≈≈ CHAPTER 4

Gendered/Sexed Bodies

Nothing is as intimately linked to one's sex/gender identity as how one feels and acts in one's body. This is perhaps why many assume that nonverbal communication is more biologically determined than verbal communication. Unless they are intentionally challenging gender/sex expectations, people tend to be less conscious of how they use their bodies to express gender and how their bodies use them to generate their identities. U.S. women usually do not think about whether or not to cross their legs, but they are more likely to think about the feminine taboo of sitting with their legs apart (especially in a skirt). Similarly, U.S. men usually do not think about sitting with their legs apart, but they are more likely to think about the masculinity taboo of sitting with their legs tightly crossed. Although biology influences gendered/sexed bodies, research shows that culture also influences not only bodily expressions but their frequency, contexts, and meaning. A person's body *does* gender; sex does not simply passively possess gender traits.

In this chapter, we do not focus on answering the question, do women and men nonverbally communicate differently? Instead, we explore the varied ways in which people sex and gender bodies and in which bodies sex and gender people. We examine how people use their bodies to communicate and how communication *shapes* people's bodies. We focus on how human beings perform identities as gendered, sexed, sexually oriented, raced, and classed persons.

Gender Embodiment: Why Nonverbals Matter

To provide a sense of gender as a body performance, we offer a classic example from psychologist Erwin Straus's research (1966). He examined a series of photographs of young girls and boys throwing baseballs and was struck by the differences in how they used space and motion:

> The girl of five does not make any use of lateral space. She does not stretch her arm sideward; she does not twist her trunk; she does not move her legs, which remain side by side. All she does in preparation for throwing is to lift her right arm forward to the horizontal and to bend the forearm backward in a pronate position. . . . The ball is released without force, speed, or accurate aim. . . . A boy of the same age, when preparing to throw, stretches his right arm sideward and backward; supinates the forearm; twists, turns and bends his trunk; and moves his right foot backward. From this stance, he can support his throwing almost with the full strength of his total motorium. . . . The ball leaves the hand with considerable acceleration; it moves toward its goal in a long flat curve. (pp. 157–160)

Straus observed that the girls did not tend to bring their whole bodies into motion, but the boys did.

To explain these differences, Straus considered biological explanations, but he found that explanation lacking. The fact that women have breasts that might get in the way of throwing with full-body motion was irrelevant because the girls studied had not reached puberty. He also had to dismiss the idea that the girls were simply weaker, because a weaker person would likely throw the whole body into the movement to compensate. Instead, he concluded that the difference in style came from what he vaguely referred to as a "feminine attitude." He did not consider the possibility that the boys had been taught to throw and the girls had not. Nor did he consider that girls who throw "like a boy" often are ridiculed as unfeminine tomboys, and boys who throw like girls often are ridiculed as feminine and gay. Throwing has social implications for sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

Twenty-four years later, philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990) discussed Straus's observation in regard to what it means to "throw like a girl." Young demystifies the idea of a "feminine attitude," rejecting femininity and masculinity as biological; not all girls "throw like a girl" and not all boys "throw like a boy." Young compares the common gender/sex differences in throwing to other differences to make clear girls are *taught* to do these things, just as boys are *taught* to throw:

> walking like a girl, tilting her head like a girl, standing and sitting like a girl, gesturing like a girl, and so on. The girl learns actively to hamper her movements. She is told that she must be careful not to get hurt, not to get dirty, not to tear her clothes, that the things she desires are dangerous for her. Thus she develops a bodily timidity that increases with age. (p. 154)

Girls and women experience their bodies in more guarded ways than boys and men because of how each person is *taught* to use and relate to her or his body.

Agreeing with Young's analysis, masculinities researcher Stephen Whitehead (2002) observes that most men do not experience their bodies in this guarded way. He acknowledges that there are always exceptions to these norms, but believes that "we should not allow the exceptions to deny the differing realities of the lived

experiences of most women's and men's bodily existence" (p. 190). Social norms, repeated over and over in parental encouragement and warnings and in the bodies children see around them, make clear that children should perform the particular gender and sexual orientation that social norms dictate are appropriate to their particular bodies.

In contrast to guarded and feminine bodily experiences, Whitehead describes masculine bodily experiences: "The male/boy/man is expected to transcend space, or to place his body in aggressive motion within it, in so doing posturing to self and others the assuredness of his masculinity" (p. 189). Social norms of masculinity encourage boys and men to physically exert and be comfortable in their bodies. The influences of gender role socialization and social inequalities become clear: Women and men are encouraged to have different relationships with their bodies. One's relationship to one's body reveals whether one feels one has agency—control in life and over one's body.

Power, Not Sex Difference

Contrary to the prevalence of the two-culture theory as an explanation of gender in discourse (discussed in Chapter 3), the majority of researchers in nonverbal communication explain their findings as indicative of power relations (Knapp & Hall, 2002). Researchers studying gendered nonverbal communication tend not to conflate sex differences with gender differences but instead foreground sex differences understood as manifestations of sex privilege.

Nancy Henley (1977) was one of the first researchers in nonverbal communication to identify how power relations influence nonverbal interactions between sexes and races. In her studies of discrete behaviors called *nonverbal cues,* she finds that the absence of reciprocity in the behaviors transforms seemingly innocent intimacy cues into acts of dominance and submission. She compares nonparallel interactions between women and men to other unequal power relations, such as parent–child, customer–food service employee, and White–Black race relations. In each case, many nonverbal behaviors could be seen as expressions of intimacy, but it is unlikely that both parties equally use the same nonverbal cues. Nonreciprocal nonverbal forms and rejection of reciprocated behaviors indicate an unequal relationship. Henley calls this the *"micropolitics"* of nonverbal communication (p. 3), the subtle nonverbal ways in which unequal power relations are performed, negotiated, and expressed.

However, one should not assume that the power component of a nonverbal cue is overt or direct. For example, later research on smiling and status found that the rates of smiling were not different, but the reasons for smiling were. People in higher-status positions smiled to express pleasure; they had a choice. People in lower-status positions smiled more out of obligation (Hecht & LaFrance, 1998). Even if an individual cue, such as smiling, does not have a fixed gender identity, it is useful to examine such isolated cues to be able to more critically read the messages being sent about gender/sex, race, class, and other social identities.

Gender Performativity

Our approach to the study of gender/sex and the body is informed by philosopher Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity. Butler (2004) explains that even though "gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in part, without one's knowing and without one's willing," that does not mean it is "automatic or mechanical" (p. 1). Instead, she describes gender as "a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint" (p. 1). Gender is a command performance in which actors maintain minimal control over the content of the scene.

Butler emphasizes that performance is a habitual act that leaves little room for individual agency. Through the repetition of gendered behaviors over time, people continually construct their gender identities. The repetition is largely guided by social expectations and habit, not by free will. Although it makes sense that people do not get up each morning and consciously decide how they will perform their gender identity that day, the nonverbal behaviors of people who do not comply with gender/sex norms prove that overt resistance is possible. We review some examples of such persons later in this chapter.

Butler's insights make evident the inadequacies of traditional scientific laboratory studies of nonverbal communication. She moves beyond observing possible gender differences to ask why and how these behaviors occur. Similar to the social constructivist and post-structuralist approaches outlined in Chapter 2, Butler argues that even the physical body is largely culturally constructed and enacted through daily interactions. When humans (consciously and nonconsciously) behave in gendered ways, they construct, maintain, and change their own and others' notions of gender. Behaviors are at once personally, socially, and politically structured.

Although many studies isolate individual nonverbal cues, in reality all nonverbal communication works together to create a performance for an audience. Each person learns a script (or is socialized) about how to act, move, and communicate the gender appropriate for what others perceive her or his sex to be. Butler's performativity theory enables a more holistic look at the larger picture: What do all the nonverbal forms mean when combined in a body's performance?

Objectification Theory

Young, who re-analyzed "throwing like a girl," argues that gender-role socialization and inequalities are constructed in part through the objectification of females. Girls and women who do not use the full potential of their bodies do not have fully connected relationships with their bodies. Women and girls often are socialized to see themselves as objects, not subjects of behavior (Young, 1990, pp. 149–150). A girl or woman tends to see herself as acted upon (the object of motion), not as acting (the subject of motion). She reacts as an object receiving motion. This self-consciousness diverts her attention from making motion, leading to a disconnection from her body. Other researchers call this *objectification theory*.

You have probably heard the statement that mass media objectify women, but what does that mean? Objectification theory suggests that when a person is the

frequent receiver of a gaze that sees one solely as a sex object that exists for the pleasure of the viewer rather than as a whole person, the person may internalize the gazer's view of her or his body. Objectified people's perceived physical and sexual attractiveness may become more important to them than their morality, honor, intellect, sense of humor, or kindness. Perfectionism can set in with unrealistic, narrow standards of beauty, and negative self-images can contribute to low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Travis, Meginnis, & Bardari, 2000).

Men certainly experience objectification, but the sexual objectification of women is more often physically threatening and used to express male hetero-sexuality (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This does not mean that all men objectify all women; however, sexual objectification creates a cultural norm that makes girls and women more vulnerable to objectification and to measuring their self-esteem through men's eyes.

Disconnection, as Young outlines, contributes to the negative effects of objecti-fication. Women often are socialized to be more aware of their bodies than many men, but at the same time, they may feel disconnected and powerless in relation to their bodies. This contradiction also is evident for boys and men who feel they do not meet society's expectations of physical masculinity. They may feel trapped in bodies that are supposed to perform in a prescribed way but fail them.

African American men receive particularly contradictory messages about their bodies. The predominant U.S. culture creates the contradiction of reverence for the Black male body in sports and fear of it in crime (Whitehead, 2002). Cultural critic Kobena Mercer (1994) described the contradictions surrounding Black bodies:

> Blacks are looked down upon and despised as worthless, ugly, and ultimately inhuman. But in the blink of an eye, whites look up to and revere black bodies, lost in awe and envy as the black subject is idealized as the embodiment of its aesthetic ideal. (p. 201)

Black men's bodies have been looked upon as violent, sexual, aggressive, and ath-letic (Jackson & Dangerfield, 2003). Their bodies are idealized and objectified solely as superior athletes. Even in this act of reverence, the underlying assumption is that athleticism comes more naturally to Black men, and therefore they are sub-human (McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000). Accordingly, their athletic accomplish-ments may not count as much as Whites' athletic accomplishments because people presume that Whites have to work harder.

Constructing a Critical Gender/Sex Lens

To understand the role of nonverbal communication in the gendering of bodies, it is important to examine gender in the body from micro (individual nonverbal behaviors) and macro (whole bodies performing within cultural contexts) perspectives. As in Chapter 3, before we present research on gender in nonverbal

communication, we outline the limitations of the research to equip you to critically assess the material.

We find reason for caution toward traditional social science research on gender in nonverbal communication, which makes up the vast majority of published scholarship.

First, the meaning of any nonverbal (or verbal) cue is in the eye of the beholder, as that eye has been trained to see by the social order. One cue can have multiple (or even contradictory) meanings, and the link between the behavior and its function is not always apparent (LaFrance, 2002). Thus, although many researchers report only the predominant cultural meanings of nonverbal cues, these meanings may not reflect all persons' understandings.

Second, similar to research on discourse, most nonverbal research identifies people's behaviors according to biological sex, not gender, sexual orientation, race, class, or other identity. Research that generalizes to all women and men and that seeks to find the differences between the (presumed internally homogeneous) sexes is misleading. Furthermore, research on nonverbal communication largely assumes a heterosexual norm (Lovaas, 2003). Although gender, sex, and sexual orientation are deeply intertwined in perceptions of self and others, not all heterosexual women have feminine gender identities, not all heterosexual men have masculine gender identities, and not all bisexual persons have androgynous gender identities, and so forth.

Third, most of the research is conducted in artificial settings, and observers are shown only isolated parts of the face or head. Even research considered to have made major contributions to the field used only still photos showing isolated cues, such as a series of lips with degrees of smiles or a series of eyes with different expressions. Observers were asked to identify the meaning conveyed by each nonverbal cue (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). In real life, people express nonverbals, and observe others' nonverbals, in combination, not in isolation. People look at a whole face and the whole body accompanying the face, not just eyes or lips.

Fourth, most of the research on nonverbal cues and gender/sex is dated. We found few original studies published since the 1980s. Most of the publications from the 1990s to the present are meta-analyses, or summary reviews of earlier studies. Students of gender and communication might ask why researchers have stopped pursuing this line of research. It seems possible that this line of inquiry has been exhausted or is not as informative as once thought, possibly because of the limitations just noted. We would also like to think that rigid gendered norms in nonverbal expression are loosening.

As we noted in Chapter 3, even as differences are identified, they may begin to disappear. In the last 10 years, the meaning of crying in public has shifted for men. Former congressperson Patricia Schroeder (D-CO) was ridiculed for crying on television when she withdrew from the presidential race in 1987 (Schroeder, 1999). A *New York Post* columnist described Schroeder as "precisely what her supporters had sought to overcome—the stereotype of women as weepy wimps who don't belong in the business of serious affairs" (quoted in Witt, Paget, & Matthews, 1994,

p. 205). Yet, when President George H. W. Bush cried in public, media treated his tears differently.

> In the fall of 1994, *Time* magazine published a list of occasions on which George Bush shed tears while president. . . . The article is symptomatic in a number of ways of the politics of affect in contemporary American culture. First, it is clear that Bush's tears are "surprising" because sentimentality and the public display of emotion are conventionally seen as feminine characteristics. At the same time, however, the list demonstrates that there is space in American public life for sentimental men: big boys do cry, even when they become president. Finally, it is noteworthy that Bush's tears were deliberately publicized and that a major national magazine deemed them newsworthy. (Chapman & Hendler, 1999, p. 1)

In the wake of 9/11, male politicians have cried on a number of occasions. The interesting question is whether, if a woman presidential candidate again were to cry, it would be like Bush's crying, as proof of humanity? As a conscious display of emotion to heighten rhetorical affect? Or as an indication of her lack of emotional control?

Fifth, gender/sex stereotypes may contribute to self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, it is difficult to notice emotions and expressions in others or in oneself that are inconsistent with sex stereotypes. Hormones may contribute to different emotional experiences for women and for men, but there are vast individual differences among women and among men in emotional experiences (Fivush & Buckner, 2000). Stereotypes are maintained when people notice only emotions that are consistent with the stereotypes. These self-fulfilling prophecies can have real consequences as sex/gender stereotypes become the basis for socializing girls and boys. "Big boys don't cry" becomes a means of managing boys' emotions, making it difficult for men to express feelings of sadness or fear and for women and men to recognize when men are expressing such feelings.

Sixth, the relative power status of roles better explains the apparent differences. Emotion researcher Tracey Madden and her associates (2000) state, "Men and women may differ in the expression of emotion because they typically differ in level of power; women are likely to hold positions of lower power and status than men" (p. 282). The emotions of fear and sadness often are described as expressions of helplessness, and a person who has less power over her or his situation becomes more vulnerable to fear and sadness (Fischer, 1993). "In contrast, men express more anger than women, possibly because anger is associated with power and assertiveness" (Madden et al., 2000, p. 282). From this view, emotional expressions function as status markers in social interaction. Cognitive theorists believe that emotions are produced by a person's assessment of a given situation. Because many girls and women tend to have less social power and control, they more often may perceive themselves as helpless, sad, and anxious. This reaction would be a rational, rather than an irrational, response to an uncertain situation. Boys and men who perceive themselves as having more control over specific life situations would be less prone to such emotions (Madden et al., 2000).

Even with these limitations, this research helps one visualize how nonverbal cues contribute to the gendering of bodies. Communication scholars Barbara Bate and Judy Bowker (1997) argue that nonverbal behaviors are a primary way in which gender dichotomies are created and maintained. Unfortunately, identifying the masculine/feminine dichotomy does not necessarily point to a way out of it, nor does tracking the ways in which gender is performed tell us what gender *means* or why it is performed that way. Thus, after we describe the micropolitics of nonverbal communication research, we place it in a larger context of whole bodies, examining the political and personal implications.

Components of Nonverbal Communication

Proxemics

The term *proxemics* refers to the study of personal space, the invisible area around a person that is considered her or his territory. The size of personal space with which a person feels comfortable varies greatly by culture (Sommer, 1959). In U.S. culture, space is power. Persons of higher status tend to wield more personal space in their offices, seats, gestures, and homes. A review of proxemic research on gender concludes that "gender research all support[s] the theory that status is a powerful organizer of proxemic behavior" (Gillespie & Leffler, 1983, p. 141). Although this research was limited to the study of Whites in the United States, it consistently shows that the White women studied had smaller personal space, were more likely to have their personal space invaded by others, and were more likely to acquiesce to the invasion than were the White men studied.

The relative size of one's body influences the amount of personal space one is allocated. In U.S. culture, masculinity often is signaled by more muscular and taller bodies. This is perhaps most obvious in wedding photos of heterosexual couples. Short men often are placed on steps above the women, and tall women often are placed on lower steps or wear flat-heeled shoes. Taller men and men with more muscular bodies are perceived as more masculine; taller women and women with more muscular bodies tend to be perceived as more masculine, and thus their femininity or womanhood is questioned. Of course, there are limits to the power of larger-bodied persons. Society discriminates against persons who are considered overweight. Great variances in size among women and among men exist, but social expectations persist.

Haptics

The term *haptics* refers to touch. If unwelcome, touch can be the ultimate invasion of one's personal space; if welcome, it can be seen as a sign of intimacy and affection. If a touch is unwelcome, or if the touched person does not feel free to reciprocate the touch or feels pressured to do so, the touch is more likely a

dominance behavior. Part of the reason such violations are difficult to determine is that they can be consciously or unconsciously cloaked in the garb of joking, friendship, warmth, or kindness. Sexual harassment and acquaintance rape are the most extreme examples of dominance related to haptics.

Sex-specific touching behaviors reflect and maintain gender socialization and inequalities. As discussed in Chapter 7, research shows that from infancy, boys and girls tend to be touched differently (Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999; Lytton & Romney, 1991). Girl babies and toddlers tend to be caressed more; boy babies and toddlers tend to be touched less, and when they are touched, they tend to be played with in a rougher fashion.

From adolescence to adulthood, women are found to exhibit more touch in the form of hugs or other cues of support, and men are found to exhibit touch with instrumental goals, such as asserting individual rights or sexual intent (Hall, 2006). A part of masculinity seems to be the act of invading others' personal space, particularly the space of women (LePoire, Burgoon, & Parrott, 1992). Yet, homophobia, the fear of being labeled homosexual or unmasculine, seems to keep many men from prolonged touching of other men (Kimmel, 2003). An exception is in sports, in which the competitive context makes male-to-male touch socially acceptable. In same-sex relationships, women are socially freer to touch than men. This seems to hold true with family members and friends. In established heterosexual relationships, both women and men are found to initiate touch, and the person who initiates tends to be viewed as exerting influence (Knapp & Hall, 2002).

Eye Contact

Eye contact can convey intimacy, power, or both. In research on superior/subordinate interaction, the subordinate is likely to maintain more eye contact when listening than the superior, regardless of the sex of the participants (Eakins & Eakins, 1988). If one is seeking approval, one is more likely to show attentiveness through eye contact. Looking away while speaking, so that one cannot monitor the other person's responses, can be a sign of power. Subordinates tend to illustrate attentive watching but avert their gazes when being stared at. In their review of research, Knapp and Hall (2002) report that men tend to use the gaze pattern typically associated with higher-status persons, whereas women tended to use the pattern associated with lower-status persons. Staring, on the other hand, tends to be seen as an invasion of personal space.

Cultural differences influence norms for eye contact. In many Asian cultures, women, children, students, and other lower-status subordinates traditionally avoid looking higher-status persons in the eye. In the Lua tribe of Kenya, sons-in-law are forbidden to look directly at mothers-in-law; in parts of Nigeria, inferiors cannot look at superiors (Klopf & McCroskey, 2007) because to do so is a sign of disrespect (Robinson, 2003). In these cultures, eye contact seems to be a tool to negotiate social status.

Body Movement

Body movement refers to demeanor, posture, and gestures. Judith Butler (1990a) aptly describes the relationship between gender and body movement: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance—of a natural kind of being" (p. 33). The motions are repeated so frequently that they become at least unconscious if not involuntary.

Sociologist Nancy Henley refers to how one physically carries herself or himself as *demeanor* (1977). People tend to think of demeanor as something unique to an individual, but Henley points out that demeanor has strong social class and power attributions. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1963) found that demeanor is used to mark upper and lower status and that higher-status persons tend to have more latitude in their behavior. They can carry their bodies more loosely. Persons of lower status tend to be tighter, more attentive to their physical demeanor. When people are among peers, they tend to relax body tension (Mehrabian, 1972). In research on superior/subordinate interactions and gender/sex, the superiors, like many men, tend to display less concern about body posture compared to the subordinates, propping their feet up, leaning back, and so on (Eakins & Eakins, 1978, 1988; Henley, 1977). The subordinates, like many women, tend to be attentive to their body posture.

In a classic study, Goffman (1979) outlines how body posture is most explicitly choreographed in advertising. Although Goffman uses advertisements to explore how conventions arise regarding performances of gender, his point is that all people engage in these actions. Advertisements just provide one, very intentional location through which to understand these practices. The positioning of bodies in relation to one another provides clues to their "presumed *social* position relative to one another" (p. 26). In wedding pictures, men often are portrayed as standing (protectively) above women and children or sitting in the center with women behind them. Subordinates are shown lower or bowing. In advertisements, women often are shown recumbent, sprawled on beds, sofas, and even cars. Women often are posed with a "bashful knee bend" or with a canting (sideways tilting) posture (p. 45). Goffman describes these and other body practices as "ritual-like bits of behavior which portray an ideal conception of the two sexes and their structural relationship to each other" (p. 84). They are ritual-like because they are repeated so often that they become entrenched.

People also perform gender through immediacy cues, the ways in which they show interest in others through body movement. Research shows that women tend to use more immediacy behaviors than men (Eakins & Eakins, 1988). This seems consistent with feminine gender-role expectations to be more expressive, to focus on relationships, and to be supportive to others. The women studied leaned in more toward the other person, tilted their head toward the person, and nodded more than the men. The women also tended to use fewer and smaller gestures than the men. Superior/subordinate research shows similar patterns, with the subordinates

showing more interest and attentiveness, but this likely varies with contexts, ethnicities, races, and age groups.

Nodding is commonly viewed as a submissive form of expression, and women are expected to nod more than men. However, a recent study of 189 students in a college classroom found that nodding frequency was situational. The men and women nodded equally often when the professor talked, but the men did not nod as much as the women when a student spoke. Both women and men students nodded more to the professor than to peers, thus attending to the status of the speaker rather than simply enacting gendered behaviors (Helweg-Larsen, Cunningham, Carrico, & Pergram, 2004).

Body Adornment

Body adornment includes dress, cosmetics, and tattooing. Art historian Ann Hollander (1978) posits that Western dress replicates the shape of the body through a more fitted style, and its primary function, beyond warmth and modesty, "is to contribute to the making of the self-conscious individual image" (p. xiv). People like to think that the way they reveal and adorn their bodies is solely an individualistic expression or practical decision, but it is intensely influenced by cultural norms, trends, gender, and social class. Furthermore, each person's dress influences that person; the dress one is socialized to wear influences one's interactions and self-image.

The relationship between dress and identity construction is apparent in the effects of gendered/sexed clothing on newborn children. An infant dressed in pink is commonly expected to be sweet, graceful, and pretty. An infant dressed in blue is expected to be strong, agile, and handsome. People respond to the infants accordingly, potentially creating a self-fulfilling prophecy (Rubinstein, 2001).

Sociologist Ruth Rubinstein (2001) argues that gendered clothing is a social tool to reinforce gender/sex differences in society and to "alert an approaching individual about suitability for sexual intercourse" (p. 103). Clothing that follows the contours of the body is most common in clothing designed for girls and women. Certainly, gendered clothing distinctions have decreased, even since the 1960s and 1970s, but it seems that as some distinctions disappear, others appear. In the United States, women's professional clothing restrictions have lessened. Politicians such as Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton wear pants instead of dresses, and men now sport earrings. Hats and gloves are no longer required for U.S. women in formal dress as they were until the 1960s. However, women's high-fashion shoes continue to be more restrictive and more harmful than men's (Harris, 2003); Western women's clothing is more revealing than in previous decades and lacks room, such as pockets, for practical things. This makes purses a necessity, again limiting ease of movement.

Women's bodies are treated as objects for adornment with jewelry, shoes, purses, cosmetics, dyed or treated hair, color-enhanced eyes, and color-coordinated clothing made from fine materials that require special care and limited activity. The

message is that the natural body is sick or unacceptable. Men, too, are increasingly receiving critical messages about their bodies, inducing them to buy muscle-building products, steroids, tattoos, hair-enhancing products, and plastic surgery. Although their clothing generally is more comfortable than women's, they do not enjoy the wider spectrum of clothing types that women do, such as skirts.

Although Western men's clothing has not been studied as much as women's, in an exploratory study of 75 mostly White, 25-year-old men at a university in the United Kingdom, the researchers conclude that "our participants deliberately and strategically used clothing to manipulate their appearance to meet cultural ideals of masculinity. They vary the color, texture, pattern, fit, and size of garments to appear slimmer, taller, bigger, or more muscular than they believe their actual body shape to be" (Frith & Gleeson, 2004, p. 47). The researchers report that some of the men were reticent to admit they cared about their appearance, but when asked about their dressing and shopping habits, their concern was apparent.

The gender policing of one's dress is most apparent in responses to cross-dressing. People in the United States tend to be uncomfortable with cross-dressers because they do not conform to the norm. People commonly ridicule those who choose to wear clothing socially assigned to another sex. However, as noted in Chapter 2, such persons are more accepted in some other cultures. In reality, every-one engages in some degree of cross-dressing, as they adapt their dress to specific situations. During cold weather, women tend to wear pants, as do men. During hot weather, men tend to wear shorts, as do women. People who break gender norms by wearing androgynous clothing or clothing ascribed to another sex broaden dress options for everyone. Why is the vision of men in skirts laughable? There is no biological reason, and in many places men do wear skirts in the form of kilts, sarongs, caftans, or djellabas. The laughing response is just one indication of the disciplining power of clothing to dictate social norms for gender/sex and sexual orientation.

Some products have become common for women as well as men to use, such as tattoos, body piercing, and cosmetics, but if you look closely, you'll discover that tattoos and piercings are gendered masculine and feminine, and cosmetics are sex exclusive (even when all the ingredients are the same). These differences are further influenced by identity ingredients other than sex. In her history of modern tattoos, Margo DeMello (2000) studies how tattooing became the basis for com-munity maintained through magazines, shops, and conventions. She also explores the shifting class location of tattooing from the lower classes to all classes. However, even as tattoos have become acceptable for those outside the lower classes, the reasons that people tattoo are class based. Middle-class women and men both explain tattoos as a way of expressing individuality, spiritualism, per-sonal growth, and the sacredness of their bodies. In contrast, working- and middle-class women "are much more apt to explain their tattoos in terms of heal-ing, empowerment, or control" (p. 172). Women interviewed claim that the tattoos were a way for them to reclaim their bodies and to subvert the male gaze.

Facial Expressions

Facial expressions studies have focused on smiling (Eakins & Eakins, 1988; Hall, 2006; Henley, 1995). Although early studies found that women smile more than men, later studies found that subordinates smile more than superiors regardless of their sex. These conflicting research results raise the question of whether differences in smiling are due to sex, gender, or power. Actually, all three influence smiling, but none is a determinant. In experimental studies examining the effects of gender/sex and status, both affected smiling such that higher-status women and men smiled less than lower-status people, but in situations with clear gender norms, women smiled more than men (LaFrance & Hecht, 2000). Even when sex can be isolated as a variable, whether the sex difference is trivial or substantial is determined by one's "theoretical preference and methodological approach" (Hall, 2006, p. 60). Finally, just because a smiling variance is identified does not mean that one knows *why* the difference exists.

Nonverbal researchers Marianne LaFrance and Marvin Hecht (2000) propose the *demand expressivity theory* to explain sex differences in smiling. Gender roles create norms that people are expected to meet, and "norms governing facial display, particularly smiling, are different for females and males with females expected to show more smiling than males" (p. 120). This means that girls and women do not smile more than boys and men because they are happier but because social norms induce them to feel they must. Girls and women are socialized to be oriented toward pleasing others and to appear less threatening (Borisoff & Merill, 2003). Some women report that they expect negative reactions from others if they do not smile (LaFrance & Hecht, 2000). A review of 30 studies supports the theory; women tend to smile more than men in social interactions because of gender role expectations and inequalities rather than biology (Hall, Carter, & Horgan, 2000).

Another indication that smiling patterns are cultural is the fact that female and male infants smile equally, but by as early as age four, boys smile less. Judith Hall (1984) suggests that boys receive the message that they should be tough, and it is difficult to look tough if one is smiling; not smiling keeps others uncertain of one's emotions, thus allowing one to maintain the upper hand (Hall, Carter, & Horgan, 2000). In a meta-analysis of 150 studies, LaFrance and Hecht (2000) found gender differences to be strongest in the 18–23-year range, which is the maturation period during which pressure for sex differentiation is greater and when heterosexual attraction strategies are heightened. Differences begin to dissipate as people age (Hall, 2006).

In a classic qualitative study, sociologist Arlie Hochschild (1983) likens this feminine socialization to the emotional burden placed on service workers such as food servers and airline attendants. These employees typically are expected to hide their true feelings by smiling, no matter what the customer says or does. This kind of smiling is not an expression of genuine happiness but an automatic one that masks true emotions, is a burden to uphold, and makes it difficult for others to interpret

one's true emotions. Conversely, in an ethnographic study of the more tradition-ally masculine profession of police officer, women on the Pittsburgh police force talked about learning "not to smile" as a way to reduce the risk that others would see them as incompetent or unprofessional (McElhinny, 1998). The women offi-cers felt compelled to manage their smiling behavior to comply with public expec-tations for officers (McElhinny, 1992).

Race, social class, and gender roles also interact with smiling patterns. Mothers of middle-class families tend to smile more than mothers in lower-class families. There are no significant differences between the fathers. The researchers suggest that the middle-class mothers in the study smiled more to fulfill middle-class expectations for "good" mothers—softer, warmer, and more compliant in public situations (Eakins & Eakins, 1988, p. 298). The fathers of both groups tended to smile less than the mothers, and yet their children interpreted their smiles as more friendly than the mothers', which suggests that the fathers' smiles were more appreciated and less expected. In research examining race and sex, the White U.S. women studied tended to smile more than the African American women (Halberstadt & Saitta, 1987), and the African American women studied did not smile more than African American men. It seems the African American women do not comply with White gender expectations here. However, when they do not meet these expectations, they may be perceived as hostile or unfriendly.

Nonverbal Sensitivity and Accuracy

Nonverbal sensitivity and accuracy is another area in which research has found some sex differences, with women tending to be more attentive than men to others' nonverbal cues (Friedman & Miller-Herringer, 1991; Hall, 2006). The women studied monitor other persons' behaviors more and are more responsive, showing empathy and attention. It follows that if women tend to be more attentive, they also may more accurately decode others' nonverbal cues. Several studies have indi-cated that women more accurately send and interpret others' nonverbal cues, espe-cially when focusing on facial cues (Ambady, Hallahan, & Rosenthal, 1995; Hall, 2006; Hall et al., 2000; McClure, 2000). These differences seem stronger for facial cues and weaker in terms of detecting deception, and some question exists as to whether the differences would hold true when judging the cues of an actual rela-tionship partner (Hall, 2006; Hall et al., 2000; McClure, 2000).

Researchers have suggested a number of explanations for these findings: (1) that brain differences and specializations are involved (Begley & Murr, 1995); (2) that the behavior is an example of social learning, wherein girls learn to be caretakers; and (3) that the behavior is a survival strategy of the less powerful, who need to be more attentive (Hall, Halberstadt, & O'Brien, 1997; Henley, 1995). Hall and asso-ciates (2000) argue that it is due to a combination of knowledge and effort. Women tend to decode nonverbals more accurately than men do because they have devel-oped better skills and because they consider the activity of accurate monitoring to be of greater value. Communication scholars Mark Knapp and Judith Hall (2002)

suggest that this combination of skill and effort may help explain the belief in "female intuition" (p. 84). Because there do not seem to be consistent biological explanations for such behavior, the influences of social factors, such as roles, prohibit the making of any blanket claims about gender/sex proclivities in nonverbal sensitivity and accuracy.

Emotional Expression

Emotional expression occurs in the form of cries, frowns, hunched body, downcast eyes, pitch changes, and much more. All the ways one expresses gender are also ways one expresses emotion. Psychologist Stephanie Shields (2000) suggests that the daily practice of being an emotional person is congruous with the practice of being a gendered person. Researchers suggest that boys in many ethnic and racial groups are socialized from early childhood to hold in their emotions more than girls are (Vingerhoets & Scheirs, 2000).

When talking about emotion, one should distinguish the internal experience of emotion from the expression or communication of emotion. They are not necessarily the same, but because they are related, we discuss them together. The ability to experience and express emotion is universal for women and men and is not limited to humans (e.g., rhesus monkeys; see Suomi, 1997). However, the stereotype is that women are more emotional than men, suggesting that women both experience and express more emotion. The truth is that women and men experience emotions relatively equally, but women are *expected* to experience and express them more (LaFrance & Hecht, 2000; Madden et al., 2000).

These expectations parallel the stereotypes attached to masculinity and femininity. Femininity stereotypically has been associated with emotionality and masculinity with objectivity or rationality. Thus, when a person is labeled emotional, the inference is that the person is irrational, as if emotionality and rationality were opposed. For centuries, this stereotype has been used to justify women's limited public participation. As recently as 1996, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on a case concerning the Virginia Military Institute's (VMI) policy to admit only male students, typical arguments supporting VMI's policy claimed, "Compared with men, women are more emotional, less aggressive, suffer more from fear of failure, and cannot withstand stress as well," and, therefore, "Women are not capable of the ferocity requisite to make the program work" (Greenberger & Brake, 1996, p. A52). Fortunately, the Supreme Court rejected the argument based on this stereotype and opened VMI to women.

The fact that these gender/sex stereotypes are lodged in people's perceptions and are not accurate characterizations of people's actions was demonstrated in a recent laboratory study. Participants were asked to rate the intensity of anger and sadness expressed by a person in a photo in which hairstyle and clothing were altered to manipulate gender. The participants rated the intensity of emotions expressed by the feminine poser as stronger than those expressed by the masculine poser (Plant, Kling, & Smith, 2004). The persistence of such a gender/sex–dichotomous stereotype

prevents observers (1) from recognizing men's emotionality and women's rationality; (2) from valuing emotionality, because rationality is socially preferred in Western cultures; and (3) from realizing that the emotional and rational parts of people are interdependent.

Gender as Body Performance

This review of research on specific nonverbal cues reveals how gender/sex differences are perceived, created, maintained, and changed. However, given research limitations, drawing generalizations is problematic. Thus, we shift from the micropolitics of nonverbal communication to exploring the macropolitics of gendered bodies. We examine the politics of gendering bodies before turning to examples of how people adapt, resist, and change performances of embodied gender norms.

To understand gender as performance, it is helpful to study those who most expose and embrace gender's performative aspect: drag queens and kings. Just as Goffman's (1979) analysis exposes how ads magnify and choreograph gender by using visual resources to "transform otherwise opaque goings-on into easily readable form" (p. 27), drag queens and kings make visible those things people typically do not see. People take note of a woman with slicked-back hair wearing pants, a button-down shirt, and a tie (unless she is part of the waitstaff at an upscale restaurant). A man in a lovely silk skirt and twinset also would be remarkable.

The gender performances of transgender people expose the performative aspect of gender even as they remind one not to conflate sex, sexual orientation, and gender. A transgender person is not necessarily homosexual; many male cross-dressers are heterosexual (e.g., Drew Carey's brother on *The Drew Carey Show*). Additionally, transgender people challenge the idea of an "essential bond between masculinity and men" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 125). Men need not be masculine, and women can be, and there is not only one way to perform masculinity: "To king a role can involve a number of different modes of performance from earnest repetition to hyperbolic re-creation, and from quiet understatement to theatrical layering" (pp. 128–129). Similarly, drag queens' use of camp "mimics dominant forms of femininity to produce and ratify alternative drag femininities that revel in irony, sarcasm, inversion, and insult" (p. 130). People's diverse performances of their sex's assigned gender can be recognized once one recognizes that gender is performative.

Overt gender performance is not reserved to those who practice drag. Sociologists Richard Majors and Janet Billson (1992) observe how African American street pimps reinvent racial stereotypes through the performance of a "cool pose." By posing, they present themselves as a spectacle of self-expression, detachment, and strength, instead of being victims of others' labeling. In the absence of other resources to indicate their masculinity, their flamboyant physical presence and expressiveness take on more importance. Consequently, Majors (2001) argues that many Black men have learned to use posing as a strategic tool to convey control and toughness.

When people internalize social expectations about gender/sex and the body, it becomes difficult for them to determine whether they construct their gender identities or whether gender/sex expectations begin to construct them. For more than 40 years, researchers have documented the negative effects of nonverbal cultural norms that objectify women and create prejudices against feminine men, such as low self-esteem, the glorification of male violence, sexual violence against girls and women, sexual harassment, domestic physical and emotional abuse, higher suicide rates for homosexual teens, and violence against LGBT people. These negative effects discipline bodies to perform gender in a particular way.

Attractiveness

Beauty can be a positive human aesthetic. However, cultural norms defining bodily beauty tend to have narrow, shifting boundaries that make them virtually unattainable, and attractiveness norms, such as gender/sex, have become binary concepts that differentiate women and men (Felski, 2006). Although physical attractiveness is valued for women *and* men (U.S. men are spending more on cosmetics, fashion, and bodybuilding), cultural pressures encourage women in particular to self-objectify and become preoccupied with physical appearances. Beauty's determination of the relative worth of a girl or woman is evidenced in the millions of dollars spent yearly on cosmetics and diets, the ubiquitous beauty literature advising them how to be attractive, and the growing popularity of plastic surgeries. Beauty costs.

Cultural ideals of beauty are difficult for all persons to attain because the norms are unrealistic. They are even more difficult to attain for persons with disabilities, persons with darker skin, persons of larger size, and older people (Gerschick & Miller, 2004; Kramer, 2005). An array of research shows that large-sized women face more difficulties with social mobility than large-sized men do. Body size, especially for women, tends to affect popularity, dating and marriage opportunities, educational and economic accomplishments, susceptibility to job discrimination, and work environments (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Similarly, poor women and women who refuse to comply with social demands of beauty regularly experience humiliation, harassment, and discrimination. They are called lazy, mentally ill, unfeminine, and asexual (Travis et al., 2000).

Heterosexuality is inextricably linked to attractiveness, and both are culturally regulated. Some psychologists believe this conflation of beauty and sexuality has a heightened potential to oppress women because the culture regulates women's sexuality by regulating beauty. Cultural norms demand that women adorn themselves to be sexually attractive to men, and "This merger [of beauty and sexuality] moves sexuality into the public realm, making it concrete and external, and thereby amenable to inspection, definition, social monitoring, and control" (Travis et al., 2000, p. 239). Women's and men's sexuality is not private; it becomes public, social property.

Even though people speak of "natural beauties," beauty is anything but natural and unchanging. These changes are confined by aesthetic shifts but are influenced by social, economic, and political factors (Faludi, 1991; Travis et al., 2000). For example, in the 1910s and 1920s, when women entered the workforce in larger numbers and gained the right to vote, fashion became more revealing. Sexual appeal became about external appearance, with short flapper-style dresses. Pale white complexions, slender legs, narrow hips, and flat breasts were the ideal, causing many women to bind their breasts and to shave their legs and armpits.

In the 1940s and 1950s, after World War II ended and women were dismissed from factory work and relegated to their homes, advertisers told women and men that happiness was a beautiful wife who provided a clean home and cared for the children. Marilyn Monroe became a beauty icon and was the first woman to pose naked in *Playboy;* larger breasts and hips became sexy. Feminine self-worth was tied to making oneself attractive and to serving men and the home, a White middle-class ideal difficult for most women to attain.

Today, U.S. women are presumed to have the most gender/sex equality in history, yet the predominant notion of feminine beauty has become even more impossible to attain. Mass media images of models' bodies are perfected by airbrushing and computer alteration. Even women with the most perfect bodies are not perfect enough. Also, the ideal body type has become increasingly thinner. Marilyn Monroe's size 12 is considered large by today's beauty standards. Current *Playboy* centerfold models are 10% to 20% thinner than most women. According to advertising analyst Jean Kilbourne (1994), only 5% of today's women fit the preferred body type, which leaves 95% of women wondering what is wrong with their bodies. Because body size is not the only component of beauty, even fewer women attain the total beauty ideal. Author Naomi Wolf (1991) argues that, at most, 1 in 40,000 women fits the "beauty myth." It is not coincidental that the beauty industry benefits economically from this. Travis et al. (2000) conclude, "The economy virtually relies on women being obsessed with thinness and forever unsuccessfully attempting to achieve it" (p. 250).

When one compares current changes in cultural notions of masculine attractiveness to current changes in women's attractiveness, an interesting insight emerges: As women are encouraged to become smaller, men are encouraged to become bigger. The pop culture hero G.I. Joe went from the equivalent of a human man with biceps of 12.2 inches in circumference in 1964, to biceps of 26.8 inches in 1998. As a point of comparison, baseball power hitter Mark McGwire has biceps of only 20 inches, and he is 6 feet tall ("As G.I. Joe Bulks Up," 1999). The *New York Times* coverage of G.I. Joe's change was occasioned by the research of psychiatrists and psychologists who studied how men are beginning to face the same enormous pressures for body perfection that women have faced for centuries. According to the researchers, toys such as G.I. Joe are partly to blame for the creation of artificial and impossible images of male bodily perfection (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000).

Notions of beauty vary by culture and race, which makes it clear that these notions are socially constructed. Race and beauty intersect; together they are

culturally defined and prescribed (Cofer, 1997). Some Azawagh Arabs of Niger define ideal femininity as extreme fatness. Expansive thighs, belly rolls of fat, and stretch marks are seen as indicators of sexual desirability and upper-class status, for they render the women unable to work (Popenoe, 2004). Latino cultures tend to define feminine beauty as larger sized than White cultures do. African American cultures tend to define larger-sized women as strong physically and emotionally, not lazy or unfeminine as in the predominant White culture (Lovejoy, 2001). Traditional Asian Hmong culture values sturdy women who can work hard, which makes larger waists and hips attractive (Lynch, 1999). This creates conflict for some Hmong American girls and women who are becoming assimilated into the predominant White U.S. culture's standards of beauty.

The predominance of White Western notions of beauty among multiple ethnic groups in the United States as well as abroad is troubling. Some African American women internalize racism and think of their hair as a problem. Many spend substantial money and time to braid, straighten, or lighten their hair in attempts to "control" it or make it look more beautiful as defined by White hair standards (hooks, 1993). Other ethnic groups find their facial features to be a problem. Ethnographer Eugenia Kaw (1997) interviewed 11 Asian American women from middle-class backgrounds and a variety of Asian countries who had chosen to have eye surgery to make their eyes look more White European. They had internalized the notion that the White European face looked more energetic and assertive. They described their birth eyelid shape as looking "dull and passive," and they wanted to make a better impression in job interviews and other career moves (p. 62). If one examines women's magazines, self-help literature, and the beauty industry in countries like Japan and India, it becomes clear how White Western notions of beauty are sold to women who are unable to (and should not be induced to) attain those beauty standards. Beauty has become a tool to colonize women around the world (Hegde, 1995).

Despite the economic and cultural forces at play in the Western beauty industry, it is inaccurate to suggest that all women are passive victims of it. As Asian American women's choice of eye surgery for career enhancement demonstrates, persons tend to pick and choose what parts of the beauty myth they adopt, according to their unique needs. They often combine Western notions of beauty and fashion with their own cultural preferences. In a study of bride photos in Taiwan, ethnographer Bonnie Adrian (2003) found that engaged women and their families invest in elaborate photo shoots in White Western gowns, hairpieces, and makeup that render the bride unrecognizable. The women describe this act as a social status marker only and believe it has no implications for how they should look on a day-to-day basis. They know the beauty standards in the photos are artificial and do not think they affect their self-images.

Attractiveness and sexuality are not just individual experiences and identities but are constructed at the social and political macrolevel. Attractiveness norms most explicitly demonstrate that gender is a command performance. Even if you have an idea of how you want to look, you are bombarded by images telling you what you

should look like, and others judge you not by your degree of self-determination but by how well you fit the cultural norm.

Eating Disorders

As our discussion of attractiveness indicates, self-esteem is strongly influenced by how one feels about one's body. Public messages communicated about ideal body size have consequences; turning an unrealistic mirror on oneself may induce shame, anxiety, depression, sexual dysfunction, and eating disorders. The rigid standard of feminine beauty as White, thin, and able bodied can become an ideal against which a person evaluates her own body (Kilbourne, 1994). The result is an efficient form of social control, a hegemonic notion of beauty and sexuality. No guns or physical force are needed. The desire for perfection, control, and self-hatred drive destructive cycles of eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. Starving and purging provide a temporary sense of control over one's body until the compulsion to starve and/or purge begin to control the person.

Although there are cultural differences in defining attractive body size, the most recent findings make clear that U.S. women across racial and ethnic groups tend to be dissatisfied with their bodies (Grabe & Hyde, 2006). Most previous research has focused on White women, which may partly explain why it was assumed that this group suffers most with body image issues. However, research on African, Asian, and Hispanic American women is now available. In a meta-analysis of 98 studies, Shelly Grabe and Janet Hyde (2006) found that all the groups of women studied reported significant dissatisfaction with their body images, with White, college-age women slightly more dissatisfied. Asian and Hispanic Americans are among the least studied groups, but previous research indicates that girls and women in these groups have lower body images like the White women studied (Grabe & Hyde, 2006; Lovejoy, 2001).

Negative body image is affecting men in increasing numbers, although researchers have been slow to document the effects (Olivardia, Pope, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2004). Instead of thinness, masculine concerns tend to be about being underweight and lacking body muscularity. *Muscle dysmorphia* is the term for preoccupation with muscularity and the misperception of one's physique as small despite distinct muscularity (Pope, Gruber, Choi, Olivardia, & Phillips, 1997).

In one of the more comprehensive studies of the relationship between men's bodies, self-images, and health, psychiatric researchers administered a variety of tests to 154 college men, predominantly White Catholics aged 18–30. The researchers found that the men displayed substantial body dissatisfaction with their muscularity (Olivardia et al., 2004). The men's concerns were tied to competing with other men and gaining their respect, which demonstrates that for many men, body image is tied to constructing a masculine, predominantly heterosexual identity, which asserts gender hierarchy (e.g., Olivardia, 2001). The results also found a large—and likely unhealthy—gap between some men's ideal body images and their own body realities. This gap can lead to health problems related to excessive exercise, anabolic

steroid use, and eating disorders. Problems such as these may go undiagnosed because heterosexual men, in particular, are reluctant to seek help for fear of appearing feminine or gay.

The men who have been identified as having the greatest tendencies toward eating disorders are gay men. Many gay cultures place a higher value on physical attractiveness than heterosexual men's cultures tend to, and some gay men report stresses similar to those on heterosexual women who work to make themselves attractive to men (Olivardia & Pope, 1997). It seems that for women and men, the more one's value is reduced to one's mere sexual attractiveness, the more one is likely to engage in self-destructive practices.

Refusing the Command Performance

As we summarize research on social norms' effects on bodies, remember that social norms continuously change. In the 1850s United States, one of the primary objections to the dress reform represented by the bloomer outfit was that it exposed the ankle, lending the outfit an erotic quality (Foote, 1989; Mattingly, 2002). For a middle-class woman, showing an ankle was shocking, even up until 1909 (Gordon, 2001). A cursory review of the *Sears Catalogue,* "the arbiter of fashion in small town America" (Olian, 1995, p. i), makes clear that women's dresses skirted to the floor were the norm in 1909, with barely a toe peeking out from underneath. Not until 1912 would ankles appear consistently as acceptable fashion. Now, women in the United States think nothing of exposing an ankle.

Even though social norms seem permanent, people push at them all the time. In many ways, the very people who are ostracized and ridiculed for being different in one era are the same people future generations thank for expanding gender and sex repertoires. In this spirit, literature professor Judith Halberstam wrote *Female Masculinity* (1998), about women who dress and act masculine. Such women illustrate that masculinity is not reducible to the male body and its effects. Halberstam explores how female masculinity, which is not simply an "imitation of maleness . . . affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity" (p. 1). Those who least fit the norms may be the people who most enhance understanding of how the norms are communicated, reiterated, and reinscribed.

People can understand their own and others' behaviors only by recognizing the interacting influences of gender *and* sex *and* communication. Women who decide not to color their gray hair, men who are balding and do not opt for implants, African American women who choose not to straighten their hair, Muslim women who wear hijabs—all broaden people's cultural assumptions about gender/sex and the body.

Even though nonverbal communication often is unconscious, when people decide to challenge social norms, they do so quite intentionally. If people's bodies are "performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence" (Butler, 1990a, p. 24), it makes sense that if people want to challenge

gender norms, they need to identify locations where the performance becomes incoherent. No repetition is a perfect reproduction. As sex is reiterated through performance, the reiteration also creates "gaps and fissures," instabilities, and something "which escapes or exceeds the norms, as that which cannot be wholly defined or fixed by the repetitive labor of that norm" (p. 10).

If gender is understood as "the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category" (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127), people's activities can manage normative sex expectations in distinct ways. First, norms can be deployed against themselves to open space for change. Second, norms can be made visible so that their incoherence is highlighted. Third, norms can be overtly challenged. Finally, norms can be revalued, where that which is denigrated or invisible is valued and made present.

Using Norms Against Each Other

Earlier, we outlined how women's traditional role of mother creates social expectations about how women should act: listening, attending to others' needs, remaining in the private sphere. However, women have used the role of mother as their foundation for public advocacy. The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo formed in 1977 to protest the "disappearance" of their children under the repressive military regime that ruled Argentina from 1976 to 1983. Communication scholar Valeria Fabj (1993) explains how verbal argument was not an option, and a nonverbal form linked to women's traditional roles was necessary. A verbal response by men was not possible because the society was repressive, yet women as mothers were valued and could protest the state's murder of their grown children. Wearing their children's cloth diapers as headscarves (embroidered with the children's names and dates of disappearance) and carrying pictures of their disappeared children, the mothers marched around the plaza at a time when public protest was prohibited. Fabj argues it was the very "myth of motherhood," the social beliefs that attached to the women's bodies, that allowed them "to draw from their private experiences in order to gain a political voice, discover eloquent symbols, and yet remain relatively safe at a time when all political dissent was prohibited" (p. 2). Because they were fulfilling social expectations attached to devoted motherhood, they were able to violate social and legal norms that no one else could. A similar tactic was deployed from 1995 to 1999 in Istanbul, where mothers protested the disappearance of politically contentious individuals held in police custody (Baydar & Ivegen, 2006).

In much the same way as these mothers used their maternal bodies, women in Nigeria used the threat of their exposed bodies as a form of silent protest. From July 2002 to February 2003, thousands of Nigerian women ranging in age from 30 to 80 peacefully seized Chevron-Texaco's terminals, airstrip, docks, and stores, disrupting oil production (Agbese, 2003; Turner & Brownhill, 2004). The women demanded jobs for their sons, schools, scholarships, hospitals, water, electricity,

and environmental protection. They wanted some of the wealth that was being pumped out of the ground to be pumped back into their communities. As part of the protests, one group of women threatened public nudity if their demands were not met. In the United States, public nudity is likely to be read as a sign that Mardi Gras or spring break is in progress, but in Nigeria women's public nudity is a traditional way of shaming men. The women explained: "Our nakedness is our weapon" (quoted in Wysham, 2002, n.p.).

The Nigerian and Argentinian women used social norms and prohibitions to pressure those in power to meet with them and to accede to their demands. The social norms demanding that women be good mothers can be used to violate other social norms if, by abiding by those other norms, women cannot fulfill the demands of motherhood. When social norms concerning how one should be in one's body contradict or conflict, the gaps and fissures that emerge can be productive places to explore new ways to be in one's body.

Making Norms Visible

The Guerrilla Girls, a New York–based group, formed to protest the exclusion of women from the art world. They employed the tactic of "zap actions," placing posters around New York City (Demo, 2000). Their first action was in 1985 and focused on the absence of women in the major museums and galleries in New York. "Using mass-media techniques and advertising world savvy" (Guerrilla Girls, 1995, p. 10), they quickly gained notoriety.

Their emblematic poster (see photo), which appeared in 1989 on buses in lower Manhattan, refigured Ingres's *Odalisque,* "a reclining figure whose sinuous nude back and hips have long stood for idealized female beauty. Rather than meeting the classical profile of Ingres' original, however, our eyes confront a large shaggy gorilla head, mouth open, teeth glistening. Twisted to meet us eye to eye, it challenges instead of seducing" (Guerrilla Girls, 1995, p. 7).

Challenging the objectification of women's bodies and positioning women as artists, the poster makes visible the naked body of a real woman, challenging the fetishized, artistically rendered bodies that seem to have exclusive presence in
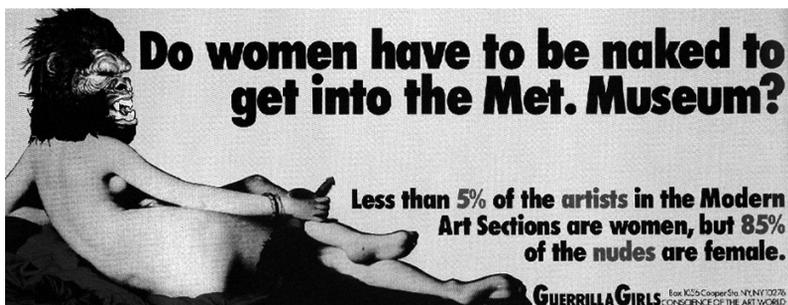
SOURCE: Copyright © 1989 by the Guerrilla Girls. Courtesy of www.guerrillagirls.com.

museums. It refigures what it means for women to be present, and it blocks the ability of museum defenders to claim that women are present as more than bodies on canvases. The poster makes visible the norm of women as objectified bodies even as the alternative of women bodies as artists is offered.

Overtly Challenging Norms

Communication scholar Bonnie Dow (2003) analyzes second-wave feminism's protest against the 1968 Miss American Pageant. In the second wave's first major public event, women challenged social norms of attractiveness. Women threw into trashcans bras as well as "girdles, high heels, cosmetics, eyelash curlers, wigs, issues of *Cosmopolitan, Playboy,* and *Ladies Home Journal*—what feminists termed 'instruments of torture' to women" (pp. 130–131). Although media coverage of the event referred to bra burning, *no bras were burned.* This event provides an interesting example of how those who challenge norms often are disciplined. Dow explains how the false claim of bra burning was used against the protestors: In a society obsessed with breasts, accusations of bra burning were a way of sexualizing and trivializing women's demands. For example, two years after the protests, Senator Jennings Randolph described feminists as "braless bubbleheads" in his response to the Women's Strike for Equality in 1970 (p. 130). In other words, even as people challenge norms, dominant social orders seek to reinforce them. Yet, more than 35 years after this initial protest, it is clear that many of the women's movements' challenges to attractiveness have taken hold (girdles, anyone?) even as new norms have replaced them (breast implants, anyone?).

Revaluing the Body

Bodies that have been denigrated or made invisible can be valued and made present. Communication scholar Kevin DeLuca (1999) explores how activist groups use the body as "not merely flags to attract attention for the argument but the site and substance of the argument itself" (p. 10). In U.S. society, homosexual bodies are marginalized because their sex, sexuality, and gender do not match up in the way dictated by heteronormativity. Thus, for such groups as ACT UP and Queer Nation, the presence of the body is the most powerful form of communication possible, "for it is the body that is at stake—its meanings, its possibilities, its care, and its freedoms. In their protest actions, the activists use their bodies to rewrite the homosexual body as already constructed by dominant mainstream discourses—diseased, contagious, deviant, invisible" (p. 17).

One also can rewrite the body by writing on the body with tattoos. Communication scholar Dan Brouwer (1998) studies the meaning of seropositive individuals who chose to tattoo themselves with symbols that would mark their HIV+ status. As DeLuca's analysis suggests, the tattoos are a way to make AIDS visible, a core goal of AIDS activist groups. However, Brouwer worries about this self-stigmatization: "The wearing of an HIV/AIDS tattoo is a precarious act, one that

simultaneously disrupts expectations of the appearance of health and challenges norms of 'patient' behavior, yet one that also invites surveillance (which can be oppressive, punitive, or physically painful) and runs the risk of reducing the wearer's identity to 'disease carrier'" (pp. 115–116).

Conclusion

For every norming of people's bodies through expectations concerning nonverbal actions, locations of resistance arise. Yet, that resistance will face a response. Although the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo faced fewer reprisals than other activists did, the government punished many of them. Although the Guerrilla Girls have been active for more than 15 years, women continue to be underrepresented in major galleries and museums. Although dress standards have changed remarkably in the last 100 years, the range of individual expression in terms of dress really is quite limited (look around your classroom if you are unconvinced). Even as the most marginal of bodies are made visible, that does not mean they are accepted. Even if one recognizes that bodies' performances of gender are not natural, that does not mean it is easy to change the performance.

"Throwing like a girl" and "throwing like a boy" are far from natural behaviors. Social norms train people to throw, sit, walk, move, dress, smile, and be in ways appropriate to what a person's gender/sex is perceived to be. Cultures label particular movements of the body as gender/sex specific, and members of the culture then ridicule those who do not follow the prescribed behaviors. Over time, routinized movements of the body in gendered/sexed ways appear natural, which is why people perceive many elements of gender to be biologically determined and believe that biology is free from social influence.

Although the two-culture theory of gender communication links many of these practices to traditional gender roles and does not address the differences as indicators of inequality, most researchers argue that these roles and differences are not separate and equal but indicators of power differentials; they are separate and create inequality. The body, then, is an important location on which gender/sex identities are communicated, constructed, maintained, and challenged.