Where has gender psychology been, where is it now, and where is it heading? Psychologists’ understandings of gender clearly change over time, and the observed changes are nuanced and multifaceted, with some facets of gender showing change and some remaining constant. Let’s unpack this point. Consider a recent exchange at a 2017 Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. When Senator Kamala Harris (D-CA) questioned Attorney General Jeff Sessions in a tough, assertive manner—rooted in her background as a career prosecutor—Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Chair Richard Burr (R-NC) interrupted and admonished her. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) subsequently pointed out that, at the same hearing, he was not interrupted for posing tough questions, a pattern many viewed as sexist (Rogers, 2017).

To see how gender psychology can help us make sense of this interchange, let’s revisit the concepts of communion and agency. Recall that communion reflects traits, roles, and behaviors related to warmth, nurturance, and emotional sensitivity (female-typed qualities) and that agency reflects traits, roles, and behaviors related to competence, assertiveness, and status (male-typed qualities) (Kite, Deaux, & Haines, 2008). Research shows that women’s agentic traits—as demonstrated by Senator Harris in her questioning—have increased from the 1970s to the present, while men’s communal traits have not changed substantively (Donnelly & Twenge, 2017).

Even though women have become increasingly more agentic over time, gender trait stereotypes, the traits that we expect women and men to possess, have remained constant. For example, Haines, Deaux, and Lofaro (2016) found communal and agentic gender stereotypes—that associate communal traits with women and agentic traits with men—to be as strong now as they were 30 years ago. As discussed in Chapter 5 (“The Contents and Origins of Gender Stereotypes”), these gender expectations also prescribe how members...
of each sex should be (e.g., men should be competitive, and women should be kind). As a result, individuals who do not conform to them, such as Senator Harris, often face penalties. In fact, as women have shown more agentic and leadership qualities in the paid workforce over time, a trend that threatens the gender status quo, they tend to experience backlash for being too dominant and not likeable enough (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). What will future research show in this area? Will men show increasing levels of communal traits over time? Will the actual traits that men and women possess begin to shape and change gender stereotypes or will the stereotypes remain strong? It will be interesting to follow these developments.

In this chapter, we prompt reflection on where gender psychology has been, where it is now, and where it is heading. We ask you to consider what you learned throughout this book, draw conclusions, and generate new ideas. Understanding our gender past and present, both in terms of the field of gender psychology and the realities of gender in daily life, serves important functions. Reconsidering the past helps us gain perspective in assessing the current state of the field, just as using past and present understandings of sex and gender helps us imagine, predict, and study what the field might look like in the years ahead. We seek to provide a useful framework here for looking forward, along with purposeful summary of the big-picture themes that run throughout the field and this book.

**Gender Past: Where Have We Been?**

What were the major methods and findings of gender psychology in its beginning? In the 19th century, researchers who studied gender used “science” to reinforce the strongly held gender stereotypes of the time. As the study of gender evolved over time, it coincided with and was informed by real-world movements of individuals who advocated for women’s rights and gender equality. When gender psychology emerged as a more coherent field in the 20th century, researchers pushed for more careful methods to test important gender questions. In this section, we will recap each of these eras, tracing the threads that brought us to the field as we know it today (see Table 15.1 for an overview).

As discussed in Chapter 7 (“Cognitive Abilities and Aptitudes”), gender researchers in the 19th century focused mainly on identifying structural brain differences that could explain women’s intellectual inferiority and thereby justify their lower position.
in society (Shields, 1975). That is, the researcher’s preexisting belief (in the intellectual superiority of men) guided and biased the research process, shaping the methods used and conclusions drawn. Given what you learned in Chapter 2 (“Studying Sex and Gender”), you will likely recognize this as a flawed application of the scientific method.

During this era, women began to organize and advocate for their economic, educational, and voting rights. In the mid-19th century, women did not have the right to vote anywhere in the world, and women who pursued higher education routinely faced discrimination. Recall that, in 1896, Harvard denied a PhD to Mary Whiton Calkins, a psychologist of great stature in the field, even though she met all degree requirements (Rutherford & Granek, 2010). In fact, U.S. universities such as Harvard and Princeton did not grant women doctoral degrees until the 1960s. Society generally expected women...
in this era—especially White women of a certain socioeconomic status—to marry, have children, and remain in the domestic sphere. Further, as discussed in Chapter 10 (“Interpersonal Relationships”), marriage tended to bestow significantly more authority and freedom on men, with married women legally transferring their identities, property, and earnings to their husbands (Coontz, 2006). Many women during this era were viewed as fragile, weak, and emotional and often confined to bed during pregnancy (Malone, 2000), as you read about in Chapter 12 (“Gender and Physical Health”). The end of the century revealed some progress, however, as women around the world began gaining the right to vote.

The focus and methods of gender psychology shifted across the 20th century, with mainstream gender psychologists engaging primarily in systematic sex difference research. See Table 15.2 for some of the most notable books on sex differences that shaped and focused the field in its earlier days (Biernat & Deaux, 2012). Through more systematic and careful research, psychologists demonstrated that the evidence did not support women’s intellectual inferiority (Halpern, 2012), which then opened educational doors for women. In contrast to the previous century, research in this era more frequently countered—rather than promoted—gender bias and misconceptions, as the practice of critical thinking and careful gender science increasingly took hold.

Table 15.2  Notable Early Works on Sex Differences in the Field of Gender Psychology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td><em>The Mental Traits of Sex: An Experimental Investigation of the Normal Mind of Men and Women</em></td>
<td>Helen B. Thompson (Woolley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td><em>Sex and Personality: Studies in Masculinity and Femininity</em></td>
<td>Lewis M. Terman and Catharine C. Miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td><em>The Psychology of Sex Differences</em></td>
<td>Eleanor E. Maccoby and Carol N. Jacklin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td><em>The Behavior of Women and Men</em></td>
<td>Kay Deaux</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td><em>Masculinity and Femininity: Their Psychological Dimensions, Correlates, and Antecedents</em></td>
<td>Janet T. Spence and Robert L. Helmreich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td><em>Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities</em></td>
<td>Diane F. Halpern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td><em>Sex Differences in Social Behavior: A Social-Role Interpretation</em></td>
<td>Alice H. Eagly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second half of the 20th century, the push for greater equality in the realms of civil rights, LGBT rights, and women’s rights began to change the shape of U.S. society and gender psychology as well. Feminists seeking equal rights and opportunities for women focused specifically on domestic violence, sexual harassment, pay equality, and reproductive rights, topics that gender psychologists also began to investigate (Rutherford & Granek, 2010). Through these efforts, women gained greater legal protections against domestic violence and gender discrimination in educational and financial domains. Though poor and minority women had always been part of the paid workforce, women’s overall rate of workforce participation steadily increased during this era, the gender wage gap narrowed (AAUW, 2017), and men began investing more time in housework and child-rearing (Parker, 2015).

Despite these advances, many criticized 1970s mainstream gender psychology for being too simplistic in its almost exclusive focus on sex differences. Feminist psychologists argued that this approach ignores the complexity of gender, the differences that exist within the members of each sex, and the influence of status, context, and social interaction on the expression of gendered attributes and behaviors (Curtin, Cortina, Roberts, & Duncan, 2016; hooks, 1981; Lorde, 1984). Following their foremothers bell hooks and Audre Lorde, third-wave feminists and feminist psychologists criticized mainstream gender psychology for too often assuming that all women share a common experience and for failing to include diverse women and identities, specifically in terms of race, class, physical ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Of note, contemporary gender psychologists still wrestle with these issues to this day, as you will read more about in the “Gender Present” section of this chapter.

Stop and Think

Though the earliest studies in psychology examined male-only samples and generalized to all humans, some gender scholars have argued more recently that boys and men—especially poor, working-class, LGBT, and ethnic minority boys and men—are underrepresented in gender research compared with their female counterparts (McCreary & Chrisler, 2010). Why might this be the case? What specific problems does this cause for the field of gender psychology, and how could these problems be addressed?
Across the 20th century, many gender psychologists came to an increasing recognition of the complexity of sex and gender. Instead of viewing gender as a stable quality residing with individuals, some conceptualized it as a more dynamic system of behaviors, shaped by societal institutions and practices, that emerges through social interaction (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Deaux & Major, 1987). These more nuanced conceptualizations of gender helped researchers explain inconsistent findings across different studies, since whether or not sex differences emerge would depend on the context.

In their gender-in-context model, Deaux and Major (1987) proposed that whether sex-typical behavior emerges depends on an interaction of individuals in a given context, each having a set of gender-related beliefs and interaction goals that shape the interaction. For example, imagine a father and daughter interacting in a situation that makes gender salient, such as the daughter taking a practice version of a standardized math test. Suppose also that the father believes girls tend to struggle with math and that the daughter has doubts about her own math ability, despite being capable at math. How this situation plays out—and how the daughter performs on the practice math test—will depend on an interaction of the father's and daughter's belief systems and behaviors in this particular context. In other words, whether the daughter confirms the gender stereotype (performs poorly on the math test) or disconfirms it (performs well on the math test) depends on more than her actual level of math ability.

As this recap of the gender psychology of the past shows, gender researchers gradually shifted over time from biased methods designed to reinforce gender stereotypes to systematic methods designed to understand sex and gender more accurately. Let's now turn our attention from the past to the present and assess the current state of the field. You will see that many of the themes and approaches that emerged in 20th-century gender psychology—such as the increased focus on careful scientific inquiry and within-sex diversity—remain pervasive in present-day gender psychology.

**Gender Present: Where Are We Now?**

What is the state of gender psychology in the 21st century? Since we have already described the current field in detail throughout this book, in this section, we encourage you to reflect upon three central themes in the field. As shown in Figure 15.1, these themes are as follows: (a) thinking critically about sex and gender and conducting systematic research; (b) recognizing how nature and nurture interact in shaping sex and gender; and (c) examining how status, power, and sociocultural diversity shape sex and gender. There is a common thread linking these features: What may seem simple on the surface typically reveals an interesting complexity underneath. As you read this section, try to identify some of the gaps in our current understandings of sex and gender because this will help you make predictions about the direction the field might take.

**Critical Thinking and Systematic Research in Gender Psychology**

In this book, we emphasize the scientific study of sex and gender. As discussed in Chapter 2, scientists engage in an ongoing process of systematic investigation in order
to discover rules and patterns in the way the world works. Most gender psychologists defend science as the best means of understanding sex and gender. Though far from perfect, the scientific method—with its orderly and self-correcting procedures—tends to reduce error and lead to more accurate understandings over time (Halpern et al., 2007). In this section, we briefly examine three specific topic areas to illustrate how critical thinking and careful research have provided some much-needed clarity.

The first row of Table 15.3 addresses the conceptualization of masculinity and femininity. Gender psychologists have struggled for decades to generate valid ways of defining and measuring masculinity and femininity. In these efforts, they tended to do the following: (a) oversimplify masculinity and femininity by construing them as a unidimensional construct and (b) over-rely on one component of gender—sex-typed traits, as measured by the PAQ (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974) and BSRI (Bem, 1974)—to assess masculinity and femininity. This measurement method readily falls apart because an individual’s subjective sense of masculinity and femininity consists of many different, relatively unrelated components, such as sex-typed traits, interests, roles, and attitudes (Spence, 1993; Spence & Buckner, 1995). Through a sustained program of systematic research, Richard Lippa discovered that individuals’ preferences for sex-related occupations, hobbies, and everyday activities (captured in a gender diagnosticity score) served as a better measure of masculinity and femininity and predicted other gender-related outcomes better than the PAQ and BSRI (Lippa, 2005). Building on Lippa’s work, Kachel, Stefens, and Niedlich (2016) recently developed a new Traditional Masculinity-Femininity (TMF) scale, which shows promise. Despite the progress made in this area, many gender researchers continue to use the PAQ and BSRI to measure masculinity and femininity, a practice with documented conceptual and empirical flaws (Fernández & Coello, 2010).
Table 15.3  Thinking Critically About Complex Topics in the Psychology of Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic Area</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Resolution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Conceptualization of masculinity and femininity| • What is the most valid way to define and measure masculinity and femininity?  
• How can researchers avoid oversimplifying these complex constructs?                                                                                                                                  | • Lippa’s (2005) gender diagnosticity approach  
• Kachel, Steffens, and Niedlich’s (2016) Traditional Masculinity-Femininity (TMF) scale                                                                                                        |
| Gender stereotypes and academic performance    | • Are stereotypes about sex differences in math ability valid?  
• Do girls and women underperform boys and men in math?                                                                                                                                                  | • Standardized tests reveal no sex differences in math performance, although girls experience more math anxiety and stereotype threat.  
• Gender stereotypes about math abilities affect girls’ choices to pursue math-related courses and careers.                                                                                  |
| Gender wage gap                                 | • How can we explain the gender wage gap?  
• Is it a fair pay differential or rooted in gender discrimination?                                                                                                                                 | • The gender wage gap is complexly determined and based on many factors.  
• These range from gender-related choices about academic majors and occupations to gender bias and discrimination.                                                                               |

The second row of Table 15.3 addresses gender stereotypes and academic performance. Gender stereotypes tell us that girls and women are naturally less capable than boys in certain academic subjects like math, but critical thinking and careful research demonstrate otherwise. As discussed in Chapter 7 (“Cognitive Abilities and Aptitudes”), recent meta-analyses of data from millions of respondents yielded no sex differences in math performance (Lindberg, Hyde, Peterson, & Linn, 2010). In addition, children’s academic interests are malleable and susceptible to environmental influences, such as when parents transmit their own math anxiety to their children (Maloney, Ramirez, Gunderson, Levine, & Beilock, 2015). Girls tend to have lower math self-confidence and greater math anxiety than boys (Else-Quest, Hyde, & Linn, 2010), and they are susceptible to stereotype threat. When under this threat, members
of negatively stereotyped groups feel anxiety about the possibility of confirming negative stereotypes, which can impact their behavior and lead them to confirm the stereotypes (Steele, 1997). For example, simply asking girls to indicate their sex prior to a math exam can trigger stereotype threat and lead to decreased performance (Stricker & Ward, 2004). In the long run, stereotypes about the math abilities of girls and women can impact their choices regarding math-related courses and careers (Gunderson, Ramirez, Levine, & Beilock, 2012).

The third row of Table 15.3 addresses the gender wage gap, the phenomenon of paying women less than men, typically for the same work. As discussed in Chapter 11 (‘Work and Home’), the 2014 gender earnings ratio in the U.S. was .80, meaning that women’s earnings averaged 20% less than men’s (Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 2016). Gender wage gaps exist in all countries (OECD, 2016) and across all racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., but the size of the gap varies by race and ethnicity (AAUW, 2017). Some argue that this wage gap exists for valid reasons that go beyond gender discrimination, such as women choosing academic majors that lead to relatively low-paid occupations (Carnevale & Cheah, 2013), but systematic research allows us to gain a better understanding of the dynamics contributing to the wage gap. Complex factors determine wages, and researchers have not identified a single cause of the wage gap. The choices people make—about occupations, negotiations, and parenting—contribute to the gap, but gender norms and expectations can constrain these personal choices (e.g., taking parental leave may seem more acceptable for women than for men). Further, the wage gap persists even when we take into account different career choices, educational levels, and time investments in work (AAUW, 2017), pointing to gender bias and discrimination as relevant factors in producing the gap.

Thus, gender psychology—as a science—includes the investigation of gender in a systematic, empirical way in order to identify rules and patterns in the way it operates. Taking this methodical approach can add clarity to areas of the field that have been beset by inconsistencies and oversimplification, as illustrated in Table 15.3.

The Interaction of Nature and Nurture in Shaping Sex and Gender

Throughout this book, we emphasized that biological and sociocultural factors—although conceptually independent—interact in ways that make them difficult to separate. Framing the question in terms of the influence of nature or nurture is overly simplistic because both nature (biological factors) and nurture (sociocultural factors) interact to shape sex
and gender (Wood & Eagly, 2013). Consider the sex difference in physical aggression (Archer, 2004) that we discussed in Chapter 14 (“Aggression and Violence”). How much of this difference stems from biology and how much from socialization, cultural norms, and life experiences? Men do tend to have higher levels of the testosterone, but society also encourages them, more so than women, to engage in physically active and risky behavior. Given the extent to which biological and sociocultural causes of sex differences are intertwined, attempting to disentangle them becomes a challenging exercise for gender researchers.

**Stop and Think**

Why do researchers so often frame the nature-nurture question in either-or terms? Why is this type of thinking appealing if it does not match how nature and nurture interact in reality to shape human behavior? What are some advantages of thinking of the interactive effects of nature and nurture over thinking of the effects of nature and nurture separately?

Intersexuality helps illustrate the complexity of the relationship between nature and nurture. As you may recall from Chapter 3 (“The Nature and Nurture of Sex and Gender”), the biological components of sex (chromosomes, hormones, and internal and external sex organs) in an intersex individual do not consistently fit typical male or typical female patterns. But how do people within a given culture respond to intersex newborns? Do they view them as nature’s “mistakes” and ask surgeons to correct the anomalies? Or do they respect and value the diversity in intersexuality? These disparate worldviews help illustrate the social construction of “biological” sex, meaning that the categories of sex (male, female, and intersex) are not fixed, universal facts in nature but are instead shaped and constructed by different belief systems within specific cultures (Marecek, Crawford, & Popp, 2004). As you might remember, not all cultures enforce a sex binary, with only two options (male or female). For example, two-spirit people, who do not identify as men or women, are valued within Native American cultures (Lang & Kuhnle, 2008).

The following quotation nicely illustrates the reality of sex as a social construction:

Nature doesn’t decide where the category of “male” ends and the category of “intersex” begins, or where the category of “intersex” ends and the category of “female” begins. Humans decide. Humans (today, typically doctors) decide how small a penis has to be, or how unusual a combination of parts has to be, before it counts as intersex. Humans decide whether a person with XXY chromosomes or XY chromosomes and androgen insensitivity will count as intersex. (“What is intersex?” n.d.)

Gender psychologists have begun to reflect the interconnection of nature and nurture by taking increasingly more integrative theoretical approaches. For example,
you may recall that Diane Halpern rejects the nature-nurture dichotomy in her biopsychosocial model and argues that biology and environment mutually influence each other in shaping sex differences and similarities in cognitive abilities (Halpern, 2012). Taking a similarly integrative approach in their biosocial constructionist theory, Alice Eagly and Wendy Wood state that biological differences lead to a division of labor between the sexes, which, in turn, leads to girls/women and boys/men acquiring different skills and behaviors (Wood & Eagly, 2012). Both of these theories thus make room for the complex interconnection of nature and nurture.

### Status, Power, and the Sociocultural Diversity of Gender

Consistently throughout this book, we focused on how status, power, and sociocultural diversity shape gendered identities and experiences. In this section, we first briefly review the important themes of status, power, and intersectionality. We then revisit and highlight the complexity of gender and sexual identities, a topic gaining attention not only in the popular media (see Sidebar 15.1) but in gender psychology as well.

#### Sidebar 15.1: The Gender Revolution

In January of 2017, National Geographic released a special issue titled “Gender Revolution,” which addresses the shifting landscape of gender around the world. A focal article explores the increasing complexity in our understandings of gender identity (Henig, 2017), highlighting children and young adults around the world whose gender identities go beyond the binary. For example, best friends Sandy (12 years old) and Mandy (10 years old) live in Samoa and identify as fa’afafine, adopting a feminine appearance and mannerisms while being anatomically male.

**Status and power.** As you may recall, human societies are hierarchical, with dominant groups having more autonomy and political power and better access to quality food, housing, medical care, education, and jobs than subordinate groups (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). In patriarchal societies—the prevalent societal structure across the globe—men constitute the dominant group and control how society operates. Although
researchers have not found evidence of true *matriarchal* societies, they have documented *matrilineal* societies—such as the Tuareg of Northern Africa—that trace family relationships and ancestry through the mother’s line (Williams, 2015).

Power—the capacity to determine outcomes not only for oneself but for others as well—can be *structural* or *dyadic*. As you may remember from Chapter 6 (“Power, Sexism, and Discrimination”), structural power involves controlling how society operates and how resources get distributed, whereas dyadic power involves choosing relationship partners and controlling relationship interactions and decisions. Men typically hold more structural power than women, but women do not always hold more dyadic power than men (as stereotypes might predict), in part because of men’s ability to use structural power in order to limit women’s dyadic power. And women’s dyadic power in the realms of housework, childcare, and sexual activity varies based on factors such as their own age, ethnicity, education level, and income (Albarracin & Plambeck, 2010).

**Stop and Think**

Recall that cultural ideologies—such as androcentrism, ethnocentrism, and heterocentrism—are beliefs about groups that justify unequal social hierarchies by promoting the interests of those in power (Pratto & Walker, 2004). What are some current examples of androcentrism in the media? Of ethnocentrism? Of heterocentrism? Do these ideologies seem to be on the rise or decline? Support your response with evidence.

At various times throughout history, group-based power imbalances have prompted disempowered groups to organize and advocate for equal and fair treatment. For example, consider the recent #MeToo movement in the U.S. (see Sidebar 15.2), which calls for an end to sex-based harassment and assault. In contrast to individual efforts, collective action consists of behavior enacted on behalf of a group with the goal of improving conditions for the entire group. Cultural ideologies sometimes undermine collective action by leading members of subordinate groups to internalize their lower status. For example, the less structural power women have relative to men across cultures, the more they accept cultural ideologies that perpetuate their relative lack of power (Glick et al., 2004). Before people will disrupt their lives and engage in collective action, they must perceive a level of unfair treatment and group disadvantage such that it triggers anger on behalf of the group, since people typically feel motivated to confront and challenge the sources of their anger (Wright, 2010).

**Sidebar 15.2: The #MeToo Movement**

In 2006, social activist Tarana Burke advocated using the phrase “Me Too” on social media to raise awareness about the sexual abuse experiences of women of color.
After the *New York Times* published a 2017 story about decades of sexual harassment and assault by film producer Harvey Weinstein (Kantor & Twohey, 2017), actress Alyssa Milano brought the idea back, urging women to tweet #MeToo if they had experienced sexual harassment or assault. The hashtag went viral, with over 200,000 women and men tweeting their #MeToo stories within the first 24 hours of Milano’s plea (Schmidt, 2017). Among those accused, the biggest names to date include Harvey Weinstein, Kevin Spacey, Louis C. K., Matt Lauer, and Donald Trump. The accused have faced various consequences, with Weinstein being fired from his film company and expelled from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The #MeToo movement has not gone without criticism, in that it fosters a “guilty until proven innocent” mentality and privileges the experiences of wealthy, educated White women (White, 2017). Even with its flaws, the movement has focused public attention on sexual harassment and assault in such a sustained way that *Time* magazine named these silence breakers as its 2017 “Person of the Year” (Zacharek, Dockterman, & Edwards, 2017). It will be interesting to see how long the movement keeps up its momentum and what societal changes result from it.

**Intersectionality.** How well do mainstream gender psychologists address issues of diversity, particularly in terms of race, ethnicity, age, religion, culture, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability? In short, there is room for improvement. In general, psychologists have conducted their research with samples of largely young, White, middle-to-upper class, healthy, cisgender, heterosexual samples (Arnett, 2008). Furthermore, gender researchers—especially those who focus on making
general comparisons between women and men—tend to overlook the reality that not all women share a uniform experience, just as not all men share a uniform experience. This approach disregards the fact that, beyond sex, people simultaneously occupy important identity categories of race, age, religion, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability, a fact emphasized by the concept of intersectionality.

Proponents of intersectionality suggest that a more sophisticated understanding of sex and gender will require psychologists to consider the intersecting identities and oppressions that influence people’s lives (Collins, 2000). Intersectionality refers to the idea that people’s experiences are shaped by multiple, interconnected identities, as well as by the power and privilege associated with these identities (Crenshaw, 1993; McCall, 2005). For example, rather than focusing on how threats to masculinity affect men as a group, an intersectional perspective might focus on how threats to masculinity interact with racism and classism to shape the experiences of poor Latino men. According to this view, examining single identities in isolation (e.g., comparing women and men, without taking other identities into consideration) lacks meaning because it is the intersection of multiple identities that shapes a person (Parent, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2013).

**Diversity in gender and sexual identities.** Throughout this book, we recognize and examine the diversity that exists in gender and sexual identities. Gender identity refers to individuals’ psychological experience of their gender and often—though not always—involves feeling a basic sense of belongingness to a sex category. As discussed in Chapter 1, the gender identity of cisgender individuals matches their assigned sex at birth. Transgender individuals, on the other hand, experience a mismatch between their gender identity and assigned sex at birth, and agender individuals do not feel a sense of belonging to any category of sex. Beyond static identities, gender researchers now recognize more dynamic identities such as gender fluid, which describes people whose gender identities shift over time and depend on the situation.

Sexual orientation refers to peoples’ tendency to develop romantic and sexual attractions to others based on their sex. Examples of different sexual orientation identities include gay, lesbian, bisexual, heterosexual, polysexual, and asexual. You may recall from Chapter 9 (“Sexual Orientation and Sexuality”) that both cisgender and transgender individuals can have any sexual orientation. For example, a cisgender gay man would be biologically male and attracted only to men, whereas a heterosexual transman would be someone who, while assigned female at birth, identifies as a man and feels attraction only to women. Keep in mind, though, that imposing categorical labels on sexual orientation—just like imposing any category labels on individuals—can lead to oversimplification. Since sexual orientation is complex and multidimensional (Herek, 2000), making it fit into a relatively small number of category boxes presents a challenge.

Sexual identity and gender identity influence physical and psychological health. LGB individuals tend to experience greater physical health problems than their heterosexual counterparts (Fredriksen-Goldsen, Kim, Barkan, Muraco, & Hoy-Ellis, 2013), and transgender adults report poorer physical health than their nontransgender LGB peers (Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014), as discussed in Chapter 12 (“Gender and Physical Health). When examining psychological health, sexual minority and transgender individuals have heightened risk for depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, self-injury, and suicidality (Russell & Fish, 2016), as discussed in Chapter 13 (“Gender
and Psychological Health”). Sexual minority individuals who occupy more than one disadvantaged group (recall the double jeopardy hypothesis) experience even greater risk for psychological disorders. For example, since racial and ethnic minority LGB individuals likely experience both homophobia and racism, they face a heightened risk for psychological distress (Syzmanski & Gupta, 2009).

On a more positive note, certain factors—such as parental acceptance and support—can insulate LGBT individuals from these negative outcomes. More specifically, having an accepting family, positive role models, extended social networks, and a supportive community can help defend sexual and gender identity minority individuals against the negative effects of stigma (Fredriksen-Goldsen, Kim, Shiu, Goldsen, & Emlet, 2015; Hatzenbuehler, 2014). And high quality parent–child relationships involving connectedness, support, and warmth serve to buffer sexual and gender minority individuals from experiencing substance abuse, depression, and suicide (Bouris et al., 2010).

**Sidebar 15.3: Transgender Political History**

Danica Roem made political history in November of 2017 by becoming the first openly transgender person to be elected to the Virginia House of Delegates. She defeated the 13-term incumbent Bob Marshall, a delegate who called himself Virginia’s “chief homophobe” and consistently referred to Roem with male pronouns (Olivo, 2017). In her new position as a legislator, Roem will serve as a powerful role model for other transgender individuals.
Gender Future: Where Are We Going?

What will the future of gender psychology look like? Now that we have carefully taken stock of the gender psychology of the past and present, let's think ahead. Where will the scientific study of gender go from here? What are some of the important unanswered questions in the field that you have identified? How should gender researchers address and study these unanswered questions? Beyond the field, what kind of changes do you foresee in how the general public thinks about and embodies gender? How might these changes in society inform or shape the field of gender psychology?

Unanswered Questions

One of the more engaging features of gender psychology (of any science, really) is that testing research questions and seeking answers inevitably raises more questions. In an ideal discipline for the curious, gender psychologists never run out of interesting questions to test empirically. Furthermore, surveying the past to the present shows how quickly the field of gender psychology has evolved, making it an interesting exercise to puzzle over and question where the field might be heading. Since this exercise is relatively open-ended and challenging, we provide some questions here—spanning the scope of the content in this book—that may help guide your thinking.

- The field of gender psychology has increasingly acknowledged nonbinary gender identities. How will this greater inclusivity shape the field over time? What complications or new questions might arise?
- What will become of sex difference research? Will it lose favor or remain relevant in the field? How might it evolve?
- In every era of gender psychology, researchers have shown some degree of bias that influences their research questions, methods, and findings. What are some of the biases that current gender researchers show? How might methods going forward be improved to avoid these biases?
- How might new methodological tools shape the field in the future? For example, how might advances in genetics, endocrinology, and brain imaging inform our understandings of sex and gender?
- Gender researchers have increasingly acknowledged the complex interaction of nature and nurture in their theories. How will researchers advance their understandings of the roles of nature and nurture in shaping sex and gender? How will the nature-nurture debate evolve in gender psychology?
- Do you anticipate that individuals, interactions, contexts (home, school, and workplace), the media, and social institutions will become more or less gender-focused? In what ways? What impact might this have on the research questions and methods of gender psychologists?
• What are some important steps for gender researchers to take in order to form a better understanding of gender identity and sexual orientation? What primary questions remained unanswered?

• What strategies and methods might gender psychologists adopt in their research in order to acknowledge and understand the diversity of the human experience, particularly in terms of race, ethnicity, age, religion, culture, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical ability? How might adopting these strategies change the field?

• How do you think the gender dynamics of friendships, romantic relationships, and marriages will change over time? What will become the most pressing relationship issues for gender psychologists to study?

• How might the findings of gender psychologists be applied to decrease gender stereotypes, gender discrimination, and sex-based aggression? How might their findings be applied to improve gender-related physical and mental health?

These questions—and many more that you generate on your own—can help you reflect upon and make reasonable predictions about where the field of gender psychology might be heading.

Doing and Undoing Gender

How much will sex and gender be emphasized versus de-emphasized in the future, both in academic gender psychology and the broader world? This is an interesting question. Most individuals and societies still show fairly high levels of gender schematicity, meaning that they use gender as an organizing framework or schema to process and interpret their social worlds (Bem, 1983). So, in other words, one theme in the questions in the previous section concerns whether you imagine a future in which people and societies have become less gender schematic or more gender schematic. Or perhaps you might expect no change in gender schematicity?

The concepts of doing and undoing gender, both of which illustrate the complexity of gender, are relevant here. As discussed, some psychologists have moved away from thinking of gender as simply traits, interests, and behaviors that reside within individuals to conceptualizing gender as emerging in social interaction in particular contexts (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Deaux & Major, 1987). The doing gender perspective views gender as a behavioral process (not an internal feature) in which gender is repeatedly practiced and negotiated in particular social interactions and contexts. In this way, gender is a verb (what someone does) rather than reflecting stable, internal traits within the individual (Shields & Dicicco, 2011; West & Zimmerman, 1987). In an interesting critique, Francine Deutsch argues that, rather than decreasing gender inequality and dismantling traditional gender roles and behaviors, the doing gender perspective actually reinforces and bolsters them. She asserts that researchers should focus more on undoing—rather than doing—gender in social interaction (Deutsch, 2007).
To illustrate the concept of undoing gender, let’s examine two cases of real-life families. First, recall the case of the Canadian child Storm Stocker Witterick discussed in Chapter 4 (“Gender Development”). Storm’s parents are raising three children, including Storm, as gender-neutral, and their story sparked an international debate in 2011 when Storm was an infant. They did not reveal Storm’s sex to anyone except a close family friend and Storm’s siblings, and they allowed each of their children to choose their own gender identities. Now at age 6, Storm identifies as female and prefers female pronouns (Botelho-Urbanski, 2016). In a case that may be less familiar, prominent psychology professors Sandra and Daryl Bem attempted to raise their children, Emily and Jeremy, in a gender-liberated way, which Sandra described in her book, An Unconventional Family (Bem, 1998). With methods described by some as extreme, the Bems modeled gender-neutral behavior in their parenting (dividing tasks by interest, not gender) and tried to delay their children’s exposure to cultural sex-typing, allowing them to feel less gender-restricted in their development. In interviews included in the book, Emily and Jeremy, then in their early 20s, reported being largely satisfied with their upbringing, despite taking issue with some of the specific methods used by their parents.

Storm’s parents and the Bems elicited strong opinions from the public for their child-rearing practices. (Some people accused them of child abuse.) Though neither case would be considered standard or typical child-rearing practice, many contemporary parents do de-emphasize gender by dressing their children in gender-neutral clothing, buying them gender-neutral toys, and exposing them to gender-diverse activities. But why do some people have such strong, negative reactions to attempts like those of Storm’s parents and the Bems to remove gender more completely from socialization? What long-term effects, both good and bad, might gender-neutral rearing have on children?

Stop and Think

Imagine that you had a child. How would you want to socialize the child in terms of gender? What gender role socialization practices would you adopt? Would they be gender-traditional, gender-nontraditional, or some combination? Why? Would your approach depend on whether the child was a boy or a girl? Why?

Though we are most interested in what you think the gender psychology of the future might look like, we will share some of our own reflections here. As postpositivists, we view empirical investigation as a useful, although inherently flawed, method for acquiring knowledge (Eagly & Riger, 2014). You may recall that postpositivistic views arose in response to scientific positivism, the position that objective and value-free knowledge can be attained through empirical investigation. While postpositivists value science as a process, they disagree with the positivistic view of science as objective and value-free. They simply identify science as the best method to gain understanding, despite the inherent biases involved (Halpern et al., 2007).

The Psychology of Sex and Gender

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Though relatively uncertain of the particular contents of gender psychology in the future, we are more confident in the types of methods that will get us there (with the greatest levels of understanding of sex and gender). The future of gender psychology likely lies in drawing on many academic disciplines because the complexity of sex and gender calls for a mixed-methods approach. In this approach, researchers incorporate multiple worldviews and methods to develop a better understanding of a topic than can be afforded by a single-worldview, single-method approach (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Furthermore, because sex and gender do not operate solely on an individual level, gender psychologists of the future would have the most success when examining sex and gender on multiple levels (from the cellular level to individual, interpersonal, societal, cross-cultural, and cross-historical levels). In this way, the field would shift its focus away from predominantly studying sex differences to studying how gender operates more complexly in context and in interaction with other demographic variables such as age, race, ethnicity, class, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Revisiting Our Challenge to You: Critical Thinking

In the beginning of this book, we challenged you to engage in critical thinking about the textbook material and about the beliefs and expectations you have already formed about sex and gender. As you will recall, when thinking critically, you ask questions, examine evidence, evaluate underlying assumptions, avoid emotional reasoning, and consider other ways of interpreting findings (Wade, 2008). These are all skills that can be strengthened with practice. We thus challenged you to develop the habit of asking and answering your own critical thinking questions, such as these: How is this point consistent or inconsistent with what I already know? What is the quality of the evidence supporting or countering this point? How can this point be approached from different perspectives?

Stop and Think

How have your understandings and beliefs about sex and gender changed by reading this book? What are the most noteworthy, surprising, and thought-provoking things you learned in reading this book? What gender-related topics do you wish to explore further on your own?

Why do we emphasize critical thinking skills so insistently throughout this book? What makes them so important? First, as mentioned in the opening chapter, research shows that the more deeply individuals think about the meaning of new material and connect it to content already stored in their long-term memory, the better they learn...
and remember it (Eysenck, 2011). Second, the U.S. job market is changing and will likely continue to change, leading to corresponding changes in the skills employers expect to see in employees. In 2016, the Pew Research Center conducted interviews with over 1,400 education experts and technology leaders, asking them to report on the skills necessary for employee success in the workforce of the future (Rainie & Anderson, 2017). Table 15.4 lists frequently mentioned skills. Respondents converged on a central theme: Due to increasing automation, in order to be successful in the workplace of the future, humans will need to distinguish themselves from machines, which will easily be able to handle computations and data analysis. Many of the skills seen as highly desirable in humans—such as problem solving, diverse thinking, creative thinking, and innovation—center on critical thinking. Also of note, as a set, these traits are neither traditionally male-typed nor female-typed. Overall, they depict a healthy combination of female-typed traits (e.g., empathy and compassion), male-typed traits (e.g., initiative and resiliency), and gender-neutral traits (e.g., creativity and flexibility). This suggests that the worker of the future will need to go beyond the gender binary (beyond being either masculine or feminine) to enjoy the most success in the workplace.

We enjoyed writing this book, and we hope that you have benefited from reading it. We also hope that you will go forward in the habit of thinking critically about sex and gender. New information about sex and gender emerges on a daily basis—as we can attest from our experiences in writing this book—and it awaits your attention and evaluation. If you have developed the ability to think critically about sex and gender, you will be able to keep up with the continually moving target of gender in our society no matter where it heads.