

percent for dropouts, and interracial marriage still a rarity, educated and employed black women often decide to raise their children out of wedlock. Recent reports suggest that some professional black women are starting to enter interracial relationships, however, so the alpha generation may change these marriage patterns. Meanwhile, Katz and Goldin believe the “marriage gap” reinforces an increasingly polarized and unequal socioeconomic environment for children.

“The mothering piece is really the fault line when it comes to class and race,” says ethnographer Wendy Luttrell, author of *Schoolsmart and Motherwise: Working-Class Women's Identity and Schooling* (1997). For middle- and upper-class girls and women struggling to balance rewarding work and family, “the tradeoff is about being the perfect mom and doing the perfect job—about being able to do *everything*,” she says. But for poor and working-class, increasingly single, mothers, “It’s not about tradeoffs, it’s about, ‘How am I going to support my kids and keep them safe?’” For these women, the challenge is meeting the double-duty demands of mothering and low-wage work, predominantly in service-

sector jobs and often for professional women, who employ and rely upon low-income women (disproportionately women of color and recent immigrants) to do all kinds of family-care work, says Luttrell. The current rhetoric about work-family conflicts emphasizes personal choices regarding working and/or mothering, “but this overlooks the larger mother-care-work crisis caused by unequal opportunity, declining social services, and unjust policies that pit employment demands on wage-poor mothers against the care needs of their children.”

Not all young women will choose to be mothers (26 percent of white women born in 1960 with a college degree are childless, for example), but the majority will. With 72 percent of American mothers working outside the home, the work/family challenge is widespread. “From a women’s rights point of view, that’s still the biggest hurdle to overcome,” notes Kindlon.

Work/family issues play a significant role in the wage gap. Some companies avoid investing in training women who may take time off for maternity and childrearing, according to Burbank professor of political economy Torben Iversen. Once career

From Title IX to Riot Grrrls

TODAY’S AMERICAN GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN may be the daughters of feminism, but their world isn’t always the one envisioned by their foremothers. “Little girls dress in pink and they’re princesses, but at the same time they’re going to grow up to wear five-inch heels and kick ass!” says Lee professor of economics Claudia Goldin, an old-school feminist who wants more equality, not difference, between the sexes. The rise of “girl power” and the celebration of “difference”—propelled by forces ranging from Title IX to feminist punk-rock bands—have changed American culture, although not all girls have benefited equally.

The struggle for women’s rights in the United States is often described in terms of “waves.” First-wave feminism culminated with women’s suffrage in 1920, while the resurgent second-wave feminism of the 1960s and ’70s focused on reproductive freedom, sexual harassment, equal pay, and access to education and jobs. The second-wave mother of the girls’ movement was Carol Gilligan, formerly Graham professor of gender studies at Harvard Graduate School of Education, whose book on women’s psychological development, *In a Different Voice* (1982), inspired countless studies on girls and sweeping educational changes. Another second-wave development was Title IX.

“My students have been *deeply* touched by Title IX” and its expectation that girls would participate in sports equally to boys, says assistant professor of studies of women, gender, and sexuality and of history and literature Robin Bernstein, when asked about girls’ self-esteem. Her work in performance studies examines “what people do with bodies.” Athletics, she says, significantly changes a girl’s relationship with her body. To help her students understand the law’s impact, she tells them that in the 1970s, “a sports bra was a specialized piece of sports equipment, not something you could buy at any department store—which speaks to a huge change in expectations for women and athletics.” People don’t recognize Title IX’s impact, she adds, “not just

on female athletes who made varsity or went on to the Olympics, but on the masses of girls who grew up with the expectation, ‘Sure, I’ll play soccer. Why not?’”

Female sports participation has skyrocketed since Richard Nixon signed Title IX of the 1972 Educational Amendments to the 1964 Civil Rights Act into law—by 450 percent in college and an astounding 900 percent in high school (to 2.9 million girls) in 2005-2006. (Not everyone has benefited as intended. For inner-city girls, for example, sports fields are often nonexistent and schools can’t afford the expense of equipment, lessons, and travel.)

Furthermore, Title IX is not just about sports. It not only bans bias (in recruitment, financial aid, benefits, and scholarships) against either sex in any educational setting receiving federal aid, it also outlaws sexual harassment and protects equal access to math and science, higher education, career training, technology, and employment. Wendy Luttrell, Aronson associate professor in human development and education and the author of *Pregnant Bodies, Fertile Minds: Gender, Race, and the Schooling of Pregnant Teens* (2003), notes that “Title IX was also initiated so that pregnant girls could stay in school.” (Public schools used to expel pregnant students and bar visibly pregnant teachers from classrooms. “Title IX got rid of the *de jure* discrimination that pregnant girls cannot be in school,” Luttrell says, “but *de facto* discrimination”—either isolating the girls from resources and regular classes, or mainstreaming them without support—“is still quite prevalent.”)

While the effects of Title IX were taking hold, a “third wave” of American feminism—advocating “difference” and “girlness”—was rising. Feminist performance artists like the Guerilla Girls and the V-Girls reclaimed the word “girl” in the 1980s, and in the early 1990s, the punk band Bikini Kill famously put the *grrr* into “grrrl” and helped catalyze a movement of Riot Grrrls. Young third-wavers resisted sexism through their music,

choices are taken into account, Iversen has found that “statistical discrimination” against women (basing judgments about individuals from a group on average assumptions about that group) is a major cause of the wage gap. Katz believes that among college graduates, career “choice” is likely the largest factor causing the wage gender gap, while traditional sex discrimination remains substantial but is diminishing. He suggests that behavioral differences play a secondary role: men tend to negotiate better salaries or bonuses, while women tend to accept what’s offered, and men seem to thrive on “pure competition” more than women. (Because studies have found that some employers “penalize” women who negotiate, female reluctance to negotiate may be self-protective against bias.)

According to the *Harvard Crimson* survey of the class of 2007, such factors are still in play for recent alphas. Women and men were heading to graduate school (22 percent) and finding jobs (50

percent) in equal numbers, but there was a significant gender gap in median starting salaries: men were contracted to earn \$10,000 more. “That’s entirely explained by which sectors they go into,” says Katz: 58 percent of men chose finance, compared to 43 percent of women (still a large percentage of women choosing a male-dominated field). Eleven women planned to work at non-governmental organizations, but no men, adds Goldin: “Men chose to work 80 hours a week at Goldman Sachs and make \$60,000, not including bonuses.” However, *within* banking or consulting, they report, the wage gap disappears.

Goldin is concerned about the “extremely large” economic penalty for choosing to balance family and career down the line. Female and male lawyers straight out of law school have similar salaries, she notes, but 10

the Internet, and grass-roots activism, on the one hand, and on the other, through a “girlie” feminism that championed “girl stuff,” from Barbie dolls and high heels to knitting.

“Girl Power,” the third wave’s best-known catch phrase, went mainstream as the slogan for the British pop group the Spice Girls. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services even named its first girl-centered public-health initiative Girl Power! (www.girlpower.gov). Today girls’ programming includes cultural staples like the Ms. Foundation’s original Take Our Daughters to Work Day (now Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day) and organizations like Strong Women, Strong Girls (SWSG).

Even the preferred sex of infants has acquired a girl-power spin. “Now people say, ‘Oh, I’m having a boy. This is going to be so difficult,’” says Goldin. “We’ve seen a huge shift in what is considered to be the perfect child—little girls are just ‘easier,’ they’re ‘smarter,’ they ‘mature faster.’” Popular treatments of sex-difference research may be responsible: “Men, Get Ready to Develop Brain Envy,” declares the back cover of *The Female Brain*, by neuropsychiatrist Louann Brizendine, a former Harvard Medical School resident and professor.

Brizendine has found a generational divide in the response to her work on this biology-psychology connection. Girls and women under 30 send grateful e-mails, she says: “Younger women have come up in the world not thinking they have limitations on their intellect at all. They’ve embraced their own intelligence, and they’re moving forward.” But women of her own over-50 generation “don’t like it. They’re afraid the message will hurt women instead of help them. If you say anything about difference, it means *unequal*, and unequal means women lose.” Brizendine was a second-waver, but now, she says, “I call myself a third-wave feminist, which means embracing and celebrating the differences.”

Whatever the wave, few daughters of feminism identify themselves by the “f-word,” as Dan Kindlon, clinical psychologist and

adjunct lecturer at the Harvard School of Public Health, found among the alpha girls he studies. SWSG’s Lindsay Hyde ’04 reports that her volunteer mentors “have really differing levels of comfort with what feminism means.” Demonizing rants against “male-bashing *feminazis*” are partly to blame, so SWSG organizationally defines feminism, which “has become such a flash point in the political realm, as ‘ensuring that *everyone*, men and women, have access to the resources they need to make positive choices in their lives,’” says Hyde. “Using that definition, I absolutely consider myself a feminist.”

