10.S: Conclusion and Exercises

In 1968, a cigarette company in the United States decided to target women as tobacco consumers and used a clever marketing campaign to entice them to take up smoking. “You’ve come a long way, baby!” billboards proclaimed. Women, according to the carefully constructed rhetoric, had moved away from their historic oppressed status and could—and should—now enjoy the full complement of twentieth-century consumer pleasures. Like men, they deserved to enjoy themselves and relax with a cigarette. The campaigns were extremely successful; within several years, smoking rates among women had increased dramatically. But had women really come a long way? We now know that tobacco (including in vaporized form) is a highly addictive substance and that its use is correlated with a host of serious health conditions. In responding to the marketing rhetoric, women moved into a new sphere of bodily pleasure and possibly enjoyed increased independence, but they did so at a huge cost to their health. They also succumbed to a long-term financial relationship with tobacco companies who relied on addicting individuals in order to profit. Knowing about the structures at work behind the scenes and the risks they took, few people today would agree that women’s embrace of tobacco represented a huge step forward.

Perhaps saying “You’ve come a long way, baby!” with the cynical interpretation with which we read it today can serve as an analogy for our contemporary explorations of gender and culture. Certainly, many women in the United States today enjoy heightened freedoms. We can travel to previously forbidden spaces, study disciplines long considered the domain of men, shape our families to meet our own needs, work in whatever field we choose, and, we believe, live according to our own wishes. But we would be naive to ignore how gender continues to shape, constrain, and inform our lives. The research and methods of anthropology can help us become more aware of the ongoing consequences of our gendered heritage and the ways in which we are all complicit in maintaining gender ideologies that limit and restrict people’s possibilities.

By committing to speak out against subtle, gender-based discrimination and to support those struggling along difficult paths, today’s anthropologists can emulate pioneers such as Franz Boas and Margaret Mead, who sought to fuse...
research and action. May we all be kinder to those who differ from the norm, whatever that norm may be. Only then will we all—women, men and those who identify with neither category—have truly come a long way. (But we will leave the infantilizing “baby” to those tobacco companies!)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is “natural” about how you experience gender and human sexuality? What aspects are at least partially shaped by culture? How do other cultures’ beliefs and practices regarding gender and sexuality differ from those commonly found in the United States? Are there any parallels? Does it depend on which U.S. community we are talking about? What about your own beliefs and practices?

2. Reflect on the various ways you have “learned” about gender and sexuality throughout your life. Which influences do you think had the biggest impact?

3. How important is your gender to how you think about yourself, to your “identity” or self-definition, to your everyday life? Reflect on what it would be like to be a different gender.

4. How important is your “sexuality” and “sexual orientation” to how you think about yourself, to your identity or self-definition? Reflect on what it would be like if you altered your sexual identity or practices.

5. In what ways have your school settings been shaped by and around gender norms?

6. How are anthropologists influenced by gender norms? How has this affected the discipline of anthropology?

GLOSSARY

- Androgyny: cultural definitions of gender that recognize some gender differentiation, but also accept “gender bending” and role-crossing according to individual capacities and preferences.
- Binary model of gender: cultural definitions of gender that include only two identities—male and female.
- Biologic sex: refers to male and female identity based on internal and external sex organs and chromosomes. While male and female are the most common biologic sexes, a percentage of the human population is intersex with ambiguous or mixed biological sex characteristics.
- Biological determinism: a theory that biological differences between males and females leads to fundamentally different capacities, preferences, and gendered behaviors. This scientifically unsupported view suggests that gender roles are rooted in biology, not culture.
- Cisgender: a term used to describe those who identify with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.
- Dyads: two people in a socially approved pairing. One example is a married couple.
- Gender: the set of culturally and historically invented beliefs and expectations about gender that one learns and performs. Gender is an “identity” one can choose in some societies, but there is pressure in all societies to conform to expected gender roles and identities.
- Gender ideology: a complex set of beliefs about gender and gendered capacities, propensities, preferences, identities and socially expected behaviors and interactions that apply to males, females, and other gender categories. Gender ideology can differ among cultures and is acquired through enculturation. Also known as a cultural model of gender.
- Heteronormativity: a term coined by French philosopher Michel Foucault to refer to the often-unnoticed system of rights and privileges that accompany normative sexual choices and family formation.
- Legitimizing ideologies: a set of complex belief systems, often developed by those in power, to rationalize, explain, and perpetuate systems of inequality.
• Matrifocal: groups of related females (e.g. mother-her sisters-their offspring) form the core of the family and constitute the family's most central and enduring social and emotional ties.

• Matrilineal: societies where descent or kinship group membership is transmitted through women, from mothers to their children (male and female), and then through daughters, to their children, and so forth.

• Matrilocal: a woman-centered kinship group where living arrangements after marriage often center around households containing related women.

• Patriarchy: describes a society with a male-dominated political and authority structure and an ideology that privileges males over females in domestic and public spheres.

• Patrifocal: groups of related males (e.g. a father-his brothers) and their male offspring form the core of the family and constitute the family’s most central and enduring social and emotional ties.

• Patrilineal: societies where descent or kinship group membership is transmitted through men, from men to their children (male and female), and then through sons, to their children, and so forth.

• Patrilocal: a male-centered kinship group where living arrangements after marriage often center around households containing related men.

• Third gender: a gender identity that exists in non-binary gender systems offering one or more gender roles separate from male or female.

• Transgender: a category for people who transition from one sex to another, either male-to-female or female-to-male.

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1: How Does Gender Shape Your Life?

Think about everything, and we do mean everything, you did since waking up this morning. Include micro-behaviors, tiny behavioral acts that take minutes or even seconds, as well as objects, substances, and language, spoken and written. Think about all the “cultural” (i.e. not found “in nature”) artifacts associated with these behaviors. For example, while urinating is natural, your “toilet” is a cultural invention. Now, which activities and behaviors were in some way “gendered”? That is, which had an element associated with “female” or “male” in some way?

As you think about how gender has shaped your life today, consider:

• What did you sleep in?
• How did you handle bodily functions?
• How did you clean yourself?
• How did you modify your body? (e.g. “shaving”, “makeup,” “deodorant”)  
• What do the names for products, like deodorants, perfumes or aftershave, convey?

List all these gendered (and gender-neutral) aspects of your day thus far. Also consider: how typical is today? Would a weekend involve more or less “gendered” dimensions?

Activity 2. Understanding Gender from a Martian Perspective.

If you were a Martian, what would you have to “know” or “learn” in order to follow gender rules on a college campus? As you consider your response, think about the following questions.
In what ways are we a gender “binary” culture? An “opposite sex” culture? An “androgynous” culture?

Are areas of U.S. life informally sexually segregated? Are there, informally, “male” and “female” spheres? Are there male spheres where women are not supposed to go? Or spheres where if they go, they incur certain risks? Are there any parallels for men who enter female spheres?

Are there any elements of an “honor” and “shame” culture in the U.S. that a Martian should be aware of? What about in your own social circle?

**Activity 3. Ethnographic Interview: How has Gender Changed Over Time?**

Interview someone at least age 65 (if you are close to 65, find someone a generation older or younger than you). Ask that person: What kind of changes in gender roles, gender relations, gender restrictions or privileges have occurred within your lifetime? After you conclude your interview, compare notes with others to find common threads. Then ask someone closer to your age what changes they anticipate may happen their lifetime?

**Activity 4. Bathroom Transgression.**

Transgender people often face dilemmas when needing to use public restrooms. As a way to experience what it’s like to be an ally, some people have started intentionally using bathrooms designated for others—an issue that took on a heightened relevance in 2016, when North Carolina banned transgender people from using sex-segregated bathrooms that did not correspond to the sex registered on their birth certificates. As part of this activity, consider whether you dare enter the bathroom you don’t normally use. If you do, then try it! What happens when you enter the men’s room, or the women’s room? How are these boundaries patrolled and enforced? Many European countries offer unisex facilities; do you think the U.S. should do so as well? Or do you agree with some politicians in North Carolina who cited safety concerns for public restroom use by transgender individuals?

Note: keep safety in mind if you choose this activity, and beware of settings where people may be hostile to an experiment like this.

**Activity 5. Analyzing Gendered Stereotypes and Masculinity in Music Videos.**

Popular culture plays an enormous role in shaping our ideas about gender, about femininity and masculinity, and about sexuality. Watch several of the videos below, paying careful attention to how these concepts are visible in current music videos. Do they draw on gendered stereotypes or push boundaries of expected gendered norms? Specify which videos you watched in your response, and also look for examples of other videos that could stimulate fruitful conversations about masculinity, femininity and other gender dynamics.

Watch Maddi & Tae, “Girl in a Country Song.” This song is partly a response to Blake Shelton—“Boys ’Round Here,” and Florida Georgia Line—“Get your Shine On.” What do you think of Maddi & Tae’s portrayal of men in their video? How does it compare with portrayals of women in videos by Blake Shelton and Florida Georgia Line?

Compare “Bitch in Business” (created by MBA students), to “Girl in a Country Song.” Pay particular attention to the third and fourth verses of “Bitch in Business.” Would you change any lyrics, or do you think they are justified? What about the word “Bitch” itself? Is it problematic? In what ways? Do words matter? Can you really change the historically negative...
associations of a word, like "bitch" or "slut"? Are there parallels to ethnic slurs?

Compare Niki Minaj and Lady Gaga: how do they deploy gender in their songs, lyrics and videos? How do their strategies compare to a male artist from a similar genre?


Should the music video industry be regulated and if so, in what ways and why? Does it make a difference if the videos are frequently consumed by (and marketed to) young people, pre-teens and teens, rather than adults who have a more fully-developed personal sense of identity? What concerns might you as a parent have?

For further exploration and analysis, view the video, Hip-Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes (http://www.mediaed.org/). Do you think the analysis provided by filmmaker Byron Hurt can be applied to these music videos?

Also view Dreamworlds 3 (http://www.mediaed.org/), which analyzes the stories told in popular culture about gender and sexuality. How well does this analysis apply to contemporary videos, including the ones that you've just viewed?

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Educational Media Companies and Distributors:


Media Education Foundation. http://www.mediaed.org/ Focuses on contemporary USA culture, with a wide range of videos analyzing mass media, popular culture, and advertising. Videos often include teaching guides.

Women Make Movies. www.wmm.com. Wide range of films/videos by women filmmakers on diverse topics, social groups, both within the US and throughout the world. One of the earliest distributors of films on gender.

Women’s Media Center. www.womensmediacenter.com/ More U.S.-centered resources, especially contemporary issues of women’s representation in the media.

Some Key Accessible Readings by Anthropologists:


reader for students and non-specialist readers. Includes a wide range of articles, often adapted from longer academic articles.


Some Useful Organizational Websites

American Men’s Studies Association

Association for Feminist Anthropology, American Anthropological Association

VOICES: Journal of the Association for Feminist Anthropology

Book reviews from the Association for Feminist Anthropology

Association for Queer Anthropology

Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University

Feminist Majority Foundation

Guttmacher Center (Research on reproductive health)

National Women’s Studies Association

Planned Parenthood

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Mukhopadhyay specializes in gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and culture-cognition, with research in the USA and India on gendered families, politics, and science-engineering. In graduate school she co-created one of the earliest gender-culture courses. She has developed numerous gender classes and taught, for 20 years, a popular anthropology and gender-oriented, multi-section Human Sexuality course. Gender-related publications include: Cognitive Anthropology Through a Gendered Lens (2011). How Exportable are Western Theories of Gendered Science? (2009). A Feminist Cognitive Anthropology: The Case of Women and Mathematics (2004), Women, Education and Family Structure in India (1994, with S. Seymour). She co-authored an early Annual Review of Anthropology article on gender (1988) and is in the Association for Feminist Anthropology. In other work, she served as a Key Advisor for the AAA RACE project; co-authored How Real is Race: A Sourcebook on Race, Culture and Biology, (2nd Edition, 2014) and promotes active learning approaches to teaching about culture (cf.2007).
Tami Blumenfield is Assistant Professor of Asian Studies at Furman University and was a 2016 Fulbright Scholar affiliated with Yunnan University. Since 2001, she has been engaged in a long-term ethnographic fieldwork project in northwest Yunnan Province, studying changes in education, social life, and ecology in Na communities. Blumenfield is the co-editor of Cultural Heritage Politics in China, with Helaine Silverman (2013), and of Doing Fieldwork in China...With Kids! with Candice Cornet (2016). Blumenfield also produced Some Na Ceremonies, a Berkeley Media film by Onci Archei and Ruheng Duoji. Blumenfield holds a PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of Washington.

Susan Harper, Ph.D., is an educator, activist, and advocate in Dallas, Texas. She holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from Southern Methodist University and a Graduate Certificate in Women’s Studies from Texas Woman’s University. Her ethnographic research focuses on New Religious Movements, primarily NeoPaganism, in the American South; the intersection of gender, sexuality, and religious identity; and sex, sexuality, and sex education. Her work has been published in the Journal of Bisexuality. Susan is passionate about a variety of social justice causes, including domestic and intimate partner violence prevention and recovery, sexual assault prevention and recovery, LGBTQ equality and inclusion, and educational justice. She has given presentations on LGBTQ+ equality and inclusion to a variety of audiences, including the North Texas Society of Human Resource Managers, The Turning Point Rape Crisis Center, and various religious organizations. She teaches courses in anthropology, sociology, and Women’s and Gender Studies at various universities and colleges in the DFW area. She also serves as Graduate Reader/Editor for Texas Woman’s University. She is currently working on an autoethnography about burlesque and visual anthropology project exploring the use of Pinterest by practitioners of NeoPaganism.


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NOTES

1. The Introduction and much of the material in the Foundations segment draws upon and synthesizes

https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Under_Construction/Book%3A_Perspectives_-_An_Open_Invitation_to_Cultural_Anthropology/...
Mukhopadhyay’s decades of research, writing, and teaching courses on culture, gender, and human sexuality. Some of it has been published. Other material comes from lecture notes. See http://www.sjsu.edu/people/carol.mukhopadhyay.

2. We use quotation marks here and elsewhere in the chapter to alert readers to a culturally specific, culturally invented concept in the United States. We need to approach U.S. cultural inventions the same way we would a concept we encountered in a foreign, so-called “exotic” culture.


5. Material in the following paragraphs comes from Mukhopadhyay, unpublished Human Sexuality lecture notes.


10. Some feminist scholars have also questioned the “naturalness” of the biological categories male and female. See for example, Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1999 [1990]).

11. For genital similarities, see Janet S. Hyde and John D. DeLamater, Understanding Human Sexuality (McGraw Hill, 2014), 94–101. For more parallels, see Mukhopadhyay’s online Human Sexuality course materials, at www.sjsu.edu/people/carol.mukhopadhyay.

12. For some idea of the enormous variability in human physical characteristics, see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 in C. Mukhopadhyay, R. Henze, and Y. Moses, How Real is Race: Race, Culture and Biology (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014).

13. Information about alternative gender roles in pre-contact Native American communities can be found in Martha Ward and Monica Edelstein, A World Full of Women (Boston: Pearson, 2013). Also, see the 2011 PBS Independent Lens film Two Spirits for an account of the role of two-spirit ideology in Navajo communities, including the story of a Navajo teenager who was the victim of a hate crime because of his two-spirit identity.


17. Beverly Chinas, personal communication with Mukhopadhyay. See also her writings on Isthmus Zapotec women such as: Beverly Chinas, The Isthmus Zapotecs: A Matrifocal Culture of Mexico (New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers 1997). For a film on this culture, see Maureen Gosling and Ellen Osborne, Blossoms of Fire, Film (San Francisco: Film Arts Foundation, 2001).
19. More information about the Nu shu writing system can be found in the film by Yue-Qing Yang, Nu Shu: A Hidden Language of Women in China (New York: Women Make Movies, 1999).
24. See http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03k6k0h. Some women are posing with photos of menstrual pads and hashtags #happytobleed: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/wo...a6748396.html.
32. For more details, see the film by Leslee Udwin, India’s Daughter (Firenze, Italy: Berta Film). The Wikipedia article about the film notes the reluctance of the Indian government to air the film in India, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India’s_Daughter.
33. For a critique of the “myth” of the medieval chastity belt, see http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/sex...mens-genitalia.
34. See for example, the film by Sabiha Sumar, Silent Waters (Mumbai, India: Shringar Film). While this is not a documentary, the film reflects the tumultuous history of the partition into two countries.
42. For powerful documentaries see, the film by Nishta Jain, Gulabi Gang (Stavanger, Norway: Kudos Family Distribution, 2012); and the film by Kim Longinotto, Pink Saris (New York: Women Make Movies, 2011).
46. For example, the major symposium on Man the Hunter sponsored by Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research included only four women among more than sixty listed participants. See Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, Man the Hunter (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1972[1968]), xiv–xvi.
47. Mukhopadhyay, Lecture Notes, Human Sexuality, Gender and Culture.
49. Ibid., 303.
57. See Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, eds. Man the Hunter (Chicago: Aldine Atherton, 1972[1968]).
64. Mauma Downie and Christina Gladwin, Florida Farm Wives: They Help the Family Farm Survive (Gainesville: Food and Resource Economics Department, University of Florida, 1981).
66. See www.momsrising.org for some contemporary examples of the challenges and obstacles workplaces pose for working mothers, as well as efforts to advocate for improved accommodation of parenting and working.
69. Ibid.
71. Carol C. Mukhopadhyay, Yolanda Moses and Rosemary Henze, How Real is Race?, Chapter 9.
74. Elizabeth Fernea, Guests of the Sheik.
75. See the film Maasai Women, 1980.
77. See https://contemporaryfamilies.org/the...-brief-report/ and https://www.pri.org/stories/
80. 79. See reviews in Naomi Quinn, “Anthropological Studies of Women’s Status,” Annual Review of Anthropology 6
83. For an alternative ethnographic, research based video see Nlai: The Story of a !Kung Woman. 1980.
85. Ibid.
94. The following analysis was developed by Mukhopadhyay in scholarly papers and in lecture notes.

98. This analysis was developed by Mukhopadhyay in scholarly papers and in lecture notes. An example of this pattern from Iran is Mary E. Hegland, Days of Revolution.


101. One 1970s male pilot, when asked about why there were no women pilots, said, without thinking, “Because women aren’t strong enough to fly the plane!” He then realized what he’d said and laughed. From Mukhopadhyay, field notes, 1980.


104. Mukhopadhyay, lecture notes, Gender and Culture.


114. Women’s political power, when exerted, may go unnoticed by the global media. For an example, see the documentary Pray the Devil to Hell on women’s role in forcing Liberian President Charles Taylor from office and leading to the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as President. For an excellent documentary on some of the alternative paths contemporary women in India are taking, see The World before Her. For more on changes in women’s education in India, see Carol C. Mukhopadhyay. 2001. “The Cultural Context of Gendered Science: The Case of India.” Available at [http://www.sjsu.edu/people/carol.mukhopadhyay/papers/](http://www.sjsu.edu/people/carol.mukhopadhyay/papers/).

115. See the excellent film The Purity Myth: The Virginity Movement’s War Against Women. Available through Media Education Foundation.


119. For examples of anti-Clinton rhetoric, see article and associated video at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/...b016f37832c22](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/...b016f37832c22). Figures for numbers of witches killed range from thousands to millions, with most suggesting at least 60,000–80,000 and probably far more. Regardless, it is estimated that 75–80 percent were women. See for example Douglas Linder. 2005. “A Brief History of Witchcraft Persecutions before Salem” [http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/project...hhistory.html](http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/project...hhistory.html) and [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/wi...e-Timeline.htm](http://womenshistory.about.com/od/wi...e-Timeline.htm).

120. Mark DiCamillo of the Field Poll suggested one reason polls were wrong is that female Trump voters hid their actual voting preferences from pollsters. DiCamillo is quoted in Debra J. Saunders. 2016. “How Herd Mentality Blinded Pollsters to Trump Potential.” San Francisco Chronicle. November 13, E3.

121. For a critique of those who “blame” Euro-American (“white”) women for Hillary Clinton’s defeat, see the article by Kelly Dittmar. 2016. “No, Women Didn’t Abandon Clinton, Nor Did She Fail to Win Their Support.” Ms. Magazine. November 14. [http://msmagazine.com/blog/2016/11/1...andon-clinton](http://msmagazine.com/blog/2016/11/1...andon-clinton/).


123. For a powerful video reaction and interpretation of this election, see [https://vimeo.com/191751334](https://vimeo.com/191751334).

124. There is a huge body of research on these (and other) topics that we simply have not been able to cover in one chapter of a book. We hope the material and references we have provided will give readers a starting point for further investigation!

125. Many gender studies scholars have moved away from labeling people “biologically female” or “biologically male,” shifting instead to terms like “assigned female at birth” and “assigned male at birth.” Terms that foreground assignment help recognize the fluidity of gender identity and the existence of intersex people who do not fit neatly into those categories.


127. David Valentine, Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category (Durham, NC: Duke University...


124. 135. Tamara Metz, Untying the Knot: Marriage, the State, and the Case for Their Divorce (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).


142. 144. Ibid.


156. The examples from Turkey come from: “The Biopolitics of the Family in Turkey: neoconservatism, sexuality and reproduction.” Session at 2015 American Anthropological Association meetings, Denver; and from a paper given by Sen Gupta in session 4–0615, “Development, Gender, and the neoliberal Social Imaginary,” at the 2015 American Anthropological Association meetings, Denver. There is a huge body of research on these topics (and others) that we simply could not cover in one chapter. We hope the references we have provided will give readers a starting point for further investigation!


162. Ibid.

163. See Agatha M. Beins and Judith L. Kennedy, Women’s Studies for the Future: Foundations, Interrogations, Politics (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005); Florence Howe and Mari Jo Buhl, The Politics of Women’s Studies: Testimony from the 30 Founding Mothers (The Feminist Press, 2000); Marilyn J. Boxer and


168. 166. See several excellent videos through Media Education Foundation including Dreamworlds 3, Killing Us Softly 4, The Purity Myth as well as those addressing masculinity such as Tough Guise 2, Joystick Warriors, and Hip Hop: Beyond Beats and Rhymes.


