor destructive rape attitudes and report a greater likelihood of using sexual coercion (Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998). The reverse also is true in that what peers do can set the stage for accepting sexist humor. A study that exposed a college man to a male confederate who engaged in sexual harassment or was generally sexist found that the participant subsequently told more sexually oriented jokes to a female student (Angelone et al., 2005).

**Hypermasculinity** has been linked to sexual aggression (Murnen et al., 2002) as well as **hostile sexism** to tolerance of sexual harassment (Russell & Trigg, 2004), to men's rape proclivity and misperceptions that rape victims really wanted it (Abrams et al., 2003), and to rape myth acceptance (Chapleau et al., 2007). Interestingly, what has been found to underlie men's hostile sexism is their own feelings of inadequacy (Cowan & Mills, 2004) and threats to men's "precarious manhood" (Vandello et al., 2008).

Thus a climate that disinhibits sexist behaviors can be established subtly by others' behaviors or overtly by outspoken objections. Women who confront sexist remarks tend to be liked and respected by other women, but can be disliked by college men (Saunders & Senn, 2009). Furthermore, although women hypothetically believe they will confront male perpetrators of **sexist prejudice**, they actually are unlikely to do so when the social costs are high (Shelton & Stewart, 2004). Pro-feminist men can play a supportive role here by addressing incidents of sexism themselves as well as by openly supporting women who do.

**Objectification** of women also has been tied to violence. For example, men who viewed R-rated movie scenes that portrayed women enjoying or responsible for either stranger or date rape felt that a subsequent magazine account of rape was less objectionable (Millburn et al., 2000). Taking one step does not necessarily lead to the others, but each step does set up the possibility of moving up the continuum of male dominance and violence. By avoiding those first steps, and by challenging ourselves and others when we do, we *all* could get at the root causes of violence against women.

## ACTIVISM

In each of the examples of personal and relationship empowerment we explored here, we saw that the picture was incomplete if we didn't expand our vision beyond the individual or relationship levels. Gender-role transcendence indeed moves individuals away from gendered-typed thinking and behaviors, but when enacted within a gender-schematic social context, different behaviors easily can be regarded as deviant, rather than as models for social change. Similar scenarios emerged from our discussions of empowerment in heterosexual dating, marital, and working relationships; empowered well-being; and violence avoidance. Individual solutions cannot exist alone without consideration of broader societal forces. Here's where activism enters the scene.

### *Definition and History*

In the 1970s and through the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1982, it was clear what the mainstream, large-scale U.S. feminist issues were. Feminist organizations

(the National Organization for Women, National Abortion Rights Action League, Women's Equity Action League, Women's Legal Defense Fund, and the National Women's Political Caucus) flourished, as did grass-roots consciousness raising and political and social action groups (battered women's shelters, rape-crisis centers, and job-training programs). Women's Studies programs spread on college campuses, the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision seemed to protect abortion rights, the Equal Rights Amendment<sup>3</sup> sailed through both houses of Congress after a long dormancy (it was first introduced in 1923) and racked up the support of 35 states (needing just three more for final ratification), affirmative action laws passed, and so on. Doing feminist activism seemed clear during this period, considered the heyday of the contemporary wave of feminism (Ryan, 1992; Taylor & Whittier, 1997).

After the defeat of the ERA, some political analysts argued that **feminism** died, offering contradictory arguments that it both outlived its usefulness and succumbed to its whimsy. It is not uncommon to now hear about a "post-feminist" period. Indeed, the 1980s saw a decline in both formal and informal feminist organizations, and the political climate shifted away from values of equality, human rights, and social justice—igniting a backlash directed against feminism and its gains during the 1970s (Faludi, 1991; Taylor & Whittier, 1997). Recognizing all this complexity, feminist analysts, like Verta Taylor and Nancy Whittier (1997), are not so pessimistic (or so naively optimistic to think that a feminist agenda is no longer necessary). Instead, they describe a post-heyday period of abeyance.

Taylor and Whittier (1997) argue that social movements go into **abeyance** in order to hold out during periods of hostility toward their ideology. Applied to contemporary feminism, this is reflected in the lower profile recently adopted by many feminists, although there have been significant exceptions—the 300,000 to 600,000 person-strong march in Washington in 1989 to protest restrictions on abortion and women's participation internationally in sociopolitical movements in Arab countries. U.S. feminism in the 1990s has established strong links to other political causes, ranging from peace to environmental, lesbian and gay, AIDS, anti-violence, and labor union movements (Paul, 1993). It offers within each an approach that includes and empowers women and men. Consciousness-raising activities continue in classes, in books such as this one, and from one generation to the next. Additionally, some of the tenets of feminism have so permeated Western cultures that we barely notice them, taking for granted everything from married couples with different last names and separable credit ratings to the viability of women political candidates. A parallel pattern of changing foci describes the recent history of feminist psychology (Rutherford et al., 2010). Feminism isn't dead; it's just not as visible as it was at other times. With a little digging, feminist activism comes within one's reach—both within psychology and beyond.

### *Being an Activist*

There obviously are women and men who are committed to feminist causes in the socio-political arena. However, politics itself is stereotyped as male (see Box 14.6), and indeed women's leadership in politics is often more precarious than men's (Ryan et al., 2010). Women tend to come into politics through more circuitous routes than men, often starting with local community participation (Bond et al., 2008). Indeed, women's political partici-

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<sup>3</sup>The full text of the ERA states: "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article. The amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification."

## Box 14.6

Do you know the answers to the following questions about U.S. politics?

- Whose responsibility is it to determine if a law is constitutional or not: The president, the Congress, or the Supreme Court?
- How many years is the term of office for a U.S. Senator?

Matthew McGlone and his colleagues (2006) asked college students questions about their political knowledge like these general ones as well as more time-specific ones (Name one U.S. senator from your home state). They activated stereotype threat by telling participants that their test is diagnostic of gender differences and by using a male phone interviewer. As they predicted, men scored higher than women on the test, and this overall effect was moderated both by how the test was described and by the interviewer's sex. Women scored significantly lower than men in the diagnostic condition and when interviewed by a man, but they found no differences in women's and men's scores in the non-diagnostic condition and with a female interviewer. Their findings confirm their speculation that indeed politics is stereotyped as a male-appropriate domain.

Answers: Supreme Court; 6 years

pation is likely to be more private than men's more direct and active participation in political parties (Coff & Bolzendahl, 2010).

Comparing rank-and-file political activists to nonactivists, feminist activists tend to be better educated, not live in the South, belong to voluntary organizations, work in the labor force, have fewer children, and believe in nontraditional political roles for women, abortion rights, the importance of women's rights, and the trustworthiness of others (Dauphinais et al., 1992). Interestingly in this study, there were a few activists who weren't strongly committed feminists, but rather who were pulled into supporting the women's movement by friends, their affiliation with voluntary organizations, and their experiences in the workforce.

Beyond being politically active, what else can we each do to contribute to feminist activism? First steps obviously involve developing, expanding, and refining our own feminist identity and personal empowerment. Part of this includes adopting the simple label of "feminist" to describe one's self (Zucker, 2004). As we have already seen, adopting the label of being feminist is more important than holding feminist beliefs per se in predicting participation in feminist activities (Yoder et al., 2011), and this relationship between self-labeling and activism holds up across Baby Boomers (born between 1943 and 1960) and Generation Xers (1961 and 1975) (Duncan, 2010). Additionally, self-labeled feminists are more likely to acknowledge the existence of sexism, see injustice in the present gender system, and believe that women should join together to bring about social change (Liss & Erchull, 2010). Having an elevated sense of women's entitlement to social justice is strongly associated with awakening to feminism (as part of the revelation stage of feminist identity development) (Yoder et al., 2011).

As we saw in Chapter 1, there are some strong negative cultural stereotypes that can make acceptance of the feminist label a risky proclamation. Women's feminist identity is threatened by homophobia, which links feminism with homosexuality as a means to disparage both (Frye, 1992); by stereotyping that predicts family-role failure for feminist activists (Rickabaugh, 1995); by sanctions against women's expression of anger, which

is a key emotional ingredient for motivating activism (Hercus, 1999); and by justifiable fears that claiming a feminist identity will make one an outsider in some contexts (Griffin, 1994). (The last of these is offset by becoming an insider in feminist contexts; Smith, 1999.) Women who take notice of discrimination are women who are willing to risk losing social approval (Kobryniewicz & Branscombe, 1997) and who are more politically engaged (Bernstein, 2005). For men, feminist identification is undermined by de-masculinizing stereotyping, but this process may be counteracted by men's positive **communion** (Toller et al., 2004) as well as women's expectations that feminist men will be favorably oriented toward family (Rickabaugh, 1995).

Gloria Steinem (1983) offers an amazingly empowering yet simple strategy for individuals to do—engage in “outrageous acts and everyday rebellions” for the cause of social justice. She contends, and I agree, that having done one act, the world will seem different and you'll want to do more. She gives some examples to get the ball rolling (e.g., making public your salary; challenging some bit of woman-hating, homophobic, or racist humor), but feel free to brainstorm and try out your own. For example, use nonsexist language (Parks & Robertson, 2000), consider hyphenating your last name (Forbes et al., 2002), and routinely use “Ms.” as a title that, like “Mr.,” doesn't make assumptions about age and marital status (Lawton et al., 2003). A resource for such ideas is Donna Jackson's (1992) intriguing book, *How to Make the World a Better Place for Women in Five Minutes a Day*.

There are plenty of outrageous acts you can do as a student. In psychology, some examples include doing a paper on a “forgotten” woman psychologist for your history course; giving a presentation on sexist bias in therapy in a psychopathology course; joining a professional organization for women (see Chapter 2 for ideas); and generally resisting the aspects of the discipline that run counter to feminist ideology and practice (see Kitzinger, 1990). At a more involved level, you can help out with feminist research being conducted by your faculty and graduate students.<sup>4</sup> By taking women's studies classes, you cast a vote for their inclusion in the curriculum (Coulson & Bhavnani, 1990). Challenge the discipline of psychology, as well as the general academic curriculum, to be feminist (see Ussher, 1990). As you can see, many of these acts are simple things that don't consume time or financial resources. Rather, they simply require some attention to details in your everyday life that can make a difference.

A major point repeated throughout this chapter is the need to see activism beyond the individual level to encompass the collective. However, as Erika Appelbaum (1999) points out in a reprinted article, this is easier said than done. Fundamental to understanding power differences between women and men is the recognition that although women are marked and identifiable as women, women (because they are subordinated) do not share a common identity as a unified group. Within such **androcentric** dictates, THE group is men. Women exist as a deviation from this norm, not as a group in and of themselves. This “de-grouping” of women mediates against the collective unification needed to bring about change.

Critics, overlooking Appelbaum's point about the basic nature of domination, often blame feminists themselves for undermining the unification of women. The heyday of American feminism was remiss in acknowledging and learning from differences among feminist women and men (Taylor & Whittier, 1997). Since then, feminists have become

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<sup>4</sup>Look for research with activist roots; that is, research that specifies how specific situations and social structures treat women and men differently, that suggest ideas for social change (Riger, 2000c), and that gives back to the community in which it was conducted (Russell & Bohan, 1999).

more tuned into a paradox of difference; that is, recognition that awareness of diversity can lead to better understandings and, ultimately, to unity (or “re-grouping” in Appelbaum’s terms) (see Greenwood, 2008). It also is this understanding that makes feminism more of an approach, a way of seeing the world that can permeate many arenas—personal, political, social, economic, educational, organizational, and so on—as well as unify diverse women (Settles et al., 2008). There are a wide range of examples of how women working together change things (see for example, Bookman and Morgen, 1988; Fonow, 1998; Taylor & Whittier, 1998; 1999). This is true in psychology as well (Tiefer, 1991; Wilkinson, 1990; Unger et al., 2010).

Thus, my ultimate challenge to you (and for me as well) is to take what we talked about here and to be mindful about making a difference. We can follow the path of least resistance by giving in to the powerful systems of inequality that privilege and oppress us, that divide us into in-groups and out-groups, and that serve to disrupt our fundamentally human connections. Or we can empower ourselves—personally, in our relationships, and by working collectively to challenge and change these social structures. Each of us CAN make a difference.



*The Welder*

Cherrie Moraga

I am a welder.  
 Not an alchemist.  
 I am interested in the blend  
 of common elements to make  
 a common thing.

No magic here.  
 Only the heat of my desire to fuse  
 what I already know  
 exists. Is possible.

We plead to each other,  
*we all come from the same rock*  
*we all come from the same rock*  
 ignoring the fact that we bend  
 at different temperatures  
 that each of us is malleable  
 up to a point.

Yes, fusion is possible  
 but only if things get hot enough—  
 all else is temporary adhesion,  
 patching up.

It is the intimacy of steel melting  
 into steel, the fire of our individual  
 passion to take hold of ourselves  
 that makes sculpture of our lives,  
 builds buildings.

And I am not talking about skyscrapers,  
 merely structures that can support us  
 without fear  
 of trembling.

For too long a time  
 the heat of my heavy hands  
 has been smoldering  
 in the pockets of other  
 people's business—  
 they need oxygen to make fire.

I am now  
 coming up for air.  
 Yes, I *am*  
 picking up the torch.  
 I am the welder.  
 I understand the capacity of heat  
 to change the shape of things.  
 I am suited to work  
 within the realm of sparks  
 out of control.

I am the welder.  
 I am taking the power  
 into my own hands.

## SUGGESTED READINGS

Schreiber, R. (2002). Injecting a woman's voice: Conservative women's organizations, gender consciousness, and the expression of women's policy preferences. *Sex Roles, 47*, 331–342.

Ronnee Schreiber explores how two conservative political groups talk about women, gender differences, and gender consciousness while pursuing political goals antithetical to a feminist agenda, raising questions about how gender consciousness relates to feminism and is translated into political action.

Bart, P. B., & O'Brien, P. H. (1997). Stopping rape: Effective avoidance strategies. In L. Richardson, V. Taylor, & N. Wittier (Eds.), *Feminist Frontiers IV* (pp. 410–420). New York: McGraw Hill.

This reprint of an article originally published in 1984 remains germane. Pauline Bart and Patricia O'Brien present data from 94 interviews with women, who when attacked either avoided being raped or were raped to give women realistic advice about what to do, and not do, if threatened with sexual assault.

Hydén, M. (2005). "I must have been an idiot to let it go on": Agency and positioning in battered women's narrative of leaving. *Feminism & Psychology, 15*, 169–188.

Margareta Hydén followed 10 battered Swedish women who came to a women's shelter across 2 years to explore how they talked about their decisions to stay or leave, highlighting individual variations in their narratives and the importance of their own agency or empowerment.

Sharpe, S. (2001). Going for it: Young women face the future. *Feminism & Psychology, 11*, 177–181.

Twenty years later, Sue Sharper revisits the schools she studied in the 1970s and again explores girls' and boys' views about feminism, careers, and relationships. She not only provides a barometer about contemporary attitudes, but also describes how these have changed and remained the same across two generations. This article is a good springboard to discuss how realistic some of their expectations are.

Steinem, G. (1983). Far from the opposite shore. In *Outrageous acts and everyday rebellions* (pp. 341–362). New York: Holt.

I still find this chapter from Gloria Steinem's book inspiring because it makes doing feminism a part of everyday life.

*Psychology's Feminist Voices* <http://www.feministvoices.com>

This project, directed by Alex Rutherford at York University, is a great resource for reading about (in "Women Past") and for actually hearing the voices of (through videotaped interviews published online in "Feminist Presence"). Influential women in the history of the psychology of women and gender *Pray the Devil Back to Hell praythedevilbacktohell.com*

This award-winning documentary chronicles the women's movement in Liberia, Africa, which is credited with helping to bring an end to that country's long and bloody civil war

in 2003 and usher in the election of Africa's first modern woman president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (a 2011 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize). This video speaks to the empowerment of women and tells an inspiring story of how diverse women can come together to make an important difference.