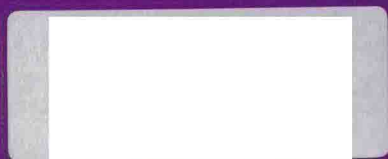


SHORT INTRODUCTIONS

# Gender

In World Perspective

Third edition



RAEWYN CONNELL  
AND REBECCA PEARSE

**Gender**  
**In World Perspective**  
**Third Edition**

**Raewyn Connell &  
Rebecca Pearse**

polity

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# Gender

Third Edition

in Men's Perspective  
David Gaeremynck

Gaylyn Cohen &  
Rebecca Petch

Gender  
in Men's Perspective  
David Gaeremynck

## **SHORT INTRODUCTIONS**

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In memory of  
Pam Benton  
1942-1997

She, who had Here so much essential joy  
As no chance could distract, much less destroy;  
... she to Heaven is gone,  
Who made this world in some proportion  
A heaven, and here, became unto us all,  
Joy, (as our joys admit) essential.

# Preface

Gender is a key dimension of personal life, social relations and culture. It is an arena in which we face hard practical issues about justice, identity and even survival.

Gender is also a topic on which there is a great deal of prejudice, myth and outright falsehood. Research and theory in the human sciences provide vital tools for understanding the real issues. This book tries to present an accessible, research-based, globally informed and theoretically coherent account of gender.

For people new to the study of gender, we introduce key examples of gender research, describe the main findings on important topics, and provide a map of debates and ideas. For people already familiar with gender issues, we propose an integrated approach that links issues ranging from the body and personality difference to the global economy and world peace. The book draws on a spectrum of the human sciences, from psychology and sociology to political science, cultural studies, education and history.

Modern research on gender was triggered by the women's movement for gender equality. There is a simple reason for this: most gender orders, around the world, privilege men and disadvantage women. Yet the details are not simple. There are different forms of privilege and disadvantage, and the scale of gender inequality varies from place to place. The costs of privilege may be high. Even the definition of who is a man and a woman can be contested.

Gender issues are about men quite as much as they are about women. There is now extensive research about masculinities, fatherhood, men's movements, men's violence, boys' education, men's health and men's

involvement in achieving gender equality. We have woven this knowledge into the picture of gender.

We have also emphasized a world perspective. The view from the global North is important, but most people live in other places and have a different social experience. Therefore we give considerable attention to gender research and theory in countries outside the global metropole, places as diverse as Latvia, Chile, Australia, western and southern Africa, Indonesia and Japan.

The world faces urgent issues about gender. Indeed, a whole new realm of gender politics is emerging, with sharp questions about human rights, global economic injustice, environmental change, relations between generations, violence, both military and personal, and the conditions for living well.

If emerging gender orders are to be just, peaceful and humane – which is by no means guaranteed – we need well-founded knowledge and a sophisticated understanding of gender issues. To produce this understanding means sharing knowledge around the globe. Previous editions of this book have been translated into Chinese, Italian, Greek, Japanese, German and Polish. We hope this new edition will be as useful.

This edition includes a wholly new chapter on gender and environment, brings all chapters up to date with current research, includes a new case study, revises the treatment of gender theory, and tries to make the presentation throughout as clear and concise as possible.

A book that attempts to synthesize knowledge across a broad field of study rests on the labour of many people – researchers, theorists, social movement activists, and the many people who participate in research studies.

Most of our intellectual debts are acknowledged in the text. Rebecca owes particular thanks to: James Hitchcock, Bronislava Lee, Stuart Rosewarne and Tim Hitchcock. Raewyn owes particular thanks to: Kylie Benton-Connell, Christabel Draffin, John Fisher, Patricia Selkirk, Carol Hagemann-White, Robert Morrell, Ulla Müller, Taga Futoshi, Teresa Valdés, Toni Schofield, Lin Walker and Kirsten Gomard.

The book is dedicated to the memory of Pam Benton. The epigraph at the start of the book is from Pam's favourite poet, John Donne, and can be found in the poem 'The Second Anniversary'.

Raewyn Connell and Rebecca Pearse  
Sydney, December 2013



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# The question of gender

## Noticing gender

One night a year, the attention of the TV-watching world is focused on Hollywood's most spectacular event, the Oscar awards ceremony. Famous people are driven up in limousines in front of an enthusiastic crowd, and in a blizzard of camera flashes they walk into the auditorium – the men in tuxedos striding easily, the women going cautiously because they are wearing low-cut gowns and high-heeled shoes. As the evening wears on, awards are given out for film scores, camera work, script writing, direction, best foreign film, and so on. But in the categories that concern the people you see on screen when you go to the movies, there are *two* awards given: best actor *and* best actress; best supporting actor *and* best supporting actress.

The internet is saturated with images of glamorous people, from models in advertisements to all kind of celebrities and public figures. When pop star Mylie Cyrus performed at the MTV Music Video Awards (VMA) in 2013, the images of her sexually provocative dancing travelled at incredible speed across the world. After the event, Cyrus tweeted, 'Smilers! My VMA performance had 306.000 tweets per minute. That's more than the blackout or Superbowl! [*sic*].' Major news and entertainment websites, social media, blogs and YouTube channels sent waves of chatter through cyberspace. Much of it was discussion about whether the public was prepared for the transformation of Cyrus from child star to sex symbol.

Whilst women's bodies are common elements of the visual images we consume on the web, women are much less likely to be producing web content. In a recent member survey, Wikipedia discovered that less than 15 per cent of people who write content for the online encyclopedia are women. Internet access is also uneven. In 2013 the multinational computer technology firm Intel found that nearly 25 per cent fewer women internationally have internet access than men. Whilst in a small number of affluent nations like France and the United States women actually have slightly higher rates of internet access, the gender gap reaches nearly 45 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa.

In politics women continue to be the minority. Every year a 'family photo' is taken at G20 meetings where heads of government and their senior finance and central bank representatives meet to discuss the international financial system. In 2013, four women stood among the twenty national leaders in the photo, representing Germany, Brazil, South Korea and Argentina. The imbalance is commonly more pronounced. There has never been a woman head of government in modern Russia, China, France, Japan, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa or Mexico. There has only been one each in the history of Brazil, Germany, Britain, India, Indonesia and Australia. Statistics from the Inter-Parliamentary Union showed that in 2013 79.1 per cent of members of the world's parliaments were men.

Among senior ministers the predominance of men is even higher. In 2012, only four countries in the world had women making up half of a national ministry (Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland). More typical figures for women in ministerial roles were 21 per cent (Australia, Mexico), 11 per cent (China, Indonesia, Japan), 6 per cent (Malaysia) and 0 per cent (Lebanon, Papua New Guinea). The few women who do get to this level are usually given the job of running welfare or education ministries. Men keep control of taxation, investment, technology, international relations, police and the military. Every Secretary-General of the United Nations and every head of the World Bank has been a man.

Women's representation in politics has changed slowly over time, and with difficulty. French lawyer Christine Lagard was the first woman ever to head the International Monetary Fund in 2011. The world average number of women in parliaments increased from 10 per cent in 1995 to 20 per cent in 2012. Australia's first woman Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, served for three years with a record eight women in ministry and five in cabinet. She was then thrown out of power in a party coup. The new conservative government elected in 2013 had only one woman in cabinet.

What is true of politics is also true of business. Of the top 200 businesses listed on the Australian stock exchange in 2012 (including those

that publish the mass-circulation magazines), just seven had a woman as CEO. Of the 500 giant international corporations listed in *Fortune* magazine's 'Global 500' in 2013, just 22 had a woman CEO. Such figures are usually presented by saying that women are now 4.4 per cent of the top business leadership around the world. It's more informative to say that men compose 95.6 per cent of that leadership.

Women are a substantial part of the paid workforce, lower down the hierarchy. They are mostly concentrated in service jobs – clerical work, call centres, cleaning, serving food, and professions connected with caring for the young and the sick, i.e. teaching and nursing. In some parts of the world, women are also valued as industrial workers, for instance in microprocessor plants, because of their supposedly 'nimble fingers'. Though the detailed division between men's and women's work varies in different parts of the world, it is common for men to predominate in heavy industry, mining, transport, indeed in most jobs that involve any machinery except a sewing machine. World-wide, men are a large majority of the workforce in management, accountancy, law and technical professions such as engineering and computers.

Behind the paid workforce is another form of work – unpaid domestic and care work. In all contemporary societies for which we have statistics, women do most of the cleaning, cooking and sewing, most of the work of looking after children, and almost all of the work of caring for babies. (If you don't think childcare is work, you haven't done it yet.) This work is often associated with a cultural definition of women as caring, gentle, self-sacrificing and industrious, i.e. as good mothers. Being a good father is rarely associated with cutting school lunches and wiping babies' bottoms – though there are now interesting attempts to promote what in Mexico has been called '*paternidad afectiva*', emotionally engaged fatherhood. Normally, fathers are supposed to be decision-makers and bread-winners, to consume the services provided by women and represent the family in the outside world.

Women as a group are less likely to be out in the public world than men, and, when they are, have fewer resources. In almost all parts of the world, men are more likely to have a paid job. Conventional measures of the economy, based on men's practices, exclude women's unpaid domestic work. By these measures, the world 'economic activity rate' for women has crept up, but is still just over two-thirds of the rate for men. The main exceptions are Scandinavia and parts of West Africa, where women's paid labour force participation rates are unusually high. But in some Arab states women's participation rates are one-quarter the rate for men, and in much of South Asia and Latin America they are about half.

Once women are in the paid workforce, how do their wages compare? Over thirty years after the United Nations adopted the Convention on

the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), nowhere in the world are women's earned incomes equal to men's. Women are often engaged in low-wage employment, and still receive 18 per cent less than men's average wages. In some countries, the gender pay gap is much bigger. Zambia has the largest gender pay gap at almost 46 per cent (2005), followed by South Korea with 43 per cent (2007) and Azerbaijan with 37 per cent (2008). Part of any gender gap in income can be explained by the pattern of women being more likely to work fewer hours and more likely to be unemployed. Other reasons relate to discriminatory wage practices and to women's overrepresentation in low-paid jobs.

Therefore most women in the world, especially women with children, are economically dependent on men. Some men believe that women who are dependent on them must be their property. This is a common scenario in domestic violence: when dependent women don't conform to demands from their husbands or boyfriends, they are beaten. This creates a dilemma for the women, which is very familiar to domestic violence services. They can stay, and put themselves and their children at high risk of further violence; or go, and lose their home, economic support, and status in the community. If they go, certain husbands are so infuriated that they pursue and kill the wives and even the children.

Men are not beaten up by their spouses so often, but they are at risk of other forms of violence. Most assaults reported to the police, in countries with good statistics on the matter, are by men on other men. Some men are beaten, indeed some are murdered, simply because they are thought to be homosexual; and some of this violence comes from the police. Most of the prisoners in gaols are men. In the United States, which has the biggest prison system in the world, the prison population in 2011 was 1.59 million, and 93 per cent of them were men. Most deaths in combat are of men, because men make up the vast majority of the troops in armies and militias. Most industrial accidents involve men, because men are most of the workforce in dangerous industries such as construction and mining.

Men are involved disproportionately in violence partly because they have been prepared for it. Though patterns of child rearing differ between cultures, the situation in Australia is not unusual. Australian boys are steered towards competitive sports such as football, where physical dominance is celebrated, from an early age – by their fathers, by schools, and by the mass media. Boys also come under peer pressure to show bravery and toughness, and learn to fear being classified as 'sissies' or 'poofers' (a local term meaning effeminate or homosexual). Being capable of violence becomes a social resource. Working-class boys, who don't have the other resources that will lead to a professional career, become the main

recruits into jobs that require the use of force: police, the military, private security, blue-collar crime, and professional sport. It is mainly young women who are recruited into the jobs that repair the consequences of violence: nursing, psychology and social work.

So far, we have listed an assortment of facts, about mass media, about politics and business, about families, and about growing up. Are these random? Modern thought about gender starts with the recognition that they are not. These facts form a pattern; they make sense when seen as parts of the overall gender arrangements, which this book will call the 'gender order', of contemporary societies.

To notice the existence of the gender order is easy; to understand it is not. Conflicting theories of gender now exist, as we shall see in chapter 4, and some problems about gender are genuinely difficult to resolve. Yet we now have a rich resource of knowledge about gender, derived from decades of research, and a fund of practical experience from gender reform. We have a better basis for understanding gender issues than any previous generation had.

## Understanding gender

In everyday life we take gender for granted. We instantly recognize a person as a man or woman, girl or boy. We arrange everyday business around the distinction. Conventional marriages require one of each. Mixed-doubles tennis requires two of each, but most sports require one kind at a time.

Most years, the most popular television broadcast in the United States is the American Super Bowl, which, like the Oscars, is a strikingly gendered event: large armoured men crash into each other while chasing a pointed leather bladder, and thin women in short skirts dance and smile in the pauses. Most of us cannot crash or dance nearly so well, but we do our best in other ways. As women or men we slip our feet into differently shaped shoes, button our shirts on opposite sides, get our heads clipped by different hairdressers, buy our pants in separate shops, and take them off in separate toilets.

These arrangements are so familiar that they can seem part of the order of nature. Belief that gender distinction is 'natural' makes it scandalous when people don't follow the pattern: for instance, when people of the same gender fall in love with each other. So homosexuality is frequently declared 'unnatural' and bad.

But if having sex with a fellow-woman or a fellow-man is unnatural, why have a law against it? We don't provide penalties for violating the third law of thermodynamics. Anti-gay ordinances in US cities, police

harassment of gay men in Senegal, the criminalization of women's adultery in Islamic Sharia law, the imprisonment of transsexual women for violating public order – such things only make sense because these matters are *not* fixed by nature.

These events are part of an enormous social effort to channel people's behaviour. Ideas about gender-appropriate behaviour are constantly being circulated, not only by legislators but also by priests, parents, teachers, advertisers, retail mall owners, talk-show hosts and disc jockeys. Events like Oscar Night and the Super Bowl are not just consequences of our ideas about gender difference. They also help to *create* gender difference, by displays of exemplary masculinities and femininities.

Being a man or a woman, then, is not a pre-determined state. It is a *becoming*, a condition actively under construction. The pioneering French feminist Simone de Beauvoir put this in a famous phrase: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.' Though the positions of women and men are not simply parallel, the principle is also true for men: one is not born masculine, but has to become a man.

This process is often discussed as the development of 'gender identity'. There are some questions to raise about this concept (see chapter 6), but it will serve for the moment as a name for the sense of belonging to a gender category. Identity includes our ideas of what that belonging means, what kind of person we are, in consequence of being a woman or a man. These ideas are not presented to the baby as a package at the beginning of life. They develop (there is some controversy about exactly when), and are filled out in detail over a long period of years, as we grow up.

As de Beauvoir further recognized, this business of becoming a gendered person follows many different paths, involves many tensions and ambiguities, and sometimes produces unstable results. Part of the mystery of gender is how a pattern that on the surface appears so stark and rigid, on close examination turns out so complex and uncertain.

So we cannot think of womanhood or manhood as fixed by nature. But neither should we think of them as simply imposed from outside, by social norms or pressure from authorities. People construct *themselves* as masculine or feminine. We claim a place in the gender order – or respond to the place we have been given – by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life.

Most people do this willingly, and often enjoy the gender polarity. Yet gender ambiguities are not rare. There are masculine women and feminine men. There are women in love with other women, and men in love with other men. There are women who are heads of households, and men who bring up children. There are women who are soldiers and men who are nurses. Sometimes the development of 'gender identity' results



in intermediate, blended or sharply contradictory patterns, for which we use terms like effeminate, camp, queer and transgender.

Psychological research suggests that the great majority of us combine masculine and feminine characteristics, in varying blends, rather than being all one or all the other. Gender ambiguity can be an object of fascination and desire, as well as disgust. Gender impersonations are familiar in both popular and high culture, from the cross-dressed actors of Shakespeare's stage to movies starring transsexual women and drag queens like *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* (2001), *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (2004) and *Hairspray* (2007).

There is certainly enough gender blending to provoke heated opposition from movements dedicated to re-establishing 'the traditional family', 'true femininity' or 'real masculinity'. By 1988 Pope John Paul II had become so concerned that he issued an encyclical, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Women*, reminding everyone that women were created for motherhood and their functions should not get mixed up with those of men. In a Christmas address in 2012, Pope Benedict XVI criticized gender theory directly. He argued: 'People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves.' This is a good summary of a central insight from gender theory. Of course the Pope was arguing against it, saying that an essential, biological nature should determine our personal and public lives. These efforts to maintain essentialist ideas about fixed womanhood and manhood are themselves strong evidence that the boundaries are none too stable.

But these are not just boundaries; they are also inequalities. Most churches and mosques are run exclusively by men, and this is part of a larger pattern. Most corporate wealth is in the hands of men, most big institutions are run by men, and most science and technology is controlled by men. In many countries, including some with very large populations, women are less likely than men to have been taught to read. For instance, recent adult literacy rates in India stood at 75 per cent for men and 51 per cent for women; in Nigeria, 72 per cent for men and 50 per cent for women. On a world scale, two-thirds of illiterate people are women. In countries like the United States, Australia, Italy and Turkey, middle-class women have gained full access to higher education and have made inroads into middle management and professions. But even in those countries many informal barriers operate to keep the very top levels of power and wealth mostly a world of men.

There is also unequal respect. In many situations, including the cheerleaders at the football game, women are treated as marginal to the main