

# Women Today

# A “post-feminist” society?

- No longer surprising to see women in powerful positions
- For the first time in US history, roughly half of all wage earners are women
  - 2/3rds of all US families rely on women’s earnings for a significant portion of their income
- Women make up 60% of those earning college degrees and 50% of those earning advanced professional degrees

# Labor force

- Women still do not perform as much paid labor as men
  - Much more likely to hold PT jobs
    - 25% of all women workers hold PT jobs
    - 2/3rds of all PT workers are women
- Women still have not achieved parity in workforce
  - 18% of law firm partners are women (2006)
  - In Fortune 500 companies, only 15% of corporate officers were women; only 12 of these companies had a woman CEO (2008)
- Persistence of sexual division of labor
  - Top 5 job categories for women: secretary, nurse, elementary or middle school teacher, cashier, retail salesperson (2007)

# Wage gap

- As of 2008, women still earned only 77 cents to the dollar of what men earned
  - Average salaries
    - Men: \$46,000
    - Women: \$36,000
- In major U.S. cities, single, childless women b/n 22-30 earned on average 8% more than men
- “Motherhood” penalty
  - Wage gap: - 3% “wage penalty” per child
    - Question: Does this reflect women’s career choices after childbearing, or discrimination?
  - One 2008 study showed that women who had identified themselves as mothers were offered salaries \$11,000 less than childless women

# Poverty and wealth

- Women more likely to be poor
  - 2007: 13.7% of women were poor; 11.1% of men
- “Gender wealth gap”
  - Women between 18-64 have only 36% as much wealth as men
  - Situation especially skewed for women of color: half of all black and Latina women have zero or negative wealth
- Why?
  - Women less likely to have jobs with good “fringe benefits”
  - Women disrupt their working lives in ways that have serious long-term consequences
    - Example: Woman earning \$60,000/year who leaves the workplace for one 3-year stint forfeits around \$325,000 over the course of her working life
  - Women are shouldering the financial burden of children to a much greater extent

# Women as voters

- Women vote at a slightly higher rate than men; favor Democratic Party
  - 1920s-80s: Women voted at lower rates than men
  - 1950s-early 60s: Women as a whole leaned more to conservative candidates than did men
- 1980 election saw rise of a “gender gap” that persists to this day
  - Clinton, 96: W-54%; M-43%
  - GW: W-43%; M-53%
  - Obama: W-56%; M-49%
    - Married women slightly favored McCain (50% to 47%); unmarried women dramatically favored Obama (70% to 29%)

# Women in Politics

- 1992 “Year of the Woman”
  - 24 new women elected to House; 5 to the Senate
- 2010: Women held less than 1/5<sup>th</sup> (17%) of all U.S. congressional seats
  - State level: 24% of all seats
- No major political party has nominated a woman to serve as their nominee for the presidential race
  - 2008: Hilary Clinton came close

# Changing views of marriage

- For many, marriage no longer is primarily an institution centered on the bearing and rearing of children
  - Only 41% of Americans see children as “very important” to a successful marriage
  - 1990: 65%
- Challenges to marriage as traditionally understood
  - Liberalizing of sexual mores
  - Rise of cohabitation
  - Movement for same-sex marriage

# Motherhood

- 4/10 children today are born to single mothers
- Patterns sharply divided along class lines
  - College-educated women far less likely to bear children outside of marriage; also less likely to divorce
- More women not bearing children
  - 20% of all women, an all-time high
- Women bearing fewer children
  - Total fertility rate: 2.1 children/woman
- More women delaying childbearing
  - Today, more babies born to women in their 30s than in their 20s
- Mothers are spending more, not less, time interacting with their children

# Survey answers

- Vast majority want children
  - Around 12% say no or weren't sure yet
- Incredible uniformity regard ideal age: vast majority said b/n 28-32 or "by 30"
  - Only 1 person said before 25; 2 said 26-27
- Work:
  - Just over half (55%) said FT; about 25% said PT; about 10% want time off for childbearing
- Dependent spouse?
  - No (60%); some variation of yes (40%)
- Being dependent?
  - No (70%); some variation of yes (30%)
- Childcare
  - Most said not before 3-4, not more than 4-5 hours a day